

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland 2001
The Report of the Special Commission anent Review and Reform

A Church without Walls

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Proposed Deliverance

The General Assembly:

A. Receive the Report.

B. Reaffirm as primary purposes of the Church the calls to the Church:

1. to follow Jesus Christ as Lord.
2. to share in Christ's mission in the world.
3. to turn back to God and neighbour.

C. As a process of continuing reform towards reshaping the Church locally, regionally and centrally:

1. Urge congregations to choose to study, reflect on and live by one Gospel for one year in the first instance, and let Jesus shape the life and structure of the congregation.
2. Urge congregations to reflect on the cycle of grace and what it means to live out that grace in our life together.
3. Urge congregations to undertake a community review at least once every ten years to reflect on the issues, changes and missionary opportunities in the community, in collaboration with others, wherever appropriate.
4. Urge Kirk Sessions to undertake a review of the worship of the existing congregation and assess potential for developments within and beyond the congregation.
5. Urge congregations to consider how the cell, congregation and celebration dimensions of being the church might be applied locally.
6. Urge congregations to determine to integrate children and young people into the life of the congregation; or to offer the resources to plant a church for a new generation alongside the current congregation.
7. Urge congregations to form paths for the spiritual journey to help people become Christian disciples in today's world.
8. Instruct Kirk Sessions to review the leadership structure, consider what ministry team is needed for current needs and determine how it might be developed in the next five years.
9. Urge congregations to form groupings according to their natural communities to explore shared mission and mutual ministry, with other churches in the area.
10. Urge congregations to establish links with other congregations in a different social context as a partnership of mutual ministry.
11. Urge congregations to research an area of the world church and establish a personal partnership with a congregation or project.
12. Urge congregations to explore ways of being more environmentally aware and responsible as a witness to the Christian care of God's creation.

13. Urge Kirk Sessions to identify the spiritual gifts of the people and grow church around the people we have rather than deploy people to support existing church structures.
14. Instruct Presbyteries to develop a coordinated strategy to equip congregations to sustain worship, pastoral care and mission with the appropriate staffing, and monitor progress through the Quinquennial visits.
15. Instruct Kirk Sessions to offer an opportunity for all elders who have not undertaken training in the past three years to share the current vision of the role and expectations of an elder in the Church of Scotland.
16. Urge Kirk Session to develop appropriate open styles of meeting and processes of communication.
17. Instruct the Board of Practice and Procedure to examine whether the present “model constitution” represents the best and most flexible way of managing a local congregation.
18. Instruct the Board of Ministry, in consultation with the Board of National Mission and the Board of Parish Education, to develop a coordinated process of recruiting and training people with missionary gifts which are vital for service within and beyond the constraints of a parish context.
19. Instruct the Board of Ministry, in consultation with the Board of National Mission and the Board of Parish Education, to develop a database with the current Curricula Vitae of all ministers, auxiliary ministers, Deacons and Readers to assist in the strategic deployment of personnel.
20. Instruct the Board of Ministry and the Board of Parish Education to develop working patterns of active collaboration to equip the whole people of God for Christian service.
21. Encourage the Panel on Worship in the review of services of ordination, induction and commissioning, in order to celebrate imaginatively the ministry of all God’s people within them.
22. Remit sections on “The Shape of the Regional Church” and “The Shape of the Central Church” to the Board of Practice and Procedure and the Assembly Council.
23. Instruct the Board of Practice and Procedure to review the culture and timing of the General Assembly in order to increase the quality of reporting, participation and decision-making.
24. Urge Kirk Sessions to identify ways of deepening the prayer life of their congregations individually and together.
25. Urge the leadership in every area of church life to institute the discipline of a period of retreat, rest and reflection to allow space for God to change us.
26. Urge congregations to take risks, to try new ways so that faith may grow.
27. Instruct Kirk Sessions and Presbyteries to study the report as a stimulus to identifying the levers for change and the limits to growth in the local situation; Kirk Sessions to establish a “local needs” plan and Presbytery to establish a “regional needs” plan of support, with special reference to recommendations 1-16 and 24-28; and to apply, where appropriate, to the Community and Parish Development Fund.

28. Urge congregational leadership teams to form networks focused on a shared context or a shared concern in order to build trusting relationships as the basis of future cooperation.

29. Urge the Coordinating Forum to develop its role of capturing the larger vision within which people are operating.

30. Instruct the Selection Committee to appoint a planning group to prepare a "Stakeholders' Conference" in 2005 as a point of National Celebration and a milestone of progress.

31. Instruct the Board of Stewardship and Finance

a) to set up a Parish Development Fund of £7.5 million over 5 years in terms of Appendix 8 and report to the General Assembly of 2002;

b) to appoint and manage two field directors until the Board of Community and Parish Development comes into being;

and instruct the Nomination Committee to nominate 12 people for the Board of Community and Parish Development and report to the General Assembly of 2002.

32. Instruct the Assembly Council, through the Coordinating Forum, to establish overall priorities for the work of the Church in the light of the emerging shape of the Church and to convey these to the Board of Stewardship and Finance, so that these priorities can be incorporated into the Co-ordinated Budget proposals which the Board will be bringing to the General Assembly in 2002 and subsequent years, with appropriate amendments to the Constitution of the Coordinating Forum and the Board of Stewardship and Finance.

33. Instruct the General Trustees, in consultation with the Board of Ministry and the Board of National Mission, to monitor changing patterns of ministry and building requirements, and report on how best to fund the needs of the emerging church and report in 2003.

34: Instruct the General Trustees to examine the Consolidated Stipend Fund and bring proposals the General Assembly of 2002 that would allow congregations more flexibility of investment.

35: Instruct the General Trustees to examine the Consolidated Fabric Fund and bring proposals to the General Assembly of 2002 that would allow congregations more flexibility of investment.

36. Instruct the General Trustees, in consultation with the Board of National Mission, examine the application of the proceeds of the sale of buildings following readjustment, and report to the General Assembly of 2002.

37. Instruct the Panel on Doctrine to undertake a study on the theology of power and report.

38. Instruct all Kirk Sessions, Presbyteries, Boards and agencies of the Church to study the Report, take appropriate action and establish the necessary accountability for progress by 2005; and instruct the Assembly Council to monitor developments through its ongoing consultations and assessments in 2002-3 and 2004-5.

39. Instruct the Board of Practice and Procedure to facilitate the study of the Report throughout the Church.

D. Thank and discharge the Special Commission anent Review and Reform.

The Remit of the Commission

In 1999 the General Assembly appointed a Special Commission *“to reexamine in depth the primary purposes of the Church and the shape of the Church of Scotland as we enter into the next Millennium; to formulate proposals for a process of continuing reform; to consult on such matters with other Scottish Churches; and to report to the General Assembly of 2001.”*

At the same time the Assembly Council was given a renewed remit which involved consultation, assessment, identifying priorities and developing appropriate strategies for the future. While there was an obvious overlap in issues and concerns, it was agreed from the outset that there be open communication between the two bodies, collaboration wherever possible and the avoidance of unnecessary duplication, especially when consulting with others.

The Commission acknowledges a debt to the careful research and the open consultative processes of the Assembly Council. The Council’s consultation on *“Change or Decay?”* has raised the issue of change around the church. We believe that the outcome of our partnership has been a strengthened witness to the issues being faced by the Church and pointers to the future. We trust that this is symptomatic of a greater sense of openness and trust within the Church at large.

The experience of the last few months has been daunting and humbling. The cooperation of many people has allowed us to listen to many perspectives. The range of experience put at our disposal and the debt owed to so many is recorded in **Appendix 1**.

The Commission offers its findings as one contribution among many at a time when many prayerfully reflect on God’s call to be the Church of Jesus Christ in our times.

A Summary of the Report

The Report of the Special Commission anent Review and Reform encourages the Church to return the ministry of the Gospel to the people of God. The aim is to give them the tools and the trust to shape a vision for the church in their own area.

The Church 'works' where people join together, building relationships with each other and the community to which they belong. It is through these relationships that the Gospel is spread. In each place the church is different. There is no one model that fits all. We rejoice in the diversity within the Church. We celebrate and encourage it.

This is achieved best by allowing congregations the space and opportunity to develop their own patterns of ministry, mission, worship and leadership that best suits the people and situations where they are.

Structures require to be flexible, not rigid. It means that nationally and as Presbytery we require to listen to the local voice and to serve the local church. This may mean a U-turn, so that the local church dictates the agenda and is served by Presbytery and '121'. At present many perceive things to be the other way round.

Churches - within new-sized Presbyteries - will plan together the best way forward for their location and be supported by the Presbytery.

We believe that it is important that the local church is allowed to flourish and grow in its own unique way with all possible resources at its disposal. The Commission therefore believes it is vital that we trust our congregations to be good stewards of their resources and to give them increased flexibility

of choice on funds held centrally for their benefit, while challenging them to increased stewardship of local giving.

In order to help and support new ideas, where local resources are not available, we propose the creation of a Community and Parish Development Fund. This fund will give financial backing to new and imaginative forms of ministry and mission.

To enable and encourage these proposals, the report outlines a process of change that will assist the church on this road. The Commission is well aware that Church is not changed by recommendations or deliverances. The Commission is not placing into the hands of any one group or Committee the responsibility for implementing these recommendations. Rather, we place them into the hands of everyone who has any responsibility and concern for the future welfare of the church.

We place into the hands of God's people the opportunity to live out our faith, each according to our uniqueness, made in the image of God. It is our hope and prayer that the report, together with the many other initiatives within the Church at present, will stimulate the Church to face the future in faith and hope.

Section I: The Primary Purposes of the Church

1. The Core Calling of the Church

“Follow me”. These two words of Jesus Christ offer us the purpose, shape and process of continuous reform of the Church at the beginning of a new Millennium and at any other time. The Commission has joked about making these two words the report to the General Assembly. The Church of Jesus Christ is about nothing more and nothing less than this. Like a computer icon, the words “Follow me” carry within them the complex and comprehensive processes of being God’s people in God’s world.

That core calling takes us back behind the secondary identities of denomination or tradition and calls us to turn again to be people with Jesus at the centre, travelling wherever Jesus takes us. It is so simple we cannot miss it. It is so profound we can never exhaust it. This calling invites us to risk the way of Jesus.

The calling is *personal*. Jesus calls people personally by name. When he calls us out of our individualism, he affirms our individuality. The church is shaped by our personal faith and obedience. The aim of the Guild captures well the spirit of our core calling: to invite, encourage and enable people to be disciples of Jesus Christ.

That calling is *local* rather than general. As Jesus came into the world at a particular time in history to a particular place and culture, our purpose is to follow Jesus in our place in our time, in the concrete situations of Stranraer or Lewis, Drumchapel or Drumnadrochit.

That calling is *relational* rather than institutional. Jesus leads us into love for God and love for our neighbour, expressed in communities of worship and mission. We are to be disciples before we can make disciples. Those who are learning the Way will accompany contemporary searchers in the Way. We are to be communities of the Way.

The calling is *sacrificial*. “Take up your cross and follow me.” It is a costly calling. We cannot save and be safe at the same time. The love of security is addictive. It will take courage and commitment to break that addiction. The sacrificial service of Christians, past and present, in Scotland and around the world, challenges patterns of church life that settle for comfortable options. The only way to Resurrection is by way of the Cross.

That calling is *radical*. A prominent Hindu once said that he would believe in the Christian Saviour, if Christians looked more saved. The Sermon of the Mount challenges us to ask if our congregational life supports us in living out street-level examples of God’s Kingdom. When Jesus challenged the establishment of his day, he highlighted the priorities of justice, mercy and faith. “What does it mean for the pastor to have as his/her job description, not the sustenance of a service club within a generally Christian culture, but the survival of a colony within an alien society?” (Stanley Hauerwas)

That calling is *global* in its scope, sending us to make disciples of all nations. Matthew’s Gospel begins with representatives of the Gentiles coming to the Messiah and ends with the representatives of the Messiah going to the Gentiles. The local church shares in an international partnership of mission. We rejoice that we are part of a global movement of God’s people that makes up one third of the world’s population. While our local experience of the past fifty years has been of decline, we recall that we are living in a time when the advance of the Church of Jesus Christ around the world is unprecedented.

That calling is *eschatological*. God’s Kingdom is breaking in on us and is coming. The church is a sign and pointer. It is never the end in itself. The church looks for God’s presence breaking into the world

and waits for Christ's coming with prayerful expectancy. The Church invests its talents and resources generously and serves Christ unselfconsciously in "the least of these".

The church shaped by the Coming Kingdom will live less by historical precedent and more by the future expectation of becoming part of God's new creation. We participate in God's mission for a redeemed planet and people, and the church is created on the way. It is not that the church 'has' a mission, but the very reverse: the mission of Christ creates his own church.

The eschatological perspective challenges our obsession with buildings and money, releases us from our "structural fundamentalism" to sit lightly to inherited structures. It frees us from anxiety about our changing place in society. According to J.L. Segundo, "it is the situation of Christendom that represents a distortion, or at least an abnormal condition, in the understanding of the church's role in history. The normal condition and the one that is coming back into focus today is that of a creative minority dedicated to the service of the vast majority."

That calling is *doxological*. The church exists by the grace of God and for the glory of God. People worship in response to God's grace. We love because he first loved us. Congregations need to know that they are loved by God - and their minister. Ministers need to know that they are loved by God - and by their congregation. A worshipping church is a church soaked in the grace of God.

"The pastor must not fail to understand the congregation just as it is, as a historical community brought into being warts and all, by God; and must not fail to be grateful for it, just as it is, warts and all, to God.

"The most important single thing about the people of God is that they are *there*. They *exist*. They *are*, not because of favourable conditions....., not because of certain perceived needs for which the church can provide a market, but because God called them out of nothing and made them his people (Hosea 1:10)." (Eugene Peterson)

This reminder of the church's continued existence by grace alone - a divinely given fact in any cultural context - challenges us to do as the Jews did in Exile, to rebuild God-honouring community in an alien environment, but to do it non-anxiously.

The purpose and shape of the Church of Scotland at the beginning of a new Millennium arises out of that calling of grace. Our sole purpose is the glorification of God. Only when the people of Scotland and other nations are released into worship of the God of grace is that purpose fulfilled. That calling is eternal.

Steve Bruce, Professor of Sociology at Aberdeen University, writes: "*the only area of life where the church can compete with any secular institution or social practice and win is in the glorification of God.*"(unpublished letter to the Commission)

Our prayer as a Commission is that the Church of Scotland recovers the sense of doxology, of glorifying God and enjoying God for ever.

Call 1: The Church is called to follow Jesus Christ as Lord.

2. *The Constitutional Calling of the Church of Scotland*

The Church of Scotland as an historical entity does have a declared constitutional purpose. That is expressed in the Third Declaratory Article of 1921:

“As a National Church, representative of the Christian Faith of the Scottish people, it acknowledges its distinctive call and duty to bring the ordinances of religion to the people in every parish of Scotland through a territorial ministry”.

The assumptions behind this statement of purpose need to be examined and questioned at the beginning of the 21st Century when Church and society have changed. **(See Appendix 2: Church and State: The Declaratory Articles)**

Assumption 1. The Christian Faith is the “Christian Faith of the Scottish people”, assuming that the majority of the population hold to that allegiance.

When the Scottish Census of Church Attendance in 1994 revealed that only 14% of the population were in church on that Sunday, and only 5% of the adult population were in any Church of Scotland church, the assumption no longer holds. This is one measure of the secularisation of Scotland throughout the 20th century.

While there is more goodwill towards the Kirk than these statistics would suggest, Robin Gill’s recent research shows that loss of Church attendance does lead to the erosion of Christian belief in society. There is no solace in attributing Christian belief to a nation that worships at other altars.

Being Christian in today’s Scotland is different from being Christian in 1921. Scotland is multicultural and has welcomed new Scots of other faiths. The statement is heard in a new political context that is conscious of the dynamics of majority/minority interests.

Assumption 2. The Church was held to be “representative of” that majority faith. It was claiming to be the voice of the people rather than a voice to the people.

The Church of Scotland must take her place alongside other churches in being a “representative of the Christian faith among the Scottish people.” The context is now overtly missionary with the collapse of the Christendom canopy. Pastoral presence, creative communication, and patient persuasion require a more proactive role for the Church of Scotland in the 21st century.

Assumption 3. The “ordinances of religion” were to be offered on a supply and demand basis.

The opportunities for pastoral presence are still our privilege at the crucial points of life relating to birth, marriage and death - as well as other points of intervention such as divorce and remarriage. The congregation that is able to be alongside people and accompany them on the journey of life, will not lack opportunity to share the Good News of Jesus Christ in appropriate and life-changing ways.

While demand for baptisms and marriages decreases, the demand for funerals remains high, requiring a massive time commitment from ministers. This commitment alone highlights the need to be part of a team ministering in the area, if pastoral leadership is to remain fresh, and bereavement care is to be appropriately offered. Teams will be different in different places.

Assumption 4. The “territorial ministry” is taken as a norm assuming social stability and cohesion. Today we recognise the many sector ministries that have emerged in the past 50 years in industry, hospitals, universities, technology and the arts.

Society is such that everybody lives in a parish, but nobody lives in a parish. People belong to networks of friendship, work and leisure pursuits, or associate with the “flow cultures” of transient groups of people. Apart from rural communities, the virtual community of the docu-soaps or the Internet may be more real than the neighbour next door.

The future lies in sharing partnerships with neighbouring congregations of various traditions, and tapping into the sector specialisms designed to connect with people in their work, leisure, or crisis moments. Trust and openness will create grassroots “matrix ministry”.

The parish structure may become a problem when it is used as a base for power or possessiveness. When put at the service of the Gospel and the whole church, it can still be a catalyst to mission. As we learn how to work together as one Church in Scotland, the Church of Scotland parish church is still perceived as the strong partner with a unique power base in the community. Christ-formed relationships will reflect the mind of Christ who laid aside the place of power to take the way of the servant.

Partner churches have spoken of the generosity of the Church of Scotland in many ecumenical ventures, and the “charism of the big heart”. Where that spirit is shown locally, the potential for partnership in mission is immense.

Assumption 5. The basic assumption is that the people are Christians and we offer a national spiritual health service on demand. The result is a deep frustration and cynicism among office-bearers who will still speak of people not being “Kirk hungry”. They lost their appetite a long time ago for church, but there are many signs of a spiritual quest that is passing our doors.

The changed situation is an opportunity, not a threat. Often people feel ill-equipped to meet that challenge, which requires a capacity for deep listening, a new spirituality and a focus on Christian discipleship rather than church membership.

In times past, faith has been passed from one generation to another. Today that “chain of memory” has been broken. People are mobile, families are fragmented and society is less stable. All these factors erode long-term memory in our culture. How does the Church nurture long-term disciples in a short-term culture?

Assumption 6. The final observation lies in the issue of identity. If the Church of Scotland defines itself as a National Church only by statute, it will have at its heart a legalistic flaw. The only rationale for the Church of Scotland is to declare its identity, purpose and calling to be by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. To live *in* the grace of God means to live *out* the grace of God. The parish system is a sign that the grace of God is offered to every person in the land, in all its parts and sectors. Grace means travelling with God across inherited boundaries to be part of the networks of society and understand the many sub-cultures around us.

If the Church of Scotland assumes that it exists by legal right and by claims of social influence and power, it will lose its life. If it lives by grace and gives away power by grace in order to make known the Gospel of grace, then, in partnership with the whole Body of Christ, we will share in making Christ known in our land.

If we were to restate the purpose of the Church of Scotland in our context, it might include:

As part of the world Church, we are committed to the spiritual welfare of the whole Scottish nation and to share in God’s mission across the world.

Along with other branches of Christ's Church, we seek humbly to represent the Christian Faith among the Scottish people.

Together, we acknowledge our distinctive call and duty to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in every part of Scotland.

We recognise the call, through a shared ministry of pastoral and prophetic evangelism, to serve people in all the communities and sectors of their lives.

As part of the world church we celebrate the privilege of partnership in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As the Church of the Way, we sit loose to every pattern of organisation, ready to respond to the call of the Spirit in our times.

As part of the whole church we are called to share the whole Gospel with the whole nation - and the whole world.

Call 2: The Church is called to share in Christ's mission in the world.

3. The Hidden Calling of the Church: Shaped by God and for God.

The purpose of the Church is to be shaped within history by God and for God. The seductive danger of our managerial culture is to imagine that we are involved in the re-engineering of an organisation.

We come at the task with a deep sense of mystery for our task is to discern the deeper purposes of God with his people in our times. One moment of insight that sparked the imagination was to see our situation through the lens of the call of the prophet Jeremiah.

Many voices claim that the Exile is a lens for seeing God's hand on the church today. The forces of change are seldom crises. Consequences are not easily connected to causes. They are usually slow moving processes that have a long time lapse between the cause and the outcome. The purposes of God are hidden in the slow moving processes of our culture and the slow learning processes of a reluctant people. The critical moment of the fall of Jerusalem was only a datable moment of visibility. In the same way we look behind this critical moment in the church's life to the hidden processes.

This prophet was brought up within the establishment of his day, lived through the structural and organisational reforms of Josiah, but saw that surface reform was not enough. The time was coming when God would work a reformation that would be deeper and more durable, but more costly. That reform is captured in the vivid imagery of land-clearance and replanting, or demolition and rebuilding: *See I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant. (Jeremiah 1:10)*

Who does this? It is not Jeremiah, but God working through the social, cultural and political forces of his time. The process will involve exile, cultural dislocation that will expose God's people to God in a new way. It takes time.

Why does the exile happen? The people have turned their backs on God and committed spiritual adultery by putting others gods in place of the true God. There are always competitors for God's place. The people of God require constantly to turn back to God.

What is the outcome? God forms a new covenant relationship with his people, and exposes them to new ways of expressing that relationship in an alien culture.

"Uproot and Tear Down": What cultural forces of erosion have uprooted the church?

Professor Steve Bruce highlights that the core issue is the erosion of belief: the lack of plausibility of

faith for many people. This has undermined the confidence of many Christian people, and made communication more complex as we have become immersed in the televisual culture. The social basis of the church has been eroded as the church has become disconnected from local community, through social fragmentation and congregational isolation. The “chain of memory” between the generations has been broken, cutting the church off from the rising generation. The political significance of the church has changed as Scotland has become multicultural and many-voiced.

After 40 years of erosion of youth statistics, the impact is felt on leadership. Without discipleship there can be no leadership. The leadership basis of the church is changing as 211 ministers retire in the next five years and candidates for ministry come forward at the rate of 20-25 a year. Shifts in population, informal patterns of relating and interactive styles of communication mean that the physical buildings of the church are often the wrong size, in the wrong style or in the wrong place. The General Trustees estimate that the Church of Scotland needs only 1700 of its current 2500 buildings.

The cultural appropriateness of much church life is sadly out of tune with the times. We live in a “sonic” culture where people pick up subconsciously the way we do things. That intuitive signal speaks of a cultural gap. Membership is alien to people who see life as a journey, or who want a real challenge. Church membership seems too static for the searchers and tamely passive for the adventurers. They are looking for looser patterns of belonging and activities that make a real difference to the world.

“Destroy and Overthrow”: What areas of church life are to be actively demolished?

The Church of Scotland mission strategy is based on the 19th Century mission model: one minister in one building in one parish. All the resources of the uniting church of 1929 were harnessed to servicing this strategy.

As we enter the 21st Century, the emerging pattern for mission strategy must be much more diverse to permeate the fragmented nature of our society: ministry teams operating in a variety of community bases to be incarnate in a network of communities. Instead of occasional variations to the assumed 19th Century norm, it is time to recognize the new components of the new strategy and resource it accordingly.

The Church of Scotland structure is perceived by most people to be overly centralized. Presbyteries are places where people do their Presbyterian duty, but gain little inspiration or support. Local congregations with the desire for vision and change sense a culture of inhibition that limits initiative for all except the boldest.

As we enter the 21st Century we believe the shape of the church needs to be turned upside down: to affirm local responsibility, offer regional support and supervision and release the central administration to offer its skills in servicing the system.

The Church of Scotland has a long and honourable legacy as a National Church taking its place in the life of Scotland over the centuries. Today we have a new Scotland and a new globalised world, which call for a redefining of a new national and global identity.

We take our place in Scotland as evangelist and servant, and as partner and prophet: bearers of the Good News of Jesus Christ and sharers in mission of God for the greater good of our nation. Our continuing role in education, social care and influencing public policy is vital for the spiritual and moral health of the nation.

We lift our eyes beyond our small church and join the massive movement of Christian people across the world where the church grows as never before. As partners in the world church we are humble but hopeful.

“Plant and Build”: What is emerging of God’s purposes?

The purposes of God are hidden and mysterious. The gift of Jeremiah’s prophecy is to disclose what is hidden. The cultural dislocation of Exile will lead to spiritual reorientation of God’s people. We believe that there are signs of that reorientation today.

We celebrate the creative work with children to build church from the crèche up, and the range of youth initiatives from the Youth Assembly to partnerships with other youth agencies. If the church will permit innovation and work at integration, the face of the church would be different in ten years’ time. We see the potential of the Third Aged (over 50’s), who have much to offer the church locally, nationally and overseas.

We celebrate new patterns of community work in Urban and Rural Priority Areas. We see committed church members working alongside people in the community, both working to God’s agenda. They are less anxious about numbers and less guilty about the nominal or lapsed members who once made vows, but have slipped their moorings. When the church seeks first the Kingdom of God and is less concerned about her own survival, God is at work.

We celebrate the increasing shift from membership to discipleship. The *Alpha* courses, Emmaus Courses and locally devised schemes are drawing members into a renewed faith in Christ. For many the way to faith is through sharing in adventurous projects at home and overseas. Being part of the Church in action leads to a deeper desire to be a disciple of Christ. People want to belong to a God who does not want children to die because of international debt, or to see homeless people go hungry and cold.

We celebrate the shift from running a congregation to building communities of faith in Christ. The Cell Church movement has given some the handle on building church relationally and organically. The Celtic renaissance has offered some a new lens for seeing church and mission in our culture: nurturing the heart for God, offering a home to the stranger and becoming a hub for mission to resource people in daily life.

We celebrate new patterns of leadership. New elders are being given a new vision for the role. Readers are being trained and deployed to congregations. Ministry teams are operating well and creatively.

We celebrate the openness to consider new structures and ways of working. On all sides we have found an openness to change. The test lies in our readiness to explore specific changes, which may be costly to ourselves. Practitioners are already pointing the way. It will require the authorizing decisionmakers – local, Presbyterial and National – to support them,

We celebrate those who have been like Jeremiah and “bought a field at Anathoth” as a sign of hope. We encourage people not to wait for a reconstruction of the Church of Scotland, but to act in faith and in hope that God is already planting and building. *I will rejoice in doing them good and will assuredly plant them in this land with all my heart. (Jeremiah 32:41)*

We celebrate the God of grace who works in the dark times to call us back to the light, and believe that it is God who is at work in the untidiness of the building site of demolition and reconstruction.

In the name of this God of grace we call on all God's people to turn back to love the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all our heart and soul and mind and strength, and to love our neighbours as ourselves.

Call 3: The Church is called to turn back to God and our neighbour.

Section II: The Shape of the Church

Guiding Principles

The Purpose: Follow me
The Focus: Local and Relational
The Shape: Upside Down
The Foundations: Trust, Responsibility and Resources
The Ethos: Interdependence
The Barriers: Fear and Power

“Follow me” is a call to travel “down” with Jesus and to live at the “edge”. The spatial metaphors are worth debating, but they do convey something of the spirit of following Jesus in a church which is perceived to operate “top down” and to be overly “centralised”.

While challenging the existing structures, we have become aware of the hurt caused by the breakdown of trust between the Church locally and centrally. We have found that some of the greatest frustration with the current system of church is to be found among those who operate “at the centre”. There is a passion to serve the local church, but our mental models have created false expectations and often paralysis of action.

The current mental model assumes a top down pattern of governance – from centre to Presbytery to local congregation. We recommend that the shape of the church be turned upside down to affirm the primacy of the local Christian community, supported appropriately by Presbytery and central administration.

Local church is the focus of action – the place of initiative, questions and vision. Our vision is of local churches discovering their vision of what God is doing and joining in.

Regional church is the focus of support – the place of oversight, encouragement and appropriate accountability. The role of Presbytery needs to be radically revisited.

Central church is the focus of essential servicing and national role – the place of ensuring equity and fostering links with national and international institutions. The role of the centre needs to be revamped in the light of the new roles of Presbyteries.

Instead of the hierarchical model, the Biblical imagery of the Body encourages us to see the whole as relationships of interdependence, with Christ as the Head. As we all own Jesus as Lord and live in openness to the Spirit, we make our contribution as we are able, and trust others to make theirs.

We need a radically increased amount of flexibility within the institutional church. The radical move is not to destroy the current institution, but to make it flexible and open, generous and accommodating, encouraging and enabling, so that new things can safely and happily emerge within - and, when they emerge outwith the system, to be easily acknowledged.

“Follow me” is an act of trust in Jesus and trust by Jesus that these ordinary people may “fish for people”. When he sent out the 70 (Luke 10), he trusted them to fulfil their mission, gave them specific responsibilities and limited (yet unlimited!) resources.

We believe that the church will flourish where trust, responsibility and resources are present.

Trust. We are all on the same side. We all love the Church and long to see her strong. We will have different dreams, perhaps different visions of a strong Church, but there is only one Lord, one gospel, one Church, one Spirit. We need to trust the Lord to build his Church. We need to trust one another that we will all, separately and together, seek his will for his Church.

At present our shape displays a culture of inhibition and little trust. Presbyterianism has become a form of institutionalised distrust. It rightly takes seriously our fallenness and is designed to check any personalised power trips, but tends to legalism. If we believe that by creation and redemption, grace is prior to and greater than our sin, then a culture of trust follows. Even mistakes will be redeemed. The issue at the heart is a choice between a spirituality of grace or law.

Responsibility. To those we trust we give responsibility. Responsibility encourages action. Distrust and lack of responsibility inhibit and restrict. It is important to challenge the cynicism about “the structures” which is rife in the church. We believe that those who serve centrally serve by the call of God as do others in the service of the church and are to be appreciated and trusted with that calling.

We believe that the core issue of the reshaping of the church is trusting local people to find their own vision under the guidance of the Spirit. In the true spirit of Presbyterianism, that will involve each taking responsibility for others in our Presbyterian fellowship. A relational church will be a responsible church inspired by our criteria of “justice, mercy and faith” in the use of our resources.

Resources. Trust and responsibility without resources will discourage and frustrate. We display our trust by allocating our resources and assets, by giving to those we trust. People will believe they have responsibility when they are resourced; when finance is allocated, when time is made available and when talents are focused.

The Church of Jesus Christ operates on trust. This involves risk. What if we never learn to trust one another? This is a risk worth taking. For such a shape to work and such trust to be engendered we need responsibility and resources to be given and received.

To affirm our trust in the local church, we recommend the formation of a Community and Parish Development Fund, which will allow congregations to pursue local visions of renewal for mission with the assurance of substantial support. **(See Proposals for Continuing Reform No 6: Modelling Change and Appendix 8)** This will be a sign of trust, responsibility and resources being given to those who have a vision for following Jesus into his world today. To fund local initiative is one way of following the Spirit who alone can reshape the Church for the purposes of God.

A. The Shape of the Local Church

A.1. Shaped by the Gospel

A.1.1. Living out the Story of Jesus

“Follow me”. The Church of Jesus Christ will want to be shaped by the Gospel of Jesus Christ to be a community that expresses the life and love of Jesus Christ. That shape is not about structures. It is about the lives of individuals and congregations being shaped by the “mind of Christ.”

From the outset the Commission has heard the plea for changes in structure, but has remained convinced that changing structures without changing mindsets achieves little. John Tiller writes:

“The Gospel community relates to church structures as a new building to the scaffolding which surrounds it. Reforming the structures is like reorganising the scaffolding: it may be necessary but it does not in itself alter the building. Creating alternative new structures is

like replacing the scaffolding: it may be useful, but then it may be a waste of time.” (The Gospel Community, p 51)

Jesus’ imagery of new wine in new wineskins has often been used to refer to new church structures, but Jesus first used the illustration to address the “structures of the mind”. The inherited mindsets of the Jewish leaders could not accommodate the life of the Kingdom of God. The subversive ministry of Jesus was hidden and deep. The Temple became redundant, but he did not lift a finger to its physical structure. In time a “Temple of living stones” was to replace it.

The shape of the church in each village, town and city of Scotland will emerge as we take time to “follow Jesus” through a saturation in the Gospel stories. We recommend that each congregation choose one of the Gospel writers as their pastor for the coming year and let them teach us about following Jesus.

Matthew will speak well to those who value order and history, and sow subversive seeds of the Kingdom. The outcome will be to turn the congregation inside out and from past to future. Mark will suit the activists. Here is a manual for active discipleship, introducing us to the way of the Cross. And if, despite the reality of the resurrection, we are still afraid, we find ourselves in good company. Doctor Luke is for those who value the call of the Spirit to prayer and to mission, but watch out for the challenges about wealth and poverty. John is for the reflective ones who want to learn how to be a contemplative community around Jesus. He makes sure that our words about loving God are earthed in loving each other. The challenge is for a congregation to live the reality of all four Gospels and so reflect the full glory of Christ’s presence.

Imagine every congregation choosing to follow Jesus in the company of one of these pastors. Imagine little clusters of people meeting to read the story together. They are challenged by the truth they find and hold each other accountable for living by that truth for the coming week. Imagine the preaching and worship unpacking the story in fresh ways. Imagine pastoral projects designed around the Good Samaritan, the woman taken in adultery, the parable of the talents. Imagine a finance committee studying Luke’s accounts of Jesus’ teaching on wealth and poverty. Imagine a church that decided to live for a year in “silent witness” on the instruction of Jesus: “By this shall the world know that you are my disciples because you love one another.”

Imagine the impact on a society where “you tell me your truth and I tell you mine”, if Christian people lived the difference by “doing the truth” with compassion, courtesy and courage.

We have reflected on the marks of a healthy church shaped by Jesus at the core and offer that for reflection in our situation. **(Appendix 4: The Marks of the Healthy Church)**

Recommendation 1: That congregations study, reflect on and live by one Gospel for one year in the first instance, and let Jesus shape the life and structure of the congregation.

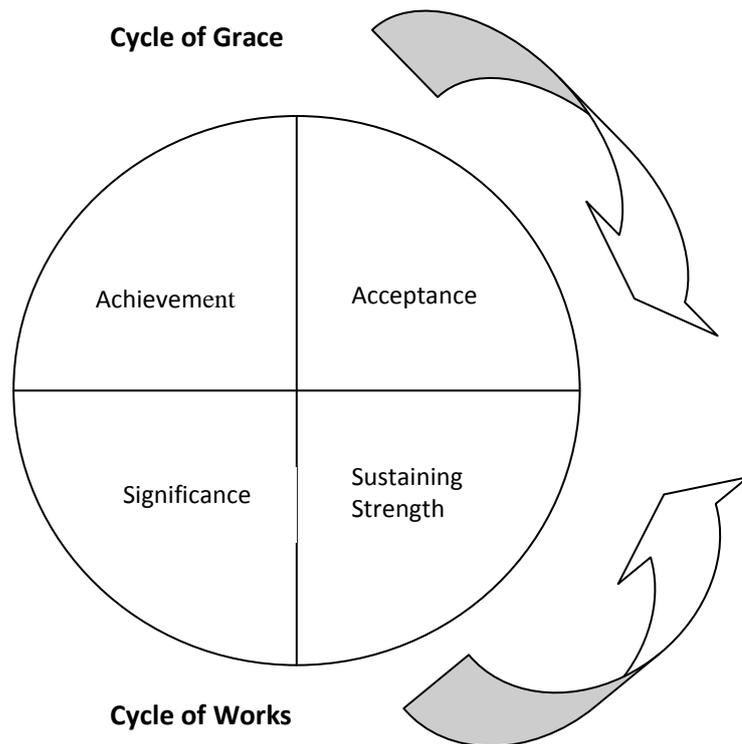
A.1.2. Living out the Spirituality of Grace

We re-affirm the Reformation doctrine of “justification by grace through faith”. We believe that the rediscovery of that fundamental truth of the Gospel will liberate the people of God into the mission of God. A lived spirituality of grace will overflow into all relationships as Christian communities, and shape our patterns of ministry and mission. Too often our relationships are marked by a need to achieve and measure up in order to prove ourselves to one another and, ultimately, to God. We pray for a grace-soaked, grace motivated Church.

Frank Lake, the clinical psychologist, speaks of living in the “cycle of grace”. In his desire to understand healthy human development, he drew on the account of Jesus’ baptism. He saw in the words of the Father profound acceptance (“You are beloved Son. With you I am well pleased.”). In the gift of the Spirit he recognised the sustaining strength of God for life in its most testing times.

The purpose of the baptism was to set Jesus upon his public ministry as the suffering servant Messiah. The outcome was the achievement of that ministry, culminating in the Cross and Resurrection. Achievement is not the same as success. Grace puts failure into the hands of God and waits for God to do what only God can do.

Lake’s insights can be expressed diagrammatically:



[Based on Dr Frank Lake’s work]

Where we live in a “clockwise” direction (acceptance>strength>significance>achievement), our personal and congregational lives grow as Christ grew. That is the cycle of grace. Where we live in the “anti-clockwise” direction (achievement>significance>strength>acceptance), we are driven by unhealthy motives of achievement and failure. That is the cycle of works.

Individuals, congregations and our denominations are constantly trapped in the wrong cycle. Congregations become busier and busier, and feel the pressure of external criteria of money and membership. It is the gift of the Gospel of grace that liberates us to live as Christ lived. The fundamental shift of mindset for the whole culture of the church is towards living out the cycle of grace in every relationship. Living out that spirituality of grace lies at the heart of the core calling to “Follow me.”

Recommendation 2: That congregations reflect on the cycle of grace and what it means to live out that grace in our life together.

A.2. Shaped by the Locality

The primary expression of church is local. The Incarnation is our mandate and our model for being local. “The word became a human being and moved into the neighbourhood” (The Message). The parish system at its best is one way of expressing that belief in the God who is as down to earth as that. Incarnational theology is in the DNA of the Church of Scotland.

A.2.1. Local means identity. The local congregation stands as sign of God’s commitment to that place. The local congregation is a community of God’s people, gathering to worship Him, encouraging one another to grow in knowing God in Jesus Christ, serving in Christ’s name and going to all peoples to make disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The congregation brings distinct gifts to the wider community by being distinctive itself. This distinctiveness arises from gathering to worship around the Story of the Gospel that transforms lives in word, sacraments, example and dialogue. The local congregation is the space where Christian life is nurtured in practical discipleship, earthed in the concrete realities of local life. The congregation shows the way by serving alongside the community and inviting others to become followers of Christ.

For reasons of theology and missionary strategy, we affirm the local Christian congregation as the primary expression of the church. However, that does not mean more of the same! A congregation may avoid the challenge of becoming a missionary congregation. A congregation may develop a fortress mentality of isolation that is no longer a servant of the Kingdom of God.

A.2.2. Local means diversity. We have heard from rural communities and the Highlands, from City Centre and towns, and from Urban Priority Areas. (**Appendix 4: The Church in Context**) Contexts vary and our vision is that every congregation discovers its own vision of being a worshipping, witnessing community.

It is vital that congregations look at and listen to their locality. We recommend that congregations undertake a community review every ten years in the wake of the National Census. We welcome the initiative of National Mission to make available to Presbyteries and congregations relevant information from the 2001 Census, and commend their resources to undertake such a survey in partnership with others in the area.

We have already acknowledged that people live in networks of communities. In the days when people lived, worked and worshipped in the same place, worship was the gathering of an already existing community. In a time when life is fragmented, congregations need to work more creatively at being real communities of faith. Without a Gospel community, there is no communication of the Gospel.

The priority for the Church is the renewing, refocusing, relocating and planting of local worshipping congregations for mission across Scotland.

A.2.3. Local means interdependency. In the mind of the Commission the words “local” and “relational” have been inextricably linked. The God of the Incarnation is the God of the Trinity and God’s people will reflect God’s nature. A primary theme of the Body of Christ is interdependency, a mark of all mature relationships. Congregations that are independent to the point of isolation deprive themselves and others in the Body of Christ.

We have observed the way in which the Urban Priority Areas and projects supported by the Priority Areas Fund have developed support networks to help them face their demanding missionary challenges. Over the years they have been meeting in areas to tell stories, identify issues and develop mutual resources. Their example is to be commended for other groups of congregations. These groups may live in the same area or they may share similar contexts (e.g. Rural, City Centre or Suburban) or be developing similar initiatives (e.g. children's ministry, worship, community development, evangelism, workplace ministry). The important thing is to move beyond isolation to interdependency.

Recommendation 3: That congregations undertake a community review at least once every ten years to reflect on the issues, changes and missionary opportunities in the community, in collaboration with others, wherever appropriate.

A.2.4. Local means creative flexibility. Every area of Scotland has "people groups" that are not touched by the church. They may be an age group that we never see around our church. They may be a social group who feel unwelcome. They may be those who find their experience of belonging and transcendence in other kind of clubs – night clubs or football clubs. In the spirit of Jesus, we challenge each congregation to identify its "no go area" and go there.

We are in an era where planting new kinds of churches for our generation will be essential if some people are to have any experience of Christian community. We recommend worship with a variety of menu in a variety of venue to be accessible to different groups of people.

Loren Mead of the Alban Institute challenges us to be radical here:

"The storm buffeting the churches is very serious indeed. Much more serious than we have admitted to ourselves, and much more serious than our leaders have yet comprehended...The storm is so serious, I believe that it marks the end of 'business as usual' for the churches and marks the need for us to begin again building the church from the ground up." (Transforming Congregations for the Future, p ix)

The resources of the Panel of Worship, Parish Education and the New Charge Development Committee offer support and advice for congregations willing to explore new ways of being church. The experience of those who have learned from Willowcreek Community Church and the Cell Church Movement are invaluable, as is the experience of some of our World Mission staff, who can help with facing the cross cultural challenges. Congregations will benefit from sending groups to visit other places and learning from other people.

Recommendation 4: That Kirk Sessions undertake a review of the worship of the existing congregation and assess potential for developments within and beyond the congregation.

A.2.5. Local means cultural sensitivity. The Western world is undergoing a culture shift of a magnitude that is experienced only every few hundred years. There are philosophical, historical, sociological and technological causes and effects of this change. Every local community is living in this mega-cultural environment. **(Appendix 5: The Church in a Changing World)**

Our changing social context can be symbolised by the microchip, the Internet, shopping malls or the mobile phone. Changing social relationships are seen in the attitudes to sexuality, marriage, racial equality and gender roles. Changes in political dynamics may be seen in the Scottish Parliament, the implications of the European Convention of Human Rights, or the shifts of power through globalisation from nation states to trans-national companies. Changing cultural values may be described as post modern or hypermodern, but the underlying core value is that individual choice is

the only absolute. The right to choose is the one inviolate principle for shopping, politics, relationships, genetics or religion.

Every one of these factors will affect the shape of the church: our pastoral care, our patterns of belonging, our communication, our understanding of the Gospel, our evangelism and our discipleship. We are called to live “in” the world but not “of” the world as Jesus did, fully engaged, yet distinctive (John 17).

A.2.6. Local means visionary possibility. As the local church gains in confidence, we envisage local worship centres, which create opportunities to build a local team to lead the various church ministries. They will recognise the untapped resources – the many gifts in a local congregation – and understand the evangelical attraction of informal partnerships with other agencies. They will develop a vision that is local and global, while being confident that the local congregation is the national face of the church for our communities. They will recognise that Information Technology means the “centre” can be local. They will link in partnerships with other congregations, and learn to network with congregations who share common goals.

As we engage with the diversity of being worshipping communities, we will see emerging:

- a menu of worship with a variety of times and styles, including a range of music;
- communication of the highest quality – personal, creative and imaginative;
- a philosophy of community that is interactive in style;
- an organisation that understands communication- internal and external;
- adequate and creative administration with church office staff;
- creative use of finance;
- partnerships with churches at home and abroad;
- partnerships with other agencies in multiple projects.

This calls for building a leadership team to lead the various church ministries:

- that takes time for regular retreat and reflection;
- that has a bias to action and can react flexibly;
- that is continually updating skills;
- that is contextualising the message in the culture.

A.3. Shaped by Friendship

“Local and relational” has been a catch phrase in the Commission. As we have tried to reach behind the complaints about “the structures”, we have seldom discovered legal obstacles to action. Instead, it has usually been a frustration that our church environment does little to encourage relationships – with God or with each other.

In a culture that is increasingly at ease with the language of spirituality, it is strange that conversations about our spiritual development are avoided by many church members, elders and even ministers. One issue for us in these times of spiritual openness is how much God actually matters to us. Belief in God is common. Belief that God matters is distinctive.

Kirk Sessions can be formal and formidable. Presbyteries have become administrative units for servicing the system of committees and regulations rather than a fellowship of mutual encouragement and inspiration. The Central Committees are viewed with suspicion from the parishes and are often impersonal for those who attend. The General Assembly has its moments, but is hardly the best forum for major decision-making.

There are many Christian people who are still committed to following Jesus, but they will not or cannot express that commitment within the context of the local church. This is not the fall out of individualism and consumerism. Quite the opposite is true. These are people in search of authentic community.

We recommend that the church recover the lost art of Christian friendship. This lost art is not about being a “friendly church”, but being a church that makes friends beyond “those that salute you”. Once again our thinking is shaped as we follow Jesus into the Upper Room and reflect on his words: “I no longer call you servants but friends” (John 15:15). Here friendship is about commitment to each other (“No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends”) and openness with each other (“I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from my Father”).

If we follow Jesus in that kind of friendship, it will transform our approach to children and young people, our relationships as church members, our understanding of team ministry, our mission in our communities, our inter-church relationships and our international viewpoint.

Think of each of these areas as areas to share friendship as Jesus describes it: in covenant commitment and transparent openness. They are no longer the issues of the few enthusiasts. They are the responsibility of all and within the competence of every Christian.

A.3.1. Friendship with fellow members. Do we have a best friend at church? How would we assess the spirit of hospitality in the congregation? How well do we handle conflict? In a society that is riddled with conflict, is the local church known as the model of mediation – friends of the crucified Mediator? Grand schemes of church renewal fail at the simplest level of an ungracious word, a dismissive look or an unforgiving heart. **(Appendix 6: The Church of the Beatitudes)**

Human nature seems to require different dimensions of belonging: the small group for support and intimacy, the medium sized group to share in tasks, and larger gatherings for inspiration and celebration. Some of the church growth literature describes these as:
cell + congregation + celebration.

The typical Church of Scotland way has been to focus on the congregation as the basic unit: often to the exclusion of cell and celebration. The research of the German Institute of Church Development among 1000 growing churches across the world discovered that the one factor, which stood out among all others, was the “multiplication of small groups”. The insights of the Cell Church movement have shown that when we begin small and go deep with a few, then, in time the Gospel spreads. It follows Jesus’ own pattern of investment in the Twelve.

The Commission has noted significant developments based on this intensive investment, both in Whiteinch, where a New Charge has been grown from a small, focused approach to discipleship; and in Gillespie Memorial: Dunfermline, where a group of twelve have been nurtured to lead worship, support pastoral care and encourage the wider ministry of the congregation in mission.

Likewise, as a Church, we often fail to offer occasions of celebration and inspiration. Congregations would be encouraged by regular shared gatherings. The tradition of the Highland Communion Season was a time of families and friends gathering from around the area, to be called afresh to worship God and receive the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Many rural congregations would benefit from the reinvention of that tradition for the 21st century.

Recommendation 5: That congregations consider how the cell, congregation and celebration dimensions of being the Church might be applied locally.

A.3.2. Friendship with the next generation. We are a covenant community. By baptism we welcome children into that covenant community, but too often our congregations fail to be covenanting community needed for children and families to flourish in faith and life. Within the Commission, members have celebrated the birth of four children. We dedicate this task of reshaping of the church to them.

The current emphasis on the role of children through Parish Education will offer congregations opportunities to build friendships with our children and their families. Community is built on names. The friendships will begin when every member can name some of the children in the Sunday School or the youth club.

Young people are crying out for the church to recover the relational quality and integrity characterised by the grace and truth of Jesus. In the “Friends” generation, young people are finding new places of community and belonging. The church culture of formality, regulations, expectations and conformity sends out a corporate “vibe” than makes today’s generation instinctively uncomfortable.

A Church that can trace 40 years of declining youth statistics must ask if all the excellent youth work of two generations has been frozen out of church life because we have failed to build relationships of friendship across the generations. We have been caught in the mythology of the generation gap instead of being pioneering mythbusters.

Communication with the next generation will require many creative youth work skills and pioneering work to develop new patterns of church, but communication without community will be sterile. Every person brings gifts to the community that create the space for young people to feel they belong and that they matter. With Jean Vanier we celebrate the “gift of the grandmother” in building community.

Recommendation 6: That congregations determine to integrate children and young people into the life of the congregation; or to offering the resources to plant a church for a new generation alongside the current congregation.

A.3.3. Friendship with the searcher. The title of a recent conference on evangelism was “communicating with absent friends”. Celtic motifs of pilgrimage and celebrating the good in our culture, Ignatian retreats on spirituality and faith accompaniment, business themes of mentoring have alerted us to a pattern of evangelism that comes alongside and travels the journey as a friend. We follow the Christ of the Emmaus Road who walked, listened, explained, intrigued and was welcomed as a Friend.

Amidst all the discussions about the shifts in our culture, there are certain recurring constants about our humanity, which take on cultural clothing. Those constants (“these three remain”) are faith, hope and love. Every human being yearns for trust in the beyond, needs a sense of purpose and meaning, and wants to belong. It has been shown that people “belong before they believe”. The received wisdom was that people behaved well, believed correctly and then belonged fully. That is the way of legalism.

The way of grace (and the way of our relational culture) is to give people a place of belonging, leading to opportunities of believing and then exploring patterns of Christian behaving - not churchy

behaviour, but Christ-like behaviour. The success of courses like *Alpha* lies in the social focus of food and friendship as the context for discovering faith. We recommend that congregations explore the right discipleship path for their situation.

Recommendation 7: That congregations form paths for the spiritual journey to help people become Christian disciples in today's world.

A.3.4. Friendship with the community. Partnerships are blossoming around the country as the church in its mission comes alongside the community for the common good of everyone. The church has moved from being the centre of the community with certain rights in local politics, through a time of being ignored and marginalized, to a time when the church is welcomed as a partner in community welfare, education, health and politics. Partnership and friendship are the models of relationship.

One community worker indicated that she gave 70% of her time to the community and 30% to the congregation. If every congregation in the land budgeted 70% of its time and efforts on being in and for the community, the church would begin to find her role again. These relationships are the foundation of authentic worship and witness of the Incarnate Christ among his people.

A.3.5. Friendship with fellow leaders. Elders have written pleading for more teamwork between elders and ministers. Ministers speak of isolation and overload. To follow Jesus is to work closely with other leaders – investing intensively in few over a period of time to build the team. “Jesus worked with 12 Jews for three years in order to win all Americans”!

There are numerous examples of ministry teams around the country: elders' teams, pastoral teams, teams of ministers with deacons or readers or youth workers, and occasional teams from different denominations. We recommend that congregations work towards breaking the isolation of the “one person ministry” by forming ministry teams according to their needs and resources. Breaking the mould of the “one person ministry” eases isolation and releases a synergy of creativity.

Recommendation 8: That Kirk Sessions review the current leadership structure, consider what ministry team is needed for current needs and determine how it might be developed in the next five years.

A.3.6. Friendship with other churches. People have knee-jerk reactions to ecumenism – for it or against it. Perhaps it is time to forget the word and learn the art of friendship – building trust and transparency. In some communities the church is a scandal to the Gospel because of the inability of Christian congregations to be friends together. Such situations are a counter sign of the Kingdom. Planned cooperation among groups of churches would release great potential for the Kingdom.

The Commission is aware of the ecumenical debates around the proposals of the Scottish Churches Initiative for Union, and has not taken a view on the issue of future Union. This debate has its own forum and process for discussion and ultimate decision. However, we welcome the many local initiatives, and the examples of cooperation in the areas of worship, education mission and national consultations.

In recommending increased local cooperation we have heard of partnerships in Barrhead, Carlisle, Drumchapel and Paisley, to name a few. We repeat our concern that the Church of Scotland live up to the “charism of the big heart” and be sensitive to needs and gifts of other churches in the area. The effectiveness of such cooperation may be helped by the appointment of a person whose role is, in part at least, to facilitate these partnerships.

Recommendation 9: That congregations form groupings according to their natural communities to explore shared mission and mutual ministry with other churches in the area.

A.3.7. Friendship with rich and poor. We stand accountable to the poorest people of the land. If our reshaping of the church does not give our God of love and justice a local face, then we have not touched the heart of God's covenant love. The prophetic voices of Scripture used the care of the poor as a touchstone by which to judge the religious establishment. The Reformation missionary mandate explicitly included the care of the poor. In our consultations with the Urban Priority Areas, we were reminded, "Public policy is to be judged by its effectiveness at the point of delivery of service."

That is a test for every policy of the church beginning with the poorest in the local parish. Jesus challenged his contemporaries to align their priorities about resources around the core issues of "justice mercy and faith" (Matthew 23:23). Many congregations in our poorest areas have to struggle against immense odds with minimal resources. And yet these congregations have often by necessity faced hard issues of mission, worship and leadership styles ahead of the rest of the church.

The Church is called by God to care for the poor, to address the causes of poverty and learn more of Christ from being alongside the poor. The "Jubilee 2000" campaign to release the world's poorest countries from international debt is one example of the political complexity of dealing with these issues. The church is called to more than occasional charity. We are called to a determined stance. That determination is not yet reflected across the Church, and we need to help each other sustain our obedience.

We recommend partnerships and friendships that will allow an exchange of resources between congregations of different social backgrounds. Examples of these partnerships reveal relationships that are mutually enriching: one congregation offering people, skills and financial support, the other offering new insights into worship, mission, spirituality and much more.

Recommendation 10: That congregations establish links with other congregations in a different social context as a partnership of mutual ministry.

A.3.8. Friendship with the World Church. In our globalised world, where 51% of the world church is now in the South and only 3% of the world church is Presbyterian, we take a humbler role in the world and accept the gifts of "reverse mission". Environmental concerns and economic imbalances link us and challenge us to make new lifestyle choices in a global context.

In the culture of the "World-Wide Web" we are only too aware of globalisation in communication, economics and politics. The Church is in a position to lead the way as a global family. When the effects of globalisation are likely to depersonalise and marginalize, the church can stay local globally by establishing living links with churches in other parts of the world. We recommend that local congregations explore with World Mission how they might establish such partnerships.

Recommendation 11: That congregations research an area of the world church and establish a personal partnership with a congregation or project.

A.3.9. Friendship with God's Creation. The relational church recognises our interdependence in the weave of creation, and our call to be an example as good stewards of God's creation. We recognise the angst among younger people about the future of the planet and recommend that churches review their policies on energy and consumer goods, and raise awareness of those aspects of

contemporary society that will hurt or heal the environment. We commend the resources of the Society, Religion and Technology Project and the calls to earlier General Assemblies for congregations to conduct an environmental audit.

Recommendation 12: That congregations explore ways of being more environmentally aware and responsible as a witness to the Christian care of God's creation.

The theme of friendship could be developed further. It may be the key to many locked doors.

A.4. Shaped by the Gifts of God's People

A.4.1. Recognising the Gifts of God's People

"Follow me" means every disciple following Jesus is to share in his ministry through his Body, the church. Each person is a gift from God to the Church, to be celebrated and nurtured. Every disciple is a servant-friend of our Lord and is gifted in many ways, or as Ephesians 4:7 says, "to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it". The word "celebrated" is used deliberately because it emphasises the joyful generosity which is needed to give freedom to people, so that they can grow and become fruitful. Each congregation is to be a living college, where people learn to exercise their gifts in an environment of grace characterised by encouragement, humility and cooperation.

The arena of service will be primarily in the world: in family, work or community. The service of the church is where the church is present as salt and light through people being church. When the church is gathered for worship and shared service, care needs to be taken to discover, develop and deploy the gifts of God's people. A church of grace will offer space to succeed or fail, and learn and grow. We recommend that congregations follow the processes and courses available to help people identify their passion and serve according to the gift of grace apportioned to them. Kirk Sessions should lead the way and ensure that the team is playing to its strengths.

Recommendation 13: That Kirk Sessions identify the spiritual gifts of the people and grow church around the people we have rather than deploy people to support existing church structures.

A.4.2. Releasing the Gifts of God's People

Current structures are often too rigid. Rather than give relational space, they crush creativity. However, there are signs of change. 80 Readers are being trained each year and are deployed strategically within Presbyteries. In the past 15 years around 1000 people have graduated from the Scottish Churches Open College and a wide range of training is offered to elders.

We trust that developments in the Board of Ministry will keep faith with the affirmations about the ministry of the whole people of God. In practical terms, we recommend close collaboration with the Board of Parish Education, especially in the well-developed work in training elders for new roles.

The new regulations for New Charges create the open space for new patterns to emerge. The example of non-stipendiary in the Episcopal Church should encourage us forward. That may be one of the more strategic gifts of ecumenical cooperation.

We have the resources across the Church to equip any congregation to lead worship, engage in pastoral care or to sustain mission and evangelism with the appropriate staffing. We are aware that for many working people time and energy are in short supply and a staff team may be desirable. The aim of any ministry team will be to release the gifts of the people of God.

We recommend that Presbyteries set a five-year goal to ensure that every congregation is working towards this capacity. We believe this would release an immense amount to energy and creativity

among members and ministers alike. Tragically, there has been little coordinated planning to encourage this kind of development. The result has been a patchy evolution where there is the enthusiasm or where the necessity of an extended vacancy or a multiple linkage has demanded it.

Recommendation 14: That Presbyteries develop a coordinated strategy to equip congregations to sustain worship, pastoral care and mission with the appropriate staffing, and monitor progress through the Quinquennial visits.

A.4. 3. Affirming the Gifts of Leadership: (1) Eldership Refocused

We need leadership. We need elders with vision and flexibility. In our Presbyterian church the role of elders is crucial. In the role of the elder the “one size fits all” pattern of districts is prevalent, but that does not give room for variety of abilities to be exercised. There needs to be an honest appraisal of the gifts and callings of our elders, and to recognise that not all elders are gifted in leadership, nor are all gifted in pastoral care. We recommend that all elders who have not undertaken training in the past three years be required to attend a short course on the current role and expectations of an elder in the Church of Scotland.

If younger people are to be elders, then “whole life” commitment may be an impediment. This does not mean that their commitment will not be genuine, but that shorter term commitments will allow them to decide priorities and focus their energy.

At a time when elders have increasing demands on time, and when the church needs to be flexible and responsive to changing situations, we encourage Kirk Sessions to develop a pattern of “terms of service” (each Session can determine the appropriate length of the term) with regular sabbaticals. These will be times for elders to step back and see things from a new angle, taking advantage of the in-service courses so freely accessible in the church today.

Recommendation 15: That Kirk Sessions offer an opportunity for all elders who have not undertaken training in the past three years to share the current vision of the role and expectations of an elder in the Church of Scotland.

In some congregations, the Kirk Session is perceived as remote from the congregation. There is little access to the decision-making and the business is not communicated to the congregation clearly or regularly. As Presbytery is a public meeting unless it needs to meet in private, we recommend that the Kirk Session makes its meetings as open as possible, and develops ways of maintaining good communication links between Session and congregation. This is in line with the recommendations of the Board of Practice and Procedure on freedom of information.

Recommendation 16: That Kirk Sessions develop appropriate open styles of meeting and processes of communication.

As congregations explore different ways of releasing the gifts of their members, they may come to realise that the “model constitution” (which requires a two-tier decision-making process) is too cumbersome and inflexible, and often ties people into administrative structures and meetings rather than releasing them for active service.

Recommendation 17: That the Board of Practice and Procedure examine whether the present “model constitution” represents the best and most flexible way of managing a local congregation.

A.4.4. Affirming the Gifts of Leadership: (2) Ministry Teams

We need a strong ministry team. We welcome the review of the enquiry and selection processes by the Board of Ministry. We affirm the emerging patterns of training and support: local responsibility in selection, greater emphasis on continuous practical development in training, early challenges towards teamwork, pro-active professional development, new thinking on the total independence which we call tenure. We look forward to their proposals on some notion of appraisal.

The term “ministry of word and sacrament” remains our description of “the ordained minister”. That role means keeping the people of God truly centred on Jesus Christ as revealed in the Scriptures and the sacraments. The role of Christian leadership is to keep Christ central and all other competitors for that position secondary.

However there is a limitation of using the time-honoured description. It represents an unquestioned assumption that sticks with the role of pastor-teacher as the primary model of leadership. The Biblical description of leadership in Ephesians 4:12 includes also the apostle, the prophet and the evangelist, along with the pastor and the teacher. According to that passage it takes all five leadership roles to express the “ministry of Christ”. This is a time to recover and reaffirm these other roles of leadership and break out of the reductionism of the pastor-teacher model.

The “word and sacrament”/ “pastor-teacher” emphasis belongs to the Christendom context, with the re-emphasis on these roles in the Reformation to offset the ignorance and superstition of the day. The context of the 21st century is undoubtedly missionary and post-Christendom. The assumptions that ride on the terminology will not be adequate for the future.

The church will require the pioneering gifts of the apostle (“sent out”), the building and dismantling gifts of the prophets, and the frontier-friendly gifts of the evangelist. The pastor and the teacher are no less important, but their monopoly on the term “ministry” needs to be broken. We recommend that in our time, we recognise, recruit, select and train evangelists who can help others share the Gospel with others. The same is required for those with “apostolic” (perhaps a church planting capacity) and “prophetic” gifts (perhaps an ability to encourage the church or a capacity to address the public arena in the name of Christ).

The collaborative nature of ministry begins by reclaiming these gifts as essential to the full development of the church to be the church of Christ in our times. It will mean taking account of these gifts in the selection and recruitment process and offering the necessary specialist training rather than the omnibus version that assumes that everybody will be a parish minister.

Recommendation 18: That the Board of Ministry, in consultation with the Board of National Mission and the Board of Parish Education, develop a coordinated process of recruiting and training people with missionary gifts which are vital for service within and beyond the constraints of a parish context.

Ordained ministry is a demanding role and there are subtle influences that erode or limit the development of the gifts of those in ordained ministry. The sacred cows of security of tenure and the right of congregational call deserve attention. While not wishing to create unnecessary insecurity, there are situations where the movement of a minister would create new possibilities for all parties. Interim Ministers and ministers in other appointments already surrender their tenure voluntarily, and put themselves at the disposal of the Church.

We recognise the effects of the “short term contract” culture in business and the caring agencies—often leading to cynicism, insecurity and lack of loyalty. On the other hand, an appointment to a situation for fixed term with a specific remit can focus the mind creatively.

We recognise the distinction between long-term pastoring of people and the short-term focus of a project. We also recognise the different personalities whose gifts will be different. There will be limiting factors on movement. The issue is how to achieve the flexibility necessary for a changing situation, and the stability necessary for the spiritual development of people. This would be met by making the “ministry team” the norm with people employed on different terms.

We recommend the creation of a database of aptitudes and needs by the Department of Ministry. Congregations, Presbyteries and Departments would have access to this pool for the normal processes of filling posts. There would then need to be a process of matching requirements to gifts and deploying people after due consultation.

Recommendation 19: That the Board of Ministry, in consultation with the Board of National Mission and the Board of Parish Education, develop a data-base of all ministers, auxiliary ministers, Deacons and Readers to assist in the strategic deployment of personnel.

A.4.5. Developing the Gifts of Leadership

We welcome the Board of Ministry’s emphasis on collaborative ministry. To encourage this ethos, we believe that the Board can give a lead in two ways: by developing active partnerships with the Board of Parish Education, and by encouraging training that brings candidates for ministry alongside other ministries who are in training e.g. Readers, Deacons or Overseas Bursars.

Since the primary ministry is the ministry of Christ through the whole Body of Christ, the Board of Ministry can offer a lead in affirming the development of elders, youth workers, children’s ministries and much more. At present there is limited collaboration and that is to the detriment of all parties. We recommend that both Boards establish working patterns that will offer mutual enrichment.

The name of the “Board of Ministry” reinforces old perceptions of the omni-competent ordained minister. We await changes in reorganisation as a new Presbytery style emerges. Our hope would be that the other facets of authorised leadership might come under a board of ministries as recognition of diversity.

Recommendation 20: That the Board of Ministry and the Board of Parish Education develop working patterns of active collaboration to equip the whole people of God for Christian service.

A.4.6. Celebrating the Gifts of all God’s People

The mindset of the church will be reshaped by our liturgy. We recommend that services of ordination of ministers and elders, and services of induction be revisited to reflect the new realities of theology and practice in relation to ministry and eldership. Our Episcopal neighbours have rich liturgies that affirm the whole people of God, and in practice are much less priestly than many Church of Scotland ministers.

Recommendation 21: That the Panel on Worship review services of ordination, induction and commissioning, in order to celebrate imaginatively the ministry of all God’s people within them.

B. The Shape of the Regional Church

B.1. The Presbytery Revisited

The Presbytery is the characteristic expression of the Church of Scotland as a member of the family

of Presbyterian churches. Before embarking on further discussion, it is worth setting our Presbyterian constitution in the context of the world church. Presbyterians have inherited a sense of our Scottishness being identified with the adjective Presbyterian. That connection is challenged by the ecumenical climate of 21st century Scotland, but it is both humbling and encouraging to step outside our inherited focus and see the world perspective.

According to Peter Brierley's *Future Church: a Global Analysis of the Christian Community to the year 2010*, Monarch/Christian Research Association, 1998:

"In 1995 there were 48 million Presbyterians worldwide. This was 3% of Christendom and 1% of the world's population. These proportions were the same in 1960 and will remain so by the year 2010 if present trends continue, showing that the Presbyterian church is keeping pace with world trends but neither beating them, nor losing to them. This means that they will grow from 30 million in 1960 to 52 million in 2010." (p 109)

Brierley goes on to show that Presbyterianism is growing mainly in Asia where in 50 years the Presbyterian Church has grown fourfold, mainly in South Korea and Indonesia. The factors to which he attributes growth are (pp 114-9):

1. A high profile focus and commitment to prayer;
2. Clear vision, thoroughly owned by the people;
3. A large amount of missionary involvement as witnessed by the number of Korean missionaries sent overseas;
4. Continuous ongoing evangelism and thorough integration of converts into small cell groups;
5. Publicly affirmed integrity of Christian people through their behaviour in wartime and since.

Returning to the role of the Presbytery in Scotland, it is a matter of significance and concern that this chief characteristic is not considered to be the source of inspiration and support for the worship and witness of local congregations. The perception of many congregations is of a Presbytery as a necessary irrelevance – necessary for maintaining the system as we have it, but irrelevant to congregations unless in the case of a vacancy or readjustment.

The origins of Presbytery lie in the "weekly exercises" for ministers to find spiritual support for their pastoral and evangelistic callings. The erosion of that relational heart is of vital concern if we are to pursue two key values in the shape of the church – to affirm the local and strengthen the relational.

Our history and contemporary missiological research encourage us to revisit the Presbytery as a focus of area/regional support and inspiration to local congregations. This will include excellent administration, for "good administration is good pastoral care".

B.2. Towards a Theology of Presbytery

How can Presbytery be a fellowship of Christian leaders sharing a vision for the Kingdom within a given part of Scotland? In what way can Presbytery function as a Gospel community? What would Presbytery look like shaped by the Gospel rather than by legal procedure or managerial function?

If the Church exists by the grace of God and for the glory of God, then, as matter of integrity, this characteristic forum of our church will be shaped by worship and mission.

If the Church is formed by participating in the mission of God to see the new creation in Christ, then Presbytery will be shaped by future challenges and possibilities rather than past precedent.

If the Church is formed around Jesus Christ in the fellowship of the Father, Son and Spirit, then the Presbytery will be a community shaped by the mutual honouring of persons rather than the static

notion of equality or parity.

If the Church is to follow Jesus on the way of grace in the Incarnation, then its primary question is what aspect of the Word of God is to be made flesh in this place at this time, not a legal question of administrative functions.

If the Church is the community of the Cross and resurrection, then Presbytery decision making will be marked by humility and integrity which will call on all our courage, compassion and companionship to dare to follow Christ together.

If the Church is the community of the Spirit, then we will be alert to the charisms of the Holy Spirit in individuals and in congregations and learn to function as the Body of Christ together in our part of Scotland, enjoying unity within diversity, including other neighbours of other denominations.

If the Church is the community of the New Creation, then Presbytery will be a sign to a divided and broken world of how to mediate in conflict and to thrive on the chaos of change as God beckons us into tomorrow.

Such a redefinition of Presbytery around the Gospel acts as a touchstone for future practical discussions on functions. It takes us further in our deconstruction before aiming at reconstruction.

Presbytery is shaped currently by a vision of God as stability, continuity and sameness. This owes more to Platonic ideas than to the God of the Hebrews who kept his people on the move and the God of Jesus who neither “possessed nor was possessed”, but released the wind and fire of God on waiting disciples.

If the regional leadership of the church is to be an inspiration to the local church, then it must reflect the life of God in Christ as an example - a community of communities with Jesus at the centre.

B.3. The Shape of Presbytery

B.3.1. The 3-D Presbytery as Regional Support

We have kept open communication with the Committee on Presbytery Boundaries and discovered that the logic of our “upside down” church has led us to similar conclusions. The Commission offers its thinking as part of the consideration of future “shape”, but our recommendation will be to invite the General Assembly to remit this section of the Report for wider consultation through the future work of the Presbytery Boundaries Committee.

The future shape of the Regional Church will have three functions: relational support for local strategy, regional centres of worship and inspiration and regions for more comprehensive oversight and allocation of resources.

We favour the formation of *local area groupings* for mutual support and missionary partnerships. Where appropriate, these districts may be ecumenical to foster the relational bonds of trust. Local and relational are the underlying principles.

We also favour the smaller number of *larger groupings* (more like the original Synod) with the strategic responsibilities, staff and financial resources to offer the local support needed to the congregations. Attention must be given to ensure ecumenical membership and regular collaboration.

Notes of caution have been sounded There is concern about duplication of effort and about the

devolution of old mindsets. The success of these moves will depend on how far the new groupings create an environment where local initiative can thrive, and decisions are taken on the principle of subsidiarity.

The third dimension might be called the “*Presbyterial Cathedral*”. This is a plea to place worship and Christian community at the heart of our life together. In times past Cathedrals offered inspiration, celebration and pastoral encouragement to local congregations. We see centres of excellence being developed to encourage renewal in worship, fellowship, leadership, mission and spirituality – regional bases that offer a lead by example.

As we look around the world we see the inspiration of churches like Willowcreek Community Church, Chicago, or Hills Church, Australia, which have taken on the role of global cathedrals. They have offered many people an example of worship, evangelism, discipleship, community work and servant-leadership. While we are not advocating these churches as examples for all, we see that they offer a starting point and practical teaching resources that flow from the integrity of a worshipping, witnessing community.

In Scotland, there are many who would see Iona Abbey as a similar example of inspiration for over 60 years. We believe that there are churches around Scotland where that same inspirational leadership might be offered to others. Our Scottish reluctance to affirm or recognize others may deprive us of good news and good practice to help us all move forward.

These centres may be a grouping or network of congregations, charged by the Presbytery to pioneer new aspects of our calling, and to share these insights with the wider church. Too much good work goes unsupported or unreported. This would ensure down to earth pilot plants to inspire and encourage others.

Part of the “example” would be their capacity to collaborate with each other in the true Presbyterial spirit. The network would necessarily change with time as different initiatives were affirmed as offering the lead direction for the moment.

B.3.2. The Style of Presbytery as a Gathering

Much of the frustration of Presbytery lies in its style of operating. It has been suggested that it move from “courtroom” to “courtyard” – a pattern of dialogue rather than debate, and conference rather than confrontation. There are times when formal rules of debate are essential for good decision-making, and appropriate procedures when meeting as a “court”, but much more time could be given to letting other voices be heard. Even competent speakers can be intimidated in the context of Presbytery meetings. This is about tone and style rather than legal necessity.

Again future consultations on Presbyteries will bring specific proposals for the change of style. Our concern is that the relational dimension of the districts be carried into the larger gatherings through story, worship, small group discussion and the use of better group facilitation. It is open to any Presbytery at any time to make the first steps towards expressing that relational style. Pilot schemes will feed the future process of consultation.

B.3.3. The Leadership Role of Presbytery

Presbyteries will require people who can function as area leaders. While the church is well served by many fine elders, in practice Presbyteries are often peopled by elders who are retired or who have been seconded for a year as a “link person” for the Kirk Session.

Elders’ ordination vows need to be made more explicit and include the commitment to the wider

church. Those who are seconded to Presbytery work should be released from some areas of local service. The role of the Presbytery elder should be seen as a real job of work.

There were discussions some years ago about the training of Presbytery elders in the ways of Presbytery. That was given scant attention, but did include visionary elements as well as nuts and bolts about the system. Such training can be made available for the new roles in the new Presbyteries.

There are ministers who contribute little to Presbytery - often through lack of confidence in Presbytery itself. Ministers might be encouraged to 'tithe' their time to the wider work of the church (Presbytery and National Committees) in a way that is recognised at the time of induction by minister and congregation alike. This might protect the overly 'committee-ed' and draw in those gifted people who are shy of the system. If nomination committees adopted the principle of "one person – one job", energy would be better focused and more widely harnessed.

Leadership in the augmented Presbyteries will include issues of staffing and the role of "regional moderators" or "superintendents" for an extended period of time to offer pastoral and missionary encouragement to the districts and congregations.

B.3.4. Resources at the Disposal of Presbytery

Resources of people and money will be decentralised. Resource people for National Mission, Parish Education, Social Responsibility and Stewardship will be locally accessible and budgets will be locally controlled. There remains a question of how far existing investments are tied to existing Boards and Committees.

Staffing of the Regions will again be a matter for consultation. Already central Boards have regionalised their staff and this will continue. The team for administration and mission will be shaped by the local challenges and gifts.

In the interest of justice there will need to be an overview of distribution to avoid the inevitable outcome of the free market where the rich-poor gap widens. There is a genuine concern that Presbyterial bureaucracy may not be any cheaper than centralised bureaucracy. Resources held more locally are not by definition stewarded better or worse. The key will lie in creating a culture of trust and local responsibility to find and share resources. Relationships of grace are once again the key.

The future process will carry significant implications for the current central administration. While the Commission has given consideration to the shape of life at the centre, everything must depend on the decisions relating to the newly developed Presbyterial structure.

C. The Shape of the Central Church

C.1. Where Committees Began

“Presbyterianism as a form of Church government was designed for the administration of an organisation the whole of whose activities were confined within its parishes, each of which was more or less self-contained and enjoyed a large measure of autonomy. Its initiatives almost all came from the perimeter, and its objective was that the ordinances of religion should be available to the people in every corner of Scotland completely free of any charge. For that purpose the design was both adequate and admirable....”

“It was in the latter half of the nineteenth century that the Church first began - not without many grace misgivings and much hesitation - to feel a sense of wider responsibility - for overseas mission, for example. This was something which had not been tackled by the Church as a whole, for obviously it could not be administered at parish level. The parishes had their part to play in furnishing the necessary funds, creating interest, in maintaining enthusiasm, but the whole administration had to be centralised. And so the Assembly appointed a Committee of their own number to do this job, always under their own direction and control. With the passing of the years the number of such ‘outside’ interests grew, with a consequent steady increase in the number of Committees. The Committee system had come to stay. The Year book for 1950 records no fewer than 65 Committees all reporting directly to the Assembly - 25 Standing and 40 Special Committees.”

To these comments of Dr Andrew Herron, authority on church law, we add these words of Dr Douglas Murray, the Church historian:

“Regarding Herron's comments on the origins of Boards and Committees. What he says happened in the late 19th century is that the Church took on greater responsibility in certain areas and this involved an increase in administration and in the work of certain committees, such as those dealing with foreign missions. Committees of the Assembly existed before that (e.g. the Accommodation or Church Extension Committee chaired by Chalmers in the 1830s), but it was in the later 19th century that there was an increase in the centralised bureaucracy of the Kirk. The Free Church in particular had to raise its own funds and this led to a more centralised structure and power tending towards the Assembly Committees and their Conveners. The '121' syndrome is very much a Free Church phenomenon. In addition congregations became more autonomous since it was they who raised the money. The result, in my view, was that presbyteries became squeezed between the centre and the localities, a situation which has remained.”

The last sentences in Dr Herron's reference indicate something of the recent past. Boards and Committees have been wedged together e.g. the former Board of World Mission and Unity. No doubt this was done for good reason, e.g. the old Union and Readjustments committee became the Parish Reappraisal committee, a constituent committee of the Board of National Mission, intending to give reappraisal work a missionary focus.

C.2. The Evolving Future

The shape of the new centre will depend on the shape of the new regions.

While the Commission has given considerable thought to possible realignments within the central administration, it has become clear that any suggestions would be premature, and indeed unhelpful, in the light of the proposals about new styles of Presbytery, a direction which we have already endorsed.

With this in mind, it is recommended that the thinking of the Commission be carried forward by whatever group is charged with the ongoing consultation and implementation of the Presbyterial plan. In this way we trust that the work of the Commission will be integrated into one of the

significant streams of reform to encourage future development of thinking.

C.3. Questions for Future Consideration

Future consultations on the shape or regional and national aspects of the Church may have to take up questions that have not been resolved within the limited timescale of the Commission.

C.3.1. What are the implications of the emerging role of the Assembly Council?

Tribute has already been paid to the cooperative spirit between the Commission and the Assembly Council. The role and remit of the Council is about consultation, assessment of priorities and developing strategies for the future. The ethos of the Council has been to develop an ongoing role of listening to the Church locally, regionally and centrally.

This process offers a uniquely new way of communicating opinions within an interdependent Church. It offers a “safe space” for different voices to be heard and represented across the interfaces of the Church’s life. We commend that as an expression of the “relational” church, and we wait with interest to see how this style will be applied in assisting the church decide priorities in a way that avoids old-style confrontation.

It is our hope that future discussions will find an acceptable way for some body to fulfil an Executive Function among the Boards and Committees. The Commission is aware of the history of former Assembly Councils and the attempts to perform this function. Much depends on the evolving shape of the centre, but the General Assembly requires a focus for its Executive Function in setting priorities among the Boards and Committees in line with agreed strategy.

C.3.2. Where is the Voice of the Church?

Between General Assemblies, there is confusion about the “voice of the Kirk”. In a devolved church, many issues could be addressed from the Regions. However, there may be the need for a coordinated setting for engagement with national policy issues: politics, education and social practice. Currently, these are handled by the Church and Nation Committee, the Department of Education and the Board of Social Responsibility. National Mission and World Mission have aspects of their work which have a political impact, and will feed into debates of Church and Nation as required.

The issue is not that the church should speak with “one voice” to suit the convenience of the media. The honesty of debate is not to be stifled. The issue is rather that there be a consistent interaction of ideas through an umbrella Board of Church and Society. Umbrellas do not assume agreement, but at least people are close enough to listen to each other and talk together.

While the Board of Communication, through its Press Office, copes with immense pressures from the media, it might help them in their difficult role of being “cultural translators” between the agenda of the journalist and the confusing culture of the Church.

For all that, the official voice is not necessarily the prophetic voice. For that authentic voice of wisdom, we need to learn to listen to the edges and the people whose obedience has taken them the humble way of the Cross. Amidst the media-saturated noise, we still need to listen for the still small voice of the Spirit, and let that voice be heard. That is a subtle discernment.

C.3.3. Where is the Leadership within the Central Administration?

The Church is operating with two cultures: the Presbyterian ethos that resists personal leadership, and a business organisation at the heart of its administration, which requires executive powers. The

proposals from the Joint Working Party to introduce a Central Coordinating Committee may address that issue.

However, as well as a strong appeal for some kind of body being proposed, many senior staff would value the appointment of a Chief Executive to oversee the central organisation. It could be argued that the proposals for reshaping regional and central organisation make it essential to have a person in the central offices who can help steer that part of the organisation through the changes. It seems inadequate that such a responsibility should lie with a Convener who has another full-time occupation far away from the workplace, or, by default, with other senior officials within the offices, whose responsibilities are onerous enough.

C.3.4. What about the role and style of the General Assembly?

The General Assembly exercises legislative, judicial and executive functions. In a church of courts it is the Supreme Court of appeal. Today much of that intricate work is delegated to the Judicial Commission because the processes of the Assembly have proved cumbersome for issues that require a more subtle context for decision-making.

If more people are to have a voice, then new *styles of decision-making* will be essential. While Moderators and business conveners are always helpful to new Commissioners, and the Assembly is always kind to a new voice struggling with procedures, there is still a need to change the ethos, so that the power does not lie only with those who know the system.

In recent years, we have seen changes in styles of dress, worship and involvement. In pursuit of our concern for a more relational church to affirm and release the gifts of the people, we recommend the Assembly take a lead from patterns of the Youth Assembly: holding area consultations for Commissioners in advance of the Assembly so that the key issues are aired in advance; and ensuring the time is divided between conference style and decision style.

In the current context, many Boards and Committees could function adequately on a *two or three yearly reporting system*, with the opportunity to bring essential decisions to the intervening Assembly. This would avoid the undue time pressures to produce annual reports on everything. The major reports would set the policy direction for the next two-three years, leaving space for short annual progress reports as required.

The Executive Function of the Assembly currently focuses on reports from Boards and Committees, creating the impression of the Annual General Meeting of the Central Administration rather than a reflection on the life of the Church as a whole. There is a tension between the desire to offer a point of visibility to celebrate the local and global life of the Church, and the need to make policy decisions for the good of all.

In a decentralised context, the reporting processes may be different. There may be more direct access of Presbyteries to the Assembly, both to bring forward issues of substance, and to contribute to the *celebratory aspects* of the Assembly – each year featuring one Region in rotation. These occasions would inspire and challenge the Commissioners and the whole church, if the media reported them well. The Assembly has the potential to be a time of national celebration and inspiration for the Church and the nation.

With the changed nature of Central Boards and Committees, the role of *General Secretaries* might change. They might be appointed to be directly accountable to the General Assembly, with the support of smaller Advisory Boards. They could have direct access to speak to the Assembly as the

people called and entrusted with the Assembly's policy. They would enjoy high trust and high accountability.

The *timing of the General Assembly* could be more efficient. The present date in May means a substantial loss of time for those who have to report to the Assembly: the summer gap, six months to prepare reports for the printer in February and then a Spring gap before the next Assembly. A September Assembly would give a full church year for committee work and the summer months for printing and immediate preparation for Assembly arrangements.

Recommendation 22: That the sections on “The Shape of the Regional Church” and “The Shape of the Central Church” be remitted to the Board of Practice and Procedure and the Assembly Council.

Recommendation 23: That the Board of Practice and Procedure review the culture and timing of the General Assembly in order to increase the quality of reporting, participation and decision-making.

Section III: Proposals for Continuing Reform

1. *Praying through Change*

“Follow me” is a call to change. The history of the church is an account of our failure to respond to that call, and Christ’s faithfulness in recalling us again and again to the Way. The call to change is not a threat, but an invitation at the heart of the Gospel.

From the outset, we have recognised that the core issue of change in the church is not about structures. It is about mindsets. It is about creating an environment in which our relationship with God and our neighbour may flourish.

We have looked at the current phase of church history through the lens of the Exile. The people of God – now as then - are cut off from familiar routines and patterns of life as they struggle to live the life of faith in a culture stripped of the symbols that sustain faith. Is the time of exile about to end and the people return to God? Or have we yet to learn the true lessons of the Exile?

When Jeremiah spoke of the Exile, he warned against the false prophets who saw it coming to a quick conclusion. Jeremiah spoke of the exile lasting for 70 years. In that time, the people were to settle in Babylon, pray for the welfare of the city and go about life faithfully before God in their new environment. In his vision of the baskets of figs (Chapter 24), he compared the basket of good figs to those who went into Babylon and promised that the experience would lead to new heart for God. (24:5-7)

Whatever the experience of God’s people in our time of cultural dislocation, it is a time when God addresses us with hope: *“For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” says the Lord.* (Jeremiah 29:11-13)

The heart of reform is the reform of the heart. The first proposal for reform is a call to prayer. People at prayer will be people who learn to live within the purposes of God with patient hope. If God be long in coming, so be it. If God comes quickly, we will be the more ready to welcome him and the future he brings.

Praying people recognise our daily dependence on the Holy Spirit. A call to prayer is a call to praise, confession, repentance, meditation, intercession and to decisive redemptive action. A call to prayer is a call to live with God. A call to prayer begins with the leadership of the church, that those who lead may be open to being led by the Spirit. A call to prayer rests on every Christian person: in the privacy of the home, in the melee of the working day, in public worship or committed prayer groups. The ways are many. The call is one. Let us pray.

We recommend that congregations explore how they might deepen their life of prayer to be more open to the renewing Spirit of God. We will not settle for reform that changes structures and leaves lives untouched by Christ. *I will give them a heart to know me that I am the Lord.* (Jeremiah 24:7)

Recommendation 24: That Kirk Sessions identify ways of deepening the prayer life of their congregations individually and together.

2. Creating Space for Change

It is difficult to change direction. The old routines, requirements and habits are instinctive. We often need to stop, stand back and reflect before we can reset our priorities. We recommend this for *individuals* in any position of leadership in the church, that they set time for spiritual retreat within the course of the year. Spiritual leadership is about keeping the essentials central. We lead by the light we shed or the shadow we cast. Solitude with God is essential for every one in any leadership role.

We recommend that *Kirk Sessions* choose a time in the near future to give the congregation a sabbatical from activity. It may be a good exercise for Lent 2002 and 2003 to agree that usual church activities are suspended for six weeks. Set people free to meet as friends without an agenda. Offer spaces for retreat, reflection and prayer at home or at a retreat centre. Plan times for the leadership to step back from the routine and rediscover the grace of God in Jesus Christ. At the end of the time (between Easter and Pentecost?), allow time to share whatever God may have revealed. Choose one area of review of congregational life to look, listen, reflect and act. Repeat the process each year over the next five years.

We recommend that *Presbyteries* build in spaces for retreat together over the next five years. Changes will come, but the changes must not become ends in themselves. They are only valid as they lead us closer to God and to each other and to our neighbours.

We recommend that in anticipation of a major movement for structural change from 2002-5, *Boards and Committees* review programmes to be less proactive. As far as is practical, we urge a disciplined moratorium on new initiatives from the centre, to allow congregations and new-forming Presbyteries to discover their direction and take up responsibilities.

Sabbath is a time of realising that we do not run the world. It is a time to recover the rhythms of grace as we trust in God the Creator. It is a time to realise our responsibilities to the poor and the lost as we look around us. We recommend a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

Recommendation 25: That the leadership in every area of church life institute the discipline of a period of retreat, rest and reflection to allow space for God to change us.

3. Giving Permission to Change

In any change process, there are those who initiate change and those who authorise change. We are confident that the initiative for change is local and specific. There can be no diktat of Assembly that ushers in a new Reformation, but there can be permission to change.

We affirm that the Church of Scotland offers more freedom for change and innovation than most people believe. Among the many suggestions for change, the majority require no legal or procedural change. What we must address is rather the culture of inhibition and distrust, which creates a fear of change. Most of the changes that are needed can already happen, and can be richly supported, if people make the decision to make the change. We trust you. Take the responsibility. Take the risk.

Our response is simply to declare the Gospel of grace to a paralysed church: "By the grace of God you are free! Get up and walk!" Most people have to walk a very long way before they find any structural impediment to change. It is a matter of mindset and faith. Go for it!

Recommendation 26: That congregations take risks and try new ways so that faith may grow.

4. Looking for Levers for Change and Limits to Growth

In every situation there are levers for change and limits to change. On some estimates, the levers for change may be found in “the 15% rule”: 15% effort in the right place produces 85% of the results.

Change in the church will not be the result of people following through a long list of recommendations. Change will come where people take the time to discover the one area that might make a difference for them and then they do it. We are part of a complex system of relationships and structures. We have suggested issues that may give you a handle on a lever for change. Find your lever and pull it.

There are limits to growth. In *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organisation*, Peter Senge claims that in our complex world we need to practice the art of being a “learning organisation”. If we keep pushing at the good idea, it will eventually slow down or burn out because it triggers the “balancing system” of resistance. Behind the resistance is a “limiting factor”. Once we discover the “limiting factor”, we release the good for growth. Once again, we have suggested some limiting factors. We pray that people may find the relevant one and have the courage to address it.

We do not claim to have identified more than a few potential levers and limits, but we offer them as potential leads to those that matter in the local situation.

Presbyteries can assist here. They can build this into a process of one to one visits or Quinquennial Visits to identify areas for growth or limits to growth. The Presbytery then builds up a “gap analysis” identifying where congregations need resources of people, training or finance. From that they create a “regional needs plan” to meet it. Presbytery will then be keyed into supporting the local congregation on its way to becoming a worshipping community sharing in Christ’s mission.

Recommendation 27: That Kirk Sessions and Presbyteries study the report as a stimulus to identifying the levers for change and the limits to growth in the local situation; that Kirk Sessions establish an “local needs” plan and Presbytery establish a “regional needs” plan of support, with special reference to recommendations 1-16 and 24-28; and apply, where appropriate to the Community and Parish Development Fund.

5. Supporting One Another through Change

We are aware that many people find change daunting. We would encourage people to see it as exciting. Anxiety and excitement are both a kind of fear. One expects a negative outcome and the other expects a positive outcome. As people of the Resurrection, we face change with hope, not fear.

However, we are aware that there is often low morale among congregations and among ministers. We believe that the way to face change is in the company of others who can travel with us through change. We commend the wisdom and experience of the many advisers and consultants in the employ of the Church e.g. in Parish Education, National Mission, Social Responsibility, and Stewardship and Finance.

The heart of the “local and relational” theme is to be worked out in the formation of local groupings. We recommend the formation of networks of common interest or common context to share struggles and ideas. Around the church there are churches that are strugglers, survivors, searchers and signposts. We encourage joining hands to move across the pain threshold of change. It is only as friendships form and trust builds that other decisions of cooperation may follow.

The story of the Commission has been recorded in **Appendix 7**. This story emphasises the journey of trust that has been travelled together. It takes time. It takes commitment and openness. It is our conviction that the renewal of the church will begin when leaders of local congregations take time out together in retreat, to reflect prayerfully and honestly on the Gospel and our mission. Only communities of trust will sustain the process of local reform that emerges.

The experience of the Commission cannot be passed on. The process of the Commission can be offered as one way of creating the new environment of trust.

Recommendation 28: That congregational leadership teams form networks focused on a shared context or a shared concern in order to build trusting relationships as the basis of future cooperation.

Interdependence is key to our future. That applies in every area of the church. We welcome the development of new relationships among Boards and Committees through the Coordinating Forum, but recognise the imbalance of power based on budgets. It is essential that the larger Boards do not develop a "Premier League" that leaves the low budget committees in second place. The Gospel principle of the strong being at the service of the weak applies in this dynamic.

We recognise the importance of people fulfilling the remits of their area of work, but that creates its own tunnel vision. We recommend that the Coordinating Forum, representing all Boards and Committees, continue to develop their residential times to ensure that the constituent parts are set within a vision of the bigger picture.

Recommendation 29: That the Coordinating Forum develop its role of capturing the larger vision within which people are operating.

Celebration is one dimension of inspiring one another for the future. As the church moves into a new shape in the coming years, we recommend that celebration be built into these movements as milestones on the way. We recommend that a "stakeholders' conference" be planned for 2005 as a national celebration, representing the churches around Scotland and partners from across the world, and with representation from various areas of national life.

This will be an opportunity to celebrate our faith and life together, a point of accountability of progress and a time to pledge ourselves to moving forward together into God's future

Recommendation 30: That the Selection Committee appoint a planning group to prepare a "Stakeholders' Conference" in 2005 as a point of National Celebration and a milestone of progress.

6. Modelling Change: The Community and Parish Development Fund

We need examples of new models of the Church for our time to encourage us to face the future together. Innovative new beginnings are already emerging around the country. It is essential to fund those visions in such a way that they may be able to flourish and share their insights with the wider church.

There are many congregations around the country who have a big vision, but limited resources. We believe that one way to encourage growth is by making significant funds available.

We recommend the formation of a Community and Parish Development Fund of £7.5 million over 5 years. **(Appendix 8: Community and Parish Development Fund)** It would be the preferred option to give out substantial grants to congregations and local groupings allowing them to put together

funding packages that would attract other funders. Making grants of up to £30,000 per annum over a five-year period would mean that congregations could begin to bring on board a variety of people to work in ministry teams. Many of those brought on might be youth workers or worship leaders or local church administrators.

The aim would be to facilitate congregations to become vibrant worship centres. On this basis we could support around 50 congregations over a 5-year period. The money would be fast tracked, going directly from the centre to the congregation. The administration of this project would mirror the flexible management approach of the Rank Foundation. In essence they keep their management of the projects to a minimum. They seek to supply support where required by linking in other agencies to deliver the service. We would recommend that two field workers be employed to develop the use of the Fund to the fullest advantage.

We would invite major funding agencies to help us formulate the most effective way of administering this Fund. We would also negotiate with these trust and others ways in which they too could partner us in these huge community investment projects. The principle would work on the three Rs adopted by Rank Foundation. These are, to help projects develop in **Relation** to each other, to be prepared to take **Risks** with local congregations and local groupings, to find additional **Resources** to reward success. (At present up to 50% of Rank's projects in Scotland have a Christian basis to them.)

To ensure that the money is spent equitably and effectively, certain criteria would be established to include partnerships with other churches and an intentional process of sharing the fruits of the development with others. In this way the money of the whole church will be invested in some churches for the benefit of the whole church.

Recommendation 31: That the Board of Stewardship and Finance

- a) **set up a Parish Development Fund of £7.5 million over 5 years in terms of Appendix 8 and report to the General Assembly of 2002;**
 - b) **appoint and manage two field directors until the Board of Community and Parish Development comes into being;**
- and that the Nomination Committee nominate 12 people for the Board of Community and Parish Development and report to the General Assembly of 2002.**

7. Investing in Change: Reviewing our Financial Strategy

Change means funding the vision. Change in shape and priorities will mean a change in investment to support those changes. Investing in change means reviewing our financial strategy. While the main issues and recommendations are represented here, the detailed arguments for reviewing our financial strategy are set out in **Appendix 9: Reviewing our Financial Strategy**.

The Church of Scotland centrally has an approximate annual income of £100 million and around £300 million in invested funds. Over £40 million of the annual income comes by way of congregational contributions to Ministry Funds and the Mission and Aid Fund. While the sources and uses of this money can be described in terms of what is and what has been, the danger is that we continue to think along existing tramlines and simply move small amounts among the existing jam jars.

One of the fatal flaws in our system, which goes to the heart of future development, is the governance of the Church in relation to finance. There is currently no mechanism to establish priorities across the Church. The General Assembly is an impossible mechanism for such work and each Board has its own commitments to fulfil and corner to defend.

The Church's priorities continue to be shaped by inherited assumptions and patterns of funding. New patterns are emerging which will require a reallocation of resources. Without that substantial reallocation, financial restrictions will limit future movement.

Recommendation 32: That the Assembly Council, through the Coordinating Forum, establish overall priorities for the work of the Church in the light of the emerging shape of the Church and to convey these to the Board of Stewardship and Finance, so that these priorities can be incorporated into the Co-ordinated Budget proposals which the Board will be bringing to the General Assembly in 2002 and subsequent years, with appropriate amendments to the Constitution of the Coordinating Forum and the Board of Stewardship and Finance.

As we enter the Third Millennium, it is important to steward the resources of an emerging church for the missionary purposes of the Church of Scotland. In the emerging church, the nature of ministry will be more varied than "ministers of word and sacrament", places of worship and mission may be temporary bases in the community rather than fixed buildings for generations and the context of mission may be to enter some of the "flow cultures" of our society rather than the immediate geographical area around a church building.

The strategic shift will include moves
from parish + building + minister
to networks of communities + multiple bases/venues + ministry teams.

Since the General Trustees steward a Consolidated Stipend Fund of £59 million for the benefit of 1400 congregations and a Consolidated Fabric Fund of £33 million for the benefit of 700 congregations, there are very considerable resources tied up in a historically inherited structure of 19th century mission models.

In 1995, an Act of Parliament removed a key obstacle to flexibility and ensured that the funds held by the General Trustees are under the sole jurisdiction of the General Assembly. If the purposes and shape of the church are redefined, then the funds may be used as the General Assembly decides for the benefit of congregations.

Recommendation 33: That the General Trustees, in consultation with the Board of Ministry and the Board of National Mission, monitor changing patterns of ministry and building requirements, and report on how best to fund the needs of the emerging church and report in 2003.

Flexibility will be essential for the future of the church, a factor which affects the work of the General Trustees:

1. Congregations with large sums invested may wish to use these funds for another area of mission development, but that choice is not open to them.
2. Congregations have no choice on how funds may be invested between the growth of income and the growth of capital. The range of options is Stipend > Fabric > Minimum Stipend Fund or Fabric > Stipend > Central Fabric Fund.
3. Congregations do, however, have the choice to be generous with their Fabric Funds within the Presbytery, as befits a Presbyterian Church.
4. The choices may be extended in the case of the Consolidated Fabric Fund to include "or other

purposes as agreed by Presbytery". This allows a more strategic view to be taken of the missionary needs of the area and avoid tying money unnecessarily to buildings.

5. Uniting congregations should be more creative in the use of funds derived from the sale of properties.

Recommendation 34: That the General Trustees examine the Consolidated Stipend Fund and bring proposals to the General Assembly of 2002 that would allow congregations more flexibility of investment.

Recommendation 35: That the General Trustees examine the Consolidated Fabric Fund and bring proposals to the General Assembly of 2002 that would allow congregations more flexibility of investment.

Recommendation 36: That the General Trustees, in consultation with the Board of National Mission, examine the application of the proceeds of the sale of buildings following readjustment, and report to the General Assembly of 2002.

8. Moving through Barriers to Change

Throughout the report we have emphasised the grace of God at work in the church. Change occurs when we release what is good, by removing the barriers to change. We have reported on the openness to change around the church., but in our consultations we have been warned never to underestimate the resistance to change. One look at our history tempers our optimism.

We need only track back through the attempts in the 20th Century to introduce change to the Church of Scotland. Suggestions of community parishes, team ministries, lay witness, missionary congregations, cell-style churches, redesigned Presbyteries and calls for spiritual renewal can be traced through the Committee of Forty in the 70's, the Tell Scotland movement of the 50's, the Baillie Commission of the 40's and right back to the writings of John White prior to the formation of the present Church of Scotland in the 1920's!

At the risk of raising a cynical sigh of weariness, let John White speak into a new century:

"Have we been using our great united forces for the winning of Scotland? The Church is not infiltrating through the Community as it can and as it ought....We are all to blame. Too many of our good respectable Church folks still think of their own church as if it were a private religious club. They miss the main function of Church life and worship - to go out to their brothers and sisters and compel them to come in."

We listen to the passionate plea and say that it is time to throw off the burden of our history, and take responsibility for obeying the call of Christ in a culture that is seen as a totally new era of human history.

Two barriers to change lie deep in our nature: the twins of fear and power.

Fear. Fear has many faces. Some fear the mess of change, others fear the effect on people we serve. Some fear admitting our failure or taking the risk of failing. Some fear stepping outside the safety of the regulations or the tradition. Some fear the pain of the unknown. Some fear the exposure of weakness or the exposure to conflict.

We have no answer to that except the call of Jesus: Follow me. He calls us into faith, hope and love - each one an antidote to fear.

Power. Power is an issue that is very difficult to identify in our system. The resistance to power focused on individuals leads to circuits of power that operate in hidden ways, from passive aggression to outright manipulation. While we are familiar with the famous phrase that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely, it has also been said that what really corrupts is the fear of the loss of power. That may be the most sinister barrier to change of all. The power of money is equally crucial. We recommend that the Panel on Doctrine undertake a study of the Christian use and abuse of power.

If we are to follow Christ, we will be led to the place where we release our power into the hands of God, put power at the service of others, and face the future with a trusting powerlessness.

Recommendation 37: That the Panel on Doctrine undertake a study on the theology of power and report.

9. Trusting God's Spirit through Change

The Commission has become convinced of a mood for change across the Church. That mood has the potential to become a movement. The prayers of many people are being answered as the Spirit of God calls us onwards. We believe that we need to trust the Spirit and trust the people of God to listen and follow in the way of Jesus Christ in the place where we are set.

The Commission considered different ways of ensuring that its proposals might be carried forward. In the end, the decision was made to offer these reflections and directions to the prayerful and committed attention of the Church.

While changes to Presbyteries and Central Administration will require careful consultation and management as they unfold, that process will be in good hands. The main emphasis of the report has been on the "local and relational" aspects of Church life. What that means for local Christian communities is for these communities to discern and determine.

That is a matter of trust. The responsibility belongs there. The resources are available in the grace of God and the people of God. There is no other plan.

We end as we began.

The purpose, shape and process of continuing reform lie in these timeless words of Jesus: "Follow me."

Recommendation 38: That all Kirk Sessions, Presbyteries, Boards and agencies of the Church study the report, take appropriate action and establish the necessary accountability for progress by 2005; and that the Assembly Council monitor developments through its ongoing consultations and assessments in 2002-3 and 2004-5.

Recommendation 39: That the Board of Practice and Procedure facilitate the study of the Report throughout the Church.

The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with us all.



GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

SPECIAL COMMISSION – REVIEW AND REFORM

Appendix 1: Listening to Many Voices

Listening, reflecting, discerning and deciding. These have been the task of the Commission. The first stage of listening has meant taking account of many voices.

1. *The Commission*

We listened to ourselves. We began here, not because we knew better than others, but in the belief that God's dreams and our human frustrations are woven together into our experience of life. We told of our passions and our frustrations and shared our journeys of faith. From the beginning we recognised the need to discover the meaning of faith for a new generation and the community to embody it. Worship and daily spirituality were high on our list of concerns, as was our desire to see God's gifts released into God's service as the Church in the world.

2. *Boards and Committees*

Every General Secretary was interviewed to gather an overview of the work of the church and the issues as they saw them. Among the many visions and dreams being expressed by so many, there was a frustration that our current structures did not serve the purpose of the Gospel reaching the whole nation.

There was a desire for more relational qualities of trust and communication. There was no real forum for deciding overall priorities. Church issues needed to be set in the context of the nation and beyond that in the global setting of a vast movement of Christian people across the world. There was an openness to change, but a concern that the change be properly paced and owned by all who were involved.

An early draft of the Commission's ideas was circulated and discussed with Conveners and Secretaries of all Boards and Committees. The wide-ranging responses have been taken into account in the final report.

3. *The Urban Priority Areas*

Visits to urban priority areas and the priority areas fund (for urban and rural projects) opened up the need for vulnerability and the inspiration from Luke 10 of doing more with less, as Jesus sends us out with little. In a sector of society that assumes that the church is not for the likes of us, they wanted to be the church that likes to say 'yes'.

We heard a tale of two churches: despite the massive support being given to UPAs in many ways, there was a feeling that the "other church" did not understand the massively complex challenges being faced by fragile communities of Christians. The gauntlet was thrown down to the Commission to deliver something that will make a difference – the litmus test of "policy at the point of delivery of service."

4. *The Highlands*

A survey was undertaken of congregations in Sutherland. We recognised the rich spiritual tradition of this part of the church, but saw how the treasure was locked into prison houses of traditionalism. Some of the best and the worst of the Reformed heritage is to be found here: the rich emphasis on the Word of God and prayer, but the constant fear of stepping out of line from the conventional inherited patterns.

The “temple template” of the holiness tradition assumes an inward pull of the Spirit and constrains the missionary movement to go where people are. The scandal of divided Presbyterianism is a cause for deep concern and repentance. Remote communities looked for a decentralisation of power and responsibility.

5. *Rural Areas*

Rural means different things to different people: from Buchan to Ayrshire, or Angus to Newcastleton. Commissioners carried with them rural experience in touch with the rural crises in farming and housing, the pressures of multiple linkages and the good news stories of ministry teams to sustain worship and witness in the various communities. Heartfelt cries for a “ministry of truth” were heard from places where the system was breaking down and needed to start again.

6. *Towns and Cities*

In our towns and cities where church was operating as a focus for community life and family support, we heard stories of congregations building long term from the crèche up, and reshaping buildings to serve the community.

The aspirations for the ministry of the people of God were often frustrated by the time constraints on people: fragmented families divide loyalties and demanding business pressures rob communities and churches of the people’s time.

In the complexity of city life, it was impossible to go it alone. We heard of partnerships of churches and “matrix ministries” between sector and parish or centre and suburbs. In our postmodern society city ministry operates in an archipelago of mini-cultures each requiring its own pattern of church.

7. *Elders*

In an attempt to listen to elders, we gathered comments from a number of focus groups of elders around the country, though not so often as we intended in the beginning. The readiness for our core leadership to face change was challenging and encouraging. Here is a sample of their concerns:

- Prayer - developing personal spirituality and corporate prayer
- Church in the Community - engaging in evangelism and social justice
- Recruitment and retention of members - winning, keeping and building disciples
- Life-long learning - deepening faith and living faith in the everyday world
- Communication - harnessing new technology for new generation
- Parish System - working a team system
- Ecumenism - working towards greater cooperation
- Patterns of worship - offering a variety of options
- Participation - increasing the range of involvement in worship and other activities
- Ministers and elders - developing better teamwork
- Ministers and elders - reviewing and encouraging training
- Radical Change - managing change carefully

These comments highlight the key areas of discontent, and discontent is the precursor of change. Looking at this list, the question that stands out is: What is stopping the change? What is needed to release people?

8. *Thenew*

“Thenew”, named after the mother of St Mungo is dedicated to identifying and eliminating violence and abuse towards women in church and society. A lively conversation with one group alerted us to

the ways in which women today feel excluded from an institution that has been created by men, and sensitised us to the pain felt by abused women in our use of language and in the assumed styles of organising and decision-making.

9. Chaplains

Reports from some chaplains reminded us of those who are daily immersed in the places where people face the greatest stresses and strains of life. Here was incarnational ministry seeking to be where people are, connect the Christian Gospel with the life issues and bear witness to Christ beyond the safety zones of our churches, both pastorally and prophetically.

There was feeling that many of the patterns of ministry being worked out by these specialists offered clues to the parish ministry today. There needed to be a closer link between these specialists and congregational life. If the UPAs reflect a tale of two churches, the chaplaincies reflect a tale of two ministries that have not been recognised as mutual and complementary.

10. Journalists

We set out to meet with people who could give an outsider's view of the Church. Among them we heard from journalists who spoke of the need for the church to relate to the new identity of the Scottish nation, and to address the loss of trust in society. There was still a massive respect for the church as an institution, but a growing lack of "insider knowledge" among journalists. The need for some clearer system of a "church voice" was raised.

11. The Video: A Church without Walls

Around 100 congregations responded to the video, "A Church without Walls", distributed in the summer of 2000, focusing on the themes of relationships, resources and risk. While there was some criticism of the video's lack of rural context and its sweeping statements on church finance, the responses were substantially positive about the key themes. There was strong affirmation of ecumenical partnerships, decentralisation, the need for ministry appraisal and the recognition of the need for two churches to run side by side.

People were concerned about the missing generations, "central-beltism" and the need for a focus on discipleship, new patterns of ministerial training and a readiness to challenge injustices. All responses were analysed and discussed by the Commission.

12. The Scottish Churches

At an early stage we invited Kevin Franz, Secretary of Action of Churches Together in Scotland, to spend time with the Commission. This gave us insights into the variety of contexts in Scotland and affirmed the Church of Scotland as having "the charism of a big heart".

At a later stage we had the benefit of responses from Sr Maire Gallagher, Convener of ACTS. Other churches were given drafts of the report and invited to comment. Conversations with our own Ecumenical Relations Committee helped sustain our awareness of our neighbouring churches.

13. Finance

The financial expertise of the General Treasurer has been freely offered as we have wrestled with the complexities of a financial system comprising of over 4000 separate funds, and the inherited allegiances which they represent.

We have received challenging advice from Professor Ewan Brown, Investment Banker, and Sir David Tweedie, past chairman of the Accounting Standards Board, both of whom are serving elders of the

Church. They have helped us separate strategic issues from the technical detail of day to day financial management. Amidst the range of opinions and emotions generated by money, we have tried to hold to the theology of grace and faith: faithful to the God who in Jesus Christ gives generously and invites us to trust unreservedly.

Listening has taken many forms. Through the courtesy of World Mission, National Mission, Ecumenical Relations, Ministry, Parish Education, former Moderators, the Coordinating Forum, the Assembly Council, the Priority Areas Fund, The Scottish Youth Focus, the National Youth Assembly, the Committee on Presbytery Boundaries and various Presbytery groupings, we have been involved in fruitful conversations about the future of the Church.

Through personal conversations with individuals including theologians, sociologists, business people and others with a concern for the future of the church, ideas and opinions have been shaped and moulded.

How well the Commission has listened, reflected, discerned and distilled the wisdom of these people is for others to decide. For our part, we thank each and all for their time and wisdom freely and generously given.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND SPECIAL COMMISSION – REVIEW AND REFORM

Appendix 2: The Church and The State: The Declaratory Articles

There are various ways in which a national Church can relate constitutionally to the political environment in which it is set. One model, uncommon nowadays, is for the Church to rule all aspects of the life of the community with no separate secular authority (or one that is subordinated to the ultimate religious authority). A second model, pejoratively termed 'Erastian' after an early Swiss example, gives the secular power all ultimate authority, with the Church subject to that worldly jurisdiction. The third model avoids either of the above tendencies, either by separating the jurisdictions of Church and State so that each has its area of rule, or else by encouraging the Church to be a completely conventional voluntary organisation within society subject to the jurisdiction of civil law - so far as civil law can appropriately regulate the Church's affairs.

Scottish History

There is little trace in Scottish history of the first model of power, though there is evidence of the influence of the Papacy in political history.

The turbulent history of the post-Reformation Church in its relations with the Stuart Dynasty represented the resistance of the Reformers and their successors to an Erastian connection with the emerging British nation-state. The tendency of interference by those kings (e.g. the Black Acts of 1583, the Articles of Perth in 1618, Laud's Liturgy introduced in 1637) took several generations to dismiss.

After the settlement of the House of Orange in 1690, a different ethos prevailed, and there developed a sense of parallel jurisdictions being the civil powers in secular matters and the Church's courts in ecclesiastical matters. This was a recognition by the state of an ancient, fundamental and inherent property of the Church, and not as something devolved or conceded by the State.

Establishment

The theory of Establishment, put simply, is the belief that the State has a responsibility to provide, fund and/or protect the existence of a national religion. It is the articulation of a spiritual duty on the part of the civil power, and therefore differs from the issue discussed above of secular interference in the Church's internal affairs.

However, the two issues, the State's right to interfere and its responsibility to protect, have often been confusing, and never more so than in reading the history of the nineteenth century. In the Ten Years' Conflict immediately before the Disruption, the Court of Session regarded the Establishment of the Church as justification for extensive civil interference in its affairs. When Thomas Chalmers led the Disruption in 1843, he made it clear that he was not criticising the theory of Establishment, but only necessarily leaving the Established Church on the principle of religious freedom. When the Free Church switched its allegiance to the (unsuccessful) Disestablishment campaign of the 1880s, it was in the recognition that there was no disentangling spiritual independence from disestablishment, and pursuing the former principle necessitated supporting the latter. So the mid-nineteenth century witnessed the Free Church supporting Establishment with spiritual freedom and the United Presbyterian (formerly Secession) Church insisting on the same spiritual freedom but with the Voluntary principle of financial self-maintenance. Only with the change in the Free Church's position could the union of those Churches proceed in 1900, to form the UF Church.

The Articles Declaratory

The Articles Declaratory presented a new self-understanding of the Church of Scotland and took a minutely precise course through the differences of principle of the Established and United Free Churches. All the precious spiritual demands of both sides were to be met, in a Church that would be national but free, related to the state but not Established in the old sense, territorial but not subject to external authority. They were a remarkable accomplishment, overcoming differences that many people thought were insuperable.

In terms of the distinctions made at the beginning of this appendix, this was a settlement which continued down the route of separate jurisdictions. In the areas of doctrine, worship, government and discipline the Church has its independent spiritual jurisdiction, and has proved successful in fending off attempts at civil actions in those types of case.

Current critique of the settlement as it pertains today would include the following difficulties.

Power or Love. The trouble with taking a legal jurisdiction and dividing it between the secular and Church courts on the basis of subject matter, is that it assumes that the kind of authority the Church has (or seeks) is a worldly kind of power. Ecclesiology like Ruth Page's distinguishes models of 'power from above' from the gospel paradigm of love, attraction and service. The exercise, by the courts of the Church, of a legal power of command or punishment is not convincingly founded in theology. The gospel virtues of service and humility do not sit well with the dignity of a self-contained legal system in the Church. **The Church should be uncomfortable with any top-down power.**

Privilege and the Church. Other Churches in Scotland have the constitutional status of voluntary organisations, and the civil law largely leaves them to govern their own affairs internally, provided they do so justly. The Church of Scotland bases its claims to spiritual independence on a legislative provision that only we have. **The Church should not be a guardian of privilege, and one branch of it should not rejoice to have privileges others do not share, unless particular good can come of it.**

European Convention on Human Rights. The ECHR, now directly accessible in the Scottish Courts, provides protection in Article 9 for freedom of religious expression. Since the vast bulk of our debate and internal case-law about doctrine, worship, government and discipline does not hold the slightest interest for the civil law or courts, the general protection afforded to all religious organisations by this Article probably secures a liberty of internal regulation for the Church of Scotland which will scarcely differ in substance and effect from the specific privilege of the 1921 Act. **The Special Commission rejoices that religious liberty is still regarded as a fundamental human right, and the Church benefits from this international recognition.**

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

SPECIAL COMMISSION

Appendix No. 3: A Healthy Church

Integrity

means:

Jesus is at the core,
He is the beginning, middle and end of our story
We remember our Church's experience covers thousands of years.
What we say is consistent with what we do.

Body and Soul

means:

We strive for a lasting face to face encounter with God
We involve the whole person and the whole people of God
The quality of our worship and devotion are vital
The whole of life is our concern

Open House

means:

We welcome all with open doors
and open arms
We go out to find the uninvited
We make our home among need
We listen and we speak

Growth

means:

We are trainees learning skills
We are followers on the road
Seeds have to be nurtured before they will bear fruit
God adds to our number

Local

means:

The global good news needs to be spoken in a local accent
We choose to be real rather than virtual
We value every locality

Love and Care

means:

Our Community will only be satisfied with
Christ-like relationships
We put our hands to work

How can these characteristics be cultivated in 21st Century soil?
Where do we see them being well cultivated today?
What about other characteristics?
They may be beautiful, efficient and sensible, but are they necessary?

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

SPECIAL COMMISSION

Appendix 4: The Church in Context

The Church in the Highlands

Factors of Geography

The Highland Church has many distinctive features, not least its geography and scattered population. In 1999, the roll of the whole Presbytery of Sutherland was 1096. While being fully aware of the number of adherents who are more active than most Lowland members, we must set these numbers against the fact that the small congregations are scattered around hundreds of miles of the coast of Sutherland.

The Highland life is rich in its natural network of community, but isolation and distance can also lead to insularity. The traditional community is being changed as “new Highlanders” migrate from the South, enriching the community in many ways, but sometimes skewing the local economy by buying up houses for holiday homes at prices locals could never afford.

These factors of geography affect the whole community: the range of educational opportunities from single pupil schools to Dingwall Academy of 1300 pupils, with pupils having to travel large distances and often boarding out during the week. The same is true for health where services are focused in Inverness, a two and a half hour drive from Wick. A trip to the cinema from Scourie may mean an overnight stay in Inverness.

Factors of History

The Highland Church is very distinctive. Its history is marked by the strength of diverse Presbyterianism, remnants of Episcopalianism and pockets of Roman Catholicism overlaid on centuries of clan loyalties created by our geography of mountains, glens, lochs and islands. At the same time it is not unusual for the Highland church to be home to people of many different traditions. Other denominations have to stretch their resources very widely: the non-stipendiary Episcopal priest in Lairg cares for four congregations, while being the local chemist.

Factors of Spirituality

The inheritance is a mix of affirmations and challenges. We affirm the deep prayer and quiet spirituality of the people which is an inspiration to many - a unique contribution to the renewal church in faithful prayer. We affirm the place of the church in the community where it will have a central role even for those who may not be actively committed. The role of elders and Readers in preaching and leading worship is an example to other parts of the church of local leadership.

We affirm the creative and inspiring responses to being the church today. Consider the youth outreach at Bayhead in Stornoway, with young people from all the churches reaching out at night to the vulnerable young folk on the streets. Travel to Benbecula and the attempts to be the church in the community or Barra with its lively congregation living peaceably with the Roman Catholic majority. Gairloch has shown the way in quietly developing the people of God in ministry as has Killearnan and Dornoch. Radical new approaches to worship, discipleship and outreach are being implemented at Hilton, and Tongue has made use of modern technology to make worship lively and breathe with the mood of today. There are many other stories to tell - from different denominations and different areas.

Factors of Identity

The issues that challenge the Highland church are primarily issues of identity. At one level that is about a negative identity based on inherited criteria of doctrine and practice adopted as acceptable conventions, usually to mark groups out from each other. The divisiveness in one village of several little churches based on secondary identities other than Jesus Christ is a scandal to the Gospel in many places. There needs to be the rediscovery of our positive identity in Christ that set us free to cross old barriers.

Identity lies at the heart of the recurring adherents issue. Who are we? Who belongs here? Who is in and who is out? How do we pass through this “buffer zone”, “ecclesiastical no-man’s-land”? Church is defined by boundaries rather than by the centre in Jesus Christ. Instead of the image of Jesus bringing sheep within the walls of the sheep-fold, perhaps we need to think of Jesus in the midst of the crowd. People who are physically close to him may be in opposition to him, while those at the edge of the crowd are straining to hear and follow.

The identity of the Church must change because the identity of the Highlands is changing. It is one of the romantic myths about Scotland that because the mountains and glens are measured in millennia that the people are not themselves subject to change or initiators of change. The history of the highlands is one of dramatic social change, and recent patterns of life are affected by improved transport links, information technology, population migration and the all-pervasive media-saturated culture. The pace of change may be more measured, but the fact of change is a given of life.

Factors of Theology

The Highland church must change if it is to follow Jesus more obediently. Like the church at large needs to revisit its roots in the Gospels, going behind the inherited shibboleths of Disruption and Reformation and redefine its identity as the people of God for the emerging generation of highland children. There is a crucial theological issue of being the church for all or the church for some - limited atonement means limited church. Open church does not mean an easy universalism, but it does mean an inclusiveness to share the journey that will reveal Christ on the road.

One underlying spiritual issue for the whole church is the issue of fear - fear of change, fear of stepping out of line, fear of failing or being seen to fail. It may be that the Highland tradition of tough independence of mind can be sanctified for the renewal of the church. Instead of being hi-jacked as a reactionary mindset to affirm Highland identity over against central-beltism, it might be baptised into Christ as a readiness to turn sterile conservatism into a dynamic radicalism - a return to the Word of God and to prayer and the community of faith as primarily about relationships not religious observance. That radicalism would be a gift to the wider church.

Factors of “Temple Christianity”

The main challenge to the Highland concept of church lies in the fact that many churches operate with a kind of “Temple Christianity”. This mindset lies behind the recurring refrain that “I am not good enough” to be a member or an elder. The way of grace is the way of release from that way of guilt and unworthiness. That involves breaking the “temple template” that lies embedded in the religious psyche.

The Temple operated with an outer court for the Gentiles, and inner court for the people of Israel, a priestly court and then the Holy of Holies for the High Priest. Highland churches have the same gradations of access, which have been socialised as the “adherents” (God-fearing Gentiles), the people of Israel (members), the court of the priests (the elders) and the High Priest (the minister). The model means that law is the core, not grace. When Jesus died, the Holy of holies was burst open, a new priesthood was released among the people and the boundary wall of Jew and Gentile

was broken down. The legal model operates from the outside in. The grace model operates from the centre out, removing the barriers and opening the doors.

The text for Highland renewal may be the Letter to the Hebrews - an extraordinarily subversive letter. In it the writer uses the imagery of Temple, priesthood and sacrifice to explain the ministry of Jesus Christ in a way that shows that all three are now fulfilled in him. The Temple model has been superseded. As we move to the end of the letter, the static imagery of Temple is overtaken by the mobile procession of the people of God who are to keep their eyes on Jesus, and we are taken back behind the Temple in the City to worship in the wilderness, and end by meeting Jesus "outside the camp".

Factors of Mission Strategy

It follows from this image of Jesus "outside the camp" that we are no longer to wait for people to come to us - an image reinforced by centuries of singing Psalms about the nations coming to Zion. The missionary muscle of the Highland church has withered under that imagery. It is time for the Christian people of the church to go and meet Jesus "outside the camp" and to meet Christ's absent friends. Jesus' way of holiness was not worked out in separation from people. He was separated to God, but he was totally involved with people. So much so that they called him the "friends of tax collectors and sinners." If we made up our minds that "any friend of Jesus is a friend of mine", our lifestyles would be turned inside out and we would become the "church without walls."

A Reformation that put Jesus Christ above every religious convention, deconstructed the ecclesiastical pecking order and turned a static-gathered church into a mobile scattered church who began to find Jesus beyond our walls in strangely "unholy" places - now that would be a Reformation worthy of the name.

The Church in Rural Areas

Rural Variations

Almost 50% of Church of Scotland congregations are in rural areas. “Rural” covers many different contexts. The Borders are different from Buchan. The Western Isles are different from the Northern Isles. Angus is different from Argyll. Rural ministry begins with respect for locality, a “knack for here” (Wendell Berry).

Rural life feels the threat of a succession of farming crises, fuel costs and limited transport. Housing prices are affected by the arrival of people from wealthier areas, or the extension of villages into commuter areas for cities and towns. The pace of life will vary from area to area and within the one community. The tension of different expectations between the traditional families and the incomers can be an issue in community life and in congregational life. Community life is sacrosanct. Feelings are usually private. The quality of life is valued, and there are deep motivations to conservation and conservatism.

Size

Rural church is usually small – the family sized church, where leadership lies with key people rather than official leadership. Young people move out for jobs and education. Leadership can sometimes be limited in numbers, but at their best elders are well-informed and personally concerned. Names are more important than numbers. Certain areas such as Angus and Buchan still have conventional pulls to membership, but attendance is low. Nominalism is endemic.

Linkages

The strains on rural church life lie in the multiple linkages, making massive drains on finances and time. This feature of rural church life more than any other, makes rural church and ministry distinctive. Add a vacancy or two in a rural Presbytery and it becomes unmanageable. The cost of maintaining buildings takes more money than can be justified in terms of the advancement of the Kingdom.

In some situations, it is time for the common sense that offers transport to a central point and the benefit of an enthusiastic worshipping congregation rather than three demoralized groups of die-hards. By contrast, where churches have developed local worship teams, such as Upper Tweeddale, worship has been sustained in local communities by local people, with the support of the minister.

On the other hand, in Orkney, the children asked why they went to one school but had to attend different churches. The outcome was united worship for the good of everybody. In some linkages, more could be done to affirm the distinctives, and let different churches develop different ministries and styles of worship. Instead of a reactionary defensiveness, it could be a proactive strategy to have a youth congregation or reflective worship or a “peace and justice” centre. Celebrate positive difference.

Denominational Allegiance

The potential for ecumenical cooperation varies from area to area. In some parts of Scotland, the Church of Scotland is the only church for miles, with the challenge of offering a spiritual home to people from many different traditions. This is both enriching and demanding, depending on attitudes and expectations. Membership rules need to be loosened to allow the gifts of people from other backgrounds to share in the governance of the congregation without requiring a change in denominational allegiance.

Patterns of Leadership

A General Kirk Session in a linked charge can allow the elders to come together around issues of strategy or to consider wider matters of church, nation or world concern. The individual Kirk Sessions can deal with the day-to-day issues of the local congregation and community. Finding elders can be difficult for reasons that are as much cultural as spiritual, and looser patterns of organization are needed to let the natural leadership be expressed without the full weight of officialdom.

One minister pleads for a “ministry of truth” about situations where the old ways are just not working. The numbers are so low that morale has gone. The leadership is tired. The church has cut itself off from the community and lost the simple art of communication and basic courtesy. Presbytery is often too close to the situation to challenge the issues.

Team ministry is essential for linked charges over wide areas. Gairloch developed a team of preaching elders to sustain worship in the different communities. Aberfeldy has employed a youth worker (formerly a dentist) to work in the schools, and develop new patterns of worship. Readers are being appointed to linked charges and given pastoral responsibilities to develop a true pastor-teacher relationship instead of being the occasional preacher.

Teams from within, or by employment, or through collaboration with other denominations are essential for the future of the rural church. Preparing the churches for multiple ministries might be the single priority of rural Presbyteries in the foreseeable future.

Church and Community

The rural church is usually immersed in the local community as the leaven in the dough. Church and community are not marked off by clear boundaries. Evangelism is best done when shaped by the human life cycle or the cycle of Christian year – the times when community attends church and are part of the faith community. One church offers the theme of pilgrimage and marks out milestones for each year – a journey to travel together. Another prays for all the children on the cradle roll. Another invites the families of all baptised children to a special service once a year.

Spirituality

The faith of the rural church is seldom vocal. Some people have found inspiration in the Celtic renaissance, where life and faith are gently woven together. Worship in small numbers requires thought and creativity on the part of the person leading the worship, and a different degree of involvement for the congregation. In some places, where the old ways are sustained for no better reason than that we have always done it this way, worship can be more exhausting than inspiring. In other places, like the Western Isles, a deep and quiet spirituality permeates the most traditional of gatherings.

Presbytery

The formation of the Committee on Presbytery Boundaries was largely due to the concerns about rural Presbyteries that had become too small to be sustainable. There is a deep frustration about trying to service central demands, and mirror General Assembly structures, with limited personnel.

Whatever the final outcome of Presbytery changes, these rural areas need “upside down” church, which takes its agenda from the local congregations and offers support, encouragement and inspiration to the small churches in the area. Rural church will find much to affirm and challenge in the twin themes of “local and relational”.

The Church in Urban Priority Areas

Through the able assistance of the Rev Ian Moir, then Urban Adviser, members of the Commission were invited to meet people working in parishes in the North of Glasgow and in an ecumenical partnership in the Inner East End of Glasgow. The Rev John Miller, then Convener of the UPA Committee, joined the Commission for a debriefing on the experience. The Commission expresses appreciation for the time and effort put into the preparations and presentations.

Starting at the End

From the experience, the Commission highlighted important signs for the Church:

- The flexibility to respond to community needs with openness and hospitality.
- The call to be the Church that likes to say “Yes” to people who assume rejection.
- The readiness to go empty-handed, like the disciples described in Luke chapter 10.
- The commitment to focus 70% of congregational time in the community.
- The cooperation between the churches of different traditions.
- The creative use of volunteers and their gifts.
- The need to go beyond the usual statistics to find alternative measures of a healthy church.
- The fragility of these situations, highlighting a church divided over resources.
- The dispersal of poverty throughout cities means it is less visible than it once was.
- The drain of the same people seeking funding from a limited range of sources.
- The mixed blessing of buildings - signs in the community, but a drain on time and money.
- The principle that “public policy is to be judged by effectiveness at the point of delivery.”

The Commission was left with uncomfortable questions about the divided church where resources need to be reallocated. Why should these congregations on the edge of mission have to spend so much time and energy seeking funding from sources beyond the church? Is the Gospel really perceived as good news for the poor in Scotland?

From the Beginning.....

An Urban Priority Area is so designated by indicators from the Scottish Office and the National Census. There are 330 parishes in Scotland containing at least 10% of the worst 20% of the most deprived population. Of the 330 parishes, 100 are within the Presbytery of Glasgow.

Much has been written about work in these areas, but, the Commission records its visits to parishes in Ruchill, Colston Milton and Possilpark, all of which over 90% UPA status.

Ruchill

The minister of Ruchill described three structural barriers to being the church in his area:

- buildings take up 60% of the income;
- ministers are trained to be suburban;
- doctrine gets in the way of valuing people first.

The Youth and Family worker is working in the community with children, who in turn bring teenage brothers and sisters, and finally the wider family. The key is to be 70% in the community and to build friendships with the young people where they are.

The convener of the Community Council valued the church’s involvement in the whole area in collaboration with other churches. She has been deeply affected by the local **Alpha** course, but challenged us to live with the realities of life, not the sham.

Summary of Key Issues

1. Be where the people are.
2. Invest in friendships around the real issues of life.
3. Find funding without having to go so far afield.
4. Consider the barriers of buildings, training of ministers and doctrine that excludes people.

Possilpark

Resources are a challenge on two fronts: the lack of money (the sectors of the church are disconnected) and the lack of members who live in the parish (the sectors of our lives are disconnected). Liberation theology thrived when the priests were on the ground and kept close to the community.

The parish is much reduced in size and a new building has given a new base for mission. The most significant development has been the Abigail Project, a cafe for drug users, involving banner-making, talks, family support groups and visits to Iona. What is emerging is a “parallel church”. It is fragile.

They are determined to be the church that likes to say “Yes” to people who assume “No”.

Summary of Key Issues

1. The cultural divide of congregation and community - and the time to be in the community.
2. The spirit of hospitality - say yes!
3. The emergence of the parallel church in the Abigail project.
4. The need for collaboration between congregations and with the wider community.
5. The funding priorities.

Colston Milton

We heard the story of the area over the forty years from being a thriving area for families to the ageing and decline of the community. The result has been the draining of resources and the loss of children. The community is now becoming more responsive.

The changes in the church are: first of all, the renovation of the building to be more usable by the community; and secondly the breaking of the “ministerial mould” as lay workers lead breakfast clubs and take school assemblies.

A strategic development has been the arts project that has attracted 80-90 young people in the worst section of the community.

Summary of Key Issues

1. Stay with the community and move with it through the generations.
2. Let the “weakness” of the few be the power to break the ministerial mould.
3. Use the building for the community.
4. Develop the arts as the way of reaching communities.

Glasgow Inner East End Churches Together

Inner East End Churches Together (IEECT) consists of Barrowfield Franciscan Friary, Bridgeton St Francis in the East (C of S), Church House (C of S), Calton Parkhead (C of S), The Episcopal East End Team, St Luke’s and St Andrew’s (C of S) and St Thomas’, Gallowgate (C of S).

Their mission statement reads: *IEECT represents congregations from the Church of Scotland and the Episcopal Church working as a team in an open and collaborative way, identifying common concerns*

and problems within our communities, and discovering the present and future reality of the Kingdom of God.

We want to do this by the way we work, pray, study together, celebrating our diversity, sharing hospitality, our faith, experience, energy, love, care and concerns, not forgetting our vulnerabilities as individuals and churches together.

This mission statement is given “teeth” in a team contract based on values of respect, affirmation, safety risk and mutual care, and practical commitments to 8 meetings with specific components of worship, agenda setting, decision-making and a rotating chairperson. An annual review with an external facilitator is built into the contract.

When the Presbytery of Glasgow invited areas to develop a Mission Plan in 1998, this was done together.

The Area

A video provided a vivid insight into the area’s history, decline and current changes: closed shops, the HQ of the Orange Lodge, the Barras, the hostels for homeless people, “the grieving and hoping” as 63 new houses are built and Merchant City encroaches on the area. The population was 35,882 in 1997 - in some wards an increase of 45% since 1991. This is a growing area.

The Inner East End has some of the worst multiple deprivation enumeration districts in Europe despite years of social planning:

75% of the population are dependent on welfare of state benefits/pensions.

70% of school children are receiving clothing/footwear grants.

71% of households are in receipt of housing benefits.

6% of the population has some form of Higher or Further Education qualification.

The people of the area speak of lack of facilities, drug abuse, territorial rights and a low level of involvement

In the Mission Plan, the churches mention several responses to this situation, but called for a “skills exchange” from churches around the city to meet the needs; and for funding for a skilled Project Worker to work alongside the four churches and seek wider funding.

The Church

“We are all struggling”.

One minister spoke of 100 funerals per year, while 300 people pass through Church House each week. There has been a 45% increase in population, but congregations are small. Five members live in the parish. Five members are in full-time work and three are part-time. Drug abuse is a constant pastoral challenge. The renovation of buildings to be usable costs hundreds of thousands of pounds.

The struggle goes on, but the journey of IECT has begun to offer support and hope for the strugglers. The staff meets for regular lunches, and there is a programme of events for congregations and team. The minister of St Thomas’ Gallowgate is appointed with 25% of her time as facilitator for the team. Snippets of hope in the struggle.

Summary of Key Issues

1. The commitment of the church to stay with the community through the painful changes.
2. The contractual, practical nature of the commitment made by members of the team and

congregations.

3. The creative appointment of one minister with 25% time allocated to ecumenical coordination.

4. The need for wider church in the Presbytery to commit people and resources to support the initiatives.

Final Comments

1. An Injustice.

It is wrong that areas of massive need and limited resources have to go in search of financial support to sustain innovative projects. While recognising the existing commitment of the church in terms of staff, buildings and national support structures, there is still much to be done to foster stronger Presbyterial partnerships of shared resources.

2. A Pointer

If every congregation in the land budgetted 70% of its time and efforts on being in and for the community, the church would begin to find her role again. These relationships are the foundation of authentic worship and witness of the Incarnate Christ among his people.

3. A Model

The formal structure of collaboration in the East End deserves reduplication around the country, noting the fact that one of the ministers allocates 25% of her time to facilitating this teamwork.

4. An Image

The image used was of a "building site" where work is in progress, but the outcomes are unclear. We live with hope amidst the confusion and trust that God is not only uprooting and destroying, but building and planting.

5. A Question

What would give greatest encouragement to the Christian congregations of these areas? A strong affirmation that the church was backing them for the long haul, without feeling that they had to prove themselves or be judged as failures. They do not ask to be beyond accountability, but that the criteria be less about the measurables of money and membership, and more about faithfulness to the Way of Jesus.

The Church in the City

The Church in the city is a kaleidoscope of patterns covering city centre, suburbia, areas of deprivation and sector ministries in shops, industry, hospitals, universities and prisons. City life brings its own challenges to the church to think “outside the box”.

Residents: The Mobile Generation

Cities are places of transience. Resident populations in city centres are often short term, and in areas like Garnethill may be multiethnic. The culture is fluid and the church in the city requires to be flexible and sensitive to keep in touch with the changing needs of the changing community.

The environment of the city is highly stimulating, with global connections. The church in the city is uniquely placed to represent the international dimensions of the Gospel, through partnerships and celebrating the church of the nations. The globalisation of the local church is essential here, but we do not yet have multiethnic teams to develop that international and multicultural focus of the church in a global world.

Churches in the city centre are usually gathered congregations, drawn together by family history or for a distinctive approach to worship: places noted for a preaching or teaching ministry, or churches which offer particular music or liturgical styles. There is scope in the cities to offer a range of worship and to be innovative: encouraging interaction, imaginative experience and spiritual search through services that reflect different traditions and styles. That potential is offset by the observation that our readiness for change is often in inverse proportion to the distance we travel to church. Our travelling is an investment in our chosen pattern of church. Our choice makes us resistant to change.

Business: The Stressed out Generation

Our cities are centres of commerce. People may work in the centre and live in the suburbs. A number of city centre church buildings have been restyled to be open to the business communities: notably Renfield: St Stephen’s in Glasgow and the current refurbishment in St George’s West, Edinburgh. Café and the chapel stand side by side.

Stress in the workplace is recognised as a modern day plague. Pastoral support is offered through chaplaincies to shopping centres and businesses. Beyond that, Christian people are looking for more connections between worship and the workplace in their worship, or through congregational groups to support them as they face real life-issues.

In every city we have specialists – chaplains to industry, hospital, university and prison - whose expertise is seldom integrated into the life of congregations to develop local ministries to these groupings in the city. We need “matrix ministries” to let different insights inform and inspire us.

Church life can often become another source of stress. Many people in business require the service of stillness and sanctuary for the journey. That may be one of the unique gifts of the church in the city to a stressed out generation.

The Weekenders: The Playful Generation

Cities are places of leisure and entertainment. The church has not been good at either sharing in the carnival or being in touch with the lament that runs through that sector. Cinemas have been described as cathedrals of image and the place where we are most likely to encounter public religious discourse. One church paid for its youth group to view several films and then meet in a café to talk about them. A group of young adults meets as an informal film club and find it leads into discussing deep issues of spirituality and our times.

It has been said that the Reformation was talked about in the coffee houses of Europe. In our café culture churches would often find better quality conversations meeting “off site” in the ordinary meeting places of the city – the pubs and clubs which are the nodes of community in a fragmented society. Christians in Sport can point the way to tapping into the fitness market.

Homeless People: The Vulnerable Generation

The city attracts the nomads, and contributes to the increasing numbers of people without a home to call their own. The factors are many, but usually significant relationships have broken down. The call of the church is to offer friendship to people who are often ignored in the impersonal bustle of the street.

City churches are often the places where vulnerable people can find healing community through hospitality: from lunches or support groups to care shelters throughout the winter months. The Churches’ Millennium Project in Edinburgh resulted in a partnership of churches, banks and commercial enterprise to establish Fresh Start, a registered charity to help people moving into their first homes after a period of homelessness. The Churches support initiatives to address the underlying social and political dimensions of homelessness.

The homeless people on the streets and at the door are a practical challenge for the Church in the city to follow the “downward way” of Christ: to meet God among the poor, and to be open to being evangelized by the poor.

Shoppers: The Consumer Generation

For many the city means shopping – the Mecca of the consumer generation. In practical terms, that presents a challenge to the churches in the centre, such as the Steeple or St Mary’s in Dundee. Where the retail parks are expanding, the church finds remarkable openness to chaplains, but has yet to rise to the challenge of the “Ikea Church” which might offer access to the Gospel to people who are accustomed to visiting cathedrals of consumerism designed around chapels of choice.

The more subtle influence is the consumer mentality. People will “shop around” for the church of their choice. More subtly, we have carried over the shopping mall mentality into our spirituality. There is a serious challenge to transform pick and mix spirituality into Christian discipleship. While that is a facet of our wider culture, it is a distinctive aspect of being a city church.

Decision-makers: The Political Generation

Cities are centres of power and political influence. City churches have a legacy of being chaplains to the powerful, colluding or colliding with the powers that be. As the forces of secularisation pushed the Church to the margins of influence, so the forces of post-modernity have opened up a new marketplace of opportunity for debate. Churches which are willing to build relationships with councillors and policy makers, ready to be well informed and pray for the welfare of the city, will be find political allies as partners in seeking the common good. They will also be better placed, when necessary, to be prophets that challenge the systems that are oppressive. City churches do well to equip members in active citizenship in a participative democracy, and to sustain the preaching that recognises the Gospel as public truth for the city – “Christ in whom all things hold together” (Col 1:17).

Ray Bakke, a specialist in urban mission, once said that the person who “loves Jesus, the church and the city is a rare bird”. Nurturing that passionate public spirituality is a peculiar challenge of being the church in the city.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND SPECIAL COMMISSION

Appendix No 5: The Church in a Changing World

To say that the world is changing faster than ever before is to say something trite but true. Technological, social and "existential" changes impact upon our lives in complex and inter-connected ways. Causal links between our environment, our genes and our experience are up for discussion in ways we could not have imagined only a few years ago. Society and the individual within it are bound together: their experiences of the shifting sands of post-modernity may be diverse, but there is no escape from its influence, whether for better or worse. The Church as an institution and as a collection of individuals cannot fail to be affected by this climate of change.

A Changing World

The recent Board of Ministry's Report "Changing Scotland" highlights some of the cultural, social and economic shifts that have taken place in Scotland. During the period we call "modern", roughly from 1850 to 1950, Scotland was firmly part of the industrial society within the United Kingdom. Class, employment, Trade Unions and religion offered some measure of security and identity. Within the family, the roles of women and men, and of the young and the old, were fairly well-defined. Of course, the impetus for change was already to be found within this period, and included the massive upheaval caused by two World Wars. The process of change has accelerated the past forty years, as Scotland has evolved into a thoroughly post-modern society.

The economic shift from an industrial to a post-industrial society is obvious. Tourism rather than manufacturing is now the biggest industry in Scotland. More than 70% of the workforce are now employed in the service industry, where flexible working patterns are the norm. The number of women in the workplace continues to grow, and now there are more women in the workplace than men. Trade Unions have no longer the influence they once had. Workers are expected to take responsibility for their own career development, where the opportunities for employment exist. In a global economy, economic Scotland owes its allegiance to Europe and the world rather than to the imperial state that was the UK.

The home life of Scots has undergone a similarly momentous change. Just over a quarter of households are made up of traditional family units. 27% are made up of pensioners, and a surprisingly high number of people of all ages (28% of households) now live on their own. There is more economic and geographical mobility than ever before, and the extended family unit may stretch over long distances and over several class boundaries. In his paper to the Board of Ministry, "Changing Scotland: A Commentary", Professor David McCrone comments that "this is a 'privatised' family pattern in the main, as households are thrown back on their own social resources, rather than locking into kin networks which have been left behind in time and place". There may be greater prosperity in the population as a whole, but among a minority of Scottish households, for example those who are single parents, endemic poverty is concentrated. The gulf between the elderly who are comfortably off and those who struggle to get by has also widened.

Who are We in this Changing World?

Without making value judgements about the nature of these changes (who could deny that some are positive while some are negative?), it is possible to note some of the cultural shifts that have arisen alongside or out of them. Individual identity is no longer bestowed by an accident of birth, but personally chosen in so far as circumstances allow. The values of one class or religion are no longer accepted in their entirety, but are selected from according to the needs of the moment. The roles of

women and men are negotiable within relationships, and these might change through time. There is a complexity and fragmentation about the culture of today, demonstrated most clearly in the experiences of young people.

Kenda Creasy Dean's paper "X-Files and Unknown Gods: The search for truth of post-modern adolescents" offers fascinating insights into the inner lives of American teenagers, surely not so distant from the experiences of Scottish teenagers. She comments:

Today's adolescents take for granted a world where microchips become obsolete every eighteen months, information is instantaneous, and parents change on weekends. Indeed, the one constant in their young lives is upheaval. In such a world truth is fluid, generic, self-constructed- and so are they. (p1)

Adolescents scarcely have to take on board the nuances of post-modern literary theory to be affected by the pressures and realities of post-modern society. The older generations, who tend to make up our church congregations, may be affected less acutely, but are unlikely to remain completely untouched by the world around them. Some may have felt the effect of our post-modern society in terms of changing patterns of employment and a loss of job security. Others may have felt its effect in shifting family relationships, whether their own or their children's.

Few are unaffected, and yet to many in the older generations, post-modern society is an alien culture, a world to be viewed with suspicion. Will Storrar's thesis is that congregations and the modern world exist as two separate worlds, sometimes overlapping and yet still clinging to their own perspectives. In a world where the big pictures are no longer viewed as adequate in themselves as patterns for living, the church is tempted to retreat into the big picture it inherited from previous centuries. In a world where structures are fluid and dynamic, the church is drawn to the rigid ways that suited past generations. In a world where change is accepted and even welcomed in the name of technological advance, the church resists and is threatened by change on many different levels.

Throughout the work of the Commission, in response to these tensions, we have sensed the need for initiatives to be local and relational, and we have seen examples of places where the post-modern world and congregations have interacted fruitfully on that basis. Sometimes in consultations we have heard pleas for movement forward in a way which takes account of the society we live in. But we have also heard stories of disappointments and fears and an impatience with a world which seems disinterested in the church and its message.

The Church in a Postmodern World

In a changing world, what hope does the church have? What can our response be to the changes in society around us and within us and what resources are available to us? For Dominic Smart in his paper "Postmodernism, the Bible and the Church", post-modernism, and deconstruction specifically, are ultimately dead-ends for the Christian faith:

Personally, I cannot see a more complete cultural reversal of the life of faith as Luther described it. No longer, on this line, are we *excurvatus ex se* - turned outwards from ourselves. Now we are inescapably returned to that fallen condition of being *incurvatus in se* - turned in upon ourselves, God's grace is replaced by our narcissism. (p7)

For Smart, the truth of God's word can and will prevail over this dangerous intellectual fashion, and a return to the big picture provided by Christianity will be possible. The point is debatable, but here we have to distinguish between post-modernism, the theoretical movement which has spawned

deconstruction and other literary and philosophical theories, and post-modernity, which charts the trends and changes in our culture over the past 40 years or so. "Post-modernity" is the name for where we, as a society and as individuals, are today. Few people are directly influenced by post-modernism in its pure form; but no-one can escape the influence of post-modernity, although attitudes towards it may vary. The hallmarks of post-modernity have already been sketched, and of course can never be divorced entirely from its more theoretically rigorous offshoot. We are dealing with rapid change, loss of established identity markers, a reluctance to commit wholesale to a ready-made system of belief or ideology. Radical scepticism and true relativism are not (as yet) features of most people's consciousness. Nevertheless, the challenges facing the Church from post-modernity itself are severe, although as Christians we want to affirm that there is no cultural shift which is beyond the grace of God. Wherever society is, God offers the resources to meet its needs.

Dean's paper offers some clues that might point the way forward for the church. Her comments about adolescents' search for truth would no doubt ring true for many people under 40 today:

The postmodern adolescent's view of truth echoes the word's etymology, from the Old English term for 'fidelity' or 'faithful', and connotes authenticity of action and congruence of character. Today's youth refuse to abstract truth from experience or reduce it to empirical data. Truth for them is neither hard-boiled fact nor universal principle; rather it embraces doubt and ambiguity. To postmodern youth, truth is event-personal, passionate, transcendent. They unapologetically up-end Descartes: "I experience, therefore I know". (p5)

Dean argues for a recovery of a Christian faith which would meet the needs of these post-modern young people, a Christian truth which is "inherently dynamic, personal, transcendent, and passionate, and as such ... can exercise extraordinary influence on the construction of self" (p20). Belief in God is not the issue (as David McCrone's analysis highlighted, far more people admit to being somewhat religious than go to church on a regular basis). Believing God *matters* is what is important.

The Church where God Matters

If the Church is called, in this postmodern age, to proclaim that God matters, then its worship and the relationships it fosters are key areas of concern. For those caught up in the postmodern maelstrom, truth must happen in worship, and it must involve the whole person:

As event, truth assumes a kind of dynamic ambiguity, best caught not by creeds or confessions but by immediate sacred experience, ambiguously captured in sacrament, icon, and community practices in which God 'happens' in the here and now. (p12)

For Dean, the truth of God "happens" in the primary experiences of community belonging and participation in worship. If postmodernism has taught us anything, it has reminded us sharply that words and systems are created by us, not God given. At the heart of the mystery of faith there is an inescapable act of trust in the possibility of God. But the secondary aspects of faith: its language, its organisation and ethics- are provisional and revisable. This creates a fruitful though painful tension in the Christian life between trust in God and detachment from the structures we create to express and define that trust. Christianity invites us to a generous and open-hearted commitment to God, though not necessarily to the words we use to talk about God, or the systems we develop to respond to God. We load these words and systems with theological meaning, and we cling onto them as certainties. But all we do in the process is alienate those who cannot subscribe, and force ourselves into positions we find it harder and harder to justify. By creating idols out of words and systems, we create refugees who have been wounded and excluded by our oppressive certainties.

People on the edge of Christianity who feel there is no place for them in the church because of their lifestyle or their intellectual difficulties with the way Christianity is officially expounded. But in worship, the truth of an experience of God may be explored, if language, music and image are used in ways which are culturally sensitive and conscious of their own provisionality.

Since 1997, St Andrew's Bo'ness has been experimenting with worship using video and computer imaging, linked with contemporary music, lighting and a variety of liturgical innovations. Essentially lay-led, although with back-up from the ministry team, these monthly worship events explore contemporary issues within a Christian framework using all aspects of the technologies available and familiar to people of the twenty-first century. TGI multi media worship may not be the future for all congregations, but it offers an insight into the possible for many.

We need to be alert to other examples of ways the Church might respond and is responding to the changing society of which it is a part (apart?). Resources are already available to the Church as it tries to move from one world into another. Our post-modern world need not be a threat to faith, but a place of opportunity and creativity, in which diversity may be celebrated.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

SPECIAL COMMISSION

Appendix 6: The Church of the Beatitudes

Our calling is to live in the Kingdom of God in response to the blessing of God in the grace of Jesus Christ. The blessings of the Beatitudes precede the radical call to discipleship in the Sermon on the Mount. Only in the confidence of that blessing of grace, will we be free to rise up and follow Christ in the radical agenda of the community of salt and light.

Blessed are the poor in spirit... Blessed are those that mourn...

Blessed is every individual and congregation that is open to God's present and future activity, because we are aware of our own weakness and failure. We know that we cannot renew ourselves. We feel a deep sense of loss that we are not closer to God and closer to one another. We feel the pain of our broken culture and long to be a touching place for Christ. We will not run away from the pain. We will run to God and meet his Kingdom coming towards us.

Jesus says: *Blessed are you.....*

Blessed are the meek.....Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness...

Blessed is the person and congregation that has been humbled by the experiences of life. The Church in Scotland is being humbled by the Spirit. We know that the old ways will not work. We are ready to be led by the Spirit into new ways of being Jesus' people. We have a growing passion to see wrong put right - in global poverty or personal relationships. We ache for the right relationships marked by justice and shalom, reconciliation with God and each other.

Jesus says: *Blessed are you....*

Blessed are the merciful.....Blessed are the pure in heart.....

Blessed is the person or congregation that is reckless in generosity and forgiveness. We do not give in to cynicism or shut people out. We see the good and seek the best. Holiness has taken on a new attraction. Amidst all our stumbling, there is a magnetic pull to single-minded obedience to Jesus Christ.

Jesus says: *Blessed are you.....*

Blessed are the peacemakers...Blessed are those who are persecuted....

Blessed is the person or congregation who so loves their enemies that they are not afraid to make them.

We face up to our differences and work them through. We are found in the places of conflict as agents of reconciliation, and are crucified for our trouble. We are determined to be salt that makes a difference in the everyday world. We laugh a lot, for we know who has the last laugh.

Jesus says: *Blessed are you.....*

Jesus says: *You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world.....Blessed are you.....*

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND SPECIAL COMMISSION – REVIEW AND REFORM

Appendix 7: A Narrative of the Special Commission

When the Special Commission on Review and Reform in the Church was set up by the General Assembly of 1999, all of those who had been appointed to it knew that the task that had been entrusted to the Commission was not only exciting and challenging but also in many respects impossible.

We were under no illusions that the task could actually be *completed* by ourselves, but we were excited by the prospect that we might be able to make some kind of meaningful contribution to the current debate about the state of the Church, and perhaps even add some impetus and sense of urgency to the mood for change that we all recognised was growing in the Church. We were also very much aware, however, that this desire for change was being inhibited by inertia and fear.

Among the first issues that had to be addressed were the methodology and working patterns that we should adopt as a Commission and the prioritisation of the various tasks that would emerge. There was an acute awareness of the short time-scale and of the limited resources available to the Commission.

Three particular decisions were made at the outset:

- Normal meetings of the Commission would be *residential* (lasting at least 24 hours). This would enable us to tackle issues in reasonable depth, but, more importantly, it would allow us to get to know each other personally and give us sufficient time to build up trusting relationships with each other. Only in this way would we be able to deal constructively with the fact that we were all very different people each with his or her own different theological bias and agenda, not to mention personality.
- We would aim to be as *open* as possible and communicate with the whole Church so that there would be few, if any, surprises when the Commission's final submissions were made. We realised that this communication process would have to be two-way, requiring us both to listen to and also speak to various constituencies. In particular, we hoped that we might be able to use a Website to facilitate this dialogue although at the beginning this proved to be more difficult to achieve.
- We would also listen to each other's *personal* faith-stories and experiences of church, not only to help us understand one another but also as an attempt to discern common threads. Again, we were not naïve enough to imagine that in a Commission of only 15 members we would encompass the whole breadth of the Church of Scotland, but equally we felt it would be wrong to ignore altogether who we were and what each of us had already experienced in the Church.

We believe that each of these decisions, taken at that very early stage, turned out to be quite crucial, and became in themselves significant pointers for some of the ways forward for the whole Church. In fact as soon as we defined the Church as a *community* of faith rather than as an *institution* we quickly realised that we could in some respects regard the Commission itself as a microcosm of the Church and use it as a test-bed for any of our theories and ideas.

If our ideas didn't work *among* us, could we expect them to work *beyond* us?

Of course there would be questions of scale and we would have to take into account the special nature and focus of the Commission together with the fact that each of us in the Commission was

already to some degree convinced of the need for change, and this might not be the case in the Church as a whole.

The Commission as Community

Each time we gathered in a locality—whether it was Dunblane, Carberry, Pitlochry, or wherever—we became a community again. Though subtly different on each occasion (for one thing not every member of the Commission could be present at each meeting) there was a continuity derived from shared experience, shared memory and shared faith. Though it was the common *task* which brought us together, and provided our focus, what made us a community were the *personal relationships* with each other which were quickly re-established on each occasion through time spent together informally and in shared worship. These relationships were not incidental but *integral* to the work in which we were engaged, for they affected the way we thought, discussed and decided matters. They enabled us to respect one another, listen to one another, learn from one another, disagree creatively with one another and therefore to "think out of our boxes".

The sense of trust that we gradually built up with each other also meant that listening to others became more than a policy decision, it became the *mindset* of the group.

Most of the members of the Commission already had experience of serving on Church Boards and Committees where, for a variety of reasons, there was not the same emphasis on inter-personal relationships and the focus was almost entirely on the business to hand. All agreed that it would have been significantly harder for us to have addressed the issues as thoroughly as we did had the Commission operated in that way.

Out of this group-dynamic two key concepts began to emerge which we soon realised may be of some significance for the Church as a whole and this was increasingly confirmed in all our consultations with groups and individuals.

The two key words were *LOCAL* and *RELATIONAL*.

The significance of the RELATIONAL:

Our present church structures, patterns of worship and church life evolved during times when people lived, worked, relaxed and worshipped in the same geographical location. Those who came together on a Sunday to worship were *already* a community, often with a shared history, and certainly with an already existing network of inter-personal relationships. This is hardly ever the case now. It is far more likely today that a person will live in one town or village, work in another, shop in some large out-of-town retail park and enjoy various leisure pursuits in many different locations among many different groups of people. We no longer live in one community: we participate in many different communities, including, for some, the Internet-community which transcends geographical location.

If any contemporary worshipping congregation is to become a welcoming community, then opportunities for relationship-building have to be deliberately *created*. A sense of belonging has to be generated through the creation of collective experiences and the sharing of personal stories. The *vertical* relationship to God is, of course, foundational, but the *horizontal* relationships to each other are also crucial.

The very first item of business at the initial meeting of the Commission (Crieff, June 1999) was to allow each member of the Commission to share with the others her or his church experience and particular issues of interest. As we discovered in the Commission, a willingness to open ourselves up to one another, also made it possible for us to become much more open to others.

The first test of this openness came at the second meeting of the Commission in Scottish Churches House, Dunblane (August 1999) where we discovered that another group (THENEW*) was meeting at the same time. We invited the participants in the THENEW meeting to come and share their story with us.

This dialogue not only exposed the Commission to an area of concern that might not otherwise have been identified but also enabled the Commission to recognise how significant in the life of the Church were the effects of fear, and the distribution and use of power—themes which were to re-emerge in subsequent consultations. It was the first of many "voices from the margins" to which we would listen.

The significance of the LOCAL:

In the telling of our own stories to each other we quickly recognised the diversity of our experiences and of the situations from which we had come. It also became clear that the local setting often determined what was effective and what was not. It was clear that the "one size fits all" approach often adopted by centralised Boards and Committees was quite inappropriate to the kind of Church which the Church of Scotland is and the kind of country in which we serve. This meant, of course, that there could be no "blueprint" or single plan of action for the renewal and reform of the Church and our report would have to deal with underlying principles and broad themes rather than detailed prescriptions, though "models of good practice" might be provided as illustrative of the principles.

Realising the significance of the local we decided, for example, that in order to consult with the Church in Urban Priority Areas we would have to visit and see for ourselves the particular challenges of such situations.

In that setting we were impressed by the creative use of limited resources but also with another theme that began to re-emerge in other situations—that often local congregations felt themselves hindered rather than enabled or supported by central bureaucracy and legislation. Sometimes this was no more than a perception and other initiatives proved that much more is possible within the system than many local congregations realise. Were the examples of "good practice" more widely publicised and shared among churches some of those misconceptions might be corrected. (The local often has global significance.)

Communication

From the outset it was decided that, as far as possible, the Commission would utilise e-mail facilities to allow individual members to share their own reflections and contributions with the rest of the Commission and do work in their own time. Some members were comfortable with this approach, others preferred the creative sparking of ideas that occurred during meetings (in itself a recognition of differing gifts and differing styles of working.)

Far more important, in terms of communication, was our discussion on the importance of the language and vocabulary which we used. We recognised that so many of the words and phrases which we so readily adopted in our conversations came loaded with associations which were not always helpful, or which meant different things to different groups of people. Using words like "ministry", for example, may well prevent people from thinking "out of the box" and even when used in phrases like "ministry of the whole people of God" may carry presuppositions that are based on previous experience of the ordained Ministry of Word and Sacrament.

We recognised the need to find a new vocabulary that would not carry with it unwanted associations but would communicate clearly. This is no easy task.

One discussion with Dr. Ruth Page, however, gave us a useful distinction between "power as clout" and "power as attraction" and we recognised that a process of re-definition was needed for many of the words we used.

Worship:

Worship was an integral part of the life of the Commission and not merely a formality.

Members of the Commission took it in turn to lead worship, prayer and celebration of the Sacrament and in this way the diversity of people's gifts was expressed. The more we became a community, the more important and more meaningful our worship became.

Worship, in fact, became an expression of our common life. We learned to appreciate the distinctive gifts and insights that each individual brought to the whole but found that together we 'owned' the worship, whatever shape it took—and the shape of our worship did vary. We followed set liturgies, specially written liturgies or relatively spontaneous orders of worship depending on who was leading. We listened to stories from each other, some drawn from personal experience, others from a variety of sources. We used a variety of kinds of music, with or without accompaniment, depending on who was present. We met in a variety of settings, sometimes in places specially set aside for worship (like the chapels at Dunblane or Carberry) or simply in the room where we had been meeting. Where possible we invited others around to participate with us. There was greater use of silence and symbolism than is often experienced in the average Church of Scotland service. For example, on one occasion the Convener made the highly significant and appropriate gesture of laying his diary upon the Table beside the Communion elements to represent a sacrificial offering of his time for the work of the Commission, an action with which we all identified. A simple act, but in its context powerfully symbolic and effective.

When worship becomes a formality, or a formula, as it often seems to do in the committees and courts of the Church, and sometimes even in congregations, (no matter how sincerely offered) it frequently becomes disconnected from the business at hand or from everyday life.

In contrast, perhaps the most significant feature of the Commission's shared worship (and it is one which is often recognised when people make space to live together in Christian community, even for a short time) was the way in which business, worship and relaxation became integrated into an almost seamless whole rather than being kept apart in separate compartments. So, for example, there were worshipful moments during complex discussions, especially if one of the group articulated a new insight; and friendships nurtured in mealtimes and shared leisure activities (e.g. a late-night visit to the Cinema on one occasion) spilled over into worship as well as work.

What made the difference seems to have been something to do with the time allowed for genuine meaningful relationships to be built up. We believe that, although this is a simple point, it is one that is not sufficiently taken account of in the way in which the structures of the Church normally operate.

If no serious attempt is made to build up a common life, truly communal worship becomes impossible.

* THENEW is a group aiming to articulate a Christian response to violence and abuse against women and concerned with the historical failings of the Church in this respect. It is associated with the VASHTI movement in Scotland and the European DAPHNE initiative.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND SPECIAL COMMISSION – REVIEW AND REFORM

Appendix 8: The Proposed Community and Parish Development Fund

Why create another Board when many are thinking about a decentralised structure?

This will be a different type of Board from the other Boards of the Church. It should be viewed more as a Board of Directors or Trustees acting as the funders of initiatives which will be based within a parish or local community.

This new Board will represent the interests of local congregations and will also seek to integrate and affirm the work of other Boards of the Church by giving grants to projects and initiatives that seek to promote collaboration between the Boards and the parishes of the Church.

The Board of Community and Parish Development will be given a seat at the regular budgeting meetings along with the other Boards in the Co-ordinating Forum and will be able to bid annually within the allocation system for funds. **The Board of Community and Parish Development will act primarily as a fast track funding mechanism to get money out to the local congregations willing to explore partnership projects that reflect the ethos of the SCARR Report.** It may turn out to be an important holding mechanism which will allow creative development to continue to be funded during a period of decentralisation.

How will this Board relate to the work of the other Boards of the church?

This Board will act as the broker between other Boards allowing them to channel their resources and expertise in a collaborative and interdependent way into the life of local congregations. Community and Parish Development will act as the contact through which Boards and congregations meet in partnership with each other and with the wider community. In a decentralised church some Presbyteries may choose to have a Board such as Community and Parish Development to continue this work or develop its remit.

What will the Community & Parish Development Fund be used for?

At present most of the resources which are directed at local level support the model of the single ministerial practitioner. This fund will be an essential part of the ongoing strategy of reform outlined in our report. We believe it will create levers for change in the mindset of the church over the next five years. The fund will signal to local congregations that the General Assembly is willing to invest substantial amounts of money in local communities and parishes to create multi-skilled team ministry. One way to establish such a team is by funding congregations to work interdependently with each other across geographical boundaries, changing mindsets in the process. We believe the Boards of Parish Education, Ministry, National Mission and World Mission and others will continue to have much to contribute to this ongoing process.

We recognise that, compared to other denominations, the Church of Scotland has a poor track record when it comes to developing and sustaining successful teams within parishes. This lack of success may say more about our historic style of training for leadership rather than the concept of working together in teams, which has become the recognised training policy of our existing Board of Ministry. Like the Board of Ministry we, too, believe multi-skilled team ministries to be essential for the future life and health of both congregations and ministers.

The Boards of National Mission, Parish Education, Social Responsibility and World Mission endorse this view and are currently endeavouring as individual Boards to further this philosophy. We believe

that the creation of a new Development Fund will allow some of the work and current thinking of the existing Boards to come together and be expressed in a practical way by funding local initiatives and creating new models of multi-skilled team ministry.

It will be essential that these initiatives and teams have a recognised pattern of leadership, but we believe this will vary in style in different places. The experience of the existing Boards in their various disciplines will be invaluable in training the leadership of multi-skilled ministry teams. Ongoing training in leadership will be encouraged via the various current opportunities within the Church's own resources.

To create an environment in which multi-skilled ministry teams within congregations and other community groups can flourish, the Church of Scotland will take the lead through funding projects and initiatives which have a built-in bias for interdependency. It will be essential that leadership and accountability be agreed before funds are invested in local initiatives. It will also be essential that these teams seek to promote aspects of the primary purposes of the church as set out in the report.

How much will be invested in the Fund?

Over a five-year period we would propose to spend £7.5 million out of resources held centrally. We believe that an equal amount could be raised through match-funding from one or two major trusts. Beginning with an investment of £1.5 million per annum, we could prime the pump for a minimum of 50 multi-skilled team ministry projects or initiatives of differing emphases to come into being over a five-year period.

When will it commence?

Preparations for a pilot group will commence in the year 2002. This will include putting into place the appropriate field staff. We recognise that it may take time for projects to come on-line, but we are convinced that the incentive of financial help will encourage congregations and Boards to think creatively, stimulating the implementers of change at the centre and the grassroots.

During 2002 we will invite Boards (especially those who intend to invest in the fund) to nominate a project which could become a collaborative, interdependent model for multi-skilled team ministry. This approach will continue to cement partnerships between the centre and the local. and give the Development Fund a good basis for success.

How will the Development Fund be established?

To help establish the Fund in 2002 we will request Stewardship and Finance to make a special grant of £1.5 million for the first year from the accumulated credit balance in the Mission and Aid Fund. (This has benefited from substantial unrestricted legacies in recent years.)

The Boards and the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland will be encouraged by the Commission to consider the merits of this proposal and work together to bring about a collective investment of £1 million per annum from their reserves during the four year period from 2003–2006. This will be a practical opportunity for the Boards to affirm their commitment to the priority of the local church's witness. Some Boards might be able to cash in some reserves while others may opt to take a lesser share of the Mission and Aid Allocation choosing to tithe their share back to the congregations. (Note the fund will be up and running for a period of 18 months before the first joint grant from the Boards is required.)

If reserves were used, the cost in lost revenue to the Boards would be approximately £40,000 per annum in year one (2003) rising to approx. £160,000 per annum by the year 2006. However, the

amount of money being levered back into the church through matched funding from other sources will make this a highly profitable investment.

In addition, the Board of Stewardship and Finance will be asked to provide a further £0.5 million per annum over the four year period by way of special grants from the Mission and Aid Fund. (This will be dependent on the continued receipt of unallocated legacies). By this means, it will be possible to establish a £7.5 million fund with limited disruption to present investment strictures over a five year period. The exciting and creative side of all this is that we know of two major funds who have expressed genuine interest in being involved with the new Development Fund once it is up and running.

The Commission intends, therefore, to invite the General Assembly in May 2001 to instruct the General Trustees, and Boards of Mission, Ministry, Parish Education, Social Responsibility and World Mission to consider the potential of this fund. Thereafter to bring to the Assembly of 2002 the financial plan which will allow an initial, collective investment of one million per annum to be paid over into the Community and Parish Development Fund for the four year period between 2003-2006. It may be that a formula will be devised to ensure that Boards pay pro rata according to their wealth.

Why will the Boards wish to put some of their reserves into such a fund?

The Boards will recognise this as a long-term investment in their own work. We are confident that the Boards are already beginning to recognise their own interdependence on one another and especially on local congregations. Indeed, the sustained spending power of Boards depends on having strong, financially secure congregational units.

How sustainable is this idea?

The action of all the Boards in putting money in the Community and Parish Development Fund will be the first act of serious decentralisation for the church for many years. If the pilot scheme were successful it will be our intention to grow the scheme to include many more congregations. This model will still be sustainable if our governance is decentralised to the regions.

How will it function?

Using the Rank Foundation's funding principles as a guiding example the Board of Community and Parish Development will function as an independent, grant awarding body working in close collaboration with the other Boards of the Church. It will help facilitate their local policies. The Board will be directly responsible to the General Assembly. It will be primarily concerned with obtaining and dispensing funds to enable congregations and groups of congregations to create and develop relevant forms of ministry for the 21st century. It would encourage congregations to tap into the collective wisdom and resources of the existing Boards of the Church.

Who will be responsible for the creation of the Board ?

The Board of Stewardship and Finance will be requested to:

- a. Write the constitution for the Board of Community and Parish Development.
- b. Select twelve appropriate people to serve on the Board and bring nominations to the General Assembly of 2002 via the Nominations Committee
- c. Appoint and manage two field directors until the Board of Community and Parish Development comes into being. The field directors will eventually be responsible to the Board of Community and Parish Development when it is established in 2002.

It will be important that members of the Board of Community and Parish Development have the relevant qualifications and experience to facilitate the aims and objectives of the fund.

Who will bring the projects to the Board?

The Development Fund will employ the two full time field directors who will have a proven track record in management and experience in Community and Parish Development. The field directors will be the key to the success of the venture. They will seek to discover the best initiatives by helping congregations articulate their vision. This will involve on-site visits including assistance in obtaining third party support. In consultation with Board Members, the field directors will bring forward the projects that in their estimation will work. The Board will then decide which to support, defer or reject. The field directors will be in constant contact with the applicants helping them to formulate their projects. Two field directors could bring on board 25 projects each and sustain them over the five-year period. The field directors would be involved in bringing the projects and initiatives together from time to time for mutual support.

How much could each project receive?

Grants could be made of up to £150,000 over a five-year period. Those applying for help will have a better chance of success if they can also match fund part of the project. As a rule, we would expect a minimum of 25% of the total funding to be raised locally in addition to monies from other trust funds. We anticipate that there may be occasions where local parties might struggle to qualify under these conditions. It would seem right to us that if the project or initiative had a rare quality or merit, the Board would have liberty to suspend the rules.

How much would it cost to run the fund?

The cost would be the salaries of two highly experienced field directors and secretarial back up. The field directors would be answerable to the Board. This would mean that they would have to be self-starters with a bias for action. The cost of servicing such a fund with this kind of staff would be in the region of £100,000 per annum. Board members would act in a voluntary capacity. Job descriptions for the field directors and their secretarial support would be agreed with the Personnel Department.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

SPECIAL COMMISSION – REVIEW AND REFORM

Appendix 9: Reviewing our Financial Strategy

The Church of Scotland centrally has an approximate annual income of £100 million and £300 million in invested funds. Over £40 million of the annual income comes by way of congregational contributions to Ministry Funds and the Mission and Aid Fund. While the sources and uses of this money can be described in terms of what is and what has been, the danger is that we continue to think along existing tramlines and simply move small amounts among the existing jam jars¹.

One of the fatal flaws in our system, which goes to the heart of future development, is the governance of the Church in relation to finance. There is currently no mechanism to establish priorities across the Church. The General Assembly is an impossible mechanism for such work and each Board has its own commitments to fulfil and corner to defend.

What are we here for? The core business of the Church is making disciples of Jesus Christ who will love God and love our neighbour as Jesus did. As the Church of Scotland our core purpose is to ensure the possibility of every person in every community of Scotland having access to the Gospel through a local church.

We are clearly failing in that core business, losing 3% of our membership per annum. The challenge is to recover the ability to win new generations of people to faith in Jesus Christ and to share in God's mission to transform the world.

When we deal with money we deal with a deeply charged subject, emotionally and spiritually. Psychotherapist David Krueger writes in *The Last Taboo*, "Money is probably the most emotionally meaningful object in contemporary life; only food and sex are close competitors as common carriers of such strong and diverse feelings, significances and strivings."²

Inherited Priorities of Invested Funds

If the priorities of the Church are set in terms of current invested funds of the Boards³ then our inherited priorities at 31 December 2000 are reflected as follows:

	£m
Ministry of Word and Sacrament	55
World Mission	39
National Mission	36
Social Responsibility	31
Parish Education	2
Mission and Aid Fund	5

¹ Images used by Sir David Tweedie, past chairman of the Accounting Standards Board, at the meeting of the Special Commission, 25 November 2000. The image highlights the fact much of our money is aligned to inherited priorities and is not easily moved from one place to another. There is no implication of lack of professionalism in the administration of the Funds as they stand.

² Quoted in *Credit Care*, article by Antonia Swinson in *Life and Work*, December, 2000.

³ "Briefing Paper on Church of Scotland Funds" prepared by the General Treasurer for the Board of Stewardship and Finance, February 2001.

One conclusion from these figures is that the Church's 1200 professional ministers are the key to the mission of the Church. At best, this may be so. At times a minister, like any other person, may be a block to mission. What is clear is that the ministry of all God's people must be enhanced and supported. This will require a priority investment if there are to be communities of faith nourished by worship, pastoral care and mission. Even taking into account the role of the minister to equip the people, this historical allocation of resources does not recognise the support needed for the many elders and members who would like to pursue opportunities to develop their faith and service through the support of other agencies of the church. That would suggest more resources for the work of Parish Education or for some future Board of Parish Development.

If the renewal of worship is a priority, then more support needs to be given to ministers and congregations who are struggling to respond to the variety of worship styles that will be part of our post-modern church. This would suggest strengthening the role of the Panel on Worship.

If we see a need for the fostering of ecumenical partnerships on the ground, and working out patterns of partnership organically rather than structurally, then there is an argument for more resources for Ecumenical Relations to support these developments.

The Church's priorities continue to be shaped by inherited assumptions and patterns of funding. New patterns are emerging which will require a reallocation of resources. Without that substantial reallocation, financial restrictions will limit future movement.

Refocusing Priorities: Shapes and Money

So far, we have simply assumed the existing structures to illustrate the messages that go out from our current deployment of finance. If we now assume the redistribution of priorities according to the emerging thinking of the Special Commission and the Committee on Presbytery Boundaries, then the structures will change significantly:

1. The Local Church is the primary focus for worship, pastoral care and mission to Scotland in all its parts – the communities, sectors and mini-cultures that make up our fluid society.
2. The Regional Support will be focused in newly formed Presbyteries with a three dimensional life: a) networks of congregations for mutual support in shared mission; b) centres of inspiration to set worship and mission as the renewing heart of the Presbytery; and c) a base for strategy, oversight and support with staff and finance at the disposal of the emerging strategy for the area.
3. The Central Servicing will be a much reduced administration that will offer professional services, facilitate networking among the Presbyteries while ensuring equity of policy across Presbyteries on issues such as salaries and employment policy for all staff, not only ministers. Attention must be given to the cost and dangers of duplication, and the scheme be subject to regular review.

On this model, the jam jars are smashed and tramlines are torn up. Local groupings will determine local strategies and priorities. Regional support units will have control of financial resources to meet these strategic developments. Some overseas work might be regionalised with each Presbytery hosting a World Mission desk and adopting an area of the world e.g. Borders Presbytery relates to Africa. The aim of this would be to increase the local involvement in overseas work and to advance the internationalising of local congregations. Appropriate central coordination would be essential to ensure common issues of policy and a national face to international missionary bodies.

It is hoped that funds held by General Assembly Boards and Committees might travel outwards and, where legally possible, restrictions be lifted on usage so that local and regional priorities can be

assessed. A process of assessment and allocation will need to be worked out, but in a way that “keeps it evergreen”⁴.

The new shape of the church will include: focusing on discipleship (“follow me”) that supports people in family, work or leisure, offering worship as “a variety of menu and a variety of venue”, nurturing a new generation of children through to maturity in life and faith, creating ministry teams with a diversity of roles and skills, building partnerships with other congregations, traditions and community groups, facilitating international connections that will bridge the local-global dimensions of everyday living, and applying Jesus’ criteria of “justice, mercy and faith”⁵ to our common life and common purse.

These ideas need to be quantified in terms of who is already mandated with these tasks and what resources they have their disposal.

Recommendation 1: That the Assembly Council, through the Coordinating Forum, establish overall priorities for the work of the Church in the light of the emerging shape of the Church and convey these to the Board of Stewardship and Finance, so that these priorities can be incorporated into the Co-ordinated Budget proposals which the Board will be bringing to the General Assembly in 2002 and subsequent years, with appropriate amendments to the Constitution of the Coordinating Forum and the Board of Stewardship and Finance.

Revisiting the Roots of our Tradition

It is essential that we revisit the roots of our own financial traditions to ask if they meet these criteria and will resource the emerging shape of the church. The General Trustees were established by Act of Parliament in 1921 to hold heritable properties and in 1925 to steward the patrimony of the Church of Scotland. In this way the resources of the pre-Union Church of Scotland were held in trust for the purposes of the Church of Scotland. In the terms of 1929 that was understood as providing the “ordinances of religion” by supplying a minister and a building within a territorial parish. That was the missionary strategy.

As we enter the Third Millennium, it is equally important to steward the resources of an emerging church for the missionary purposes of the Church of Scotland. In the emerging church, the nature of ministry will be more varied than “ministers of word and sacrament”, places of worship and mission may be temporary bases in the community rather than fixed buildings for generations and the context of mission may be to enter some of the “flow cultures” of our society rather than the immediate geographical area around a church building.

The strategic shift will include moves
from parish + building + minister
to networks of communities + multiple bases/venues + ministry teams.

Since the General Trustees steward a Consolidated Stipend Fund of £59 million on behalf of 1400 congregations and a Consolidated Fabric Fund of £33 million for the benefit of 700 congregations,

⁴ A phrase used by Walter Williamson, management consultant, about any process of change. We seem to work out models and apply them beyond their sell-by date. It will take a total reshaping of the environment to stimulate a new pattern of thinking which Peter Senge calls “The Fifth Discipline” – the art of being a learning organisation.

⁵ Matthew 23:23 – Jesus comment to the Establishment of his day who had their financial priorities wrong, following the “hand-me-down” patterns of tradition rather than the radical re-rethink from their roots in the nature of God who is righteous, compassionate and faithful.

there are very considerable resources tied up in a historically inherited structure of 19th century mission models.

In 1995, an Act of Parliament removed a key obstacle to flexibility and ensured that the funds held by the General Trustees are under the sole jurisdiction of the General Assembly. If the purpose and shape of the church are redefined, then the funds may be used as the General Assembly decides for the benefit of congregations.

If the General Assembly agrees to the norm of “ministry teams” and a range of “ministries” for differing contexts, then the term “stipend” will not apply exclusively to “the parish minister”, but to supporting whatever ministry is agreed as necessary for that area. Otherwise £59 million will be tied to paying fewer parish ministers, albeit with better salaries.

It is not widely appreciated that “Fabric” can apply to the premises necessary for the mission of Christ in a given area. That may include shop fronts and community buildings as well as permanent church buildings. The needs of the church in a fluid missionary situation are changing. It is wrong to commit a substantial part of the Church’s income to sustaining 1700 ecclesiastical buildings, of which at least one third are estimated by the General Trustees to be in the wrong place or unsuitable for contemporary use. That Gordian knot must be cut.

Past attempts at overall rationalisation have been resisted fiercely. In the spirit of this report, the responsibility for that lies locally, for the church to make hard decisions about buildings that are essential for the mission of Christ in the area. We are a church possessed by our possessions. There may be no more direct application of the Gospel call than for some local churches to let go of inappropriate buildings for the sake of the Kingdom.

Recommendation 2: That the General Trustees, in consultation with the Board of Ministry and the Board of National Mission, monitor changing patterns of ministry and building requirements, and report on how best to fund the needs of the emerging church and report in 2003.

Who has Control of the Money?

The Consolidated Stipend Fund and the Consolidated Fabric Fund are made up of funds that are held by the General Trustees for the benefit of local congregations. The bulk of the Funds derive from the patrimony of the heritors, made over to the General Trustees in 1925. Technically, that has never “belonged” to congregations.

Nonetheless, it is recognised that money from the locality is for the benefit of the church in that locality. A major concern is that, the congregations have no control on how it may be used or invested.

1. Congregations with large sums invested may wish to use these funds for another area of mission development, but that choice is not open to them. If £100,000 is in the Consolidated Stipend Fund from the sale of a glebe 20 years ago, it may produce £4000 towards stipend. If the congregation wants to use that £100,000 to create a new base for mission in the community, and work at raising the £4000 per annum, they are not free to make that choice.

2. Congregations have no choice on how funds may be invested between the growth of income and the growth of capital. The range of options is Stipend >Fabric>Minimum Stipend Fund or Fabric>Stipend>Central Fabric Fund.

3. Congregations do, however, have the choice to be generous with their Fabric Funds, as befits a Presbyterian Church. A well-endowed congregation may choose to make a surplus in the Fabric Fund available to a “linked partner” or to another congregation in the Presbytery. These options are publicised through the Treasurer’s Handbook and by a leaflet issued to congregations by the General Trustees whenever a new fund is established. The take up on this opportunity has been disappointing.

4. The choices may be extended in the case of the Consolidated Fabric Fund to include “or other purposes as agreed by Presbytery”. This allows a more strategic view to be taken of the missionary needs of the area and avoid tying money unnecessarily to buildings.

Recommendation 3: That the General Trustees examine the Consolidated Stipend Fund and bring proposals to the General Assembly of 2002 that would allow congregations more flexibility of investment.

Recommendation 4: That the General Trustees examine the Consolidated Fabric Fund and bring proposals to the General Assembly of 2002 that would allow congregations more flexibility of investment.

There is an earlier stage at which strategic thinking is required before the proceeds of the sale of local properties. When a union or linking of congregations takes place, the Basis of Union or Linking often commits the proceeds of sale to fabric funds on the assumption that property from the past helps pay for property in the future. That process has become a matter of “use and wont”, but is not a legal necessity.

We recommend that congregations be creative in their approach to these opportunities and consider if funds may support some new initiative in the area rather than be committed to bricks and mortar forever.

Recommendation 5: That the General Trustees, in consultation with the Board of National Mission, examine the application of the proceeds of the sale of buildings following readjustment, and report to the General Assembly of 2002.

The Theology of Grace

The theology that underpins our consideration of all our financial considerations is simply grace and faith: grace that gives freely to release people from poverty of opportunity into new potential; and faith that encourages risk and movement into new territory for the sake of the Gospel.

In all our conversations we are aware that the general level of giving across the church is far below its potential for the cause of the Kingdom. Stewardship must become a way of life for Christian people if we are not to be possessed by our possessions.

We believe that those who hold national roles in the church must offer a lead by making the first move (grace) and taking the first risk of release (faith) as an example to the church at large. We believe that if the visions are funded, then the grace of giving and the releasing of resources by faith will rise among the people of God across the land.

The current policies may be defended as saving the church for a future generation. We believe that such a “rainy day” mentality locally or centrally is counter to the Spirit of Christ who calls us to lose our lives in order to save it.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND SPECIAL COMMISSION – REVIEW AND REFORM

Appendix 10: Members of the Special Commission anent Review and Reform

Members:

Fyfe Blair

Albert Bogle

Ian Boyd (resigned March 2000)

Susan Brown

Susan Clark

Iain Cunningham (Vice-Convener and Representative on the Assembly Council)

Richard Fraser (resigned June 2000)

Peter Gardner

Alison Jack

Gordon Kennedy

Michael Lyall

Alan Miller

Pat Munro

Peter Neilson (Convener)

Ramsay Shields

Associated:

David Denniston (Representative from the Assembly Council)

Marjory MacLean (Secretary, Depute Principal Clerk)