

THE PRINCIPAL

ACTS

OF THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OF THE



FREE CHURCH *of* **SCOTLAND**

CONVENED AT EDINBURGH, MAY 2021

WITH

ACTS

OF THE

COMMISSION OF ASSEMBLY

MARCH 2021

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

FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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THE PRINCIPAL ACTS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

CLASS 1 ACTS – ACTS WHICH HAVE PASSED THE BARRIER ACT

None

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

Act 1 – Examination of Records

Number 1 of Class 2

Category: *General Assembly*

Monday 17th May 2021

1. The General Assembly note that the Assembly Clerks have not been able to carry out the examination of records are instructed by the Assembly in Act 2, Class 2, 2020, Paragraph 6, due to the ongoing Scottish Government COVID-19 restrictions on in-person meetings. They also note that it is not possible for Assembly committees to meet for the examination of records because of the said restrictions.
2. The General Assembly instruct all Presbyteries to submit their records for ecclesiastical years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 to the Assembly Clerks' Office for examination as soon as in-person meetings are possible and on receipt of a request from the Assembly Clerk. They instruct the Assembly Clerks to report to the Commission of Assembly or the General Assembly as soon as possible after the examination has been completed.
3. The General Assembly instruct all Boards and Committees to submit their records for ecclesiastical years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 electronically to the Assembly Clerks' Office by Friday 12th June 2021. They instruct the Assembly Clerks to examine such records and to report on the examination to the October 2021 Commission of Assembly.
4. The General Assembly authorise the Assembly Clerk, on records being attested as correct, to issue a statement of attestation in the form of an extract of the proceedings of the General Assembly or its Commissions to Presbytery Clerks and to the Clerks of Boards and Committees. They instruct all Clerks to insert the statement of attestation in their permanent records at the first available opportunity after receipt of the same from the Assembly Clerk.

Act 2 – Amending Act 8, 1853 as Amended by Act 9, 1863 and Repealing Act 31, Class 2, 1976
and Act 6, Class 2, 2009

Number 2 of Class 2

Category: *General Assembly*

Monday 17th May 2021

1. The General Assembly declare that the requirement of Act 8, 1853 as amended by Act 9, 1863 that Kirk Session that *bona fide* Certificates be issued by Kirk Session for Ruling Elders appointed as Commissioners to the General Assembly be discontinued. They instruct the Assembly Clerks to ensure that a *bona fide* Certificate be included in the Form of Commissions for Presbyteries. They amend Act 8, 1853, as amended by Act 9, 1863, to read as follows:

The General Assembly, on the Report of their Committee appointed to collect, revise, and classify, the existing Standing Orders, and to suggest such other Orders as might appear to be necessary, did, and hereby do, ORDER:

I. As to COMMISSIONS to General Assembly

1. That all Commissions transmitted to the Clerks of Assembly, shall be revised by them, in so far as regards the regularity of said Commissions in point of form; and that the Clerks shall prepare and submit a Report on the subject to the Committee appointed by the Assembly for the revising of Commissions.
2. That the Clerks of Assembly shall furnish all Presbytery Clerks with printed copies of the form of Commission to Representatives hitherto in use and hereto appended.

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Commission to Representatives

At the day of one thousand eight hundred and years. The which day the Free Church Presbytery of being convened, in order to elect their Representatives to the ensuing Assembly, pursuant to a resolution entered their minutes on the day of did, and hereby do, nominate and appoint:

Minister	Congregation
Rev.	Minister at
Rev.	Minister at
Rev.	Minister at
Rev.	Minister at

With (*with their names given at length and including the Kirk Session of which they are members*)

Ruling Elder	Congregation of

their Commissioners to the next General Assembly of the Free Church Scotland, indicted to meet at Edinburgh the day of May next to come when and where it shall happen to sit, willing them to repair thereto, and to attend all the diets of the same, and there to consult, vote, and determine in all matters that come before them, to the glory of God and the good of His Church, according to the Word of God, the Confession of Faith, and agreeable to the constitution of this Church, as they will be answerable ; and that they report their diligence therein at their return therefrom.

And the said Presbytery do hereby testify and declare, that all the Ministers above named have signed the Formula, and further, that the said Ruling Elders are *bona fide* acting Elders of their Congregation and have signed the Formula, are of unblemished character, circumspect in their walk, regular in giving attendance on the ordinances of Divine Institution and behave in other respects agreeable to their office. All which the Presbytery have hereby attested on proper information.

Attested by

..... Moderator

..... Clerk

AFTER-ELECTION OF A MINISTER

At the day of one thousand eight hundred and years. The which day the Free Church Presbytery of being convened, and *here narrate the occasion of the new election*) did, and hereby do, nominate and appoint in place, their Commissioner to the next General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland; and do hereby testify and declare, that signed the Formula.; which the Presbytery hereby attest upon proper information.

Attested by

..... Moderator

..... Clerk

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AFTER-ELECTION OF AN ELDER

At the day of one thousand eight hundred and years. The which day the Free Church Presbytery of being convened, and (*here narrate the occasion of the new election*) did, and hereby do, nominate and appoint in place, their Commissioner to the next General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland; and do hereby testify and declare, that he is in all respects qualified in the same manner as their Commissioner, in whose room he is chosen; which the Presbytery hereby attest upon proper information.

Attested by

..... Moderator

..... Clerk

2. The General Assembly repeal Act 31, Class 2, 1976 – Act anent Certificates for Elder Commissioners, and Act 6, Class 2, 2009 – Act anent Elders' Certificates (Presbytery Clerks to monitor submission)

Act 3 – The Establishment Principle for Today

Number 3 of Class 2

Category: Governance

Monday 17th May 2021

The General Assembly receive the Overture in the name of Rev. Ian Watson and others and grant its crave. They form a Committee to consider how the Church should interpret and apply the Establishment Principle in the 21st century. They declare that the Committee shall have six members and shall have the power to appoint consultants and co-opt members as required to fulfil its remit. They instruct the Committee to report their findings to the 2022 General Assembly.

Act 4 – The Mission Director

Number 4 of Class 2

Category: Mission & Ministry

Tuesday 18th May 2021

The General Assembly declare the post of Mission Director to be a permanent post with the appointment to be reviewed every five years.

Act 5 – Reappointing Rev. David C. Meredith as Mission Director

Number 5 of Class 2

Category: Mission & Ministry

Tuesday 18th May 2021

The General Assembly re-appoint Rev. David C. Meredith as Mission Director and they thank him for his services to the Church since his first appointment.

Act 6 – The Status of South Uist and Benbecula and Rev. Thomas Penman

Number 6 of Class 2

Category: Mission & Ministry

Tuesday 18th May 2021

1. The General Assembly note the new settled ministry in South Uist and Benbecula and thank the Mission Board for its financial commitment to the ministry for the first three years.

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2. The General Assembly note the further two-year financial commitment of the Mission Board and the Western Isles Presbytery to the ministry in South Uist and Benbecula and thank them for this commitment.

3. The General Assembly extend the first three-year term of Rev. Thomas Penman's appointment by two years due to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on revitalising ministry in the congregation, with the appointment to be reviewed in October 2024.

Act 7 – Regarding the Status of Campbelltown

Number 7 of Class 2

Category: *Mission & Ministry*

Tuesday 18th May 2021

1. The General Assembly receive the Petition of the Presbytery of Glasgow and Argyll regarding the congregation of Campbelltown and, noting the recommendation of the Mission Board, grant its crave.

2. They grant permission to the congregation of Campbelltown to call a Minister on the restricted terms of a five-year reviewable appointment in accordance with the terms of Act 1, Class 1, 2018 anent the Sustentation Fund, Paragraph 3.4.

Act 8 – Assistant Minister at St Columba's

Number 8 of Class 2

Category: *Mission & Ministry*

Tuesday 18th May 2021

1. The General Assembly receive the Petition of the Presbytery of Edinburgh and Perth regarding the appointment of an Assistant Minister to the congregation of St Columba's and, noting the recommendation of the Mission Board, grant its crave.

2. They grant permission to the congregation of St Columba's to appoint an Assistant Minister in accordance with the terms of Act 18, Class 2, 2013, anent Assistantships, such permission to lapse at the General Assembly of 2023.

Act 9 – Assistant Minister at Stornoway

Number 9 of Class 2

Category: *Mission & Ministry*

Tuesday 18th May 2021

1. The General Assembly receive the Petition of the Presbytery of Western Isles regarding the appointment of an Assistant Minister to the congregation of Stornoway and, noting the recommendation of the Mission Board, grant its crave.

2. They grant permission to the congregation of Stornoway to appoint an Assistant Minister in accordance with the terms of Act 18, Class 2, 2013, anent Assistantships, such permission to lapse at the General Assembly of 2023.

Act 10 – Regarding the Status of Cornerstone

Number 10 of Class 2

Category: *Mission & Ministry*

Tuesday 18th May 2021

1. The General Assembly receive the Petition of the Presbytery of Edinburgh and Perth regarding the application of Cornerstone Church Plant to become a fully sanctioned charge and, noting the recommendation of the Mission Board, grant its crave.

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2. They terminate the Church Plant status of the congregation of Cornerstone. They grant the Congregation the status of a fully sanctioned charge under the ongoing ministry of Rev. Neil MacMillan.
3. They declare that Mr MacMillan's appointment be continuous with his original induction to the charge and without restriction according to the terms of Act 1, Class 1, 2018, paragraph 3.3.

Act 11 – Overseas Missionary Fellowship

Number 11 of Class 2

Category: *Mission & Ministry*

Tuesday 18th May 2021

The General Assembly note with approval and thankfulness the compilation of a Memorandum of Understanding between Overseas Missionary Fellowship and the Free Church of Scotland. They also note that an official partnership is now in place between Overseas Missionary Fellowship and the Free Church of Scotland.

Act 12 – Loyal and Dutiful Address

Number 12 of Class 2

Category: *General Assembly*

Tuesday 18th May 2021

The General Assembly called for the Report on the Loyal and Dutiful Address to Her Majesty the Queen which was given by the Moderator. The Report was adopted and in accordance therewith, the address was agreed to and appointed to be duly signed and submitted 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 17th Day of May 2021, humbly offer Your Majesty this statement of our continued loyalty to Your Majesty's Person and Throne and to the Constitutional Monarchy of which you are the much loved and honoured Head and Representative.

We offer our deepest condolences to Your Majesty over the death of your beloved husband, His Royal Highness, Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

We pray that in such a great loss you will experience the comfort of God and his particular care over you. We give thanks for the life of Prince Philip and for all that he was as a husband, father, grandfather, and great grandfather. We also record our sincere gratitude for his service to our nation in World War II and his many years of selfless public service. He had a tremendous impact on innumerable people. In particular, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme has helped to transform the lives of millions of young people in the UK and across the globe, including many members of our denomination. We praise God that through this, and by so many other means, God used the life of Prince Philip to serve and strengthen others.

Over the past year our nation has faced the great upheaval of global pandemic. We are grateful to Your Majesty for your leadership, prayers and wise counsel to our nation. In a year of such great deprivation, loss and sorrow for many of your people, we thank Your Majesty for the ways in which, by word and deed, you have provided hope and comfort when it was most needed.

We are thankful to Your Majesty's Governments for the effort made to protect the peoples of the United Kingdom from COVID-19. We grieve the terrible loss of life to this virus in our nation, and across the world. We express our profound gratitude to those employed within the National Health Service, home carers, and all essential workers, who have sacrificed so much for the benefit of others. We express our thanks also for the manner in which Your Majesty and other members of the Royal Family, have sought to uphold and sustain Commonwealth citizens in their response to the pandemic. The rapid rollout of the vaccination programme across the United Kingdom is a remarkable achievement for which Your Majesty's Governments must be applauded. It is our sincere prayer that the vaccination programme will be swiftly implemented across all the nations of the Commonwealth.

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We continue to pray for the good health of Your Majesty and for the health of all the Royal Household. We rejoice that Your Majesty has been blessed with two more great grandchildren, August Philip Hawke Brooksbank and Lucas Philip Tindall.

We note the hard-working service of members of Your Majesty's family, who assist in Your Royal and Constitutional duties and promote very many charities and good causes. We give thanks especially for the unstinting support given by the Royal Family to Your Majesty's Armed Forces. We are thankful for the continued service and sacrifice of all Your Majesty's Armed Forces and 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.

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 give thanks for the continued recognition Your Majesty gives to the work and ministry of the Free Church of Scotland by the welcome visit to our General Assembly of Your Majesty's Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. We are sorry that we are unable to welcome the Duke of Cambridge in person this year.

Your Majesty, as Ministers and Elders of the Free Church of Scotland, we count it a privilege to 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 ask that the Lord Jesus Christ may daily be your refuge and your strength.

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

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

Act 13 – Reappointing Rev. Duncan Peters to the Work of Asian Outreach

Number 13 of Class 2

Category: Mission & Ministry

Tuesday 18th May 2021

1. The General Assembly note the report and recommendation of the Mission Board regarding the review of Asian Outreach in Glasgow and the appointment of Rev. Duncan Peters.
2. The General Assembly re-appoint Mr Peters to the work of Asian Outreach for a further period of five years according to the terms of the approved Development Plan, with the work fully funded by the Mission Board, and with the work and the appointment to be reviewed at the 2026 General Assembly.
3. They thank Mr Peters for his services to the work of Asian Outreach over the years of his appointment and they commend him to the prayers of the Church.

Act 14 – Appointment of Dr Zachary Purvis as Programme Leader and Lecturer in Church History

Number 14 of Class 2

Category: ETS

Tuesday 18th May 2021

The General Assembly welcome and approve of the appointment of Dr Zachary Purvis as Programme Leader and Lecturer in Church History at the Edinburgh Theological Seminary and they grant him a seat on the Senate.

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Act 15 – Authority to Confer the Academic Designation of Professor

Number 15 of Class 2

Category: *ETS*

Tuesday 18th May 2021

The General Assembly grant the Edinburgh Theological Seminary Board authority to confer the academic designation of Professor on a lecturer who substantially meets the following criteria:

‘The lecturer has published three monographs (or fifteen academic articles or equivalent); has shown academic leadership within the Seminary and outside (involvement in learned bodies, speaking at academic conferences, leading an international research project); has experience of teaching at Postgraduate level; is asked by others to write references for book proposals, research proposals; has done PhD examining, or has been an external examiner in more than one institution.’

Act 16 – Principal’s Report

Number 16 of Class 2

Category: *ETS*

Tuesday 18th May 2021

The General Assembly instruct the Edinburgh Theological Seminary Board to ensure that, from 2022 onwards, the Principal’s Report incorporates developments in educational strategy, curriculum development, assessment reviews and pedagogical methodology as standing items so that the Assembly is fully apprised as to the teaching practices and curriculum at ETS.

Act 17 – Four-Year Minister-In-Training Model

Number 17 of Class 2

Category: *ETS*

Tuesday 18th May 2021

The General Assembly instruct the ETS Senate to liaise with the Board of Ministry regarding components of training impacted by the new four-year Minister-in-Training model. They further instruct the Senate to address issues of flexibility regarding content.

Act 18 – Presbytery Accounts

Number 18 of Class 2

Category: *Governance*

Wednesday 19th May 2021

The General Assembly instruct Presbyteries to send in their accounts to the Central Office finance team each year.

Act 19 – Sale of London City Manse

Number 19 of Class 2

Category: *Mission & Ministry*

Wednesday 19th May 2021

The General Assembly grant permission to London City Presbyterian Church to sell their manse. They declare that the proceeds from the sale shall be used for the purchase of a new manse.

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Act 20 – Communications

Number 20 of Class 2

Category: Governance

Wednesday 19th May 2021

1. The General Assembly instruct the Board of Trustees to set up a Communication Group under its oversight. They direct that the Communications Group will seek the approval of the Board of Trustees before any action is taken which may incur institutional risk.
2. The General Assembly delete Paragraph 1 of Act 24, Class 2, 2017 regarding the Review of Communications Arrangements, and they renumber the remaining paragraphs as Paragraphs 1-3.
3. The General Assembly amend Act 6, Class 2, 2014 by deleting Paragraph 1.1.3 on the Media Office. They insert a new Paragraph 1.1.3 regarding the Communications Group and its remit as follows: to have overall responsibility for all internal and external communication; to progress the communications strategy developed by the now defunct Communications Oversight Group; to implement improvements in communications across the whole Church; to support the Media Officer in responding to media enquiries on behalf of the Church and to take over the remit of the current Media Group; to consult widely with Boards, Presbyteries and Congregations as required.
4. The General Assembly further amend Act 6, Class 2, 2014 with the insertion of new Paragraph 1.1.3.1 regarding the membership of the Communications Group as follows: The membership and the Chairman of the Group will be appointed by the Board of Trustees.
5. The General Assembly direct that the existing Paragraph 1.1.4 regarding the membership of the Board of Trustees be renamed ‘Membership of the Board’ to avoid confusion in the reading of the Act.
6. The General Assembly instruct the Assembly Clerks’ Office in consultation with the Board of Trustees to revise Act 2, Class 2, 2008 regarding Appointing the Media Officer and Terms of Appointment and to bring revised proposals to the 2022 General Assembly.
7. The General Assembly instruct the Board of Trustees, in consultation with the Communications Group, to consider the appointment of an additional communications staff member to work with the Communications Group to improve internal and external communications.
8. The General Assembly recognise the need for greater coordination between Boards, and greater communication and sharing of prayer points between Boards, Committees, Presbyteries, and Congregations. They specifically instruct the Communications Group to take steps to improve this.
9. The General Assembly also recognise the need to provide ongoing training, in the various aspects of good communication, to Ministers and other Office-bearers throughout the Church. They instruct the Communication Group in conjunction with the Board of Ministry to consider suitable training options.

Act 21 – Public Engagement

Number 21 of Class 2

Category: Governance

Wednesday 19th May 2021

1. The General Assembly create the position of Public Engagement Coordinator. They declare that the Coordinator will be responsible for leading the Church’s public engagement. They further declare that the Coordinator will be appointed by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Board of Trustees.
2. The General Assembly establish a Public Engagement Group, under the Board of Trustees, with the following remit:
 - 2.1 To establish ad-hoc committees, relating to particular areas of policy, as required which can prepare an initial draft response to consultations.

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2.2 To establish a sounding body who will be asked for comments on proposed publications by email. The sounding body will include a representative from each home Presbytery, a representative of the Mission Board, a Member of the ETS Senate, and other representatives decided by the Public Engagement Group. The comments from the sounding body will be considered by the Public Engagement Group when approving the final response to ensure that the Group's response to any issue is fairly representative of views across the Church.

2.3 To liaise with the Board of Trustees (or its executive) ahead of any publication, via the Chairman and CEO, to protect the institutional reputation of the Church.

2.4 To support Presbyteries or Kirk Sessions seeking to engage with Local Government, Health Boards, or other public bodies.

2.5 To work with and support the work of a Free Church Parliamentary Liaison Officer.

3. The General declare that the Membership of the Public Engagement Group will be appointed by the Board of Trustees in consultation with the Public Engagement Coordinator, and that Group will have a maximum of five members including the Public Engagement Coordinator ex officio, who will chair the Group and the Principal Clerk, ex officio, who will act as Clerk to the Group. They further declare that the Parliamentary Liaison Officer, ex officio, is appointed as an advisor to the Group.

4. The General Assembly instruct the Board of Trustees to appoint a Free Church Parliamentary Liaison Officer in consultation with the Public Engagement Coordinator as soon as possible, to ensure appropriate influencing takes place and to assist in generating the work required by the committee. They declare that Parliamentary Liaison Officer position may be a voluntary, part-time position.

Act 22 – Amending Act 19, 2016 Recognition of Candidates and Admission of Ministers

Number 22 of Class 2

Category: *Mission & Ministry*

Wednesday 19th May 2021

The General Assembly amend Paragraph 2.2 of Act 19, Class 2, 2016 (Recognition of Candidates and Admission of Ministers) to read:

“The Board shall agree to interview the applicant, and come to a decision on the application if: (1) the Presbytery supports the application and is satisfied that the applicant is a suitable person to hold a ministerial charge in the Free Church of Scotland; (2) the applicant has completed the Free Church Ministry Module (available online at ETS); and (3) the applicant gives an unqualified and appropriate response to the Questions put to licentiates, and is willing to sign the Formula.”

Act 23 – Journey into Ministry

Number 23 of Class 2

Category: *Mission & Ministry*

Wednesday 19th May 2021

The General Assembly, seeking to revise and update arrangements and procedures regarding the application process to become a Candidate for Free Church Ministry and oversight and support of such Candidates before they are licensed to preach the gospel, enact and ordains as follows:

The General Assembly note that the biblical qualifications for pastors and teachers do not focus entirely, or even primarily, on their academic achievements, natural gifting or theological knowledge (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-3). They declare that the Free Church of Scotland seeks to identify and train faithful, reliable and humble men of God, motivated only by love for Christ and his people, who are called by God into a life of service.

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SECTION A – Pre-Application

1. Prior to an applicant completing an application form, intending applicants should hold informal conversations with their Minister and Kirk Session and be given opportunities to test their teaching gifts within a local church. If candidacy looks likely, the Kirk Session should inform the Presbytery.
2. The Presbytery will then inform the Board of Ministry, who may then appoint a training mentor, in consultation with the Presbytery, and assist in training and developing the candidate's gifts.
3. The Board of Ministry will prepare guidance to assist congregations and Presbyteries in the pre-application stage.

SECTION B - Application Process

1. In order to apply to be a Candidate for the Free Church Ministry the applicant must be:
 - 1.1. Male.
 - 1.2. Over the age of twenty-one.
 - 1.3. Have been a Communicant Member of a Christian church for a minimum of two years.
 - 1.4. Have been a Communicant Member of a Free Church congregation for a minimum of six months.
 - 1.5. Have not applied as a candidate for ministry in the Free Church within the previous two years.
2. All Applicants shall complete the Application Form produced by the Board of Ministry.
 - 2.1. A Minister or Session Clerk shall make the Application Form available to any potential candidates within their congregation.
 - 2.2. The Applicant shall give their completed Application Form to the Minister or to the Clerk of the Kirk Session.
 - 2.3. Applications may be received by the Kirk Session at any time of year.
 - 2.4. In order to begin studies at Edinburgh Theological Seminary in September the Application Form must be processed by the Kirk Session by the end of February of the same year.
3. Upon receipt of an Application Form, the Kirk Session shall discuss the suitability of the Applicant for the role of Minister.
 - 3.1. The Kirk Session will interview the Applicant as soon as possible after receipt of the Application Form.
 - 3.2. If the Applicant is married the Applicant and his wife will also meet with the Minister and his wife (or if the Minister is unmarried by the Minister and another married couple) to assess whether the Applicant's wife is supportive of his candidacy. The Board will provide a list of questions for discussion. The minutes of the discussion will be given to the Kirk Session and taken into consideration when they are making their assessment of the candidate.
 - 3.3. The Kirk Session shall meet without the Applicant to come to a decision on whether his Application will progress to the next stage.
 - 3.4. The Kirk Session shall inform the Applicant of their decision within seven days of the meeting.
4. Where an Application proceeds to the next stage the Kirk Session shall inform their Presbytery within seven days of their decision.
 - 4.1. The Presbytery Clerk should be given a copy of the Application Form.
 - 4.2. The Presbytery Clerk should send notice of the Application to all members of Presbytery taking care to secure the confidentiality of personal information.
 - 4.3. Presbytery and Kirk Session Representatives should listen to sermon recordings of the Applicant prior to interview.
5. The Presbytery shall appoint a date to interview the Applicant and may appoint a Committee to carry out this stage of the process.
 - 5.1. At the end of this interview, the Presbytery shall come to a view on whether the application should progress to the next stage of the process.

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- 5.2. The Interview can be conducted by the Personnel Committee of the Presbytery, or other similar committee, where this role has been delegated to them by the Presbytery.
- 5.3. At least two members of the relevant Kirk Session must be present at the interview.
- 5.4. The Board of Ministry shall provide all Presbyteries with appropriate interview questions and guidance.
6. At its Ordinary Meeting, the Presbytery shall take up consideration of the Applicant and the Application Form. It shall be moved, seconded and agreed that the Applicant can proceed to the next stage of the process if the Presbytery decide the Applicant is suitable.
 - 6.1. The Presbytery will receive the report of the interview committee with their recommendations.
 - 6.2. The Applicant shall appear before the whole Presbytery and any further questions can be put to him by any member of the Presbytery.
 - 6.3. The Applicant will be asked to leave the room and the Presbytery will then decide on whether his Application will be approved and recommended for consideration by the Board of Ministry.
 - 6.4. The Presbytery shall come to a decision on the approval of the application by way of a suitable motion recording their approval of the Application.
 - 6.5. The Presbytery shall inform the Applicant of progress with his application no later than seven days after the decision is taken.
7. The Presbytery must inform the Board of Ministry of any successful applications within seven days of approving an application, and they shall pass on all relevant documents to the Board at this time.
 8. The Applicant will be required to attend an Assessment Day.
 - 8.1. Assessment Days shall be organised by the Board of Ministry.
 - 8.2. The Board of Ministry, and several others appointed by them, will assess Applicants' suitability for Ministry.
 - 8.3. At least one female assessor shall be present at each Assessment Day.
 - 8.4. Assessment Days will take place as required.
 - 8.5. The Board of Ministry or Representatives of the Board will conduct an interview with the Applicant during or shortly after the Assessment Day.
 9. After the Assessment Day and Interview, a Report will come to the Board of Ministry.
 - 9.1. The Board of Ministry shall come to a decision on whether the Applicant is a suitable Candidate for Free Church Ministry. They shall also assess his training requirements in the context of becoming a suitable person to be licensed for Ministry.
 - 9.2. The Board of Ministry shall inform the Applicant of their decision regarding his candidacy within seven days of the next Board meeting. This must be in writing.
 - 9.3. If the Applicant is accepted as a Candidate for the ministry, the Board of Ministry must inform the Applicant and the Presbytery of their decision regarding the training requirements within twenty-one days. This must be in writing.
10. When an Applicant is married then due consideration for his wife must be taken at every stage of the Application Process
 - 10.1. The Board of Ministry shall ensure that the Application Form includes a section for wives to complete.
 - 10.2. Wives should also attend the Assessment Day where possible.

SECTION C - Application Form

The Board of Ministry hold the responsibility for creating an Application Form and providing interview questions for Presbyteries.

1. The Board of Ministry shall create an Application Form to be used for Applicants for Free Church Ministry.
 - 1.1. The Board of Ministry shall create Regulations to govern the content of the Application Form.

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- 1.2. The General Assembly reserves the right to review the Application Form and any Regulations related to the Application Form.
- 1.3. The content of the Application form must comply with civil legislation.
- 1.4. The Application Form shall be reviewed by the Board of Ministry on a yearly basis.
2. The Board of Ministry shall create an Application Information Sheet to be released with the Application Form.
- 2.1. The Application Information Sheet will detail how to complete the Application Form and provide information on the process to become a Candidate for Free Church Ministry.
3. The Board of Ministry shall create interview questions to be used by Presbytery during the Application process, including questions regarding sensitive information, and provide these to each Presbytery.
- 3.1. The Board of Ministry shall create Regulations to govern the content of the interview questions.
- 3.2. The General Assembly reserves the right to review the interview questions and any Regulations related to the interview questions.
- 3.3. The interview questions shall be reviewed by the Board of Ministry on a yearly basis.
4. Retention of Records
- 4.1. The Board of Ministry is responsible for storing all information gathered during the Application Process in a manner that complies with civil law.

SECTION D - Decisions on Route to Ministry

Upon offering Candidacy to an Applicant, the Board of Ministry shall devise a study plan for each candidate. The Board of Ministry will arrange this study plan in conjunction with Edinburgh Theological Seminary.

1. All Candidates should complete the full course of study available to Edinburgh Theological Seminary and achieve a pass of the BTh.
2. All Candidates must complete the Presbyterian Church Ministry Module and attend Preaching Seminars as required by the Board of Ministry before being licensed.
3. Exceptions to the requirement for all candidates to complete the full BTh can be made in particular circumstances:
 - 3.1. When the Candidate has already completed theological studies, he may be required to undertake courses at ETS at the discretion of the Board of Ministry.
 - 3.2. ETS shall devise an examination which will assist the Board of Ministry in assessing the Candidate's knowledge if he has already completed theological study.
 - 3.3. The Board of Ministry can in exceptional circumstances waive the requirement to study the Biblical languages.
4. The Board of Ministry shall publish a Candidate Information Guide in conjunction with ETS each academic year. This shall be distributed by the Board of Ministry to all Candidates at the beginning of each academic year.

SECTION E - Support for Free Church Ministry Candidates

Free Church Candidates have a responsibility to live a life above reproach, suitable of that of a Minister of the Gospel and must make themselves available for mentoring and accountability.

1. Every Candidate will be provided with a mentor by Presbytery. The mentor will typically be a member of that Presbytery.
 - 1.1. Mentors shall contact their assigned Candidate at least twice per semester.
 - 1.2. Mentors shall discuss matters of personal and professional development with the Candidate.
 - 1.3. All discussions between Mentor and their assigned Candidate shall take place in strict confidence unless a safeguarding issue is disclosed, or any matter that may call into question the integrity of the Candidate and their suitability for Ministry.
 - 1.4. The Board of Ministry are responsible for ensuring that Mentors are in place and that Mentors are in contact with their assigned Candidate at least twice per Semester.

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2. ETS shall appoint a Director of Studies to each Candidate.
 - 2.1. The Director of Studies shall send a report to Presbytery and the Board of Ministry on the Candidate's academic progress at the end of each academic year.
 - 2.2. The Director of Studies should also report on any other issues that have arisen over the course of the year.
 - 2.3. If any issues regarding the academic progress of a Candidate emerge during the year the Director of Studies shall report this to Presbytery and the Board of Ministry as soon as is practicable.
3. The Board of Ministry reserve the right to hold a meeting with a Candidate at any point.
 - 3.1. The Board of Ministry can use such meetings to discuss any matter regarding the progress of the Candidate.
 - 3.2. The Candidate may bring a friend or their Mentor to any of these meetings (such a friend should be a communicant member in the Free Church or another Christian church).
 - 3.3. The Board of Ministry shall bring any concerns regarding a Candidate to the Presbytery as soon as is practicable.
 - 3.4. At the end of each academic year the Board of Ministry shall report to Presbytery on each Candidate's progress.
4. The local congregation where the candidate is serving shall send a report to Presbytery and the Board of Ministry on the Candidate's involvement with the local congregation at the end of each academic year.
 - 4.1. Where this is a training congregation, details of training undertaken by the candidate should be provided in the report.
5. At the end of each academic year, Presbytery shall certify that the Candidate is able to continue in his role.
 - 5.1. They shall review all information received from the Board of Ministry, the local congregation and ETS on the Candidate's Progress.
 - 5.2. They will interview the Candidate and discuss matters related to his Candidacy and continued suitability for ministry.
 - 5.3. If any particular issues are raised by a Candidate's Mentor, Accountability Partner, Director of Studies or the Board of Ministry these will be discussed with the Candidate.
 - 5.4. In their assessment of the Candidate, the Presbytery shall satisfy themselves as far as possible that the Candidate is a suitable person to sign the Formula.
 - 5.5. The Presbytery will issue a certificate, before the commencement of the ensuing academic year, to the Candidate, ETS and the Board of Ministry to certify his continued status as a Candidate.
6. A Candidate is under the pastoral oversight of the Presbytery of the Congregation in which he is a Communicant Member.

SECTION F - Ending a Candidacy

1. The candidacy shall be kept under review by the Presbytery and the Board of Ministry. This review may on occasions lead to the conclusion that there are potential grounds to end the candidacy.
2. If the ETS Senate has cause for concern about a candidate, they shall report this to the Presbytery and the Board as soon as possible.
3. Prior to the commencement of a formal process of terminating the candidacy, the Presbytery and the Board shall seek to help the Candidate to resolve the problems leading to concerns over their suitability as a candidate for the ministry.
4. Should such efforts fail to resolve the situation, a review committee will be established comprising three members of the Presbytery and three members of the Board of Ministry. The Board's representatives shall include the Chairman who will also act as Convener of the Review Committee.
5. The Review Committee shall have powers to interview the Candidate, to arrange support for the Candidate, and to recommend to the Presbytery to terminate the candidacy should the concerns raised regarding the candidacy be confirmed.
6. The candidate shall be given every opportunity to find a resolution of the problem.

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- 6.1. The Committee shall consult with the ETS Senate and receive a report from them on the Candidate's progress, character and suitability as a candidate for the ministry.
- 6.2. The Committee shall consult with the Minister of the candidate's training Church, where he is on a Minister-in-Training programme.
- 6.3. The Committee shall consult with the Board and receive a report from them on their oversight and examination of the Candidate.
- 6.4. The Review Committee shall consider the candidacy and the problems that have arisen, taking cognisance of the Senate's report, the Board's report, and the record of the Presbytery's previous deliberations on the matter, before proceeding to interview the Candidate.
- 6.5. The Candidate shall be invited to appear before the Review Committee, accompanied by a friend or his mentor, to address the concerns that have been raised and to seek a solution. The process may require more than one meeting with the Candidate before a final recommendation is made.
- 6.6. The Candidate shall leave the room before the Committee considers the details of the interview and come to a recommendation on the matter.
7. Should the Review Committee find that the potential grounds for terminating the candidacy have been confirmed by the review process, they shall report to the Presbytery and the Board accordingly, with their conclusions and recommendations. The Committee shall also inform the candidate of their conclusions and recommendations.
8. The Presbytery will meet to reach a final decision on the Committee's recommendation.
- 8.1. The Candidate and a representative of the Board of Ministry will have a right to address the Presbytery before the Presbytery reaches its decision.
- 8.2. The Candidate shall leave the room before the Presbytery considers the details of the recommendation on the matter.
- 8.3. The Candidate and the Board of Ministry will be informed of the final decision in writing within 7 days.
- 8.4. The Presbytery in consultation with the Board will ensure that suitable pastoral support is made available to the Candidate.
9. Any decision made by the Presbytery regarding ongoing candidacy can be appealed by the Candidate to the General Assembly or one of its Commissions within 10 days of receiving the written decision.
10. The Chairman of the Board of Ministry will also have a right to appeal the decision of the Presbytery to the General Assembly or one of its Commissions, within 10 days of receiving the written decision, where the proper procedure has not been followed or relevant information has been disregarded by the Presbytery.

SECTION G - Repeals

The General Assembly repeal the following Acts: Section 1 of Act 19, Class 2, 2016; Act 38, Class 2, 2015; Act 48, Class 2, 2012; and Act 37, Class 2, 2012.

Act 24 – Admitting Rev. Dr Cory Brock to the Ministry of the Free Church of Scotland

Number 24 of Class 2

Category: *Mission & Ministry*

Wednesday 19th May 2021

1. The General Assembly receive the application for the Free Church ministry from Rev. Dr Cory Brock. 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. Dr Cory Brock to the Register of Ministers without Charge Available for Call.
3. The General Assembly direct that documents supporting the application to be held in retentis.

Act 25 – Committee on the Establishment Principle

Number 25 of Class 2

Category: *Governance*

Wednesday 19th May 2021

The General Assembly appoint the membership of the Committee to report on the Establishment Principle and its relevance in the 21st Century as follows: Rev. Dr John S. Ross (Convener), Rev. James Maciver, Rev. Gordon Matheson, Rev. Nigel Anderson, Rev. Andrew Longwe, Mr Neil D.M. Macleod (St Columba's, Edinburgh), and the Public Engagement Coordinator, *ex officio*.

Act 26 – Appointing Rev. Stephen Allison as the Public Engagement Coordinator

Number 26 of Class 2

Category: *Governance*

Wednesday 19th May 2021

The General Assembly appoint Rev. Stephen Allison to the position of the Church's Public Engagement Coordinator.

Act 27 – General Assessors to the Northern Presbytery

Number 27 of Class 2

Category: *Governance*

Wednesday 19th May 2021

The General Assembly appoint the following General Assessors to the Northern Presbytery, with the appointments to terminate at the 2023 General Assembly: Rev. Alasdair M. Macleod, Minister at Smithton and Culloden, Rev. Rory Stott, Minister at Fortrose, Mr Iain A. Macdonald, Elder at Greyfriars Inverness, and Mr Angus Mackay, Elder at Dingwall and Strathpeffer.

Act 28 – Appointing the Commission of Assembly

Number 28 of Class 2

Category: *General Assembly*

Wednesday 19th May 2021

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

1. **Meetings.** This Commission is appointed to meet at Edinburgh on Tuesday 5th October 2021 and on Tuesday 1st March 2022 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 terms of Act 33, Class 2, 2010, and Act 4, Class 2, 2020 should there be restrictions on in-person meetings at the time.

1.2. **Virtual Meetings.** The General Assembly declare that it shall be competent to meet virtually with the use of audio-visual technology, under the terms of the above-mentioned Acts of Assembly, at the discretion of the Moderator and the Assembly Clerk in consultation with the Assembly Business Committee.

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

1.4. **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.

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1.5. **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.

1.6. **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 to take up and dispose of any matter referred to them by the General Assembly or arising out of any Act or finding of the Assembly in accordance with the instructions given by the Assembly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.1 *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.

5.2 *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.

5.3 *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.

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

7. **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.

8. **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.

Act 29 – Appointing the 2022 General Assembly

Number 29 of Class 2

Category: *General Assembly*

Wednesday 19th May 2021

The General Assembly appoint the next General Assembly to meet on Monday 23rd May 2022 at 6.00pm. The Assembly empower the Moderator and the Assembly Clerk, in consultation with the Assembly Business Committee, to alter the date should this date not coincide with the Church of Scotland Assembly.

ACTS OF THE COMMISSION OF ASSEMBLY

Act 1 – COVID-19 Restrictions

Number 1 of Class 2

Category: *Governance*

Wednesday 3rd March 2021

1. The Commission of Assembly thank the Board of Trustees COVID-19 Group for its services to the Church during the coronavirus pandemic and the direction it has taken at a time when Scottish Government COVID-19 restrictions have once more closed churches for public worship.

2. The Commission of Assembly recognise that the intention of the Scottish Government in closing churches at this time is to control the virus, prevent our health services being overwhelmed and limit the loss of life. They give thanks to the Lord for the COVID-19 vaccine roll out and pray that this programme, together with the public health restrictions, will accelerate the return of the country to normality.

3. The Commission of Assembly declare that the Free Church of Scotland has no role in the pre-action letter written and signed by 27 church leaders on 15th January 2021, claiming that closure of churches in Scotland has led to the criminalising of public worship, or in the subsequent action which has resulted in them being granted a judicial review of this aspect of the Scottish Government's policy. They further declare that Free Church Ministers or Office-bearers who have supported the said action are expressing their personal views and that they are not representative of the Church's position on the matter.

4. The Commission of Assembly instruct the Board of Trustees COVID-19 Group to make representations to the Scottish Government to prioritise the re-opening of churches as part of the easing of lockdown restrictions, given the importance of gathered worship to the wellbeing of our members. They declare that Board of Trustees will publish on the Free Church website this representation to the Government for the sake of transparency.