

Moderator,

Well over a year ago I received a phone call to ask if I would consider becoming the

Convener of ROM COM!

I thought someone was having a laugh –
ROM COM . . .

Romantic Comedy . . .

Was the Church of Scotland diversifying?

But, I'm not very good at acronyms and didn't know that Registration of Ministries Committee is affectionately known as ROM COM.

What at first I didn't take seriously is something that I now take very seriously in seeing the part that this committee plays in the life of the church –

protecting and supporting minister . . .
protecting and supporting congregations. . .

It often comes as a surprise that what we do is more than a tick box exercise ensuring that applicants who have been out of the parish or haven't been in a parish are up to speed with where the church is currently at in this time of great change: that they are up-to-date with practice and procedure.

We want to ensure that they are actively involved in the life of the church at Kirk Session and Presbytery level: that they are ready to return to or come for the first time to a rigorous and resilient ministry of preaching and teaching, of pastoral care and all that comes with parish ministry. We have a duty of care both to applicants and to the church itself. In every other profession there are expectations that professionals have kept their hand in and, if not, what do they need to do to get up-to-speed. We might ask someone to get more experience in the pulpit or at a Kirk Session. Every application is taken on its own merits.

We also look at all of this in the context of call – why now?

What has nudged them into wanting to be re-registered?

Sometimes we say “yes” without any hesitation.

Other times we might say “yes” but “not now”.

Rarely we might say “no” and for very good reasons.

Every application is taken on its own merits and is supported by two referees. We want to support and offer training and experience where necessary and listen to the experiences of those who apply. We take time and prayerfully consider the whole picture and make a decision in light of where the church is, where the church is going and what the church stands for.

ROM COM . . . Registration of Ministries . . .

Small, but perfectly formed?

Well, small but perhaps not perfectly formed given that we are bringing changes to the Act that brought the Committee into being.

It is only when you implement legislation and/or come against particular situations do you see the weaknesses and anomalies which is why we are bringing these changes.

There are unnecessary hoops for applicants to jump through in relation to safeguarding. We found ourselves in a quorate which, understandably, frustrated applicants. We reviewed the length of time ministers hold the category ‘O’ without being in a charge. We will continue to monitor the legislation to ensure that the Act is fit for purpose as we continue the work with which the Assembly has tasked us with.

Moderator,

I submit the report and move the deliverance.