

# THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OF THE



## FREE CHURCH *of* SCOTLAND

CONVENED AT EDINBURGH, MAY 2020

MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THAT ASSEMBLY

AND THE

MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMISSIONS

OF THE 2019 ASSEMBLY

FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND, THE MOUND, EDINBURGH  
(Scottish Charity Number: SC012925)

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# FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND – 2020 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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## MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND HELD via ZOOM AUDIO-VISUAL TECHNOLOGY ON MONDAY 18th MAY 2020

1. **Assembly Constituted:** By means of the Zoom audio-visual technology on 18th May 2020, which day the Ministers and Elders, Commissioners from Presbyteries appointed to meet this day, were convened, and after devotions led by Rev. Donald G Macdonald, Moderator of the 2019 General Assembly, the General Assembly was duly constituted.
2. **General Assembly Business Committee.** The General Assembly called for the report of the Business Committee, which was presented by the Principal Clerk, who addressed the Assembly.
  - 2.1. **The Finding.** It was moved, seconded and agreed that:
    1. The General Assembly receive and adopt the report and thank the Committee.
    2. The General Assembly humbly calls on the whole Church to continue in prayer to Almighty God in the midst of the current coronavirus crisis. They call for prayer for all those affected by the virus and for the Government as it seeks to manage the spread of the virus. They give thanks to God for the NHS, for all key health care workers, and for other emergency services and commit them to God's care and protection.

### (A) ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS

1. The General Assembly, noting the Government restrictions on travel and public gatherings, 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 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020 at 6.00pm. They further declare that the General Assembly will adjourn on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020 to meet again on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2020 at 9.00am in the Assembly Hall, Edinburgh, and to rise not later than 1.00pm on 8<sup>th</sup> 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 appoint the 2021 General Assembly to meet on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021 in the Assembly Hall, Edinburgh, at 6.00pm.

### (B) GENERAL ASSEMBLY PROGRAMME

1. The General Assembly approve the draft Assembly programme containing only urgent and time-critical business as the programme for this Assembly.
2. The General Assembly declare that, when confidential business is taken up in the report of the Board of Ministry, related documents will be read out by the Chairman of the Board instead of being distributed to Commissioners.
3. The General Assembly declare that, on an application for admission as a minister of the Free Church of Scotland being successful, the Moderator shall proceed immediately to ask the successful applicant the relevant Questions from Act 12, 1846 and, on receiving satisfactory answers to the Questions, to proceed to the signing of the Formula using the process outlined in the proposed deliverance of the Assembly Clerks' Report.

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## (C) GENERAL ASSEMBLY DOCUMENTS

1. The Roll of the General Assembly, having been presented in a printed list and acknowledged as correct, were recorded as follows:

### ROLL OF 2020 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

#### Presbytery of Edinburgh and Perth

<i>Ministers</i>		<i>Elders</i>	
Rev. Neil MacMillan	Cornerstone, Edinburgh	Mr Greg Doty	Dunfermline
Rev. Andrew Robertson	Charleston, Dundee	Mr Charles Douglas	Elder Memorial, Leith
Rev. David Randall	Falkirk	Mr Harrison Perkins	London City
Rev. Derek Lamont	St Columba's	Mr Alex Ogilvie	Montrose
Rev. Hamish Sneddon	Assistant, St Andrews	Mr John Ferguson	St Peter's Dundee
Rev. David Meredith	Mission Director		
Rev. Dr Alistair Wilson	ETS		

#### Presbytery of Glasgow and Argyll

<i>Ministers</i>		<i>Elders</i>	
Rev. Ian M. Watson	Blackwood & Kirkmuirhill	Mr Iain Sanderson	Blackwood & Kirkmuirhill
Rev. Jonathan de Groot	Christ Church, Glasgow	Mr Evan Macdonald	Glasgow City
Rev. Ivor MacDonald	Coatbridge	Mr Cameron Maciver	Coatbridge
Rev. Andrew Longwe	Cumbernauld	Mr Colin Macdonald	Cumbernauld
Rev. Iain Thomson	East Kilbride	Mr John Macdonald	Dowanvale
Rev. Kenneth Boyd	Govanhill	Mr John Mackenzie	Dowanvale
Rev. Benjamin Wilks	Newmilns		
Rev. Duncan Peters	Asian Outreach		

#### Presbytery of Inverness, Lochaber and Ross

<i>Ministers</i>		<i>Elders</i>	
Rev. Angus MacRae	Free North, Inverness	Mr John Macdonald	Dingwall & Strathpeffer
Rev. Robin Gray	Gardenstown	Mr John A.W. Scott	Gardenstown
Rev. Dr Malcolm M. Maclean	Greyfriars & Stratherrick	Mr Andrew Murchison	Glenurquhart & Fort Augustus
Rev. Chris Davidson	Merkinch	Mr James Fraser	Kiltarlity
Rev. Sean Ankers	Glenurquhart	Mr Roderick MacRae	Knockbain
Rev. Innes MacSween	Smithton & Culloden	Mr Blair Gardner	Urquhart & Resolis

#### Northern Presbytery

<i>Ministers</i>		<i>Elders</i>	
Rev. Howard Stone	Castletown & Community	Mr John Garvie	Tain & Fearn
Rev. Duncan Macleod	Dornoch	Mr Duncan Maclean	Tain & Fearn
Rev. Alasdair Macaulay	Tain & Fearn	Mr William Mackenzie	Tain & Fearn
Rev. John Marker	Thurso & North Coast	Mr William A. Paterson	Tain & Fearn

#### Presbytery of Skye and Wester Ross

<i>Ministers</i>		<i>Elders</i>	
Rev. Neil L. Macdonald	Lochbroom & Coigach	Mr Robert Macdonald	Duirinish
Rev. Marcos Florit	Lochcarron & Applecross	Mr William Fraser	Plockton & Kyle
Rev. Roddie Rankin	Plockton & Kyle	Mr Duncan Mackinnon	Portree & Bracadale
Rev. Donald G. Macdonald	Portree & Bracadale	Mr John A. Gillies	Portree & Bracadale

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## Presbytery of the Western Isles

<i>Ministers</i>		<i>Elders</i>	
Rev. Malcolm Macdonald	Callanish	Mr Calum Martin	Back
Rev. Ewen Matheson	Cross	Mr Angus Smith	Callanish
Rev. Calum I. Macleod	Lochs	Mr Iain H. Macleod	Callanish
Rev. Roderick J. Campbell	North Tolsta	Mr Gordon Macleod	North Harris
Rev. Malcolm Macleod	Shawbost	Mr John Macaulay	North Uist
Rev. Thomas Penman	South Uist & Benbecula	Mr Murdo Murray	Stornoway

## Presbytery of North America

<i>Ministers</i>		<i>Elders</i>	
Rev. Kent Compton	Desable Free Church	Mr Stephen Plouffe	Murray River Free Church

- The General Assembly declare that the need for the submission Elders' Certificates according to the terms of Act 8, 1853 as amended by Act 9, 1863, be waived for this Assembly in the light of the current COVID-19 crisis and its impact on meetings of Church courts.
- The General Assembly receive and adopt the Standing Orders, distributed with Assembly papers, with Act 33, Class 2, 2010 appended, as the Standing Orders of this Assembly and for the meeting of 6<sup>th</sup> October 2020 as required.
- The General Assembly declare that the following sections of Standing Orders be suspended for the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020 Session of the Assembly: B.1 – Elders' Certificates; C.3 – Examination of Presbytery Records; E2 – Reading of Speeches and Length of Speeches; .E.4 – Submission of Amendments and Addenda apart from Paragraph 1; E.14 – Examination of Presbytery Records; E.15 – Examination of Records of Boards and Committees; E.16 – Additional Assembly Committees.
- The General Assembly further declare that Standing Orders Section (E), Paragraph 5.2 regarding reading and length of speeches be amended to read as follows for the purposes of this meeting only: 'That in the discussion of any question the proposer of each motion may address the House for not longer than 10 minutes, and the seconder for 5 minutes; and no subsequent speaker shall address the House for a longer period than 5 minutes; and that these limits shall only be exceeded when the Moderator shall have ascertained that the House desires any speaker to continue and shall intimate the ascertained desire to that effect.'

### (D) MISCELLANEOUS

- 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.
- The General Assembly declare that all ministerial appointment which are due for review in May 2020 be extended under the current terms until the 2021 General Assembly.
- 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.
- 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 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020, the date on which the 2020 General Assembly will adjourn to meet again on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2020.
- Assembly Clerks' Office.** The General Assembly then called for the Report of the Assembly Clerks, which being printed and in the hands of members, was referred to by the Principal Clerk, who addressed the Assembly.
- 3.1. The Finding.** It was moved, seconded and agreed that:

### (A) NOMINATIONS

- The General Assembly note the resignation of Mr Calum MacMillan from the Mission Board and thank him for his services.

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2. The General Assembly note that the term of Rev. Angus MacRae as member and Chairman of the Board of Ministry comes to an end at this Assembly. They thank Mr MacRae for his services to the Church on the Board of Ministry.

3. The General Assembly note that Mr James Fraser is stepping down as Chairman of the Board of Trustees. They thank Mr Fraser for his years of unstinting and faithful services to the Church as the Board's Chairman.

4. 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: 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.

5. The General Assembly appoint Rev. Paul Clarke to serve on the Board of Ministry as a member and as the Board's Chairman.

6. 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 be on the basis of experience, and gifts and abilities suited to the duties. They appoint Mr Charles Anderson as Clerk of the Board of Ministry to succeed the late Rev. David E.C. Ford according to the terms of Act 10, Class 2, 2015 anent the Appointment of Clerks to Committees, Boards, Presbyteries and the General Assembly.

7. The General Assembly appoint the following membership of Boards, Committees and the Judicial Commission:

8. The General Assembly note that the figure in the year column in the tables below refers to the new year of service in a four-year term, and that the figure in the term column refers to which four-year term the year refers to. They appoint the following membership of Boards, Committees and the Judicial Commission:

Board of Ministry			Year	Term
	Rev. Paul Clarke	EP	1	1
	Rev. Ivor Macdonald	GA	4	2
	Rev. Colin L. Macleod	SWR	1	1
	1 member appointed by Senate			
	Mr Murdo Murray	WI	3	2
	Mr Michael W. J. Townsend	WI	3	2
	Mr Clive Bailey	GA	1	2
	Mr Charles Anderson	ILR	3	2
	ETS Principal <i>ex officio</i>			
<b>Chairman:</b>	Rev. Paul Clarke			
<b>Clerk:</b>	Mr Charles Anderson			

Board of Trustees			Year	Term
	Mr Donald Forsyth	ILR	3	1
	Mr James Fraser	ILR	2	4
	Mr Callum Macdonald	ILR	2	2
	Mr Neil Longwe	GA	2	1
	Mr Mark Robinson	N	2	1
	Rev. Kenneth J. Macleod	GA	3	2
	Rev. David C. Meredith	EP	3	2
	Rev. Dr Malcolm M. Maclean	ILR	4	2
	Rev. Paul Clarke	EP	3	2
	Rev. Calum Iain Macleod	ILR	1	2
	Mr Alastair Oliver	EP	1	2
	Mr Donald Macleod (Stornoway)	WI	2	1
<b>Chairman:</b>	Mr Donald Forsyth			
<b>Clerk:</b>	Chief Executive Officer			
<b>Adviser</b>	Principal Clerk <i>ex officio</i>			

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<b>Ecumenical Relations Committee</b>		<b>Year</b>	<b>Term</b>
	Mission Director <i>ex officio</i>		
	Mission Board Chairman <i>ex officio</i>		
	Principal Clerk of Assembly <i>ex officio</i>		
	Assistant Clerk Representative <i>ex officio</i>		
	Principal of ETS		
	Moderator of the Assembly		
	Mr Alastair Simison	2	1
<b>Convener:</b>	Rev. Iver Martin		
<b>Clerk:</b>	Principal Clerk of Assembly		

<b>ETS Board</b>		<b>Year</b>	<b>Term</b>
	Principal <i>ex officio</i>		
	1 other member of Senate		
	Chairman Board of Ministry		
	President SRC		
	Rev. Thomas Davis EP	4	1
	Rev. Dr Malcolm M. Maclean ILR	3	2
	Rev. Dr Fergus A. J. Macdonald EP	3	2
	Mr William Mackenzie N	1	1
	Mr Ross S. Finlay LIR	1	1
<b>Chairman:</b>	Rev. Dr Malcolm M. Maclean		
<b>Clerk:</b>	Seminary Secretary		

<b>Mission Board</b>		<b>Year</b>	<b>Term</b>
	Rev. Jeremy Ross EP	1	1
	Rev. Dr Robert Akroyd EP	4	1
	Rev. Iain MacAskill GA	2	2
	Rev. David Macleod WI	4	1
	Rev. Chris Davidson ILR	2	1
	Rev. Donald G. Macdonald SWR	2	1
	Dr Andrew Maciver EP	2	1
	Dr John Morrison EP	2	2
<b>Chairman:</b>	Rev. Dr Robert Akroyd		
<b>Secretary</b>	Mission Coordinator		

<b>Psalmody &amp; Praise Committee</b>		<b>Year</b>	<b>Term</b>
	Rev. Iver Martin EP	3	2
	Rev. Neil L. Macdonald SWR	2	1
	Mr Cameron Maciver GA	3	2
	Rev. Ruairidh Maclean GA	2	2
	Mr Kenneth Macdonald WI	4	1
	Mr Angus T. Macleod GA	2	2
<b>Convener:</b>	Rev. Ruairidh Maclean		
<b>Clerk:</b>	Mr Angus T. Macleod		

9. The General Assembly reappoint the **Judicial Commission** as follows:

<b>Presbytery</b>		<b>Year</b>	<b>Term</b>
Edinburgh & Perth	Rev. David C. Meredith	1	3
	Rev. Neil MacMillan	3	1
	Mr John MacRae	1	3
	Mr Neil Campbell	3	1
Glasgow & Argyll	Rev. Iain MacAskill	1	3
	Rev. Ian M. Watson	3	1

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	Mr Evan MacDonald	1	3
	Mr Rod Morrison	3	1
Inverness, Lochaber & Ross	Rev. Dr Malcolm M. Maclean	3	1
	Rev. Angus MacRae	1	3
	Mr Andrew Murchison	1	3
	Mr John Macaulay	3	1
Northern	Rev. Howard Stone	3	1
	Rev. Gordon Mair	3	1
	Mr Bill Ferrier	1	1
	Mr John Skinner	3	1
Skye & Wester Ross	Rev. Marcos Florit	3	1
	Rev. Roddie Rankin	1	1
	Mr Ian Macdonald	3	1
	Mr Stewart Clarke	1	1
Western Isles	Rev. Andrew Coghill	1	1
	Rev. Ewen Matheson	2	1
	Mr Donald Macleod (Shawbost)	3	1
	Mr Murdo Murray (Stornoway)	1	3
Chairman:	Mr Neil Campbell		
Clerk:	Principal Clerk		

## (B) ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

1. The General Assembly note the difficulties likely to be encountered by Deacons' Courts and Finance Committees in holding Annual General Meetings for the purpose of approving annual trustees' reports and congregational accounts.
2. The General Assembly instruct Deacons' Courts and Finance Committees, in the event that it has not been possible to hold the Annual Congregational Meeting, to submit annual reports and accounts to OSCR provided these have first of all been approved by the Deacons' Court/Finance Committee.

## (C) ARRANGEMENTS FOR EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

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 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.



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- 2.4. The person will show the unsigned Formula to the Camera.
  - 2.5. The person will sign the Formula on Camera.
  - 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 congregation 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 by raising their hand and keeping their hands raised until such time as the Moderator and Clerk have recorded the number of votes. 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 their 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.
  - 4.7. The meeting to Moderate the Call will be conducted as normal via audio-visual technology.

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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 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.

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.

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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.

**4. Edinburgh Theological Seminary.** The General Assembly then called for the Report of the Edinburgh Theological Seminary which being printed and in the hands of members, was referred to by the Convenor, Rev. Malcolm Maclean who addressed the Assembly.

**4.1. First Motion.** It was moved and seconded that:

1. The General Assembly thank Principal Martin, the Course Organisers and the Lecturers for their instruction of students during the past academic year.

2. The General Assembly thank Dr Alastair Wilson and those who helped him in the Centre for Mission during the past academic year.

3. The General Assembly thank Mrs Heather Watson and Mrs Ruth Smith for fulfilling their various roles in the running of ETS.

4. The General Assembly thank Mr Graham Keith and Mr Murdo MacPhail for their faithful contribution to the work of the ETS Board for the last eight years.

5. 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.

6. 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.

7. 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.'

8. The General Assembly commend the ETS Board for its progress in trying to identify a Course Organiser for the Church History Department at Edinburgh Theological Seminary.

**4.2. Second Motion.** It was moved and seconded that Paragraphs 6-8 of the proposed Deliverance be deleted and replaced with the following:

6. The General Assembly amend Paragraph 3.1 of Act 26, Class 2, 2014 regarding Staffing Arrangements for ETS to read 'It will be the responsibility of the Seminary Board to oversee the appointment of lecturing staff at the Seminary and, in the case of appointing a full time Course Organiser, the Seminary Board will bring a sole nominee for appointment to the General Assembly or its Commission. The final appointment of a full time Course Organiser will be made by the General Assembly or its Commission. If the General Assembly or its Commission do not agree to the appointment of the Seminary Board's sole nominee, the Seminary Board will be instructed to restart the appointment process. [Alternative nominees will not be accepted from the floor of the Assembly or its Commission].

7. The General Assembly also amend Paragraph 6.12 of Act 26, Class 2, 2014 regarding Staffing Arrangements for ETS by deleting the sentence saying, "The final responsibility for all appointments (Course Organisers and Part-time Core Lecturers) lies with the Seminary Board." Paragraph 6.12 now reads "Whilst the Course Organiser may exercise discretion to invite guest lecturers on an occasional basis, he does not have the authority to appoint a Part-time Core Lecturer in his subject except on a temporary replacement basis in the case of an emergency or due to ill health."

8. The General Assembly also amend Paragraph 6.14 to of Act 26, Class 2, 2014 regarding Staffing Arrangements for ETS read 'The Seminary Board will include in its report to the General Assembly all courses together with Course

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Organisers, Part-time Core Lecturers and Module lecturers. The General Assembly, or its Commission, will have the final authority over appointments.'

9. 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. They instruct that Paragraph 3.1.6.4 of Act 16, Class 2, 2019 be deleted and that the following paragraphs be renumbered accordingly.

**4.3. The Finding.** On a vote being taken between the Second Motion and the First Motion the First Motion carried and the finding of the Assembly was as follows:

1. The General Assembly thank Principal Martin, the Course Organisers and the Lecturers for their instruction of students during the past academic year.

2. The General Assembly thank Dr Alastair Wilson and those who helped him in the Centre for Mission during the past academic year.

3. The General Assembly thank Mrs Heather Watson and Mrs Ruth Smith for fulfilling their various roles in the running of ETS.

4. The General Assembly thank Mr Graham Keith and Mr Murdo MacPhail for their faithful contribution to the work of the ETS Board for the last eight years.

5. 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.

6. 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.

7. 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.'

8. The General Assembly commend the ETS Board for its progress in trying to identify a Course Organiser for the Church History Department at Edinburgh Theological Seminary.

**5. Mission Board.** The General Assembly then called for the Report of the Mission Board which being printed and in the hands of members, was referred to by the Chairman, Rev. Dr Robert J. Akroyd who addressed the Assembly.

**5.1. The Finding.** It was moved, seconded and agreed that:

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. They terminate the current Alternative Ministerial Arrangements under the terms of Act 13, Class 2, 2014. 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. 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.

**6. Board of Ministry.** The General Assembly then called for the Report of the Board of Ministry which being printed and in the hands of members, was referred to by the Chairman, Rev. Angus MacRae who addressed the Assembly.

**6.1. The Finding.** It was moved, seconded and agreed that:

1. The General Assembly receive and adopt the Report of the Board of Ministry and thank the Board, especially the Chairman and Vice-Chairman and those completing their period of service with the Board.

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2. The General Assembly note with sadness the sudden passing of Rev. Dr David E.C. Ford, formerly Clerk to the Board of Ministry, and give thanks for his varied, diligent and faithful contributions to the Kingdom of God. They commend his family to the grace and care of Almighty God.
3. The General Assembly thank Rev. Alex J. MacDonald, the *Pastoral Support Worker*, and all the consultants and advisors who assist the Board of Ministry and all who facilitate In-Service Training.
4. The General Assembly call on the whole Church to continue to pray that God would raise up many more gospel workers for the urgent spiritual needs of our times.
5. The General Assembly note the matters under ongoing review by the Board of Ministry and invite the Board to report to future meetings of the General Assembly or the Commission of Assembly on their activities and future intentions.
6. 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 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.'

7. The General Assembly appoint Rev. Derek Lamont to the membership of the Board as the representative of training congregations for a four-year term renewable for one further term of four years according to the terms of appointment in Act 6, Class 2, 2014, Paragraph 1.2.3.

**7. Board of Ministry – Supplementary Report.** The General Assembly then called for the Supplementary Report of the Board of Ministry which being printed and in the hands of members, was referred to by the Chairman, Rev. Angus Macrae who addressed the Assembly.

### *The General Assembly met in private.*

The General Assembly took up consideration of an application for admission to the Free Church ministry from Rev. Dr Euan G. Dodds. Confidential documents regarding the application were read to the Assembly by Mr MacRae as he presented the Board's report.

**7.1. The Finding.** It was moved, seconded and agreed that:

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 18<sup>th</sup> 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*.

### *The General Assembly met in open court.*

**7.2. Questions and Formula.** Rev. Dr Euan G. Dodds was called into the Assembly. The Moderator welcomed him and announced to him the decision of the Assembly, informing him that his application to be accepted as a Minister of the Free Church of Scotland was successful. The Moderator proceeded to ask Dr Dodds the prescribed Questions for ordinands and ministers on admission to pastoral charges and, having given appropriate response to the Questions, Dr Dodds signed the Formula according to the process outlined in the draft Act on Arrangements in Exceptional Circumstances passed by the General Assembly earlier.

**8. Board of Trustees.** The General Assembly then called for the report of the Board of Trustees, which being printed and in the hands of members, was referred to by the Chairman, Mr. James Fraser who addressed the Assembly.

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**8.1. The Statement.** The Chairman reported on the following statement of the Board of Trustees regarding the current COVID19 pandemic and potential risks to the Church:

The Board of Trustees has deferred reporting on its normal business in the light of the constraints under which the General Assembly meets. Instead, the Board wishes to make a statement in relation to the COVID-19 crisis and its impact upon the Church and on the business of the Board.

Since the inception of the crisis the Board set up a COVID Group to monitor and respond to the difficulties occasioned by the rapid onset of the pandemic. The work of the Board in this regard is summarised on the Free Church website. The Board's first priority was to ensure the continuation of the Church's ministry, congregation by congregation, within the constraints of lockdown. The Board is thankful to the Lord and Head of the Church, for the rapidity with which ministers have adopted technological means to continue as far as possible all the services which the church provides in normal times. Almost every Free Church congregation is now operating its services through videoconferencing and/or livestream. ETS has continued teaching by distance learning and as far as possible other areas of the Church have adapted to the constraints of a digitally enabled organisation. Indeed, many of our members are looking for new opportunities for spreading the gospel in the new environment. The Board wishes to commend ministers and members for their focus and, in that respect, is confident that the first priority has been achieved.

The Board's second priority is to ensure that the church receives the level of income which it needs to sustain its ministers in congregations, its training, mission and support functions. This is a challenging priority in a nation in lockdown. We are aware that some of our givers may experience loss of employment, business and income, and in such cases, we know that they have a duty to care for themselves and their families and may not be able to continue to donate to the Church. Indeed, we are encouraged by the fact that many congregations are setting up hardship funds to help brothers and sisters in this difficult situation. Added to this, we know that a large proportion of givings come through the collection plate and unless such donations are changed to an electronic method or to some other means, there is a danger that they be lost to the church.

It is too early to be precise about the likely effect of the crisis on our finances. A snapshot in April is not an adequate basis for a hard forecast; initial indications from scenario planning suggest that a medium forecast of loss of income, if unchecked, could lead to a deficit of around £1M in 2020. This scenario lies between a more optimistic and a more pessimistic scenario. The Board expects to be in a better position by end-June when these scenarios will be revised but meantime is adopting this as a working hypothesis.

Given a potential deficit of this magnitude, the Board believes that as a minimum each congregation should aim to remit at least the same amount of money in 2020 as it remitted, or should normally have remitted, in 2019 and wherever possible to exceed this figure. This target would allow the church to maintain its momentum and emerge from 2020 in good shape for the future. We want to resume in 2021 our ambitious targets for filling empty pulpits and planting new congregations. The Board will of course look at budgets and test expenditure. The Church is a lean organisation with a relatively small proportion of discretionary expenditure and although it is always important to test costs it is unlikely that this will be a remedy for dealing with a shortfall in income.

“God is our refuge and our strength” and has taken our Church through severe times of crisis hitherto. He has answered the prayers of our faithful people and we have weathered crises before in our nation. The Board is confident that the Lord will take us through this crisis too. We therefore urge our people to continue to give as the Lord has prospered them and urge our congregations to maintain the 2019 remittances as the minimal threshold for 2020 and to exceed this wherever required or possible.

**8.2. The Finding.** It was moved, seconded and agreed that:

1. The General Assembly endorse the Board of Trustees' ongoing scenario planning in relation to COVID-19 and instruct it to keep all matters under careful review.
2. The General Assembly remind congregations of the importance of monthly remittances and income reporting and instruct congregations to ensure that, as far as possible, these are up to date for period ending 31 May 2020.
3. The General Assembly instruct the Assembly Clerk to send the Board of Trustees Report and an extract from the proceedings of the General Assembly with the Assembly's finding on the matter to all Deacons Courts, Finance Committees, and Presbyteries of the Church.

**9. Thanks to Mr James Fraser.** Mr Scott Matheson, Chief Executive Officer, expressed his and the church's thanks for Mr Fraser's 14 years of service as Chairman of the Board of Trustees. Mr Matheson praised Mr Fraser's work ethic, communication and man-management skills, his energy, commitment and vision for the cause of the gospel.

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10. **Appointment of the 2021 General Assembly.** The General Assembly appointed the next General Assembly to meet in Edinburgh on Monday 17th May 2021 at 6.00pm.
11. **Minutes of Session.** The Minutes of this Session were read and approved.
12. **Adjournment.** The General Assembly then adjourned to meet again at 9.00am on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2020 of whereof public intimation having been given, the Session was closed with prayer.

## MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND HELD via ZOOM AUDIO -VISUAL TECHNOLOGY ON TUESDAY 6th OCTOBER 2020

1. **Assembly Constituted.** By means of the Zoom audio-visual technology on 6th October 2020, which day the Ministers and Elders, Commissioners from Presbyteries appointed to meet this day, did again convene, and after devotions led by Rev. Donald G. Macdonald, Moderator of the 2020 General Assembly, the General Assembly was duly constituted.
2. **Revised Programme.** The General Assembly approved the revised Programme which had been distributed with Assembly papers.
3. **Loyal and Dutiful Address.** 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.

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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.

**4. Assembly Clerks' Office.** The General Assembly called for the Report of the Assembly Clerks' Office, which having been distributed to members, was referred to by the Principal Clerk, who addressed the Assembly.

**4.1 The Finding.** It was moved, seconded and agreed that:

## (A) GENERAL

1. The General Assembly thank Rev. Paul Clarke and Mr James Fraser for their services to the Church on the Board of Trustees.

2. 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.

3. The General Assembly continue the remit of the 2019 General Assembly and instruct the Assembly Clerks' Office to draw up draft proposals for a new Act of Assembly to replace Act 10, Class 2, 2006 regarding the Appointment and Employment of Presbytery Workers with such draft proposals to update, revise and clarify the provisions of Act 10, Class 2, 2006. They direct that the draft proposals be drawn up in conjunction with the Mission Board and the Board of Trustees and instruct the Assembly Clerks to report to the 2021 General Assembly on a proposed revision of the arrangements.

4. 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.

5. The General Assembly declare that Standing Orders as approved by the Assembly on 18th May 2020 be the Standing Orders for the 6th October 2020 Session of the Assembly.

6. The General Assembly declare that successful applicants for the Free Church ministry may answer the Questions and sign the Formula at the meeting of the Assembly subsequent to their application being accepted according to the process set out in Act 4, Class 2, May 2020, Paragraph 2.

## (B) PROVINCIAL SYNODS

The General Assembly note the responses from Presbyteries to the Overture sent down according to the terms of the Barrier Act regarding the dissolution of Provincial Synods. They enact and ordain as follows:

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



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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.

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.

5. **Board of Ministry.** The General Assembly called for the Report of the Board of Ministry, which being printed and in the hands of members, was referred to by the Chairman, Rev. Paul Clarke, who addressed the Assembly.

5.1 **The Finding.** It was moved, seconded and agreed that:

1. The General Assembly receive and adopt the Report of the Board of Ministry and thank the Board, especially the Chairman and Vice-Chairman for their work.

2. The General Assembly thank Rev. Alex J. MacDonald the Pastoral Support Worker and all the consultants and advisers who assist the Board of Ministry and all who facilitate the In-Service Training.

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3. The General Assembly call on the whole Church to continue to pray that God would raise up many more gospel workers for the urgent spiritual needs of our times.
4. The General Assembly note the ongoing activities of the Board of Ministry, including the creation of a ‘Student Team’ and a ‘Ministers Team’ to further its work, and invite the Board to report to future meetings of the General Assembly or the Commission of Assembly on its activities and future intentions.
5. The General Assembly agree to meet in private session to take up and dispose of Supplementary Reports from the Board of Ministry concerning Applications for Admission to Free Church ministry from the Rev. Benjamin Fiddian, and Rev. Douglas Cranston, including the signing of the Formula should the applications be successful.
6. **Board of Ministry – Supplementary Report.** The General Assembly then called for the Supplementary Report of the Board of Ministry which being printed and in the hands of members, was referred to by the Chairman, Rev. Paul Clarke who addressed the Assembly.

## *The General Assembly met in private.*

The General Assembly took up consideration of applications for admission to the Free Church ministry from Rev. Benjamin Fiddian and Rev. Douglas Cranston. Confidential documents regarding the applications were read to the Assembly by Mr Clarke as he presented the Board’s report.

### **6.1 Rev. Douglas Cranston**

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*.

### **6.2 Rev. Benjamin Fiddian**

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*.

## *The General Assembly met in open court.*

**6.3 Questions and Formula.** Rev. Douglas Cranston and Rev. Benjamin Fiddian were called into the Assembly. The Moderator welcomed them and announced to them the decision of the Assembly, informing them that their applications to be accepted as a Minister of the Free Church of Scotland were successful. The Moderator proceeded to ask Mr Cranston and Mr Fiddian the prescribed Questions for ordinands and ministers on admission to pastoral charges and, having given appropriate response to the Questions, Mr Cranston and Mr Fiddian Dodds signed the Formula according to the process outlined in Act 2, Class 2, 2020 regarding Arrangements in Exceptional Circumstances. The Moderator then called on Rev. Angus MacRae to lead the Assembly in prayer.

**7. Edinburgh Theological Seminary.** The General Assembly called for the Report of Edinburgh Theological Seminary, which having been distributed to members, was referred to by the Chairman, Rev. Dr Malcolm Maclean, who addressed the Assembly.

**7.1 The Finding.** It was moved, seconded and agreed that:

### **(A) GENERAL**

1. The General Assembly thank the Board for its work on behalf of Edinburgh Theological Seminary.

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2. The General Assembly thank Principal Martin for his leadership of Edinburgh Theological Seminary.
3. The General Assembly thank the Professors and Lecturers who have given instruction in the various departments of Edinburgh Theological Seminary during the current period of crisis connected to COVID 19.
4. The General Assembly also thank Mrs Heather Watson and the administrative staff for their contribution to the work of the Seminary.
5. The General Assembly congratulate Principal Emeritus Donald Macleod for his recently published volume on Scottish Church History.

### (B) ETS CENTRE OF MISSION

1. The General Assembly thank Dr Alistair Wilson for his work as Coordinator of the Centre for Mission.
2. The General Assembly also thanks the other lecturers and speakers who contributed to the various activities of the Centre for Mission.

### (C) CHURCH HISTORY PROGRAMME LEADER / LECTURER

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.
7. The General Assembly instruct the Assembly Clerks to examine all Acts of Assembly relating to ETS staff and to revise and update the relevant Acts to ensure consistency and accuracy in the light of recent changes. They instruct the Clerks to report on this exercise to the 2021 General Assembly.

**8. Board of Trustees.** The General Assembly called for the Report of Board of Trustees, which having been distributed to members, was referred to by Rev. David Meredith who addressed the Assembly.

**8.1 First Motion.** It was moved and seconded that:

### (A) CORONAVIRUS

1. The General Assembly thank the Board for fulfilling its remit in assessing the risks facing the Church as a result of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. They also thank the Board's COVID-19 Group for its advice and guidance and remind all Kirk Sessions to comply with COVID-19 Group guidance as the situation develops.
2. The General Assembly instruct the Board through its COVID-19 Group to continue its diligence in assessing risks facing the Church during the current crisis. They instruct them to take such steps as are necessary to mitigate identified risks to public health and to the reputation of the Church.

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3. The General Assembly commend the UK and Scottish Governments to the ongoing prayers of the Church as they continue to navigate the coronavirus crisis. They thank the NHS and other organisations for the care and support given to those affected and their families.

4. The General Assembly note the Board's oversight of finances during the pandemic and urge Treasurers, Deacons' Courts and Finance Committees to ensure that remittances and income reports are submitted monthly to the church offices. They encourage the members of the church to continue to give in accordance with how the Lord has prospered them.

**8.2 Second Motion.** It was moved and seconded that the following be added as new Paragraph 5 in the Proposed Deliverance:

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 25<sup>th</sup> 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 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

**8.3 The Finding.** With the permission of the Assembly, Mr Meredith accepted the proposed addendum and the finding of the General Assembly was as follows:

1. The General Assembly thank the Board for fulfilling its remit in assessing the risks facing the Church as a result of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. They also thank the Board's COVID-19 Group for its advice and guidance and remind all Kirk Sessions to comply with COVID-19 Group guidance as the situation develops.

2. The General Assembly instruct the Board through its COVID-19 Group to continue its diligence in assessing risks facing the Church during the current crisis. They instruct them to take such steps as are necessary to mitigate identified risks to public health and to the reputation of the Church.

3. The General Assembly commend the UK and Scottish Governments to the ongoing prayers of the Church as they continue to navigate the coronavirus crisis. They thank the NHS and other organisations for the care and support given to those affected and their families.

4. The General Assembly note the Board's oversight of finances during the pandemic and urge Treasurers, Deacons' Courts and Finance Committees to ensure that remittances and income reports are submitted monthly to the church offices. They encourage the members of the church to continue to give in accordance with how the Lord has prospered them.

5. 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 25<sup>th</sup> 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 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

**9. Mission Board.** The General Assembly called for the Report of Mission Board, which having been distributed to members, was referred to by Rev. Dr R. Ackroyd who addressed the Assembly.

**9.1. The Finding.** It was moved, seconded and agreed that:

## (A) LOCALLY SUBSIDISED ARRANGEMENTS

1. 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.

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## (B) ASSISTANTSHIPS

1. 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.

**10. March 2021 Commission of Assembly.** The General Assembly appointed the next Commission of Assembly to meet in Edinburgh on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021 at 7.00pm as follows:

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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

2.4 *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.

2.5 *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.

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

3.1 *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

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3.2 *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.

3.3 *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.

4. **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.

5. **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.

11. **Protestations.** The Moderator called for protestations and none were declared.

12. **Minutes.** The Minutes of this Session were read, adjusted and approved.

13. **Thanks.** The Moderator thanked the Clerks, and Rev. Thomas Davis and Mr Alistair Oliver for hosting the meeting.

14. **Rising of the Assembly.** The General Assembly was declared dissolved and closed with prayer, the singing of Psalm 122 and the Benediction.

## MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS

### OF THE COMMISSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### OF THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

At Edinburgh and within the Free Presbytery Hall there on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2019, which day a quorum of the Commission appointed by last General Assembly being met, Rev. Donald G. Macdonald was called to the Chair, and the meeting was constituted with devotional exercises.

#### 1. Note of Business

The Principal Clerk submitted a note of the business to come before the Commission of Assembly as authorised by the General Assembly, *Act 9, Class 2, 2019.*

# FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND – 2020 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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## 2. Tabling of Acts and Proceedings of May 2019 General Assembly

The Acts and Proceedings of the 2019 General Assembly were tabled by the Principal Clerk.

*The Commission of Assembly met in private.*

## 3. Board of Ministry Report – Rev. Gavino Fioretti

The Commission of Assembly called for the report of the Board of Ministry which was presented by Rev. Alasdair M. Macleod. Mr Macleod presented the Board's report on the application of Rev. Gavino Fioretti to be added to the Roll of Ministers Without Charge Eligible for a Call.

**3.1 Presbytery Petition.** The Petition of the Presbytery of Edinburgh and Perth addressed to the 2019 General Assembly was noted as follows:

Unto the Venerable the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland indicted to meet in Edinburgh on Monday 20th May 2019, the Petition of the Rev. Gavino Fioretti humbly shows that:

1. Whereas your Petitioner was inducted to the charge of Edinburgh Leith Elder Memorial on 20th April 2013, and ministered there until resigning his charge on 28th June 2016 in order to work as a missionary in Italy;
2. Whereas your Petitioner left his charge as a minister of the Church in good standing;
3. Whereas your Petitioner was placed on the Roll of Resigned & Retired Ministers in terms of Act 34, Class 2, 2012;
4. Whereas your Petitioner has worked as a missionary in the congregation of Cristiani Biblici Insieme in Sesto Calende (Italy), as well as preaching and lecturing in the church of Nuova Vita in Bologna and other congregations in Italy;
5. Whereas your Petitioner now, in the providence of God, has a sense of God's call to return to the UK and if it is God's will to serve the church in Scotland;
6. Whereas your Petitioner now wishes to make himself available for a Call by a congregation of the Free Church of Scotland;
7. Whereas Act 15, Class 2, 2017, paragraph 5.5, states that a minister whose name is on the *Roll of Resigned Ministers* and who desires to have his name transferred to the *Register of Ministers without Charge Available for Call* shall petition the General Assembly through the Presbytery within whose bounds he is resident at the time;
8. Whereas your Petitioner has not been resident within the bounds of any Presbytery of the Free Church of Scotland while carrying out his ministry in Italy;
9. Whereas your Petitioner is bringing his desire to have his name transferred to the Register of Ministers without Charge Available for Call through the Presbytery of Edinburgh and Perth, the Presbytery in which he was last a member;
10. Whereas the Presbytery is supportive of your Petitioner's application;

Wherefore it is humbly requested that the General Assembly take these premises into their consideration and grant that your Petitioner be transferred from the Roll of Resigned and Retired Ministers to the Register of Ministers without Charge Available for Call.

Or do otherwise as in their wisdom they may deem best.

And your Petitioner will ever pray.

**3.2 The Finding.** It was moved, seconded and agreed that:

# FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND – 2020 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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1. The Commission of Assembly receive the report of the Board of Ministry regarding the Petition of the Presbytery of Edinburgh and Perth and Rev. Gavino Fioretti and they grant its crave.
2. They instruct that the name of Rev. Gavino Fioretti be transferred from the Roll of Resigned to the Roll of Ministers Without Charge Eligible for Call.
3. They further instruct the Chairman of the Mission Board to provide pastoral support and counsel to Mr Fioretti on his return to Scotland.

## *The Commission of Assembly met in open court.*

### **4. Board of Trustees Report**

The Commission of Assembly called for the report of the Board of Trustees regarding the appointment of the Editor of *The Record* and the appointment of a Parliamentary Officer which was presented by Chairman, Mr James Fraser.

#### **4.1 The Finding.** It was moved, seconded and agreed that:

1. The Commission of Assembly appoint Mr John Macdonald as Editor of *The Record* effective from 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2019. They declare that Mr Macdonald's appointment be according to terms of Act 8, Class 2, 2015.
2. The Commission of Assembly note that the Board of Trustees is not yet able to recommend a permanent appointment to the role. They instruct the Board to continue to pursue the matter and to bring a report to the March 2020 Commission of Assembly.

### **5. Appointment of Moderator-Designate of the 2020 General Assembly**

The Commission of Assembly called for the Report of the Assembly Clerks' Office regarding nominations for Moderator-Designate of the General Assembly of 2020. The Principal Clerk reported that the process of inviting nominations for General Assemblies' Moderator-Designate, outlined in Act 13, Class 2, 2017, has been successfully completed for the 2020 General Assembly, and that nominations were in favour of Rev. Neil MacMillan, Cornerstone Church Plant, Edinburgh. The Clerk also reported that Mr MacMillan has agreed to the nomination should he be appointed.

**5.1 Finding.** It was moved, seconded and agreed that the Commission of Assembly receive the report and that they appoint Rev. Neil MacMillan, minister at Cornerstone Church Plant, Edinburgh, as the Moderator-Designate of the 2020 General Assembly.

### **6. Assembly Clerks' Report - Examination of Records**

The Commission of Assembly called for Assembly Clerks' Report on outstanding matters from the 2019 General Assembly Examination of Records Report, which was presented by the Principal Clerk. The Clerk reported that the submission of the following records for re-examination was still outstanding: Presbytery of Glasgow and Argyll, the Presbytery of North America, and the Psalmody and Praise Committee.

#### **6.1 Finding.** It was moved, seconded and agreed that:

1. The Commission of Assembly receive the report of the Assembly Clerks Office regarding the examination of records.
2. The Commission of Assembly authorise the Assembly Clerks to stamp and sign the records of the Ecumenical Relations Committee and that of the ETS Board.
3. The Commission of Assembly instruct the Presbytery of Glasgow and Argyll and the Psalmody and Praise Committee to submit their records to the Assembly Clerks Office by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019. They authorise the Clerks to attest and sign the said records on successful completion of the re-examination.
4. The Commission of Assembly instruct the Presbytery of North America to report to the Assembly Clerks Office on the completion of the examination of records by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019.
5. The Commission of Assembly instruct the Assembly Clerks to include a report on the outstanding items above in the Assembly Business Committee's report on the examination of records to the 2020 General Assembly.



# FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND – 2020 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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7. **Minutes**            The Minutes of the meeting were read and approved.
8. **Close**                There being no further business, the meeting was closed with prayer.

## MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMISSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

At Edinburgh and within the Free Presbytery Hall there on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020, which day a quorum of the Commission appointed by last General Assembly being met, Rev. Donald G. Macdonald was called to the Chair, and the meeting was constituted with devotional exercises.

### **Quorum of Commission**

There being eight Commissioners present including six ministers the following Commissioners joined the meeting by telephone: Mr Callum Macdonald and Mr Sandy Finlay, Presbytery of Inverness, Lochaber and Ross, and Mr John A. Gillies, Presbytery of Skye and Wester Ross.

### **1. Note of Business**

The Principal Clerk submitted a note of the business to come before the Commission of Assembly as authorised by the General Assembly, *Act 9, Class 2, 2019*.

### **2. Board of Trustees – Parliamentary Officer**

The Commission of Assembly called for the report of the Board of Trustees regarding the appointment of a Parliamentary Officer. The report was presented by Chairman, Mr James Fraser.

**3.1 *The Finding*.** The Commission of Assembly note that the Board of Trustees continue to pursue the appointment of a new Parliamentary Officer. They instruct the Board to bring a report on the matter to the 2020 General Assembly.

### **3. Mission Board – Admission of Congregations**

The Commission of Assembly called for the report of the Mission Board regarding the application of Abbeygreen Church, Lesmahagow, Lanarkshire, to be admitted as a congregation of the Free Church of Scotland. The report was presented by Rev. Dr Robert Akroyd, Chairman.

**3.1 *The Finding*.** The finding of the Commission of Assembly was as follows:

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 31<sup>st</sup> 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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.

*The Commission of Assembly met in private.*

# FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND – 2020 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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## **4. Board of Ministry – Admission of Rev. David Carmichael**

The Commission of Assembly called for the report of the Board of Ministry on the application of Rev. David Carmichael to be admitted as a minister of the Free Church of Scotland. The report was presented by Rev. Angus MacRae, Chairman. Prior to presenting the Board's report, the Commission of Assembly noted with sadness the passing of Rev. Dr David Ford, former Clerk of the Board of Ministry, and recorded its thanks for his services to the Church.

**4.1 The Finding.** The finding of the Commission of Assembly was as follows:

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 31<sup>st</sup> 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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 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*.

### *The Commission of Assembly met in open court.*

- 4.2 Welcome.** The Moderator formally welcomed Rev. David Carmichael and representatives of the Abbeygreen Congregation after which he called on Rev. Angus Macrae to lead in prayer.
- 5. Minutes.** The Minutes of the meeting were read and approved.
- 6. Close.** There being no further business, the meeting was closed with prayer.