



Introduction

The notes below have been prepared as a prompt and an indication of many of the key points which will come up during the General Assembly. They should help us navigate the “Blue Book” and should be regarded as a helpful addition to it. We are grateful for the work which has gone into preparing this summary.

Each section of the Blue Book is listed under the day on which it will be discussed and certain salient points are highlighted with the appropriate deliverance or report number being given.

We would seek to participate fully in the Assembly and it is important that we are seen to do so – not being, or perceived as being, a negative voice from the sidelines. We should take every opportunity to commend or affirm the many good things which are taking place within the church.

Our contributions should be clear, succinct (so as not to try the patience of Assembly), gracious and they should express the principles that Covenant Fellowship Scotland believes God wishes to see demonstrated in the life, work and worship of the Church of Scotland.

General

- Start with preparation: read and pray
- Heart and Soul – the Church gathers in Princes St Gardens: Sunday pm. A major witness in the city centre, with 5,000+ gathered – don’t leave this to others
- Many important issues over the week (not just the Returns to Overtures)

Saturday 21st May

Opening Ceremonials from 9.30 am - business resumes about 10.45 am after opening ceremonials

- **Assembly arrangements committee (1)**
 - Del. 4: Nominations for the Selection Committee
 - Del. 7: Changes to Assembly timing, format etc.
 - Report 4: Nominate the Moderator – **Names to Ballot – especially Elders who know the wider church**
- **Scottish Bible Society:** always an excellent report – David Laing will be giving this year’s
- **The Delegation of Assembly (2)** – short but the numbers of Unitary Constitutions indicate a direction.
- **Returns to Overtures (3)**
 - Amend Ministers and Deacons in Civil Partnerships Act - should be a significant debate given the narrowness of the vote – among Presbyteries, and particular between individual elder numbers
- **3 pm Council of Assembly (4)**
 - **+ Supplementary Report: the Budget – which cannot be adjusted later in the week**
 - Del 3: Regional Roadshows on the future of the Church
 - Del 4: staffing resource alongside Pres. Clerks – Presbytery partnership theme
 - Del 6: Regs – M&M 5% flexibility – using funds more locally
 - Dels 21-24: Appointments
 - Supplementary Del 6: Interfaith Officer – already appointed
 - Supplementary Del 8: moving the Church Offices report - to GA 2017
- **Legal Questions committee (5)**
 - Pass an Act: hallmark of these reports – changes to Church law
 - Dels 6-8: Registrations of Ministries **Overture** – licencing ministers, linking to changes in Ministries Council Report – Ministerial Development and Review, and Continuous ~~Professional~~ Ministerial Development
 - Del 10: draft Discipline Overture – taking three Assemblies to deal with a thorny process. Note that Church Discipline takes too long, with Ministers being suspended for many many months.
 - Del 11: Unitary Constitution only form of constitution from now on. A charities legislation led principle, but also a very popular form of government since it was introduced.
 - Del 12: Congregational voting: examination of use of proxies or remote voting

- Del 15: Act: Inter-Presbytery co-operation – a continuing theme to be welcomed

Saturday Evening – session 3

- Address and Presentations

Sunday 22nd May: Services: St Giles 10 am, Heart & Soul

Monday 23rd May

- Begin with Communion – a full house
- Business Committee report
- **World Mission Council (6)**
 - A short report in print
 - Dels 3 & 4: Resources, Links & Twinings
 - Del 6: Care for creation – conference
 - Dels 7 & 8: Register as Eco-congregations/Fairtrade
 - Dels 13-15: 24th of the month – Holy Land; but no mention of Tiberias, Tabeetha or St Andrew's, Jerusalem
 - Del 18: HIV Programme
 - Del 19: North Korea
- **Social Care Council (7)**
 - Del 4: Long-term funding & sustainability
 - Del 5: Pay rise
 - Del 6: contributions and living wage
 - Del 7: Sunday 9/10 Social Care Sunday - welcome
- **Review & Reform (8)**
 - Del 3: Instruct Presbyteries to have a Path of Renewal speaker by June 2016 – this date is surely too early?
 - Del 5: Alleviate Admin burden – responses from Presbyteries by Dec 2016
 - Del 7: Instruct Pres: empowering local – responses from Presbyteries by Dec 2016
 - Del 9: Scope of OLM broadened?

Tuesday 24th May

- **Church & Society Council (9)**
 - Additional Reports online in Order of Proceedings
 - Del 2: Celebrate and endorse Speak Out – are we content to **endorse**?
 - Corporal Punishment; Climate 'Justice';
 - Fuel issues
 - Education
 - Supplementary Report: Del 2: remain in the EU **Should the church take a position on this?**
 - 2 pm: Stevenson Prize
- **Guild (10)**
 - Dels 9 & 10: NYA Intergenerational work
- **Iona Community Board (11)**
 - Del 3: Refurbishment work at Iona Abbey

Wednesday 25th May

- **Ecumenical Relations (12)**
 - Del 2: Columba Declaration – mutual recognition with Church of England – welcome?
 - Del 3: Scottish Episcopal Church – not to be forgotten
 - Del 5: UF talks – going nowhere after the breakdown of the Covenant caused by the Civil Partnership Act?
 - Dels 7 & 8: Sharing of church buildings with CofE – mainly affecting borders congregations and some English CofS – surely welcome

- **Safeguarding (13)**
 - Vital instructions on PVG
 - Del 2: Regular KS agenda item and report
- **Ministries Council (14) + Supplementary Reports**
 - Del 2: Future of Ministry: Roadshows
 - Del 3: **'Hub-style' Ministry** – similar pattern to some Church of England charges with a central congregation and satellites of smaller congregations – but can it fit our polity?
 - Del 4: *Tomorrow's Calling*: Decade for Ministry – a long way to go with the growing shortage of Parish Ministers (hence Hub suggestion above).
 - Del 6: **Ministerial Development Review (MDR)**
 - Del 7: **Continuing Ministerial Development (CMD)** – both these could be welcomed
 - Del 8: Regs – Part-time Ministers and Manses
 - Del 9: Act – Unsatisfactory State – making difficult legislation work at last?
 - Del 10: Pastoral fees for non-Parish Ministers
 - Del 12: Winding up the Presbytery Staffing Fund
 - Del 13: Commend **Go For It** (a success)

Thursday 26th May

- **Chaplains (15)**
 - Del 7: Armed Forces Covenant to GA2017 – making it fit the Church of Scotland
 - Outside speaker from the forces expected
- **Mission & Discipleship Council (16)**
 - All about the good resources provided for a broad Church. This Council has been changed significantly over the last four years – the Church owes Rev Colin Sinclair a debt of gratitude; also encourage prayer for Norman Smith, his replacement as Convener
 - Del 2: Encourage KS – *Learn Exploring Faith* etc
 - Del 3: Eldership Training – to GA2018
 - Del 4: KS – *Learn Pastoral Care* Conference
 - Del 5: KS & Pres – *Invisible Church* research
 - www.resourcingmission.org.uk
- **National Youth Assembly (17)**
 - Confessions of Faith
 - Future of the General Assembly
 - Climate Justice
 - Child Exploitation & Human Trafficking
- **Theological Forum (18)**
 - 'Constrained Difference' to GA 2017
 - May seek to pick up the Confessions of Faith issue from NYA – be prepared
 - Same Sex Marriage to GA 2017
 - Anything else? – we are invited to consider what else the TF should explore.

Friday 27th May

- **Housing & Loan (19)**
- **General Trustees (20)**
 - Del 3: Rent from Manses is congregational income. Note that recent legislation means that evictions from new Manses might be difficult.
 - Del 6: Closer / Strategic cooperation with Presbyteries
- **CH4 Trustees (21)**
- **Trusts and Pensions (22-24)**
- **Central Services (25)**
- **Nomination (26) Get involved!**