

THE PRINCIPAL

ACTS

OF THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OF THE



FREE CHURCH *of* **SCOTLAND**

CONVENED AT EDINBURGH, MAY 2020

WITH

ACTS

OF THE

COMMISSIONS OF ASSEMBLY

OCTOBER 2019 & MARCH 2020

FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

CLASS 1 ACTS – ACTS WHICH HAVE PASSED THE BARRIER ACT

Act 1 – Dissolution of Provincial Synods

Number 1 of Class 1

Category: Governance

Tuesday 6th October 2020

The General Assembly, noting that annual statutory meetings of Provincial Synods have been suspended since 2009 General Assembly, and that the reduced number of Presbyteries in the Church has resulted in this tier of Church government becoming largely redundant, and desiring therefore that Provincial Synods be dissolved and removed from the governmental structure of the Church, ordain as follows with the consent of Presbyteries:

1. ***Dissolution of Provincial Synods.*** The General Assembly, noting that statutory meetings of Provincial Synods have been suspended since the 2009 General Assembly, and that Provincial Synods no longer have a meaningful purpose in the government of the Church due to reduction in the number of Presbyteries over the years, declare that Synods be dissolved with no prejudice to the review procedures regarding Complaints and Appeals, Petitions, and References.

2. ***Review Procedures.*** The General Assembly declare that the business of reviewing matters from Presbyteries now be directed to the Commissions of Assembly and finally to the General Assembly. They instruct that all future meetings of the Commissions of Assembly be empowered to receive appeals, complaints, petitions and references from individuals and from the lower courts of the Church.

2.1 The General Assembly declare that the procedure for the submission of papers, etc., regarding references, appeals, complaints, and petitions be such that these be forwarded to the Principal Clerk of Assembly for inclusion in the business of the Assembly or its Commissions. They instruct the Principal Clerk to bring all such papers to the attention of the Assembly Business Committee who will bring a recommendation to the Assembly or to its Commissions on the acceptability and relevance of all papers.

2.2 The General Assembly declare that the final decision regarding the reception of papers, etc., associated with references, appeals, complaints, and petitions will rest with the Assembly and its Commissions and that it shall be competent to submit amendments to the Committee's proposal at the time at which its report is taken up for consideration.

2.3 The General Assembly affirm that in general terms, the findings of the Commissions of Assembly are final and not subject to appeal. However, they declare that, in the case of Complaints and Appeals, Petitions, and References, it shall be competent for parties in the review process to appeal to the General Assembly.

3. ***Examination of Records.*** The General Assembly instruct that Presbytery records be submitted for examination to the General Assembly Business Committee annually by 31st March. They instruct the Business Committee to examine the records at its annual April meeting and to report on the examination to the next General Assembly.

4. ***Financial Arrangements.*** The General Assembly instruct all Synods to meet in order to make suitable arrangements for the allocation of funds held in the name of the Synod.

4.1 ***General Funds.*** The General Assembly direct that, where monies are held in a general account in the name of the Synod, such funds be divided equally between the Presbyteries of the Synod.

4.2 ***Bursary Funds.*** The General Assembly further direct that, where funds are held by the Synod in restricted funds such as bursary accounts and grant-aid accounts, Synods make suitable arrangements for the administration of such fund by the Central Offices of the Church. They instruct the Central Offices to arrange the dispersal of such funds according to the terms of the deeds of the funds. They also instruct the Central Offices to ensure that bursaries or grant aid are advertised to students in Edinburgh Theological Seminary and any others who are engaged in post-graduate studies who may qualify for financial support from the terms of the bursaries or grants.

4.3 ***Reporting.*** The General Assembly instruct each Synod to report to the Assembly Clerks' Office on the completion of the financial re-arrangements set out in Paragraph 4.1 and 4.2 and to do so not later than 31st December 2020. They instruct the Assembly Clerk to report accordingly to the next General Assembly.

5. ***Dissolution.*** The General Assembly declare that Provincial Synods be dissolved and that the provisions of this Act are implemented as soon as possible after the rising of the 2021 General Assembly.

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6. **Repeal.** The General Assembly repeals all Acts of the General Assembly relevant to the constitution of Synods, the re-organisation of Synods and to general meetings of Synod.

CLASS 2 ACTS – ACTS WHICH ARE OF GENERAL INTEREST TO THE CHURCH

Act 2 – Regarding Exceptional Arrangements for the 2020 General Assembly and Presbyteries

Number 1 of Class 2

Category: *General Assembly*

Monday 18th May 2020

1. The General Assembly, noting the Government restrictions on travel and public gatherings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, declare that the Assembly shall convene to take up urgent and time-critical business using the Zoom audio-visual technology platform.
2. The General Assembly declare that the Assembly shall convene for one session only on Monday 18th May 2020 at 6.00pm. They further declare that the General Assembly will adjourn on Monday 18th May 2020 to meet again on Tuesday 6th October 2020 at 9.00am in the Assembly Hall, Edinburgh, and to rise not later than 1.00pm on 8th October 2020. They empower the Moderator and the Principal Clerk, in consultation with the Business Committee, to make alternative arrangements should the current restrictions on social distancing and public gatherings still apply.
3. The General Assembly, noting the benefits of continuity in the role of Moderator at this time, and taking cognisance of the uncertainty regarding the Assembly meeting for normal business in this year, appoint Rev. Donald G. Macdonald, Moderator of the 2019 General Assembly, as Moderator of the 2020 General Assembly. They thank Mr Macdonald for his willingness to continue in the role of Moderator for a second year.
4. The General Assembly note that Rev. Neil MacMillan has been elected Moderator-Designate of the 2020 General Assembly. They declare that Mr MacMillan's election shall be valid for the purposes of appointing the Moderator of the 2021 General Assembly.
5. The General Assembly declare that the need for the submission of Elders' Certificates according to the terms of Act 8, 1853 as amended by Act 9, 1863, be waived for the 2020 Assembly in the light of the current COVID-19 crisis and its impact on meetings of Church courts.
6. The General Assembly instruct the Assembly Clerks to examine the records of Boards and Committees and to report on this, and the examination of Presbytery records, to the October 2020 meeting of the Assembly.
7. The General Assembly declare that all ministerial appointments which are due for review in May 2020 be extended under the current terms until the 2021 General Assembly.
8. The General Assembly further declare that the fixed terms of all ministers on the Rolls of Ministers according to Act 8, Class 2, 2019 be extended until such time as revised and updated arrangements are approved by the 2021 General Assembly.
9. The General Assembly instruct Presbyteries to proceed with the appointment of Moderator and the election of Representative Elder at Presbytery and Synod according to the terms of Act 1, Class 1, 2019 and to do so with reference to 18th May 2020, the date on which the 2020 General Assembly will adjourn to meet again on 6th October 2020.

Act 3 – Amending Act 2, Class 1, 2020 regarding the Membership of the Judicial Commission

Number 2 of Class 2

Category: *Governance*

Monday 18th May 2020

The General Assembly ordain that Paragraph 1.1 of Act 2, Class 1, 2020 regarding the Judicial Commission and its composition and membership be revised to read as follows:

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The Judicial Commission shall be appointed by the General Assembly on the recommendation in the first instance of the Committee to Review Disciplinary Procedures and thereafter on the recommendation of the Board of Trustees. The Judicial Commission shall be comprised of 24 members, two ministers and two elders from each of the home Presbyteries, appointed for a term of four years, renewable annually by the General Assembly for a subsequent four-year term. Those appointed shall be senior ministers and elders of the church with at least 10 years' experience of active service. The General Assembly shall appoint one of the members of the Judicial Commission as Chairman.

Act 4 – Repealing Act 5, Class 2, 1968 regarding the Clerk of the Training in the Ministry Committee

Number 3 of Class 2

Category: Governance

Monday 18th May 2020

The General Assembly repeal Act 5, Class 2, 1968 which states that the Clerk of the Training of the Ministry should be a minister. They declare that all future appointments to the clerkship shall be on the basis of gifts and experience suited to the post and that the appointment shall be according to the terms and conditions for the appointments of clerks to Boards and Committee current at time.

Act 5 – Use of Technology in Exceptional Circumstances

Number 4 of Class 2

Category: Governance

Monday 18th May 2020

The General Assembly, recognising the need to make use of audio-visual technology in the carrying out of Church business in exceptional circumstances, enact and ordain as follows:

1. *General Principles.* The General Assembly declare that the following general principles apply for the purposes of this Act.
 - 1.1. The General Assembly declare that exceptional circumstances for the purposes of this Act are circumstances where, due to restrictions on public gatherings imposed by the Government or other legislative authority, Presbyteries are unable to meet physically in one location to constitute a meeting in the normal way.
 - 1.2. Where such exceptional circumstances exist, a Kirk Session may proceed to appoint a congregational meeting to elect a minister to fill a vacancy, and a Presbytery may proceed to hold a meeting to moderate a call, license a student, and conduct an induction or an ordination using audio-visual technology without the need for people to be physically present in one location.
 - 1.3. Such a meeting will be governed by the principles in Act 33, Class 2, 2010 – Use of Modern Technology in Conducting Church Business alongside the additional principles outlined in this Act.
2. *The Signing of the Formula.* The General Assembly declare that, where, during a meeting of Presbytery conducted using audio-visual technology, a person is required to answer the Questions and sign the Formula the following procedure will be used.
 - 2.1. The Clerk will provide the person with a copy of the Formula in PDF in advance of the meeting.
 - 2.2. The Moderator will ask the person the Questions via videoconferencing at the appropriate time during the meeting.
 - 2.3. On giving satisfactory answers to the Questions, the Moderator will then instruct the person to sign the Formula.
 - 2.4. The person will show the unsigned Formula to the Camera.
 - 2.5. The person will sign the Formula on Camera.

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- 2.6. The person will show the signed Formula to the Camera.
- 2.7. The signed Formula will then be posted to the Presbytery Clerk.
3. *Congregational Meetings to Elect Minister.* The General Assembly declare that, in exceptional circumstances, Kirk Sessions of a vacant congregation may proceed to appoint a congregational meeting for the purpose of electing a minister to fill the vacancy using audio-visual technology.
 - 3.1 The Kirk Session shall meet using audio-visual technology to consider steps to filling a vacancy in the congregation. If they consider the time is right for this, they will appoint a congregational meeting for the purpose of electing a minister.
 - 3.2 The Kirk Session will give due intimation of the congregational meeting to all communicant members and supporting adherents and shall ensure that they are all informed of the meeting and of its purpose.
 - 3.3 The Kirk Session shall explain to members and adherents that the meeting will take place using audio-visual technology. They shall ensure that arrangements are made for members and adherents who do not have access to audio-visual technology to connect with the meeting using landline or mobile telephone. They shall issue a separate document explaining how to join the meeting and how to participate in the meeting for the purposes of the election.
 - 3.4 At the congregational meeting, the Moderator will call for nominations to fill the vacancy in the usual way. Communicant members and supporting adherents will show their support of nominations when asked to do so either by raising their hand and keeping their hand raised until such time as the Moderator and Clerk have recorded the number of votes, or by the use of the polling function when this is available on the audio-visual platform in use at the time. Communicants and adherents participating in the meeting using landline or mobile telephone will declare their support verbally.
 - 3.5 On the successful completion of the election process, and on there being a clear majority support for one nomination to fill the vacancy, the Kirk Session shall decide to ask the Presbytery to moderate in a Closed Call.
 - 3.6 The Kirk Session shall report to the Presbytery on the congregational meeting, giving details of the process of informing all communicant members and adherents of the meeting and also giving details of the process of informing the regarding participation in the meeting.
4. *Meetings to Moderate a Call.* The General Assembly declare that, where a Congregation requests Presbytery to Moderate in a Call, and Presbytery agrees that exceptional circumstances exist, the Presbytery shall conduct the meeting to moderate the call via audio-visual technology.
 - 4.1. The Presbytery shall receive a report from the Kirk Session and shall satisfy itself that the steps outlined in Section 3 above have been followed without any detriment to the rights of the people in electing a minister. The Presbytery shall record its satisfaction with this report before proceeding to appoint a meeting to moderate in a Call.
 - 4.2. In order for a meeting to Moderate a Call to be conducted by audio-visual technology, the call must be a Closed Call with the name of the Minister or Probationer agreed and elected by the congregation and inserted in the Call.
 - 4.3. A form of Mandate should be prepared and circulated to each communicant member of the congregation and any adherents who wish to sign the Concurrence in Call.
 - 4.4. The Form of Mandate shall authorise one of the Elders of the congregation to sign the Form of Call or the concurrence in Call on behalf of the member or adherent.
 - 4.5. During the meeting to Moderate the Call there should be a facility for the Presbytery to meet apart from the wider congregation (either a separate conference or placing the congregation on Hold while the Presbytery meeting).
 - 4.6. The Kirk Session will submit to the Presbytery written confirmation that every communicant on the Roll has had the opportunity to complete a mandate form before the Presbytery proceeds to moderate in the Call. The Kirk Session shall also report on the opportunity given to adherents and regular worshippers in the congregation to sign a mandate for concurrence in the Call.

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- 4.7. The meeting to Moderate the Call will be conducted as normal via audio-visual technology.
- 4.8. At the point where Members and Adherents would normally be invited to sign the Form of Call or the Concurrence in Call, the Elder authorised to sign mandates will sign on behalf of all members and adherents who have granted authority to do so.
- 4.9. The Presbytery shall consider the Call and, if they decide to sustain the call, the Presbytery Clerk will report to the Congregation and call for any dissents which can either be made via the technology or if some members of the congregation are merely watching a live-stream a telephone number of the Presbytery Clerk can be provided for dissents. If the Presbytery Clerk provides a telephone number for dissents, they must wait 5 minutes before proceeding in case there are any delays in the technology.
5. *Licensing.* The General Assembly declare that, where exceptional circumstances exist, a Presbytery may decide to conduct the Licensing of a candidate to preach the Gospel via audio-visual technology.
- 5.1. The Presbytery may carry out both the trials for licence, and the Presbytery meeting to license the candidate, via audio-visual technology.
- 5.2. The Presbytery shall carry out the trials licensing process in line with the recognised practice with meetings conducted according to the general principles outlined in Section 1 above.
- 5.3. On successful completion of the trials for licence, the Presbytery will proceed to the signing of the Formula in accordance with the procedure outlined in Section 2 of this Act.
6. *Inductions.* The General Assembly declare that, where exceptional circumstances exist, a Presbytery may decide to proceed with the induction of a minister using audio-visual technology.
- 6.1. The Presbytery shall proceed with the induction service according to the Church's recognised practice with two exceptions:
- 6.2.1. Firstly, when the Presbytery Clerk reads the Second Edict calling for anyone who is prepared to substantiate objections to the life or doctrine of the Probationer or Minister, he shall provide a telephone number for the raising of any objections and wait 5 minutes before proceeding in case there are any delays in the technology.
- 6.2.2. Secondly, asking of the Questions and signing of the Formula will be conducted in accordance with the procedure outlined in Section 2 of this Act.
7. *Ordinations.* The General Assembly, notwithstanding the fact that the laying on of hands is an essential element in the Church's current process for ordination to the office of the holy ministry, declare that in exceptional circumstances it shall be competent for Presbyteries to proceed as follows:
- 7.1. When the Presbytery has sustained a Call to a Probationer according to the process outlined in Section 3 of this Act, the Presbytery may decide to proceed with the ordination process with the use of audio-visual technology.
- 7.2. The Presbytery shall then follow the procedure outlined in Section 5 of this Act with regard to trials for licence for students for the purpose of completing the trials for ordination.
- 7.3. The induction service will be carried out as outlined in Section 6 of this Act.
- 7.4. Having satisfactorily answered the Questions and signed the Formula, the Presbytery shall proceed with the prayer and declaration of ordination after which the person is formally inducted to the congregation and granted a seat in the Presbytery.
- 7.5. As soon as possible after the exceptional circumstances have ended and the Presbytery is able to meet in the normal way, they shall conduct a service of dedication when the Moderator will lead the Presbytery in prayer and when they will lay hands on the individual before the gathered congregation.
8. *Additional Regulations.* The General Assembly declare as follows regarding additional regulations:

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8.1 In exceptional circumstances where people are unable to physically gather for constituted meetings, the Assembly Clerks' Office is empowered to make regulations consistent with this Act for the conducting of any Church business via technology in accordance with the principles of the Free Church of Scotland making suitable accommodation to the exceptional circumstances.

8.2 Such regulations must be communicated to each Presbytery Clerk and made widely available to the Church.

8.3 Any regulations made under this Act will be reviewable by the General Assembly or the Commission of the Assembly.

9. *Restrictions.* The General Assembly declare that the provisions of this Act are for exceptional and emergency situations only and not to be adopted for meetings of Church courts in normal circumstances.

Act 6 – Renewing the Appointment of Principal Martin

Number 5 of Class 2

Category: Governance

Monday 18th May 2020

The General Assembly thank Principal Martin for his contribution to the growth of ETS. They renew his appointment as Principal according to the terms of Act 32, Class 2, 2015, as amended by Act 16, Class 2, 2019, for a further five years.

Act 7 – Correcting Inconsistencies in Legislation Governing Edinburgh Theological Seminary

Number 6 of Class 2

Category: Governance

Monday 18th May 2020

1. The General Assembly note that Paragraph 3.1.6.4 of Act 16, Class 2, 2019 regarding Governance of ETS is inconsistent with Paragraph 3.1 of Act 26, Class 2, 2014 regarding Staffing Arrangements for ETS in that it states that 'It will be the responsibility of the Seminary Board to oversee and determine the appointment of lecturing staff at the Seminary'. They instruct that Paragraph 3.1.6.4 of Act 16, Class 2, 2019 be deleted and that the following paragraphs be renumbered accordingly.

2. The General Assembly also note the inconsistency between Paragraph 3.1 of Act 26, Class 2, 2014 regarding Staffing Arrangements for ETS and Paragraph 6.14 of the same Act in that it states that 'The General Assembly will have the final authority over appointments.' They instruct that this sentence be deleted from Paragraph 6.14 and that the revised Paragraph 6.14 should read as follows: 'The Seminary Board will include in its report to the General Assembly, all courses together with Course Organisers, Part-time Core Lecturers and Module lecturers.'

Act 8 – Amending Act 6, Class 2, 2014 regarding the Membership of the Board of Ministry

Number 7 of Class 2

Category: Governance

Monday 18th May 2020

The General Assembly note the comments of the Board of Ministry on the Board's membership. They amend Paragraph 1.2.3 of Act 6, Class 2, 2014, as amended by Act, 12, Class 2, 2015, Act 17, Class 2, 2016, Act 12, Class 2, 2019, and Act 15, Class 2, 2019, to read as follows:

'Ten members in total including the Principal of Edinburgh Theological Seminary ex officio, one additional member of the College Senate appointed annually by them on an ex officio basis, and one additional member who shall be a minister in a Training Congregation nominated by the Board of Ministry. The remaining membership shall comprise three ministers and four elders appointed by the General Assembly for a four-year term renewable for one further term of four years. The Chairman shall be appointed from the membership of the Board by the General Assembly for a four-year term, renewable

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for one further term of four years. The quorum shall be three members of the Board. The Board shall be empowered to appoint Consultants and Advisors as required, particularly to liaise closely with the Mission Board and to assist with interviews and other functions of the Board.'

Act 9 – Regarding the Status of Golspie Free Church

Number 8 of Class 2

Category: Mission & Ministry

Monday 18th May 2020

1. The General Assembly receive the Petition of the Northern Presbytery regarding a five-year terminable/renewable appointment for the congregation of Golspie and, noting the recommendation of the Mission Board, grant its crave.
2. They terminate the current Alternative Ministerial Arrangements under the terms of Act 13, Class 2, 2014.
3. They grant permission to the congregation of Golspie to appoint a Minister on a five-year terminable/renewable appointment in accordance with the terms of Act 1, Class 1, 2018 anent The Sustentation Fund, Paragraph 3.4 subject to the submission of a development plan to the satisfaction of the Mission Board.
4. They appoint Rev. Eric Paterson to the congregation of Golspie in accordance with Act 1, Class 1, 2018, anent the Sustentation Fund and they declare that his appointment be continuous with his original induction to the charge.

Act 10 – Admitting Rev. Dr Euan George Dodds to the Ministry of the Free Church of Scotland

Number 9 of Class 2

Category: Mission & Ministry

Monday 18th May 2020

1. The General Assembly receive the application from Rev. Dr Euan George Dodds. They admit him as an ordained minister of the Free Church of Scotland, with effect from 18th May 2020, and following his satisfactory response to the prescribed Questions and his signing of the Formula before the General Assembly.
2. The General Assembly thereafter direct the Principal Clerk to add the name of Rev. Dr Euan George Dodds to the register of Ministers without Charge Available for Call.
3. The General Assembly order the supporting documents to be held *in retentis*.

Act 11 – Appointing the 2021 General Assembly

Number 10 of Class 2

Category: General Assembly

Monday 18th May 2020

The General Assembly appointed the 2021 General Assembly to meet in the Assembly Hall, Edinburgh, on Monday 17th May 2021 at 6.00pm.

Act 12 – Loyal and Dutiful Address

Number 11 of Class 2

Category: General Assembly

Tuesday 6th October 2020

FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly called for the Loyal and Dutiful Address to Her Majesty the Queen, which was given in by the Moderator. The Assembly approved the Address presented by the Moderator and appointed it to be duly signed and transmitted to the Secretary of State for Scotland, with a letter from the Clerk.

May it please Your Majesty.

We, the Ministers and Elders of the Free Church of Scotland, met in General Assembly on the 6th day of October 2020, humbly offer Your Majesty the expression of our continued loyalty to Your Majesty's Person and Throne and to the Constitutional Monarchy of which you are the honoured Head and Representative.

We pray for Your Majesty's Parliaments in Westminster and Holyrood, committing to our Great God, the Prime Minister and the First Minister, and their respective Governments, in the many responsibilities that devolve upon Your Majesty's servants at home and abroad.

We recognise that the nation faces particular challenges during a time of global pandemic. We are grateful to Your Majesty for the address delivered from Windsor Castle in April, encouraging the nation to work together in the fight against the coronavirus. We are also thankful to Your Majesty's Governments for the effort made to protect the peoples of the United Kingdom from COVID-19. We mourn the loss of so many lives to this virus in our nation, and across the world. We acknowledge with gratitude, those employed within the National Health Service, home carers, and all essential workers, whose tireless work served all our communities during a time of lockdown.

We are thankful to God for the good recovery made by His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, from COVID-19. We continue to pray for the good health of Your Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh, and for the health of all the Royal Household.

We note the dutiful service of several members of Your Majesty's family, who assist in Your Royal and Constitutional duties and promote very many charities and good causes. In particular we celebrate the seventieth birthday of Her Royal Highness, Princess Anne, the Princess Royal, whose steadfast service to Your Majesty, and to the nation, continues to earn such admiration and respect.

We shared in Your Majesty's disappointment that the planned celebrations for the 75th anniversary of VE Day were not possible, but we thank Your Majesty for Your address marking the occasion, reminding us of the great sacrifices made by many to secure our freedom, and also for recognising that the nation's response to the current crisis revealed we were still a nation those brave soldiers, sailors and airmen would recognise and admire. We thank Your Majesty for the timely reminder to never give up and never despair.

As we remember the service and sacrifice made by many in previous conflicts, we also express our thankfulness for the continued service and sacrifice of all Your Majesty's Armed Forces, serving at home and abroad. We remember in our prayers all who have lost loved ones, and those who have suffered injury in mind and body. We thank Almighty God for the work of Your Majesty's chaplains to the Armed Forces, and the ministry of the Soldiers and Airmen's Scripture Readers Association. During a time of global instability, we continue to pray for peace.

Your Majesty, as Ministers and Elders of the Free Church of Scotland, be assured that we pray regularly for Your Majesty's person, family and governments. We commit ourselves and our congregations to do so willingly and as we are encouraged to do so by God's Word.

We give thanks to God for our Saviour, Jesus Christ, and our shared faith. The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.

So pray Your Majesty's most faithful subjects, the Ministers and Elders of the Free Church of Scotland, in General Assembly convened.

Act 13 – Amending Act 1, 2020 Regarding Exceptional Arrangements for the 2020 General Assembly and Presbyteries

Number 12 of Class 2

Category: General Assembly

Tuesday 6th October 2020

FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly amend paragraph 6 of Act 1, 2020 - Regarding Exceptional Arrangements for the 2020 General Assembly and Presbyteries to read:

“6. The General Assembly declare that the 2020 examination of the records of Presbyteries, Boards and Committees be cancelled. They instruct that arrangements be made for the examination of all records for years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 in time to report to the 2021 General Assembly.”

Act 14 – General Assessors to the Presbytery of Glasgow & Argyll

Number 13 of Class 2

Category: Governance

Tuesday 6th October 2020

The General Assembly receive the Petition of the Presbytery of Glasgow and Argyll and grant its crave. They appoint Rev. David C. Meredith, Mission Director, and Rev. Nigel Anderson, minister at Livingston, to be General Assessors to the Presbytery of Glasgow and Argyll, with the appointments to be reviewed at the May 2023 General Assembly.

Act 15 – Admitting Rev. Douglas Cranston to the Ministry of the Free Church of Scotland

Number 14 of Class 2

Category: Mission & Ministry

Tuesday 6th October 2020

1. The General Assembly receive the application for the Free Church ministry from Rev. Douglas Cranston. They admit him as an ordained minister of the Free Church of Scotland, on receiving satisfactory responses to the prescribed Questions and his signing of the Formula before the General Assembly.
2. The General Assembly thereafter direct the Principal Clerk to add the name of Rev. Douglas Cranston to the Register of Retired Ministers.
3. The General Assembly direct that documents supporting the application to be held *in retentis*.

Act 16 – Admitting Rev. Benjamin Fiddian to the Ministry of the Free Church of Scotland

Number 15 of Class 2

Category: Mission & Ministry

Tuesday 6th October 2020

1. The General Assembly receive the application for the Free Church ministry from Rev. Benjamin Fiddian. They admit him as an ordained minister of the Free Church of Scotland, on receiving satisfactory responses to the prescribed Questions and his signing of the Formula before the General Assembly.
2. The General Assembly thereafter direct the Principal Clerk to add the name of Rev. Benjamin Fiddian to the register of Ministers without Charge Available for Call.
3. The General Assembly direct that documents supporting the application to be held *in retentis*.

Act 17 – Church History Programme Leader / Lecturer

Number 16 of Class 2

Category: ETS

Tuesday 6th October 2020

FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

1. The General Assembly approve the appointment of an MTh Programme Leader / Lecturer in the department of Church History at ETS instead of the appointment of a Church History Course Organiser.
2. The General Assembly declare that the Programme Leader / Lecturer may be male or female and that the person will be appointed based on suitability and qualifications for the post. They declare that the appointee should hold a relevant doctorate and, if possible, some track record of relevant publications.
3. The General Assembly declare that the Programme Leader / Lecturer's responsibilities shall include providing supervision in MTh (Taught) in Scottish Church History and Theology, engaging in research and publications, particularly in the field of Scottish Church History, assisting in the delivery of lectures, seminars and tutorials in the Church History Department, assisting in the general administration responsibilities at ETS, and providing pastoral and academic support to BTh and MTh students.
4. The General Assembly declare that the Programme Leader / Lecturer will work alongside the Director of Post Graduate studies in supervising post graduate students and will work within existing BTh structures in delivering an agreed programme of lectures under the management of the Principal.
5. The General Assembly declare that the Programme Leader / Lecturer in Church History must be a communicant member under the pastoral discipline of a Reformed Church, shall give unqualified subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith, and shall be in full sympathy with the doctrinal position of the Free Church.
6. The General Assembly declare that the Programme Leader / Lecturer will be a full-time member of staff at ETS and have a seat on the Senate.

Act 18 – Day of Prayer for COVID-19

Number 17 of Class 2

Category: Mission & Ministry

Tuesday 6th October 2020

The General Assembly record their concern over the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and its impact on the overall health and wellbeing of our people as well as its impact on the national economy. They note with sadness the spiritual and moral decline of recent times and the apparent failure to acknowledge the name of our God and to reach out to Him for help as the crisis worsens at this time. They appoint a day of prayer to be observed in all congregations on 25th October 2020. They call on the Church to pray to Almighty God for His merciful intervention to suppress the coronavirus, to give recovery and good health to those who suffer, to comfort those who have endured loss, to turn the hearts of our people in repentance to the Lord our God, and for the Spirit of God to bless the preaching of the gospel. They instruct the Mission Board to coordinate this day of prayer in addition to the National Day of Prayer appointed to be observed on 25th November 2020.

Act 19 – Changing the Status of the Congregation of Dunblane

Number 18 of Class 2

Category: Mission & Ministry

Tuesday 6th October 2020

The General Assembly receive the Petition of the Presbytery of Glasgow and Argyll regarding the appointment of a five-year reviewable appointment for the congregation of Dunblane and, noting the recommendation of the Mission Board, grant its crave. They terminate the locally subsidised arrangements for ministry at Dunblane under the provisions of Act 14, Class 2, 2013. They declare that the appointment of the current minister, Rev. Allan Shearer, be on the basis of a five-year reviewable appointment according to the Act 1, Class 1, 2018, Paragraph 3.4, and that his appointment be continuous with his original induction to the charge. They repeal Act 22, Class 2, May 2019.

Act 20 – Revoking Permission to Appoint Assistant Minister at Glasgow City

Number 19 of Class 2

FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Category: Mission & Ministry

Tuesday 6th October 2020

The General Assembly receive the request from the congregation of Glasgow City Free Church and the Presbytery of Glasgow and Argyll regarding the revocation of the permission to call an Assistant Minister and, noting the recommendation of the Mission Board, grant the request. They revoke the permission of the congregation of Glasgow City Free Church to appoint an Assistant Minister and they terminate the remittance arrangement required by Act 18, Class 2, 2013 anent Assistantships with immediate effect. They repeal Act 18, Class 2, 2019.

Act 21 – Appointing the Commission of Assembly

Number 20 of Class 2

Category: General Assembly

Tuesday 6th October 2020

The General Assembly hereby appoint a Commission consisting of all the members of this General Assembly along with Rev. Iver Martin named by the Moderator to be their Commission.

1. **Meetings.** This Commission is appointed to meet at Edinburgh on Wednesday 3rd March 2021 at 7 o'clock in the evening, and at other times and places as may be required with power to choose their own Moderator.

1.1. *Exceptional Circumstances.* The General Assembly declare that it shall be competent for the Commission to meet virtually under the provisions of Act 4, Class 2, 2020 should the current COVID-19 restrictions on public gatherings still be in force at the time.

1.2. *Quorum.* The quorum shall be any twelve or more of their number, of whom four at least are always to be ministers.

1.3. *Business.* Items of business to be included in the Note of Business of the Commission shall be submitted to the Assembly Clerks' Office at least ten days before the Commission is due to meet.

1.4. *Church Courts.* The General Assembly declare that no other Court of the Church may meet on the dates on which the Assembly has appointed its Commission to meet.

1.5. *Continuance.* This Commission shall remain in being until another Commission is appointed. All members are required to attend the diets of the Commission.

2. **General Powers.** The General Assembly empower this Commission, or their quorum, to take up and dispose of any matter referred to them by the General Assembly or arising out of any Act or finding of the Assembly in accordance with the instructions given by the Assembly.

2.1 *Interests of the Church.* The Commission shall give attention to the interests of the Church in every respect to ensure that the Church does not suffer or incur any prejudice which it is possible for their powers to prevent, as they will be answerable.

2.2 *Public Questions.* The Commission shall give such a lead as they are able on moral issues and provide advice and assistance to Presbyteries, Board and Committees of the General Assembly, upon their making application.

2.3 *Exclusions.* The powers granted above shall not apply to particular affairs or processes before Presbyteries which have only a local relevance and have no reference to the whole Church.

3. **Review.** The General Assembly empower this Commission, or their quorum, to receive appeals, complaints, petitions and references from individuals and from the lower courts of the Church, and all such matters as were previously directed to Provincial Synods.

3.1 *Procedure.* The General Assembly declare that the procedure for the submission of papers, etc., regarding references, appeals, complaints, and petitions be such that these be forwarded to the Principal Clerk of Assembly for inclusion in the business of the Commission as this is set out in the 2020 Act on the Dissolution of Synods.

FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

4. **Admissions.** The General Assembly empower this Commission, or their quorum, to receive applications for admission to the Free Church as follows.

4.1 *Applications from Ministers.* The said Commission is hereby authorised to receive and dispose of applications duly submitted through Presbyteries and the Board of Ministry from ministers of other denominations seeking admission to the Free Church ministry

4.2 *Applications from Congregations.* The said Commission is authorised to receive and dispose of applications through Presbyteries from any congregation wishing to join the Free Church of Scotland submitted in accordance with the procedures laid down by the General Assembly.

4.3 *Ministerial Rolls.* The said Commission is authorised to receive and dispose of petitions received from Presbyteries regarding the transference of the name of a minister from the Roll of Resigned Ministers to the Roll of Ministers Without Charge Eligible for Call.

5. **Mission Board.** The General Assembly empower this Commission, or their quorum, to receive applications from the Mission Board as follows.

4.1 *Church Development.* The said Commission is empowered to receive and dispose of applications from preaching stations and church plants to be raised to fully sanctioned charges submitted through the Mission Board.

4.2 *Consolidation.* The said Commission is empowered to receive and dispose of applications from the Mission Board to link or unite two or more congregations following upon a Report from Board.

4.3 *Global Mission.* The said Commission is empowered to receive and dispose of applications from the Mission Board to appoint Ministers and workers in fulfilling the Church's commitment to global mission following a report from the Board.

6. **Limited Powers.** The General Assembly declare that it is not competent for the Commission to become involved in matters other than those committed and referred to them as above. All their proceedings shall be conducted in accordance with the Acts and Constitution of the Church, avoiding anything which is contrary or prejudicial to such Acts and Constitution.

5.1 *Accountability.* The General Assembly further declare that in all their proceedings they shall be accountable to and censurable by next General Assembly as they may find reason arising from the above introduction to Paragraph 6.

5.2 *Appeals.* The General Assembly affirm that in general terms the findings of the Commission of Assembly are final and not subject to appeal. However, they declare that, in the case of Complaints, Appeals, Petitions, and References, it shall be competent for parties in the review process to appeal to the General Assembly.

ACTS OF THE COMMISSION OF ASSEMBLY

Act 1 – Transferring Rev. Gavino Fioretti to the Roll of Ministers Without Charge Eligible for a Call

Number 1 of Class 2

Category: Mission & Ministry

Wednesday 2nd October 2019

1. The Commission of Assembly receive the petition of the Presbytery of Edinburgh and Perth and Rev. Gavino Fioretti, and noting the recommendation of the Board of Ministry, instruct that the name of Rev. Gavino Fioretti be transferred from the Roll of Resigned and Retired Ministers to the Register of Ministers without Charge Available for Call.

2. The Commission of Assembly further instruct further instruct the Chairman of the Mission Board to provide pastoral support and counsel to Mr Fioretti on his return to Scotland.

FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Act 2 – Appointing Mr John MacDonald as Editor of *The Record*

Number 2 of Class 2

Category Mission & Ministry

Wednesday 2nd October 2019

1. The Commission of Assembly appoint Mr John Macdonald as Editor of *The Record* effective from 2nd October 2019. They declare that Mr Macdonald's appointment be according to terms of Act 8, Class 2, 2015.

Act 3 – Admitting Abbeygreen Church, Lesmahagow as a Congregation of Free Church of Scotland

Number 3 of Class 2

Category Mission & Ministry

Wednesday 4th March 2020

1. The Commission of Assembly establish the body of Christians worshipping in the Abbeygreen Church as a fully sanctioned pastoral charge of the Free Church of Scotland, effective from 31st March 2020.
2. The Commission of Assembly declare that the new congregation shall be known as Abbeygreen Church within the Presbytery of Glasgow and Argyll under the ministry of the Rev. David Carmichael on his admission as a minister of the Free Church of Scotland.
3. They declare Mr Carmichael's appointment to be without restriction according to the provisions of Act 1, Class 1, 2018 regarding the Sustentation Fund and grant him a seat in the Presbytery of Glasgow and Argyll.
4. They instruct the Presbytery of Glasgow and Argyll to meet on 31st March 2020 to appoint General Assessor Elders to the Kirk Session so that the Congregation may proceed to an election and ordination of office-bearers as soon as practically possible.
5. They further instruct the Presbytery of Glasgow and Argyll to appoint a meeting with the congregation for a service of public worship for the purpose of formally establishing the Congregation and welcoming the congregation and the minister formally into the Presbytery.

Act 4 – Admitting Rev. David Carmichael to the Ministry of the Free Church of Scotland

Number 4 of Class 2

Category General Assembly

Wednesday 4th March 2020

1. The Commission of Assembly receive the application from Rev. David Carmichael, and noting the recommendation of the Board of Ministry, admit him as an ordained minister of the Free Church of Scotland, with effect from 31st March 2020 and subsequent to him answering the Questions and signing the Formula.
2. The Commission of Assembly instruct the Presbytery of Glasgow and Argyll to meet on 31st March 2020 and to make arrangements at this meeting for Mr Carmichael to answer the Questions and sign the Formula under their supervision. They instruct the Presbytery Clerk thereafter to notify the Principal Clerk of Assembly by extract of the proceedings of the Presbytery.
3. The Commission of Assembly declare Mr Carmichael to be minister of Abbeygreen Church upon his answering the Questions and signing of the Formula under the direction of the Presbytery, and upon Abbeygreen Church being admitted as a congregation of the Free Church of Scotland.
4. The Commission of Assembly instruct Mr Carmichael to complete the Presbyterian Church Ministry Module, available through Edinburgh Theological Seminary, either by attendance or by distance learning.
5. The Commission of Assembly note the recommendations of the Board of Ministry and accordingly commend those who have already given their help to Rev. David Carmichael and the Abbeygreen congregation in their application process. They instruct the Presbytery of Glasgow and Argyll and the Mission Board to take all possible steps to provide

FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ongoing support, encouragement and a wholehearted welcome to the minister and congregation at Abbeygreen Church, Lesmahagow.

6. The Commission of Assembly order the supporting documents to be held *in retentis*.
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