

*“There are challenges facing the whole Church at every level – national, regional and local. These concern strategy, governance and resource. Doing nothing and continuing as we are is not an option.”*

These are not my words; they are the words that David Fergusson used when he addressed the General Assembly in May. Professor Fergusson was speaking about the critical days which the Church of Scotland is living through. A Church which has allowed itself to continue with ways of functioning which may have worked in the past, but which are hardly relevant now. A Church where staffing levels in the central organisation are the same as they were 20 years ago, when the membership of the Church of Scotland was more than double its present size.

For the Special Commission it was clear there was a need for simultaneous reform of the church at every level. Again to quote Professor Fergusson from his speech in May, *“The task is that of adjusting several components parts in order to get the whole machine working more smoothly. This will involve changes to the way we do business at the General Assembly, to the size of the central organisation, to a council and committee structure that is labour intensive and often inefficient, to the number and function of Presbyteries, and also of the local congregation where we need to find ways of enabling Kirk Sessions to operate more efficiently and so to release the time and talents of our members for other work.”*

This was clarion call, heard without demur and the recommendations of the Commission were adopted with unanimity. I labour this point just in case Commissioners have forgotten the wave of enthusiasm which filled this hall back in May and, I labour this point, just in case, like the Grand Old Duke of York, having got to the top of hill you regard the view to be such that you may consider marching all the way back down the hill again.

We have talked before about this kind of radical change across every element of our Church’s life, but, we have never yet succeeded in pulling all of the levers for change at the same time. This time we are tantalisingly close, but, completion depends on a number of significant changes, not just to our structures, but far more significantly to **our culture.**

We have to develop levels of trust in one another hitherto unknown. We can (amongst us) engineer yet another restructuring of the central administration of the church and this time we might actually manage a

reorganisation of Presbyteries, but if we do not change the way we think of our colleagues or learn to speak well of our brothers and sisters in Christ (even those we disagree with) it may all be for nothing. Ours is a culture that needs to change and it has been said many times that “culture can eat strategy for breakfast” and in the history of our church - culture has had many a hearty breakfast.

We have to understand and embrace the fact that change may be the only constant. As we have crept closer to this first and very modest change in our structure, it has become increasingly clear that while everyone wants change; mostly, people want change on their own terms. Each of us has to be the change we want to see in our Church.

And we need to adopt a new way of working – a way that is more effective, more efficient and more targeted on the growth of the local Church. It may not, however, have occurred to too many people in the wider Church just how significant a move it was to establish this new body known as the Assembly Trustees. Among other things, that was the laying of a foundation upon which a new way of working could be built.

- One which leaves managers to manage
- One which empowers staff to do what they are good at without having to hold a committee meeting every time they want to sneeze and
- One that encourages the development of cross department teams; where no one belongs in an independent silo, but everyone belongs in a unified workforce supporting one another in delivering the work that they have been invited, by the General Assembly, to deliver.

This same radical move signals a different way of working for those who are members of the central agencies of the General Assembly. There have always been boundaries between governance, strategy setting and policy making (on the one hand) **and** management, operational activity and the delivery of work (on the other hand). These boundaries, however, have not always been respected and the huge size of central Councils and Committees - and the micro-management mentality that goes with it - has lent itself to a blurring of the lines. This must end - this is a new way of working for both members of central agencies and the staff who work for them.

We need to trust that fewer people can form recommendations on policy and strategy and through a robust scheme of delegated authority we need to allow our professional staff to get on with their work. I have little doubt that it will take some time for both staff and agency members to get used to this way of working.

The Trustees have much work to do in preparation for next year's Assembly

- We have begun thinking about the process of reducing the administrative costs within the central organisation of the Church by 20%-30%
- We have initiated discussions with the Social Care Council and Crossreach on how they can become a more financially viable part of our organisation
- If today's measures are approved we will begin work on matters of strategy, finance, governance, and staffing which we will report to the General Assembly in May.
- We have begun to think about the establishment of an adequate research and analysis unit in order to inform the vision, strategy and policies of the Church.
- We hope to have the Growth Fund operational from the beginning of 2020
- And we will reach firm conclusions on the options for the future of 121 George Street

But for today we are simply bringing the foundational layer of a new way of governing and a new way of working. In this we believe that we have fulfilled the remit of the General Assembly which asked that the process for the reduction in the number of central agencies should be accelerated so that two new agencies would be formed and made operational by the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020.

The substance of our report recommends:

- that the current members of the Mission and Discipleship and Ministries Council should be thanked and discharged - because the work that they are currently responsible for will be merged and governed by a single Agency, which, for the time being, is being given the working title of the Faith Nurture Forum.
- Further that the current members of the Church and Society Council and the World Mission Council should be thanked and discharged because the work that they are currently responsible

for will be merged and governed by another single Agency, which, for the time being, is being given the working title of the Faith Impact Forum.

The report stresses that these are working titles; new titles may emerge in time. These names were used in the conversations between the Conveners and the Trustees; it was felt they were both ***dynamic as well as descriptive***. Faith Nurture - taking us into the heart of God and Faith Impact - taking us out into the heart of the world. But the names of these agencies are the least important part of this report; the focus of the Trustees is on the creation of a leaner and fitter organisation with a more efficient method of governance and a new way of working which is made possible as a result of this realignment.

We recommend that each these Forums will have a total of 15 members – a Convener, a Vice-Convener and 13 ordinary members and we are proposing 3 year terms of office.

This significant reduction in size follows the pattern set in the creation of the Assembly Trustees, we believe that 15 is a sufficient number to ensure proper oversight of the responsibilities that will fall to these bodies and we understand that with a proper cycle of meetings and good use of electronic decision making; savings of £60-70,000 per year could be made in this area of the Church's work. That might be the salaries with on-costs of two members of staff.

The work of these Forums will be done by small implementation groups. For the purposes of good governance one Forum Member would be allocated to each Implementation Group, but we expect that at this level of the operation staff will have authority, under a scheme of delegation, to make decisions, fulfil remits and get on with the work.

In addition we are recommending that while the Ecumenical Relations Committee and the Theological Forum will continue to report separately to the General Assembly they should, for efficiency of administration sit within the Faith Nurture Department and that Interfaith should sit within the Faith Impact Forum, where it will also find the source of its policy direction. Presently **i**nterfaith does not sit under any umbrella that sets its policy direction. For the future each of these areas of work will have an active role to play in the Faith Nurture and Faith Impact Forums; therefore, we believe that they should sit under the management of the Chief Officer.

We ask you to note in the Appendix containing the remits of these two Forums that they share a high level objective; however, at this stage there has not been enough time to do much more than bring together the wider remits of the Councils which make up these two agencies. No one; however, should miss the thrust of Section 18 of each of these Forums:

*That during 2020, each Forum, in collaboration with the Assembly Trustees, will review all areas of work and give consideration as to how these might be best managed, devolved or discontinued.*

I might add that the proposals from the Special Commission envisaged recommendations on reducing Councils coming to the General Assembly of 2020 whereas, at Assembly 2019 there was a palpable enthusiasm to proceed as rapidly as possible. Our proposals confirm agreement on the reduction in the number of Councils; once approved, we can all move on to the detailed remits.

Of course, in the case of the devolution of responsibilities some things will have to wait until new Presbyteries are in place, so, it cannot be emphasised enough how important it is that the Assembly Business Committee, the Office of the General Assembly and the Principal Clerk are properly resourced to take this vital piece of work forward.

The overall priority is that the centre must serve the local.

For the first time the administration of the central agencies of the Church all fall under the management of a Chief Officer so that there will be no licence for work to be done in separate silos and at least twice a year these Forums and the Assembly Trustees, the Ecumenical Relations Committee, the Theological Forum and others who may be involved in the consolidation of our work or in the reforming of our structures will meet on the same day sharing their work and learning from one another.

We also submit:

- a Schedule in relation to the future operation of the Salvesen Trust - since the World Mission Council as the Salvesen Trustees cease to be.
- And, as requested, we submit a detailed remit for the Audit Committee
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My final word is in relation to the continued existence of the Ministries Council as a sub-committee within the Faith Nurture Forum and the continued existence of the World Mission Council as a sub-committee within the Faith Impact Forum. These sub-committees will have specific

responsibility for acting as the statutory employer of individuals who are members of the Church of Scotland Pension Scheme for Ministers and Overseas Missionaries (“the Ministers Scheme”) and of the Church of Scotland Pension Scheme for Ministries Development Staff (“the MDS Scheme”).

This is not a legal fiction, but a significant responsibility which will have to be carried out by those members of the Forums who are appointed to these sub-committees.

Moderator, I present the report, and, since I am not a commissioner, I ask that the Principal Clerk move the deliverance.