

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland
The Report of the Special Commission anent Review and Reform

A Church without Walls
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Website

www.churchwithoutwalls.org.uk

Proposed Deliverance

The General Assembly:

A. Receive the Report.

B. Reaffirm as primary purposes of the Church the calls to the Church:

1. to follow Jesus Christ as Lord.
2. to share in Christ's mission in the world.
3. to turn back to God and neighbour.

C. As a process of continuing reform towards reshaping the Church locally, regionally and centrally:

The Shape of the Local Church

1. Urge congregations to choose to study, reflect on and live by one Gospel for one year in the first instance, and let Jesus shape the life and structure of the congregation.

2. Urge congregations to reflect on the cycle of grace and what it means to live out that grace in our life together.

3. Urge congregations to undertake a community review at least once every ten years to reflect on the issues, changes and missionary opportunities in the community, in collaboration with others, wherever appropriate.

4. Urge Kirk Sessions to undertake a review of the worship of the existing congregation and assess potential for developments within and beyond the congregation.

5. Urge congregations to consider how the cell, congregation and celebration dimensions of being the church might be applied locally.

6. Urge congregations to determine to integrate children and young people into the life of the congregation; or to offer the resources to plant a church for a new generation alongside the current congregation.

7. Urge congregations to form paths for the spiritual journey to help people become Christian disciples in today's world.

8. Instruct Kirk Sessions to review the leadership structure, consider what ministry team is needed for current needs and determine how it might be developed in the next five years.

9. Urge congregations to form groupings according to their natural communities to explore shared mission and mutual ministry, with other churches in the area.

10. Urge congregations to establish links with other congregations in a different social context as a partnership of mutual ministry.

11. Urge congregations to research an area of the world church and establish a personal partnership with a congregation or project.

12. Urge congregations to explore ways of being more environmentally aware and responsible as a witness to the Christian care of God's creation.

13. Urge Kirk Sessions to identify the spiritual gifts of the people and grow the church around the people we have rather than deploy people to support existing church structures.

14. Instruct Presbyteries to develop a coordinated strategy to equip congregations to sustain worship, pastoral care and mission with the appropriate staffing, and monitor progress through the Quinquennial/Presbytery visits.
15. Instruct Kirk Sessions to offer an opportunity for all elders who have not undertaken training in the past three years to share the current vision of the role and expectations of an elder in the Church of Scotland.
16. Urge Kirk Sessions to develop appropriate open styles of meeting and processes of communication.
17. Instruct the Board of Practice and Procedure to examine whether the present “model constitution” represents the best and most flexible way of managing a local congregation.
18. Instruct the Board of Ministry, in consultation with the Board of National Mission and the Board of Parish Education, to develop a coordinated process of recruiting and training people with missionary gifts which are vital for service within and beyond the constraints of a parish context.
19. Instruct the Board of Ministry, in consultation with the Board of National Mission and the Board of Parish Education, to develop a database with the current Curricula Vitae of all ministers, auxiliary ministers, Deacons and Readers to assist in the strategic deployment of personnel.
20. Instruct the Board of Ministry and the Board of Parish Education to develop working patterns of active collaboration to equip the whole people of God for Christian service.
21. Encourage the Panel on Worship in the review of services of ordination, induction and commissioning, in order to celebrate imaginatively the ministry of all God’s people within them.

The Shape of the Church Regional and Central

22. Remit sections on “The Shape of the Regional Church” and “The Shape of the Central Church” to the Board of Practice and Procedure and the Assembly Council.
23. Instruct the Board of Practice and Procedure to review the culture and timing of the General Assembly in order to increase the quality of reporting, participation and decision-making.

Proposals for Continuing Reform

24. Urge Kirk Sessions to identify ways of deepening the prayer life of their congregations individually and together.
25. Urge the leadership in every area of church life to institute the discipline of a period of retreat, rest and reflection to allow space for God to change us.
26. Urge congregations to take risks, to try new ways so that faith may grow.
27. Instruct Kirk Sessions and Presbyteries to study the report as a stimulus to identifying the levers for change and the limits to growth in the local situation; Kirk Sessions to establish a “local needs” plan and Presbytery to establish a “regional needs” plan of support, with special reference to recommendations 1-16 and 24-28; and to apply, where appropriate, to the Community and Parish Development Fund.

28. Urge congregational leadership teams to form networks focused on a shared context or a shared concern in order to build trusting relationships as the basis of future cooperation.
29. Urge the Coordinating Forum to develop its role of capturing the larger vision within which people are operating.
30. Resolve to appoint a planning group of seven persons including a Convener and Vice-Convener to prepare a "Stakeholders' Conference" in 2005 as a point of National Celebration and a milestone of progress, and instruct the Selection Committee to bring names to a future sederunt.
31. Resolve to establish a Board of Community and Parish Development as described in Appendix 8, and accordingly instruct the Board of Stewardship and Finance
- a) to set up a Parish Development Fund of £7.5 million over 5 years in terms of Appendix 8 and report to the General Assembly of 2002;
 - b) to appoint and manage two field directors until the Board of Community and Parish Development comes into being;
- and instruct the Nomination Committee to nominate 12 people for the Board of Community and Parish Development and report to the General Assembly of 2002.
32. Instruct the Assembly Council, through the Coordinating Forum, to establish overall priorities for the work of the Church in the light of the emerging shape of the Church and to convey these to the Board of Stewardship and Finance, so that these priorities can be incorporated into the Co-ordinated Budget proposals which the Board will be bringing to the General Assembly in 2002 and subsequent years, with appropriate amendments to the Constitution of the Coordinating Forum and the Board of Stewardship and Finance.
33. Instruct the General Trustees, in consultation with the Board of Ministry and the Board of National Mission, to monitor changing patterns of ministry and building requirements, and report on how best to fund the needs of the emerging church and report to the General Assembly in 2003.
34. Instruct the General Trustees to examine the Consolidated Stipend Fund and bring proposals to the General Assembly of 2002 that would allow congregations more flexibility of investment.
35. Instruct the General Trustees to examine the Consolidated Fabric Fund and bring proposals to the General Assembly of 2002 that would allow congregations more flexibility of investment.
36. Instruct the General Trustees, in consultation with the Board of National Mission to examine the application of the proceeds of the sale of buildings following readjustment, and report to the General Assembly of 2002.
37. Instruct the Panel on Doctrine to undertake a study on the theology of power and report to a future General Assembly.
38. Instruct all Kirk Sessions, Presbyteries, Boards and agencies of the Church to study the Report, take appropriate action and establish the necessary accountability for progress by 2005; and instruct the Assembly Council to monitor developments through its ongoing consultations and assessments in 2002-3 and 2004-5.
39. Instruct the Board of Practice and Procedure to facilitate the study of the Report throughout the Church.

D. Thank and discharge the Special Commission anent Review and Reform.

The Remit of the Commission

In 1999 the General Assembly appointed a Special Commission *“to reexamine in depth the primary purposes of the Church and the shape of the Church of Scotland as we enter into the next Millennium; to formulate proposals for a process of continuing reform; to consult on such matters with other Scottish Churches; and to report to the General Assembly of 2001.”*

At the same time the Assembly Council was given a renewed remit which involved consultation, assessment, identifying priorities and developing appropriate strategies for the future. While there was an obvious overlap in issues and concerns, it was agreed from the outset that there be open communication between the two bodies, collaboration wherever possible and the avoidance of unnecessary duplication, especially when consulting with others.

The Commission acknowledges a debt to the careful research and the open consultative processes of the Assembly Council. The Council’s consultation on “Change or Decay?” has raised the issue of change around the church. We believe that the outcome of our partnership has been a strengthened witness to the issues being faced by the Church and pointers to the future. We trust that this is symptomatic of a greater sense of openness and trust within the Church at large.

The experience of the last few months has been daunting and humbling. The cooperation of many people has allowed us to listen to many perspectives. The range of experience put at our disposal and the debt owed to so many is recorded in **Appendix 1**.

The Commission offers its findings as one contribution among many at a time when many prayerfully reflect on God’s call to be the Church of Jesus Christ in our times.

A Summary of the Report

The Report of the Special Commission anent Review and Reform encourages the Church to return the ministry of the Gospel to the people of God. The aim is to give them the tools and the trust to shape a vision for the church in their own area.

The Church 'works' where people join together, building relationships with each other and the community to which they belong. It is through these relationships that the Gospel is spread. In each place the church is different. There is no one model that fits all. We rejoice in the diversity within the Church. We celebrate and encourage it.

This is achieved best by allowing congregations the space and opportunity to develop their own patterns of ministry, mission, worship and leadership that best suits the people and situations where they are.

Structures require to be flexible, not rigid. It means that nationally and as Presbytery we require to listen to the local voice and to serve the local church. This may mean a U-turn, so that the local church dictates the agenda and is served by Presbytery and '121'. At present many perceive things to be the other way round.

Churches - within new-sized Presbyteries - will plan together the best way forward for their location and be supported by the Presbytery.

We believe that it is important that the local church is allowed to flourish and grow in its own unique way with all possible resources at its disposal. The Commission therefore believes it is vital that we trust our congregations to be good stewards of their resources and to give them

increased flexibility of choice on funds held centrally for their benefit, while challenging them to increased stewardship of local giving.

In order to help and support new ideas, where local resources are not available, we propose the creation of a Community and Parish Development Fund. This fund will give financial backing to new and imaginative forms of ministry and mission.

To enable and encourage these proposals, the report outlines a process of change that will assist the church on this road. The Commission is well aware that Church is not changed by recommendations or deliverances. The Commission is not placing into the hands of any one group or Committee the responsibility for implementing these recommendations. Rather, we place them into the hands of everyone who has any responsibility and concern for the future welfare of the church.

We place into the hands of God's people the opportunity to live out our faith, each according to our uniqueness, made in the image of God. It is our hope and prayer that the report, together with the many other initiatives within the Church at present, will stimulate the Church to face the future in faith and hope.

Section I: The Primary Purposes of the Church

1. The Core Calling of the Church

“Follow me”. These two words of Jesus Christ offer us the purpose, shape and process of continuous reform of the Church at the beginning of a new Millennium and at any other time. The Commission has joked about making these two words the report to the General Assembly. The Church of Jesus Christ is about nothing more and nothing less than this. Like a computer icon, the words “Follow me” carry within them the complex and comprehensive processes of being God’s people in God’s world.

That core calling takes us back behind the secondary identities of denomination or tradition and calls us to turn again to be people with Jesus at the centre, travelling wherever Jesus takes us. It is so simple we cannot miss it. It is so profound we can never exhaust it. This calling invites us to risk the way of Jesus.

The calling is *personal*. Jesus calls people personally by name. When he calls us out of our individualism, he affirms our individuality. The church is shaped by our personal faith and obedience. The aim of the Guild captures well the spirit of our core calling: to invite, encourage and enable people to be disciples of Jesus Christ.

That calling is *local* rather than general. As Jesus came into the world at a particular time in history to a particular place and culture, our purpose is to follow Jesus in our place in our time, in the concrete situations of Stranraer or Lewis, Drumchapel or Drumnadrochit.

That calling is *relational* rather than institutional. Jesus leads us into love for God and love for our neighbour, expressed in communities of worship and mission. We are to be disciples before we can make disciples. Those who are learning the Way will accompany contemporary searchers in the Way. We are to be communities of the Way.

The calling is *sacrificial*. “Take up your cross and follow me.” It is a costly calling. We cannot save and be safe at the same time. The love of security is addictive. It will take courage and commitment to break that addiction. The sacrificial service of Christians, past and present, in Scotland and around the world, challenges patterns of church life that settle for comfortable options. The only way to Resurrection is by way of the Cross.

That calling is *radical*. A prominent Hindu once said that he would believe in the Christian Saviour, if Christians looked more saved. The Sermon of the Mount challenges us to ask if our congregational life supports us in living out street-level examples of God’s Kingdom. When Jesus challenged the establishment of his day, he highlighted the priorities of justice, mercy and faith. “What does it mean for the pastor to have as his/her job description, not the sustenance of a service club within a generally Christian culture, but the survival of a colony within an alien society?” (Stanley Hauerwas)

That calling is *global* in its scope, sending us to make disciples of all nations. Matthew’s Gospel begins with representatives of the Gentiles coming to the Messiah and ends with the representatives of the Messiah going to the Gentiles. The local church shares in an international partnership of mission. We rejoice that we are part of a global movement of God’s people that makes up one third of the world’s population. While our local experience of the past fifty years has been of decline, we recall that we are living in a time when the advance of the Church of Jesus Christ around the world is unprecedented.

That calling is *eschatological*. God’s Kingdom is breaking in on us and is coming. The church is a sign and pointer. It is never the end in itself. The church looks for God’s presence

breaking into the world and waits for Christ's coming with prayerful expectancy. The Church invests its talents and resources generously and serves Christ unselfconsciously in "the least of these".

The church shaped by the Coming Kingdom will live less by historical precedent and more by the future expectation of becoming part of God's new creation. We participate in God's mission for a redeemed planet and people, and the church is created on the way. It is not that the church 'has' a mission, but the very reverse: the mission of Christ creates his own church.

The eschatological perspective challenges our obsession with buildings and money, releases us from our "structural fundamentalism" to sit lightly to inherited structures. It frees us from anxiety about our changing place in society. According to J.L. Segundo, "it is the situation of Christendom that represents a distortion, or at least an abnormal condition, in the understanding of the church's role in history. The normal condition and the one that is coming back into focus today is that of a creative minority dedicated to the service of the vast majority."

That calling is *doxological*. The church exists by the grace of God and for the glory of God. People worship in response to God's grace. We love because he first loved us. Congregations need to know that they are loved by God - and their minister. Ministers need to know that they are loved by God - and by their congregation. A worshipping church is a church soaked in the grace of God.

"The pastor must not fail to understand the congregation just as it is, as a historical community brought into being warts and all, by God; and must not fail to be grateful for it, just as it is, warts and all, to God.

"The most important single thing about the people of God is that they are *there*. They *exist*. They *are*, not because of favourable conditions....., not because of certain perceived needs for which the church can provide a market, but because God called them out of nothing and made them his people (Hosea 1:10)." (Eugene Peterson)

This reminder of the church's continued existence by grace alone - a divinely given fact in any cultural context - challenges us to do as the Jews did in Exile, to rebuild God-honouring community in an alien environment, but to do it non-anxiously.

The purpose and shape of the Church of Scotland at the beginning of a new Millennium arises out of that calling of grace. Our sole purpose is the glorification of God. Only when the people of Scotland and other nations are released into worship of the God of grace is that purpose fulfilled. That calling is eternal.

Steve Bruce, Professor of Sociology at Aberdeen University, writes: "*the only area of life where the church can compete with any secular institution or social practice and win is in the glorification of God.*" (unpublished letter to the Commission)

Our prayer as a Commission is that the Church of Scotland recovers the sense of doxology, of glorifying God and enjoying God for ever.

Call 1: The Church is called to follow Jesus Christ as Lord.

2. *The Constitutional Calling of the Church of Scotland*

The Church of Scotland as an historical entity does have a declared constitutional purpose. That is expressed in the Third Declaratory Article of 1921:

“As a National Church, representative of the Christian Faith of the Scottish people, it acknowledges its distinctive call and duty to bring the ordinances of religion to the people in every parish of Scotland through a territorial ministry”.

The assumptions behind this statement of purpose need to be examined and questioned at the beginning of the 21st Century when Church and society have changed. (**See Appendix 2: Church and State: The Declaratory Articles**)

Assumption 1. The Christian Faith is the “Christian Faith *of* the Scottish people”, assuming that the majority of the population hold to that allegiance.

When the Scottish Census of Church Attendance in 1994 revealed that only 14% of the population were in church on that Sunday, and only 5% of the adult population were in any Church of Scotland church, the assumption no longer holds. This is one measure of the secularisation of Scotland throughout the 20th century.

While there is more goodwill towards the Kirk than these statistics would suggest, Robin Gill’s recent research shows that loss of Church attendance does lead to the erosion of Christian belief in society. There is no solace in attributing Christian belief to a nation that worships at other altars.

Being Christian in today’s Scotland is different from being Christian in 1921. Scotland is multicultural and has welcomed new Scots of other faiths. The statement is heard in a new political context that is conscious of the dynamics of majority/minority interests.

Assumption 2. The Church was held to be “representative of” that majority faith. It was claiming to be the voice *of* the people rather than a voice *to* the people.

The Church of Scotland must take her place alongside other churches in being a “representative of the Christian faith *among* the Scottish people.” The context is now overtly missionary with the collapse of the Christendom canopy. Pastoral presence, creative communication, and patient persuasion require a more proactive role for the Church of Scotland in the 21st century.

Assumption 3. The “ordinances of religion” were to be offered on a supply and demand basis.

The opportunities for pastoral presence are still our privilege at the crucial points of life relating to birth, marriage and death - as well as other points of intervention such as divorce and remarriage. The congregation that is able to be alongside people and accompany them on the journey of life, will not lack opportunity to share the Good News of Jesus Christ in appropriate and life-changing ways.

While demand for baptisms and marriages decreases, the demand for funerals remains high, requiring a massive time commitment from ministers. This commitment alone highlights the need to be part of a team ministering in the area, if pastoral leadership is to remain fresh, and bereavement care is to be appropriately offered. Teams will be different in different places.

Assumption 4. The “territorial ministry” is taken as a norm assuming social stability and cohesion. Today we recognise the many sector ministries that have emerged in the past 50 years in industry, hospitals, universities, technology and the arts.

Society is such that everybody lives in a parish, but nobody lives in a parish. People belong to networks of friendship, work and leisure pursuits, or associate with the “flow cultures” of transient groups of people. Apart from rural communities, the virtual community of the docu-soaps or the Internet may be more real than the neighbour next door.

The future lies in sharing partnerships with neighbouring congregations of various traditions, and tapping into the sector specialisms designed to connect with people in their work, leisure, or crisis moments. Trust and openness will create grassroots “matrix ministry”.

The parish structure may become a problem when it is used as a base for power or possessiveness. When put at the service of the Gospel and the whole church, it can still be a catalyst to mission. As we learn how to work together as one Church in Scotland, the Church of Scotland parish church is still perceived as the strong partner with a unique power base in the community. Christ-formed relationships will reflect the mind of Christ who laid aside the place of power to take the way of the servant.

Partner churches have spoken of the generosity of the Church of Scotland in many ecumenical ventures, and the “charism of the big heart”. Where that spirit is shown locally, the potential for partnership in mission is immense.

Assumption 5. The basic assumption is that the people are Christians and we offer a national spiritual health service on demand. The result is a deep frustration and cynicism among office-bearers who will still speak of people not being “Kirk hungry”. They lost their appetite a long time ago for church, but there are many signs of a spiritual quest that is passing our doors.

The changed situation is an opportunity, not a threat. Often people feel ill-equipped to meet that challenge, which requires a capacity for deep listening, a new spirituality and a focus on Christian discipleship rather than church membership.

In times past, faith has been passed from one generation to another. Today that “chain of memory” has been broken. People are mobile, families are fragmented and society is less stable. All these factors erode long-term memory in our culture. How does the Church nurture long-term disciples in a short-term culture?

Assumption 6. The final observation lies in the issue of identity. If the Church of Scotland defines itself as a National Church only by statute, it will have at its heart a legalistic flaw. The only rationale for the Church of Scotland is to declare its identity, purpose and calling to be by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. To live *in* the grace of God means to live *out* the grace of God. The parish system is a sign that the grace of God is offered to every person in the land, in all its parts and sectors. Grace means travelling with God across inherited boundaries to be part of the networks of society and understand the many sub-cultures around us.

If the Church of Scotland assumes that it exists by legal right and by claims of social influence and power, it will lose its life. If it lives by grace and gives away power by grace in order to make known the Gospel of grace, then, in partnership with the whole Body of Christ, we will share in making Christ known in our land.

If we were to restate the purpose of the Church of Scotland in our context, it might include:

As part of the world Church, we are committed to the spiritual welfare of the whole Scottish nation and to share in God’s mission across the world.

Along with other branches of Christ’s Church, we seek humbly to represent the Christian Faith among the Scottish people.

Together, we acknowledge our distinctive call and duty to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in every part of Scotland.

We recognise the call, through a shared ministry of pastoral and prophetic evangelism, to serve people in all the communities and sectors of their lives. As part of the world church we celebrate the privilege of partnership in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As the Church of the Way, we sit loose to every pattern of organisation, ready to respond to the call of the Spirit in our times.

As part of the whole church we are called to share the whole Gospel with the whole nation - and the whole world.

Call 2: The Church is called to share in Christ's mission in the world.

3. The Hidden Calling of the Church: Shaped by God and for God.

The purpose of the Church is to be shaped within history by God and for God. The seductive danger of our managerial culture is to imagine that we are involved in the re-engineering of an organisation.

We come at the task with a deep sense of mystery for our task is to discern the deeper purposes of God with his people in our times. One moment of insight that sparked the imagination was to see our situation through the lens of the call of the prophet Jeremiah.

Many voices claim that the Exile is a lens for seeing God's hand on the church today. The forces of change are seldom crises. Consequences are not easily connected to causes. They are usually slow moving processes that have a long time lapse between the cause and the outcome. The purposes of God are hidden in the slow moving processes of our culture and the slow learning processes of a reluctant people. The critical moment of the fall of Jerusalem was only a datable moment of visibility. In the same way we look behind this critical moment in the church's life to the hidden processes.

This prophet was brought up within the establishment of his day, lived through the structural and organisational reforms of Josiah, but saw that surface reform was not enough. The time was coming when God would work a reformation that would be deeper and more durable, but more costly. That reform is captured in the vivid imagery of land-clearance and replanting, or demolition and rebuilding: *See I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant. (Jeremiah 1:10)*

Who does this? It is not Jeremiah, but God working through the social, cultural and political forces of his time. The process will involve exile, cultural dislocation that will expose God's people to God in a new way. It takes time.

Why does the exile happen? The people have turned their backs on God and committed spiritual adultery by putting others gods in place of the true God. There are always competitors for God's place. The people of God require constantly to turn back to God.

What is the outcome? God forms a new covenant relationship with his people, and exposes them to new ways of expressing that relationship in an alien culture.

“Uproot and Tear Down”: What cultural forces of erosion have uprooted the church?

Professor Steve Bruce highlights that the core issue is the erosion of belief: the lack of plausibility of faith for many people. This has undermined the confidence of many Christian people, and made communication more complex as we have become immersed in the televisual culture. The social basis of the church has been eroded as the church has become disconnected from local community, through social fragmentation and congregational

isolation. The “chain of memory” between the generations has been broken, cutting the church off from the rising generation. The political significance of the church has changed as Scotland has become multicultural and many-voiced.

After 40 years of erosion of youth statistics, the impact is felt on leadership. Without discipleship there can be no leadership. The leadership basis of the church is changing as 211 ministers retire in the next five years and candidates for ministry come forward at the rate of 20-25 a year. Shifts in population, informal patterns of relating and interactive styles of communication mean that the physical buildings of the church are often the wrong size, in the wrong style or in the wrong place. The General Trustees estimate that the Church of Scotland needs only 1700 of its current 2500 buildings.

The cultural appropriateness of much church life is sadly out of tune with the times. We live in a “sonic” culture where people pick up subconsciously the way we do things. That intuitive signal speaks of a cultural gap. Membership is alien to people who see life as a journey, or who want a real challenge. Church membership seems too static for the searchers and tamely passive for the adventurers. They are looking for looser patterns of belonging and activities that make a real difference to the world.

“Destroy and Overthrow”: What areas of church life are to be actively demolished?

The Church of Scotland mission strategy is based on the 19th Century mission model: one minister in one building in one parish. All the resources of the uniting church of 1929 were harnessed to servicing this strategy.

As we enter the 21st Century, the emerging pattern for mission strategy must be much more diverse to permeate the fragmented nature of our society: ministry teams operating in a variety of community bases to be incarnate in a network of communities. Instead of occasional variations to the assumed 19th Century norm, it is time to recognize the new components of the new strategy and resource it accordingly.

The Church of Scotland structure is perceived by most people to be overly centralized. Presbyteries are places where people do their Presbyterian duty, but gain little inspiration or support. Local congregations with the desire for vision and change sense a culture of inhibition that limits initiative for all except the boldest.

As we enter the 21st Century we believe the shape of the church needs to be turned upside down: to affirm local responsibility, offer regional support and supervision and release the central administration to offer its skills in servicing the system.

The Church of Scotland has a long and honourable legacy as a National Church taking its place in the life of Scotland over the centuries. Today we have a new Scotland and a new globalised world, which call for a redefining of a new national and global identity.

We take our place in Scotland as evangelist and servant, and as partner and prophet: bearers of the Good News of Jesus Christ and sharers in mission of God for the greater good of our nation. Our continuing role in education, social care and influencing public policy is vital for the spiritual and moral health of the nation.

We lift our eyes beyond our small church and join the massive movement of Christian people across the world where the church grows as never before. As partners in the world church we are humble but hopeful.

“Plant and Build”: What is emerging of God’s purposes?

The purposes of God are hidden and mysterious. The gift of Jeremiah’s prophecy is to disclose what is hidden. The cultural dislocation of Exile will lead to spiritual reorientation of

God's people. We believe that there are signs of that reorientation today.

We celebrate the creative work with children to build church from the crèche up, and the range of youth initiatives from the Youth Assembly to partnerships with other youth agencies. If the church will permit innovation and work at integration, the face of the church would be different in ten years' time. We see the potential of the Third Agers (over 50's), who have much to offer the church locally, nationally and overseas.

We celebrate new patterns of community work in Urban and Rural Priority Areas. We see committed church members working alongside people in the community, both working to God's agenda. They are less anxious about numbers and less guilty about the nominal or lapsed members who once made vows, but have slipped their moorings. When the church seeks first the Kingdom of God and is less concerned about her own survival, God is at work.

We celebrate the increasing shift from membership to discipleship. The *Alpha* courses, Emmaus Courses and locally devised schemes are drawing members into a renewed faith in Christ. For many the way to faith is through sharing in adventurous projects at home and overseas. Being part of the Church in action leads to a deeper desire to be a disciple of Christ. People want to belong to a God who does not want children to die because of international debt, or to see homeless people go hungry and cold.

We celebrate the shift from running a congregation to building communities of faith in Christ. The Cell Church movement has given some the handle on building church relationally and organically. The Celtic renaissance has offered some a new lens for seeing church and mission in our culture: nurturing the heart for God, offering a home to the stranger and becoming a hub for mission to resource people in daily life.

We celebrate new patterns of leadership. New elders are being given a new vision for the role. Readers are being trained and deployed to congregations. Ministry teams are operating well and creatively.

We celebrate the openness to consider new structures and ways of working. On all sides we have found an openness to change. The test lies in our readiness to explore specific changes, which may be costly to ourselves. Practitioners are already pointing the way. It will require the authorizing decisionmakers – local, Presbyterian and National – to support them,

We celebrate those who have been like Jeremiah and “bought a field at Anathoth” as a sign of hope. We encourage people not to wait for a reconstruction of the Church of Scotland, but to act in faith and in hope that God is already planting and building. *I will rejoice in doing them good and will assuredly plant them in this land with all my heart. (Jeremiah 32:41)*

We celebrate the God of grace who works in the dark times to call us back to the light, and believe that it is God who is at work in the untidiness of the building site of demolition and reconstruction.

In the name of this God of grace we call on all God's people to turn back to love the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all our heart and soul and mind and strength, and to love our neighbours as ourselves.

Call 3: The Church is called to turn back to God and our neighbour.

Section II: The Shape of the Church

Guiding Principles

The Purpose: Follow me
 The Focus: Local and Relational
 The Shape: Upside Down
 The Foundations: Trust, Responsibility and Resources
 The Ethos: Interdependence
 The Barriers: Fear and Power

“Follow me” is a call to travel “down” with Jesus and to live at the “edge”. The spatial metaphors are worth debating, but they do convey something of the spirit of following Jesus in a church which is perceived to operate “top down” and to be overly “centralised”.

While challenging the existing structures, we have become aware of the hurt caused by the breakdown of trust between the Church locally and centrally. We have found that some of the greatest frustration with the current system of church is to be found among those who operate “at the centre”. There is a passion to serve the local church, but our mental models have created false expectations and often paralysis of action.

The current mental model assumes a top down pattern of governance – from centre to Presbytery to local congregation. We recommend that the shape of the church be turned upside down to affirm the primacy of the local Christian community, supported appropriately by Presbytery and central administration.

Local church is the focus of action – the place of initiative, questions and vision. Our vision is of local churches discovering their vision of what God is doing and joining in.

Regional church is the focus of support – the place of oversight, encouragement and appropriate accountability. The role of Presbytery needs to be radically revisited.

Central church is the focus of essential servicing and national role – the place of ensuring equity and fostering links with national and international institutions. The role of the centre needs to be revamped in the light of the new roles of Presbyteries.

Instead of the hierarchical model, the Biblical imagery of the Body encourages us to see the whole as relationships of interdependence, with Christ as the Head. As we all own Jesus as Lord and live in openness to the Spirit, we make our contribution as we are able, and trust others to make theirs.

We need a radically increased amount of flexibility within the institutional church. The radical move is not to destroy the current institution, but to make it flexible and open, generous and accommodating, encouraging and enabling, so that new things can safely and happily emerge within - and, when they emerge outwith the system, to be easily acknowledged.

“Follow me” is an act of trust in Jesus and trust by Jesus that these ordinary people may “fish for people”. When he sent out the 70 (Luke 10), he trusted them to fulfil their mission, gave them specific responsibilities and limited (yet unlimited!) resources.

We believe that the church will flourish where trust, responsibility and resources are present.

Trust. We are all on the same side. We all love the Church and long to see her strong. We will have different dreams, perhaps different visions of a strong Church, but there is only one Lord, one gospel, one Church, one Spirit. We need to trust the Lord to build his Church. We need to trust one another that we will all, separately and together, seek his will for his Church.

At present our shape displays a culture of inhibition and little trust. Presbyterianism has become a form of institutionalised distrust. It rightly takes seriously our fallenness and is designed to check any personalised power trips, but tends to legalism. If we believe that by creation and redemption, grace is prior to and greater than our sin, then a culture of trust follows. Even mistakes will be redeemed. The issue at the heart is a choice between a spirituality of grace or law.

Responsibility. To those we trust we give responsibility. Responsibility encourages action. Distrust and lack of responsibility inhibit and restrict. It is important to challenge the cynicism about “the structures” which is rife in the church. We believe that those who serve centrally serve by the call of God as do others in the service of the church and are to be appreciated and trusted with that calling.

We believe that the core issue of the reshaping of the church is trusting local people to find their own vision under the guidance of the Spirit. In the true spirit of Presbyterianism, that will involve each taking responsibility for others in our Presbyterian fellowship. A relational church will be a responsible church inspired by our criteria of “justice, mercy and faith” in the use of our resources.

Resources. Trust and responsibility without resources will discourage and frustrate. We display our trust by allocating our resources and assets, by giving to those we trust. People will believe they have responsibility when they are resourced; when finance is allocated, when time is made available and when talents are focused.

The Church of Jesus Christ operates on trust. This involves risk. What if we never learn to trust one another? This is a risk worth taking. For such a shape to work and such trust to be engendered we need responsibility and resources to be given and received.

To affirm our trust in the local church, we recommend the formation of a Community and Parish Development Fund, which will allow congregations to pursue local visions of renewal for mission with the assurance of substantial support. **(See Proposals for Continuing Reform No 6: Modelling Change and Appendix 8)** This will be a sign of trust, responsibility and resources being given to those who have a vision for following Jesus into his world today. To fund local initiative is one way of following the Spirit who alone can reshape the Church for the purposes of God.

A. The Shape of the Local Church

A.1. Shaped by the Gospel

A.1.1. Living out the Story of Jesus

“Follow me”. The Church of Jesus Christ will want to be shaped by the Gospel of Jesus Christ to be a community that expresses the life and love of Jesus Christ. That shape is not about structures. It is about the lives of individuals and congregations being shaped by the “mind of Christ.”

From the outset the Commission has heard the plea for changes in structure, but has remained convinced that changing structures without changing mindsets achieves little. John Tiller writes:

“The Gospel community relates to church structures as a new building to the scaffolding which surrounds it. Reforming the structures is like reorganising the scaffolding: it may be necessary but it does not in itself alter the building. Creating alternative new structures is like replacing the scaffolding: it may be useful, but then it may be a waste of time.” (The Gospel Community, p 51)

Jesus’ imagery of new wine in new wineskins has often been used to refer to new church structures, but Jesus first used the illustration to address the “structures of the mind”. The inherited mindsets of the Jewish leaders could not accommodate the life of the Kingdom of God. The subversive ministry of Jesus was hidden and deep. The Temple became redundant, but he did not lift a finger to its physical structure. In time a “Temple of living stones” was to replace it.

The shape of the church in each village, town and city of Scotland will emerge as we take time to “follow Jesus” through a saturation in the Gospel stories. We recommend that each congregation choose one of the Gospel writers as their pastor for the coming year and let them teach us about following Jesus.

Matthew will speak well to those who value order and history, and sow subversive seeds of the Kingdom. The outcome will be to turn the congregation inside out and from past to future. Mark will suit the activists. Here is a manual for active discipleship, introducing us to the way of the Cross. And if, despite the reality of the resurrection, we are still afraid, we find ourselves in good company. Doctor Luke is for those who value the call of the Spirit to prayer and to mission, but watch out for the challenges about wealth and poverty. John is for the reflective ones who want to learn how to be a contemplative community around Jesus. He makes sure that our words about loving God are earthed in loving each other. The challenge is for a congregation to live the reality of all four Gospels and so reflect the full glory of Christ’s presence.

Imagine every congregation choosing to follow Jesus in the company of one of these pastors. Imagine little clusters of people meeting to read the story together. They are challenged by the truth they find and hold each other accountable for living by that truth for the coming week. Imagine the preaching and worship unpacking the story in fresh ways. Imagine pastoral projects designed around the Good Samaritan, the woman taken in adultery, the parable of the talents. Imagine a finance committee studying Luke’s accounts of Jesus’ teaching on wealth and poverty. Imagine a church that decided to live for a year in “silent witness” on the instruction of Jesus: “By this shall the world know that you are my disciples because you love one another.”

Imagine the impact on a society where “you tell me your truth and I tell you mine”, if Christian people lived the difference by “doing the truth” with compassion, courtesy and courage.

We have reflected on the marks of a healthy church shaped by Jesus at the core and offer that for reflection in our situation. (**Appendix 4: The Marks of the Healthy Church**)

Recommendation 1: That congregations study, reflect on and live by one Gospel for one year in the first instance, and let Jesus shape the life and structure of the congregation.

A.1.2. Living out the Spirituality of Grace

We re-affirm the Reformation doctrine of “justification by grace through faith”. We believe that the rediscovery of that fundamental truth of the Gospel will liberate the people of God into the mission of God. A lived spirituality of grace will overflow into all relationships as Christian communities, and shape our patterns of ministry and mission. Too often our

relationships are marked by a need to achieve and measure up in order to prove ourselves to one another and, ultimately, to God. We pray for a grace-soaked, grace motivated Church.

Frank Lake, the clinical psychologist, speaks of living in the “cycle of grace”. In his desire to understand healthy human development, he drew on the account of Jesus’ baptism. He saw in the words of the Father profound acceptance (“You are beloved Son. With you I am well pleased.”). In the gift of the Spirit he recognised the sustaining strength of God for life in its most testing times.

The purpose of the baptism was to set Jesus upon his public ministry as the suffering servant Messiah. The outcome was the achievement of that ministry, culminating in the Cross and Resurrection. Achievement is not the same as success. Grace puts failure into the hands of God and waits for God to do what only God can do.

Lake’s insights can be expressed diagrammatically:
[diagram to be inserted]

Where we live in a “clockwise” direction (acceptance>strength>significance>achievement), our personal and congregational lives grow as Christ grew. That is the cycle of grace. Where we live in the “anti-clockwise” direction (achievement>significance>strength>acceptance), we are driven by unhealthy motives of achievement and failure. That is the cycle of works.

Individuals, congregations and our denominations are constantly trapped in the wrong cycle. Congregations become busier and busier, and feel the pressure of external criteria of money and membership. It is the gift of the Gospel of grace that liberates us to live as Christ lived. The fundamental shift of mindset for the whole culture of the church is towards living out the cycle of grace in every relationship. Living out that spirituality of grace lies at the heart of the core calling to “Follow me.”

Recommendation 2: That congregations reflect on the cycle of grace and what it means to live out that grace in our life together.

A.2. Shaped by the Locality

The primary expression of church is local. The Incarnation is our mandate and our model for being local. “The word became a human being and moved into the neighbourhood” (The Message). The parish system at its best is one way of expressing that belief in the God who is as down to earth as that. Incarnational theology is in the DNA of the Church of Scotland.

A.2.1. Local means identity. The local congregation stands as sign of God’s commitment to that place. The local congregation is a community of God’s people, gathering to worship Him, encouraging one another to grow in knowing God in Jesus Christ, serving in Christ’s name and going to all peoples to make disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The congregation brings distinct gifts to the wider community by being distinctive itself. This distinctiveness arises from gathering to worship around the Story of the Gospel that

transforms lives in word, sacraments, example and dialogue. The local congregation is the space where Christian life is nurtured in practical discipleship, earthed in the concrete realities of local life. The congregation shows the way by serving alongside the community and inviting others to become followers of Christ.

For reasons of theology and missionary strategy, we affirm the local Christian congregation as the primary expression of the church. However, that does not mean more of the same! A congregation may avoid the challenge of becoming a missionary congregation. A congregation may develop a fortress mentality of isolation that is no longer a servant of the Kingdom of God.

A.2.2. Local means diversity. We have heard from rural communities and the Highlands, from City Centre and towns, and from Urban Priority Areas. (**Appendix 4: The Church in Context**) Contexts vary and our vision is that every congregation discovers its own vision of being a worshipping, witnessing community.

It is vital that congregations look at and listen to their locality. We recommend that congregations undertake a community review every ten years in the wake of the National Census. We welcome the initiative of National Mission to make available to Presbyteries and congregations relevant information from the 2001 Census, and commend their resources to undertake such a survey in partnership with others in the area.

We have already acknowledged that people live in networks of communities. In the days when people lived, worked and worshipped in the same place, worship was the gathering of an already existing community. In a time when life is fragmented, congregations need to work more creatively at being real communities of faith. Without a Gospel community, there is no communication of the Gospel.

The priority for the Church is the renewing, refocusing, relocating and planting of local worshipping congregations for mission across Scotland.

A.2.3. Local means interdependency. In the mind of the Commission the words “local” and “relational” have been inextricably linked. The God of the Incarnation is the God of the Trinity and God’s people will reflect God’s nature. A primary theme of the Body of Christ is interdependency, a mark of all mature relationships. Congregations that are independent to the point of isolation deprive themselves and others in the Body of Christ.

We have observed the way in which the Urban Priority Areas and projects supported by the Priority Areas Fund have developed support networks to help them face their demanding missionary challenges. Over the years they have been meeting in areas to tell stories, identify issues and develop mutual resources. Their example is to be commended for other groups of congregations. These groups may live in the same area or they may share similar contexts (e.g. Rural, City Centre or Suburban) or be developing similar initiatives (e.g. children’s ministry, worship, community development, evangelism, workplace ministry). The important thing is to move beyond isolation to interdependency.

Recommendation 3: That congregations undertake a community review at least once every ten years to reflect on the issues, changes and missionary opportunities in the community, in collaboration with others, wherever appropriate.

A.2.4. Local means creative flexibility. Every area of Scotland has “people groups” that are not touched by the church. They may be an age group that we never see around our church. They may be a social group who feel unwelcome. They may be those who find their experience of belonging and transcendence in other kind of clubs – night clubs or football

clubs. In the spirit of Jesus, we challenge each congregation to identify its “no go area” and go there.

We are in an era where planting new kinds of churches for our generation will be essential if some people are to have any experience of Christian community. We recommend worship with a variety of menu in a variety of venue to be accessible to different groups of people.

Loren Mead of the Alban Institute challenges us to be radical here:

“The storm buffeting the churches is very serious indeed. Much more serious than we have admitted to ourselves, and much more serious than our leaders have yet comprehended...The storm is so serious, I believe that it marks the end of ‘business as usual’ for the churches and marks the need for us to begin again building the church from the ground up.” (Transforming Congregations for the Future, p ix)

The resources of the Panel of Worship, Parish Education and the New Charge Development Committee offer support and advice for congregations willing to explore new ways of being church. The experience of those who have learned from Willowcreek Community Church and the Cell Church Movement are invaluable, as is the experience of some of our World Mission staff, who can help with facing the cross cultural challenges. Congregations will benefit from sending groups to visit other places and learning from other people.

Recommendation 4: That Kirk Sessions undertake a review of the worship of the existing congregation and assess potential for developments within and beyond the congregation.

A.2.5. Local means cultural sensitivity. The Western world is undergoing a culture shift of a magnitude that is experienced only every few hundred years. There are philosophical, historical, sociological and technological causes and effects of this change. Every local community is living in this mega-cultural environment. (**Appendix 5: The Church in a Changing World**)

Our changing social context can be symbolised by the microchip, the Internet, shopping malls or the mobile phone. Changing social relationships are seen in the attitudes to sexuality, marriage, racial equality and gender roles. Changes in political dynamics may be seen in the Scottish Parliament, the implications of the European Convention of Human Rights, or the shifts of power through globalisation from nation states to trans-national companies. Changing cultural values may be described as post modern or hypermodern, but the underlying core value is that individual choice is the only absolute. The right to choose is the one inviolate principle for shopping, politics, relationships, genetics or religion.

Every one of these factors will affect the shape of the church: our pastoral care, our patterns of belonging, our communication, our understanding of the Gospel, our evangelism and our discipleship. We are called to live “in” the world but not “of” the world as Jesus did, fully engaged, yet distinctive (John 17).

A.2.6. Local means visionary possibility. As the local church gains in confidence, we envisage local worship centres, which create opportunities to build a local team to lead the various church ministries. They will recognise the untapped resources – the many gifts in a local congregation – and understand the evangelical attraction of informal partnerships with other agencies. They will develop a vision that is local and global, while being confident that the local congregation is the national face of the church for our communities. They will recognise that Information Technology means the “centre” can be local. They will link in partnerships with other congregations, and learn to network with congregations who share common goals.

As we engage with the diversity of being worshipping communities, we will see emerging:

- a menu of worship with a variety of times and styles, including a range of music;
- communication of the highest quality – personal, creative and imaginative;
- a philosophy of community that is interactive in style;
- an organisation that understands communication- internal and external;
- adequate and creative administration with church office staff;
- creative use of finance;
- partnerships with churches at home and abroad;
- partnerships with other agencies in multiple projects.

This calls for building a leadership team to lead the various church ministries:

- that takes time for regular retreat and reflection;
- that has a bias to action and can react flexibly;
- that is continually updating skills;
- that is contextualising the message in the culture.

A.3. Shaped by Friendship

“Local and relational” has been a catch phrase in the Commission. As we have tried to reach behind the complaints about “the structures”, we have seldom discovered legal obstacles to action. Instead, it has usually been a frustration that our church environment does little to encourage relationships – with God or with each other.

In a culture that is increasingly at ease with the language of spirituality, it is strange that conversations about our spiritual development are avoided by many church members, elders and even ministers. One issue for us in these times of spiritual openness is how much God actually matters to us. Belief in God is common. Belief that God matters is distinctive.

Kirk Sessions can be formal and formidable. Presbyteries have become administrative units for servicing the system of committees and regulations rather than a fellowship of mutual encouragement and inspiration. The Central Committees are viewed with suspicion from the parishes and are often impersonal for those who attend. The General Assembly has its moments, but is hardly the best forum for major decision-making.

There are many Christian people who are still committed to following Jesus, but they will not or cannot express that commitment within the context of the local church. This is not the fall out of individualism and consumerism. Quite the opposite is true. These are people in search of authentic community.

We recommend that the church recover the lost art of Christian friendship. This lost art is not about being a “friendly church”, but being a church that makes friends beyond “those that salute you”. Once again our thinking is shaped as we follow Jesus into the Upper Room and reflect on his words: “I no longer call you servants but friends ” (John 15:15). Here friendship is about commitment to each other (“No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends”) and openness with each other (“I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from my Father”).

If we follow Jesus in that kind of friendship, it will transform our approach to children and young people, our relationships as church members, our understanding of team ministry, our mission in our communities, our inter-church relationships and our international viewpoint.

Think of each of these areas as areas to share friendship as Jesus describes it: in covenant commitment and transparent openness. They are no longer the issues of the few enthusiasts. They are the responsibility of all and within the competence of every Christian.

A.3.1. Friendship with fellow members. Do we have a best friend at church? How would we assess the spirit of hospitality in the congregation? How well do we handle conflict? In a society that is riddled with conflict, is the local church known as the model of mediation – friends of the crucified Mediator? Grand schemes of church renewal fail at the simplest level of an ungracious word, a dismissive look or an unforgiving heart. (**Appendix 6: The Church of the Beatitudes**)

Human nature seems to require different dimensions of belonging: the small group for support and intimacy, the medium sized group to share in tasks, and larger gatherings for inspiration and celebration. Some of the church growth literature describes these as:

cell + congregation + celebration.

The typical Church of Scotland way has been to focus on the congregation as the basic unit: often to the exclusion of cell and celebration. The research of the German Institute of Church Development among 1000 growing churches across the world discovered that the one factor, which stood out among all others, was the “multiplication of small groups”. The insights of the Cell Church movement have shown that when we begin small and go deep with a few, then, in time the Gospel spreads. It follows Jesus’ own pattern of investment in the Twelve.

The Commission has noted significant developments based on this intensive investment, both in Whiteinch, where a New Charge has been grown from a small, focused approach to discipleship; and in Gillespie Memorial: Dunfermline, where a group of twelve have been nurtured to lead worship, support pastoral care and encourage the wider ministry of the congregation in mission.

Likewise, as a Church, we often fail to offer occasions of celebration and inspiration. Congregations would be encouraged by regular shared gatherings. The tradition of the Highland Communion Season was a time of families and friends gathering from around the area, to be called afresh to worship God and receive the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Many rural congregations would benefit from the reinvention of that tradition for the 21st century.

Recommendation 5: That congregations consider how the cell, congregation and celebration dimensions of being the Church might be applied locally.

A.3.2. Friends hip with the next generation. We are a covenant community. By baptism we welcome children into that covenant community, but too often our congregations fail to be covenanting community needed for children and families to flourish in faith and life. Within the Commission, members have celebrated the birth of four children. We dedicate this task of reshaping of the church to them.

The current emphasis on the role of children through Parish Education will offer congregations opportunities to build friendships with our children and their families. Community is built on names. The friendships will begin when every member can name some of the children in the Sunday School or the youth club.

Young people are crying out for the church to recover the relational quality and integrity characterised by the grace and truth of Jesus. In the “Friends” generation, young people are finding new places of community and belonging. The church culture of formality, regulations, expectations and conformity sends out a corporate “vibe” than makes today’s generation instinctively uncomfortable.

A Church that can trace 40 years of declining youth statistics must ask if all the excellent youth work of two generations has been frozen out of church life because we have failed to build relationships of friendship across the generations. We have been caught in the mythology of the generation gap instead of being pioneering mythbusters.

Communication with the next generation will require many creative youth work skills and pioneering work to develop new patterns of church, but communication without community will be sterile. Every person brings gifts to the community that create the space for young people to feel they belong and that they matter. With Jean Vanier we celebrate the “gift of the grandmother” in building community.

Recommendation 6: That congregations determine to integrate children and young people into the life of the congregation; or to offering the resources to plant a church for a new generation alongside the current congregation.

A.3.3. Friendship with the searcher. The title of a recent conference on evangelism was “communicating with absent friends”. Celtic motifs of pilgrimage and celebrating the good in our culture, Ignatian retreats on spirituality and faith accompaniment, business themes of mentoring have alerted us to a pattern of evangelism that comes alongside and travels the journey as a friend. We follow the Christ of the Emmaus Road who walked, listened, explained, intrigued and was welcomed as a Friend.

Amidst all the discussions about the shifts in our culture, there are certain recurring constants about our humanity, which take on cultural clothing. Those constants (“these three remain”) are faith, hope and love. Every human being yearns for trust in the beyond, needs a sense of purpose and meaning, and wants to belong. It has been shown that people “belong before they believe”. The received wisdom was that people behaved well, believed correctly and then belonged fully. That is the way of legalism.

The way of grace (and the way of our relational culture) is to give people a place of belonging, leading to opportunities of believing and then exploring patterns of Christian behaving - not churchy behaviour, but Christ-like behaviour. The success of courses like *Alpha* lies in the social focus of food and friendship as the context for discovering faith. We recommend that congregations explore the right discipleship path for their situation.

Recommendation 7: That congregations form paths for the spiritual journey to help people become Christian disciples in today’s world.

A.3.4. Friendship with the community. Partnerships are blossoming around the country as the church in its mission comes alongside the community for the common good of everyone. The church has moved from being the centre of the community with certain rights in local politics, through a time of being ignored and marginalized, to a time when the church is welcomed as a partner in community welfare, education, health and politics. Partnership and friendship are the models of relationship.

One community worker indicated that she gave 70% of her time to the community and 30% to the congregation. If every congregation in the land budgeted 70% of its time and efforts on being in and for the community, the church would begin to find her role again. These relationships are the foundation of authentic worship and witness of the Incarnate Christ among his people.

A.3.5. Friendship with fellow leaders. Elders have written pleading for more teamwork between elders and ministers. Ministers speak of isolation and overload. To follow Jesus is to work closely with other leaders – investing intensively in few over a period of time to build the team. “Jesus worked with 12 Jews for three years in order to win all Americans”!

There are numerous examples of ministry teams around the country: elders’ teams, pastoral teams, teams of ministers with deacons or readers or youth workers, and occasional teams

from different denominations. We recommend that congregations work towards breaking the isolation of the “one person ministry” by forming ministry teams according to their needs and resources. Breaking the mould of the “one person ministry” eases isolation and releases a synergy of creativity.

Recommendation 8: That Kirk Sessions review the current leadership structure, consider what ministry team is needed for current needs and determine how it might be developed in the next five years.

A.3.6. Friendship with other churches. People have knee-jerk reactions to ecumenism – for it or against it. Perhaps it is time to forget the word and learn the art of friendship – building trust and transparency. In some communities the church is a scandal to the Gospel because of the inability of Christian congregations to be friends together. Such situations are a counter sign of the Kingdom. Planned cooperation among groups of churches would release great potential for the Kingdom.

The Commission is aware of the ecumenical debates around the proposals of the Scottish Churches Initiative for Union, and has not taken a view on the issue of future Union. This debate has its own forum and process for discussion and ultimate decision. However, we welcome the many local initiatives, and the examples of cooperation in the areas of worship, education mission and national consultations.

In recommending increased local cooperation we have heard of partnerships in Barrhead, Carluke, Drumchapel and Paisley, to name a few. We repeat our concern that the Church of Scotland live up to the “charism of the big heart” and be sensitive to needs and gifts of other churches in the area. The effectiveness of such cooperation may be helped by the appointment of a person whose role is, in part at least, to facilitate these partnerships.

Recommendation 9: That congregations form groupings according to their natural communities to explore shared mission and mutual ministry with other churches in the area.

A.3.7. Friendship with rich and poor. We stand accountable to the poorest people of the land. If our reshaping of the church does not give our God of love and justice a local face, then we have not touched the heart of God’s covenant love. The prophetic voices of Scripture used the care of the poor as a touchstone by which to judge the religious establishment. The Reformation missionary mandate explicitly included the care of the poor. In our consultations with the Urban Priority Areas, we were reminded, “Public policy is to be judged by its effectiveness at the point of delivery of service.”

That is a test for every policy of the church beginning with the poorest in the local parish. Jesus challenged his contemporaries to align their priorities about resources around the core issues of “justice mercy and faith” (Matthew 23:23). Many congregations in our poorest areas have to struggle against immense odds with minimal resources. And yet these congregations have often by necessity faced hard issues of mission, worship and leadership styles ahead of the rest of the church.

The Church is called by God to care for the poor, to address the causes of poverty and learn more of Christ from being alongside the poor. The “Jubilee 2000” campaign to release the world’s poorest countries from international debt is one example of the political complexity of dealing with these issues. The church is called to more than occasional charity. We are called to a determined stance. That determination is not yet reflected across the Church, and we need to help each other sustain our obedience.

We recommend partnerships and friendships that will allow an exchange of resources between congregations of different social backgrounds. Examples of these partnerships reveal relationships that are mutually enriching: one congregation offering people, skills and financial support, the other offering new insights into worship, mission, spirituality and much more.

Recommendation 10: That congregations establish links with other congregations in a different social context as a partnership of mutual ministry.

A.3.8. Friendship with the World Church. In our globalised world, where 51% of the world church is now in the South and only 3% of the world church is Presbyterian, we take a humbler role in the world and accept the gifts of “reverse mission”. Environmental concerns and economic imbalances link us and challenge us to make new lifestyle choices in a global context.

In the culture of the “World-Wide Web” we are only too aware of globalisation in communication, economics and politics. The Church is in a position to lead the way as a global family. When the effects of globalisation are likely to depersonalise and marginalize, the church can stay local globally by establishing living links with churches in other parts of the world. We recommend that local congregations explore with World Mission how they might establish such partnerships.

Recommendation 11: That congregations research an area of the world church and establish a personal partnership with a congregation or project.

A.3.9. Friendship with God’s Creation. The relational church recognises our interdependence in the weave of creation, and our call to be an example as good stewards of God’s creation. We recognise the angst among younger people about the future of the planet and recommend that churches review their policies on energy and consumer goods, and raise awareness of those aspects of contemporary society that will hurt or heal the environment. We commend the resources of the Society, Religion and Technology Project and the calls to earlier General Assemblies for congregations to conduct an environmental audit.

Recommendation 12: That congregations explore ways of being more environmentally aware and responsible as a witness to the Christian care of God’s creation.

The theme of friendship could be developed further. It may be the key to many locked doors.

A.4. Shaped by the Gifts of God’s People

A.4.1. Recognising the Gifts of God’s People

“Follow me” means every disciple following Jesus is to share in his ministry through his Body, the church. Each person is a gift from God to the Church, to be celebrated and nurtured. Every disciple is a servant-friend of our Lord and is gifted in many ways, or as Ephesians 4:7 says, “to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it”. The word “celebrated” is used deliberately because it emphasises the joyful generosity which is needed to give freedom to people, so that they can grow and become fruitful. Each congregation is to be a living college, where people learn to exercise their gifts in an environment of grace characterised by encouragement, humility and cooperation.

The arena of service will be primarily in the world: in family, work or community. The service of the church is where the church is present as salt and light through people being church. When the church is gathered for worship and shared service, care needs to be taken to discover, develop and deploy the gifts of God’s people. A church of grace will offer space to succeed or fail, and learn and grow. We recommend that congregations follow the processes

and courses available to help people identify their passion and serve according to the gift of grace apportioned to them. Kirk Sessions should lead the way and ensure that the team is playing to its strengths.

Recommendation 13: That Kirk Sessions identify the spiritual gifts of the people and grow the church around the people we have rather than deploy people to support existing church structures.

A.4.2. Releasing the Gifts of God's People

Current structures are often too rigid. Rather than give relational space, they crush creativity. However, there are signs of change. 80 Readers are being trained each year and are deployed strategically within Presbyteries. In the past 15 years around 1000 people have graduated from the Scottish Churches Open College and a wide range of training is offered to elders.

We trust that developments in the Board of Ministry will keep faith with the affirmations about the ministry of the whole people of God. In practical terms, we recommend close collaboration with the Board of Parish Education, especially in the well-developed work in training elders for new roles.

The new regulations for New Charges create the open space for new patterns to emerge. The example of non-stipendiary in the Episcopal Church should encourage us forward. That may be one of the more strategic gifts of ecumenical cooperation.

We have the resources across the Church to equip any congregation to lead worship, engage in pastoral care or to sustain mission and evangelism with the appropriate staffing. We are aware that for many working people time and energy are in short supply and a staff team may be desirable. The aim of any ministry team will be to release the gifts of the people of God.

We recommend that Presbyteries set a five-year goal to ensure that every congregation is working towards this capacity. We believe this would release an immense amount to energy and creativity among members and ministers alike. Tragically, there has been little coordinated planning to encourage this kind of development. The result has been a patchy evolution where there is the enthusiasm or where the necessity of an extended vacancy or a multiple linkage has demanded it.

Recommendation 14: That Presbyteries develop a coordinated strategy to equip congregations to sustain worship, pastoral care and mission with the appropriate staffing, and monitor progress through the Quinquennial visits.

A.4.3. Affirming the Gifts of Leadership: (1) Eldership Refocused

We need leadership. We need elders with vision and flexibility. In our Presbyterian church the role of elders is crucial. In the role of the elder the "one size fits all" pattern of districts is prevalent, but that does not give room for variety of abilities to be exercised. There needs to be an honest appraisal of the gifts and callings of our elders, and to recognise that not all elders are gifted in leadership, nor are all gifted in pastoral care. We recommend that all elders who have not undertaken training in the past three years be required to attend a short course on the current role and expectations of an elder in the Church of Scotland.

If younger people are to be elders, then "whole life" commitment may be an impediment. This does not mean that their commitment will not be genuine, but that shorter term commitments will allow them to decide priorities and focus their energy.

At a time when elders have increasing demands on time, and when the church needs to be flexible and responsive to changing situations, we encourage Kirk Sessions to develop a pattern of "terms of service" (each Session can determine the appropriate length of the term)

with regular sabbaticals. These will be times for elders to step back and see things from a new angle, taking advantage of the in-service courses so freely accessible in the church today.

Recommendation 15: That Kirk Sessions offer an opportunity for all elders who have not undertaken training in the past three years to share the current vision of the role and expectations of an elder in the Church of Scotland.

In some congregations, the Kirk Session is perceived as remote from the congregation. There is little access to the decision-making and the business is not communicated to the congregation clearly or regularly. As Presbytery is a public meeting unless it needs to meet in private, we recommend that the Kirk Session makes its meetings as open as possible, and develops ways of maintaining good communication links between Session and congregation. This is in line with the recommendations of the Board of Practice and Procedure on freedom of information.

Recommendation 16: That Kirk Sessions develop appropriate open styles of meeting and processes of communication.

As congregations explore different ways of releasing the gifts of their members, they may come to realise that the “model constitution” (which requires a two-tier decision-making process) is too cumbersome and inflexible, and often ties people into administrative structures and meetings rather than releasing them for active service.

Recommendation 17: That the Board of Practice and Procedure examine whether the present “model constitution” represents the best and most flexible way of managing a local congregation.

A.4.4. Affirming the Gifts of Leadership: (2) Ministry Teams

We need a strong ministry team. We welcome the review of the enquiry and selection processes by the Board of Ministry. We affirm the emerging patterns of training and support: local responsibility in selection, greater emphasis on continuous practical development in training, early challenges towards teamwork, pro-active professional development, new thinking on the total independence which we call tenure. We look forward to their proposals on some notion of appraisal.

The term “ministry of word and sacrament” remains our description of “the ordained minister”. That role means keeping the people of God truly centred on Jesus Christ as revealed in the Scriptures and the sacraments. The role of Christian leadership is to keep Christ central and all other competitors for that position secondary.

However there is a limitation of using the time-honoured description. It represents an unquestioned assumption that sticks with the role of pastor-teacher as the primary model of leadership. The Biblical description of leadership in Ephesians 4:12 includes also the apostle, the prophet and the evangelist, along with the pastor and the teacher. According to that passage it takes all five leadership roles to express the “ministry of Christ”. This is a time to recover and reaffirm these other roles of leadership and break out of the reductionism of the pastor-teacher model.

The “word and sacrament”/ “pastor-teacher” emphasis belongs to the Christendom context, with the re-emphasis on these roles in the Reformation to offset the ignorance and superstition of the day. The context of the 21st century is undoubtedly missionary and post-Christendom. The assumptions that ride on the terminology will not be adequate for the future.

The church will require the pioneering gifts of the apostle (“sent out”), the building and dismantling gifts of the prophets, and the frontier-friendly gifts of the evangelist. The pastor

and the teacher are no less important, but their monopoly on the term “ministry” needs to be broken. We recommend that in our time, we recognise, recruit, select and train evangelists who can help others share the Gospel with others. The same is required for those with “apostolic” (perhaps a church planting capacity) and “prophetic” gifts (perhaps an ability to encourage the church or a capacity to address the public arena in the name of Christ).

The collaborative nature of ministry begins by reclaiming these gifts as essential to the full development of the church to be the church of Christ in our times. It will mean taking account of these gifts in the selection and recruitment process and offering the necessary specialist training rather than the omnibus version that assumes that everybody will be a parish minister.

Recommendation 18: That the Board of Ministry, in consultation with the Board of National Mission and the Board of Parish Education, develop a coordinated process of recruiting and training people with missionary gifts which are vital for service within and beyond the constraints of a parish context.

Ordained ministry is a demanding role and there are subtle influences that erode or limit the development of the gifts of those in ordained ministry. The sacred cows of security of tenure and the right of congregational call deserve attention. While not wishing to create unnecessary insecurity, there are situations where the movement of a minister would create new possibilities for all parties. Interim Ministers and ministers in other appointments already surrender their tenure voluntarily, and put themselves at the disposal of the Church.

We recognise the effects of the “short term contract” culture in business and the caring agencies— often leading to cynicism, insecurity and lack of loyalty. On the other hand, an appointment to a situation for fixed term with a specific remit can focus the mind creatively.

We recognise the distinction between long-term pastoring of people and the short-term focus of a project. We also recognise the different personalities whose gifts will be different. There will be limiting factors on movement. The issue is how to achieve the flexibility necessary for a changing situation, and the stability necessary for the spiritual development of people. This would be met by making the “ministry team” the norm with people employed on different terms.

We recommend the creation of a database of aptitudes and needs by the Department of Ministry. Congregations, Presbyteries and Departments would have access to this pool for the normal processes of filling posts. There would then need to be a process of matching requirements to gifts and deploying people after due consultation.

Recommendation 19: That the Board of Ministry, in consultation with the Board of National Mission and the Board of Parish Education, develop a data-base of all ministers, auxiliary ministers, Deacons and Readers to assist in the strategic deployment of personnel.

A.4.5. Developing the Gifts of Leadership

We welcome the Board of Ministry’s emphasis on collaborative ministry. To encourage this ethos, we believe that the Board can give a lead in two ways: by developing active partnerships with the Board of Parish Education, and by encouraging training that brings candidates for ministry alongside other ministries who are in training e.g. Readers, Deacons or Overseas Bursars.

Since the primary ministry is the ministry of Christ through the whole Body of Christ, the Board of Ministry can offer a lead in affirming the development of elders, youth workers, children’s ministries and much more. At present there is limited collaboration and that is to

the detriment of all parties. We recommend that both Boards establish working patterns that will offer mutual enrichment.

The name of the “Board of Ministry” reinforces old perceptions of the omni-competent ordained minister. We await changes in reorganisation as a new Presbytery style emerges. Our hope would be that the other facets of authorised leadership might come under a board of ministries as recognition of diversity.

Recommendation 20: That the Board of Ministry and the Board of Parish Education develop working patterns of active collaboration to equip the whole people of God for Christian service.

A.4.6. Celebrating the Gifts of all God’s People

The mindset of the church will be reshaped by our liturgy. We recommend that services of ordination of ministers and elders, and services of induction be revisited to reflect the new realities of theology and practice in relation to ministry and eldership. Our Episcopal neighbours have rich liturgies that affirm the whole people of God, and in practice are much less priestly than many Church of Scotland ministers.

Recommendation 21: That the Panel on Worship review services of ordination, induction and commissioning, in order to celebrate imaginatively the ministry of all God’s people within them.

B. The Shape of the Regional Church

B.1. The Presbytery Revisited

The Presbytery is the characteristic expression of the Church of Scotland as a member of the family of Presbyterian churches. Before embarking on further discussion, it is worth setting our Presbyterian constitution in the context of the world church. Presbyterians have inherited a sense of our Scottishness being identified with the adjective Presbyterian. That connection is challenged by the ecumenical climate of 21st century Scotland, but it is both humbling and encouraging to step outside our inherited focus and see the world perspective.

According to Peter Brierley’s *Future Church: a Global Analysis of the Christian Community to the year 2010*, Monarch/Christian Research Association, 1998:

“In 1995 there were 48 million Presbyterians worldwide. This was 3% of Christendom and 1% of the world’s population. These proportions were the same in 1960 and will remain so by the year 2010 if present trends continue, showing that the Presbyterian church is keeping pace with world trends but neither beating them, nor losing to them. This means that they will grow from 30 million in 1960 to 52 million in 2010.” (p 109)

Brierley goes on to show that Presbyterianism is growing mainly in Asia where in 50 years the Presbyterian Church has grown fourfold, mainly in South Korea and Indonesia. The factors to which he attributes growth are (pp 114-9):

1. A high profile focus and commitment to prayer;
2. Clear vision, thoroughly owned by the people;
3. A large amount of missionary involvement as witnessed by the number of Korean missionaries sent overseas;
4. Continuous ongoing evangelism and thorough integration of converts into small cell groups;
5. Publicly affirmed integrity of Christian people through their behaviour in wartime and since.

Returning to the role of the Presbytery in Scotland, it is a matter of significance and concern

that this chief characteristic is not considered to be the source of inspiration and support for the worship and witness of local congregations. The perception of many congregations is of a Presbytery as a necessary irrelevance – necessary for maintaining the system as we have it, but irrelevant to congregations unless in the case of a vacancy or readjustment.

The origins of Presbytery lie in the “weekly exercises” for ministers to find spiritual support for their pastoral and evangelistic callings. The erosion of that relational heart is of vital concern if we are to pursue two key values in the shape of the church – to affirm the local and strengthen the relational.

Our history and contemporary missiological research encourage us to revisit the Presbytery as a focus of area/regional support and inspiration to local congregations. This will include excellent administration, for “good administration is good pastoral care”.

B.2. Towards a Theology of Presbytery

How can Presbytery be a fellowship of Christian leaders sharing a vision for the Kingdom within a given part of Scotland? In what way can Presbytery function as a Gospel community? What would Presbytery look like shaped by the Gospel rather than by legal procedure or managerial function?

If the Church exists by the grace of God and for the glory of God, then, as matter of integrity, this characteristic forum of our church will be shaped by worship and mission.

If the Church is formed by participating in the mission of God to see the new creation in Christ, then Presbytery will be shaped by future challenges and possibilities rather than past precedent.

If the Church is formed around Jesus Christ in the fellowship of the Father, Son and Spirit, then the Presbytery will be a community shaped by the mutual honouring of persons rather than the static notion of equality or parity.

If the Church is to follow Jesus on the way of grace in the Incarnation, then its primary question is what aspect of the Word of God is to be made flesh in this place at this time, not a legal question of administrative functions.

If the Church is the community of the Cross and resurrection, then Presbytery decision making will be marked by humility and integrity which will call on all our courage, compassion and companionship to dare to follow Christ together.

If the Church is the community of the Spirit, then we will be alert to the charisms of the Holy Spirit in individuals and in congregations and learn to function as the Body of Christ together in our part of Scotland, enjoying unity within diversity, including other neighbours of other denominations.

If the Church is the community of the New Creation, then Presbytery will be a sign to a divided and broken world of how to mediate in conflict and to thrive on the chaos of change as God beckons us into tomorrow.

Such a redefinition of Presbytery around the Gospel acts as a touchstone for future practical discussions on functions. It takes us further in our deconstruction before aiming at reconstruction.

Presbytery is shaped currently by a vision of God as stability, continuity and sameness. This owes more to Platonic ideas than to the God of the Hebrews who kept his people on the move

and the God of Jesus who neither “possessed nor was possessed”, but released the wind and fire of God on waiting disciples.

If the regional leadership of the church is to be an inspiration to the local church, then it must reflect the life of God in Christ as an example - a community of communities with Jesus at the centre.

B.3. The Shape of Presbytery

B.3.1. The 3-D Presbytery as Regional Support

We have kept open communication with the Committee on Presbytery Boundaries and discovered that the logic of our “upside down” church has led us to similar conclusions. The Commission offers its thinking as part of the consideration of future “shape”, but our recommendation will be to invite the General Assembly to remit this section of the Report for wider consultation through the future work of the Presbytery Boundaries Committee.

The future shape of the Regional Church will have three functions: relational support for local strategy, regional centres of worship and inspiration and regions for more comprehensive oversight and allocation of resources.

We favour the formation of *local area groupings* for mutual support and missionary partnerships. Where appropriate, these districts may be ecumenical to foster the relational bonds of trust. Local and relational are the underlying principles.

We also favour the smaller number of *larger groupings* (more like the original Synod) with the strategic responsibilities, staff and financial resources to offer the local support needed to the congregations. Attention must be given to ensure ecumenical membership and regular collaboration.

Notes of caution have been sounded There is concern about duplication of effort and about the devolution of old mindsets. The success of these moves will depend on how far the new groupings create an environment where local initiative can thrive, and decisions are taken on the principle of subsidiarity.

The third dimension might be called the “*Presbyterial Cathedral*”. This is a plea to place worship and Christian community at the heart of our life together. In times past Cathedrals offered inspiration, celebration and pastoral encouragement to local congregations. We see centres of excellence being developed to encourage renewal in worship, fellowship, leadership, mission and spirituality – regional bases that offer a lead by example.

As we look around the world we see the inspiration of churches like Willowcreek Community Church, Chicago, or Hills Church, Australia, which have taken on the role of global cathedrals. They have offered many people an example of worship, evangelism, discipleship, community work and servant-leadership. While we are not advocating these churches as examples for all, we see that they offer a starting point and practical teaching resources that flow from the integrity of a worshipping, witnessing community.

In Scotland, there are many who would see Iona Abbey as a similar example of inspiration for over 60 years. We believe that there are churches around Scotland where that same inspirational leadership might be offered to others. Our Scottish reluctance to affirm or recognize others may deprive us of good news and good practice to help us all move forward.

These centres may be a grouping or network of congregations, charged by the Presbytery to pioneer new aspects of our calling, and to share these insights with the wider church. Too much good work goes unsupported or unreported. This would ensure down to earth pilot

plants to inspire and encourage others.

Part of the “example” would be their capacity to collaborate with each other in the true Presbyterian spirit. The network would necessarily change with time as different initiatives were affirmed as offering the lead direction for the moment.

B.3.2. The Style of Presbytery as a Gathering

Much of the frustration of Presbytery lies in its style of operating. It has been suggested that it move from “courtroom” to “courtyard” – a pattern of dialogue rather than debate, and conference rather than confrontation. There are times when formal rules of debate are essential for good decision-making, and appropriate procedures when meeting as a “court”, but much more time could be given to letting other voices be heard. Even competent speakers can be intimidated in the context of Presbytery meetings. This is about tone and style rather than legal necessity.

Again future consultations on Presbyteries will bring specific proposals for the change of style. Our concern is that the relational dimension of the districts be carried into the larger gatherings through story, worship, small group discussion and the use of better group facilitation. It is open to any Presbytery at any time to make the first steps towards expressing that relational style. Pilot schemes will feed the future process of consultation.

B.3.3. The Leadership Role of Presbytery

Presbyteries will require people who can function as area leaders. While the church is well served by many fine elders, in practice Presbyteries are often peopled by elders who are retired or who have been seconded for a year as a “link person” for the Kirk Session.

Elders’ ordination vows need to be made more explicit and include the commitment to the wider church. Those who are seconded to Presbytery work should be released from some areas of local service. The role of the Presbytery elder should be seen as a real job of work.

There were discussions some years ago about the training of Presbytery elders in the ways of Presbytery. That was given scant attention, but did include visionary elements as well as nuts and bolts about the system. Such training can be made available for the new roles in the new Presbyteries.

There are ministers who contribute little to Presbytery - often through lack of confidence in Presbytery itself. Ministers might be encouraged to ‘tithe’ their time to the wider work of the church (Presbytery and National Committees) in a way that is recognised at the time of induction by minister and congregation alike. This might protect the overly ‘committee-ed’ and draw in those gifted people who are shy of the system. If nomination committees adopted the principle of “one person – one job”, energy would be better focused and more widely harnessed.

Leadership in the augmented Presbyteries will include issues of staffing and the role of “regional moderators” or “superintendents” for an extended period of time to offer pastoral and missionary encouragement to the districts and congregations.

B.3.4. Resources at the Disposal of Presbytery

Resources of people and money will be decentralised. Resource people for National Mission, Parish Education, Social Responsibility and Stewardship will be locally accessible and budgets will be locally controlled. There remains a question of how far existing investments are tied to existing Boards and Committees.

Staffing of the Regions will again be a matter for consultation. Already central Boards have regionalised their staff and this will continue. The team for administration and mission will be

shaped by the local challenges and gifts.

In the interest of justice there will need to be an overview of distribution to avoid the inevitable outcome of the free market where the rich-poor gap widens. There is a genuine concern that Presbyterian bureaucracy may not be any cheaper than centralised bureaucracy. Resources held more locally are not by definition stewarded better or worse. The key will lie in creating a culture of trust and local responsibility to find and share resources. Relationships of grace are once again the key.

The future process will carry significant implications for the current central administration. While the Commission has given consideration to the shape of life at the centre, everything must depend on the decisions relating to the newly developed Presbyterian structure.

C. The Shape of the Central Church

C.1. Where Committees Began

“Presbyterianism as a form of Church government was designed for the administration of an organisation the whole of whose activities were confined within its parishes, each of which was more or less self-contained and enjoyed a large measure of autonomy. Its initiatives almost all came from the perimeter, and its objective was that the ordinances of religion should be available to the people in every corner of Scotland completely free of any charge. For that purpose the design was both adequate and admirable....”

“It was in the latter half of the nineteenth century that the Church first began - not without many grave misgivings and much hesitation - to feel a sense of wider responsibility - for overseas mission, for example. This was something which had not been tackled by the Church as a whole, for obviously it could not be administered at parish level. The parishes had their part to play in furnishing the necessary funds, creating interest, in maintaining enthusiasm, but the whole administration had to be centralised. And so the Assembly appointed a Committee of their own number to do this job, always under their own direction and control. With the passing of the years the number of such ‘outside’ interests grew, with a consequent steady increase in the number of Committees. The Committee system had come to stay. The Year book for 1950 records no fewer than 65 Committees all reporting directly to the Assembly - 25 Standing and 40 Special Committees.”

To these comments of Dr Andrew Herron, authority on church law, we add these words of Dr Douglas Murray, the Church historian:

“Regarding Herron's comments on the origins of Boards and Committees. What he says happened in the late 19th century is that the Church took on greater responsibility in certain areas and this involved an increase in administration and in the work of certain committees, such as those dealing with foreign missions. Committees of the Assembly existed before that (e.g. the Accommodation or Church Extension Committee chaired by Chalmers in the 1830s), but it was in the later 19th century that there was an increase in the centralised bureaucracy of the Kirk. The Free Church in particular had to raise its own funds and this led to a more centralised structure and power tending towards the Assembly Committees and their Conveners. The '121' syndrome is very much a Free Church phenomenon. In addition congregations became more autonomous since it was they who raised the money. The result, in my view, was that presbyteries became squeezed between the centre and the localities, a situation which has remained.”

The last sentences in Dr Herron's reference indicate something of the recent past. Boards and Committees have been wedged together e.g. the former Board of World Mission and Unity. No doubt this was done for good reason, e.g. the old Union and Readjustments committee became the Parish Reappraisal committee, a constituent committee of the Board of National Mission, intending to give reappraisal work a missionary focus.

C.2. The Evolving Future

The shape of the new centre will depend on the shape of the new regions.

While the Commission has given considerable thought to possible realignments within the central administration, it has become clear that any suggestions would be premature, and indeed unhelpful, in the light of the proposals about new styles of Presbytery, a direction which we have already endorsed.

With this in mind, it is recommended that the thinking of the Commission be carried forward by whatever group is charged with the ongoing consultation and implementation of the Presbyterian plan. In this way we trust that the work of the Commission will be integrated into one of the significant streams of reform to encourage future development of thinking.

C.3. Questions for Future Consideration

Future consultations on the shape or regional and national aspects of the Church may have to take up questions that have not been resolved within the limited timescale of the Commission.

C.3.1. What are the implications of the emerging role of the Assembly Council?

Tribute has already been paid to the cooperative spirit between the Commission and the Assembly Council. The role and remit of the Council is about consultation, assessment of priorities and developing strategies for the future. The ethos of the Council has been to develop an ongoing role of listening to the Church locally, regionally and centrally.

This process offers a uniquely new way of communicating opinions within an interdependent Church. It offers a “safe space” for different voices to be heard and represented across the interfaces of the Church’s life. We commend that as an expression of the “relational” church, and we wait with interest to see how this style will be applied in assisting the church decide priorities in a way that avoids old-style confrontation.

It is our hope that future discussions will find an acceptable way for some body to fulfil an Executive Function among the Boards and Committees. The Commission is aware of the history of former Assembly Councils and the attempts to perform this function. Much depends on the evolving shape of the centre, but the General Assembly requires a focus for its Executive Function in setting priorities among the Boards and Committees in line with agreed strategy.

C.3.2. Where is the Voice of the Church?

Between General Assemblies, there is confusion about the “voice of the Kirk”. In a devolved church, many issues could be addressed from the Regions. However, there may be the need for a coordinated setting for engagement with national policy issues: politics, education and social practice. Currently, these are handled by the Church and Nation Committee, the Department of Education and the Board of Social Responsibility. National Mission and World Mission have aspects of their work which have a political impact, and will feed into debates of Church and Nation as required.

The issue is not that the church should speak with “one voice” to suit the convenience of the media. The honesty of debate is not to be stifled. The issue is rather that there be a consistent interaction of ideas through an umbrella Board of Church and Society. Umbrellas do not assume agreement, but at least people are close enough to listen to each other and talk together.

While the Board of Communication, through its Press Office, copes with immense pressures from the media, it might help them in their difficult role of being “cultural translators” between the agenda of the journalist and the confusing culture of the Church.

For all that, the official voice is not necessarily the prophetic voice. For that authentic voice of wisdom, we need to learn to listen to the edges and the people whose obedience has taken them the humble way of the Cross. Amidst the media-saturated noise, we still need to listen for the still small voice of the Spirit, and let that voice be heard. That is a subtle discernment.

C.3.3. Where is the Leadership within the Central Administration?

The Church is operating with two cultures: the Presbyterian ethos that resists personal leadership, and a business organisation at the heart of its administration, which requires executive powers. The proposals from the Joint Working Party to introduce a Central Coordinating Committee may address that issue.

However, as well as a strong appeal for some kind of body being proposed, many senior staff would value the appointment of a Chief Executive to oversee the central organisation. It could be argued that the proposals for reshaping regional and central organisation make it essential to have a person in the central offices who can help steer that part of the organisation through the changes. It seems inadequate that such a responsibility should lie with a Convener who has another full-time occupation far away from the workplace, or, by default, with other senior officials within the offices, whose responsibilities are onerous enough.

C.3.4. What about the role and style of the General Assembly?

The General Assembly exercises legislative, judicial and executive functions. In a church of courts it is the Supreme Court of appeal. Today much of that intricate work is delegated to the Commission of Assembly because the processes of the Assembly have proved cumbersome for issues that require a more subtle context for decision-making.

If more people are to have a voice, then new *styles of decision-making* will be essential. While Moderators and business conveners are always helpful to new Commissioners, and the Assembly is always kind to a new voice struggling with procedures, there is still a need to change the ethos, so that the power does not lie only with those who know the system.

In recent years, we have seen changes in styles of dress, worship and involvement. In pursuit of our concern for a more relational church to affirm and release the gifts of the people, we recommend the Assembly take a lead from patterns of the Youth Assembly: holding area consultations for Commissioners in advance of the Assembly so that the key issues are aired in advance; and ensuring the time is divided between conference style and decision style.

In the current context, many Boards and Committees could function adequately on a *two or three yearly reporting system*, with the opportunity to bring essential decisions to the intervening Assembly. This would avoid the undue time pressures to produce annual reports on everything. The major reports would set the policy direction for the next two-three years, leaving space for short annual progress reports as required.

The Executive Function of the Assembly currently focuses on reports from Boards and Committees, creating the impression of the Annual General Meeting of the Central Administration rather than a reflection on the life of the Church as a whole. There is a tension between the desire to offer a point of visibility to celebrate the local and global life of the Church, and the need to make policy decisions for the good of all.

In a decentralised context, the reporting processes may be different. There may be more direct access of Presbyteries to the Assembly, both to bring forward issues of substance, and to contribute to the *celebratory aspects* of the Assembly – each year featuring one Region in rotation. These occasions would inspire and challenge the Commissioners and the whole church, if the media reported them well. The Assembly has the potential to be a time of national celebration and inspiration for the Church and the nation.

With the changed nature of Central Boards and Committees, the role of *General Secretaries* might change. They might be appointed to be directly accountable to the General Assembly, with the support of smaller Advisory Boards. They could have direct access to speak to the Assembly as the people called and entrusted with the Assembly's policy. They would enjoy high trust and high accountability.

The *timing of the General Assembly* could be more efficient. The present date in May means a substantial loss of time for those who have to report to the Assembly: the summer gap, six months to prepare reports for the printer in February and then a Spring gap before the next Assembly. A September Assembly would give a full church year for committee work and the summer months for printing and immediate preparation for Assembly arrangements.

Recommendation 22: That the sections on “The Shape of the Regional Church” and “The Shape of the Central Church” be remitted to the Board of Practice and Procedure and the Assembly Council.

Recommendation 23: That the Board of Practice and Procedure review the culture and timing of the General Assembly in order to increase the quality of reporting, participation and decision-making.

Section III: Proposals for Continuing Reform

1. Praying through Change

“Follow me” is a call to change. The history of the church is an account of our failure to respond to that call, and Christ’s faithfulness in recalling us again and again to the Way. The call to change is not a threat, but an invitation at the heart of the Gospel.

From the outset, we have recognised that the core issue of change in the church is not about structures. It is about mindsets. It is about creating an environment in which our relationship with God and our neighbour may flourish.

We have looked at the current phase of church history through the lens of the Exile. The people of God – now as then - are cut off from familiar routines and patterns of life as they struggle to live the life of faith in a culture stripped of the symbols that sustain faith. Is the time of exile about to end and the people return to God? Or have we yet to learn the true lessons of the Exile?

When Jeremiah spoke of the Exile, he warned against the false prophets who saw it coming to a quick conclusion. Jeremiah spoke of the exile lasting for 70 years. In that time, the people were to settle in Babylon, pray for the welfare of the city and go about life faithfully before God in their new environment. In his vision of the baskets of figs (Chapter 24), he compared the basket of good figs to those who went into Babylon and promised that the experience would lead to new heart for God. (24:5-7)

Whatever the experience of God’s people in our time of cultural dislocation, it is a time when God addresses us with hope: *“For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” says the Lord.* (Jeremiah 29:11-13)

The heart of reform is the reform of the heart. The first proposal for reform is a call to prayer. People at prayer will be people who learn to live within the purposes of God with patient hope. If God be long in coming, so be it. If God comes quickly, we will be the more ready to welcome him and the future he brings.

Praying people recognise our daily dependence on the Holy Spirit. A call to prayer is a call to praise, confession, repentance, meditation, intercession and to decisive redemptive action. A call to prayer is a call to live with God. A call to prayer begins with the leadership of the church, that those who lead may be open to being led by the Spirit. A call to prayer rests on every Christian person: in the privacy of the home, in the melee of the working day, in public worship or committed prayer groups. The ways are many. The call is one. Let us pray.

We recommend that congregations explore how they might deepen their life of prayer to be more open to the renewing Spirit of God. We will not settle for reform that changes structures and leaves lives untouched by Christ. *I will give them a heart to know me that I am the Lord.* (Jeremiah 24:7)

Recommendation 24: That Kirk Sessions identify ways of deepening the prayer life of their congregations individually and together.

2. Creating Space for Change

It is difficult to change direction. The old routines, requirements and habits are instinctive. We often need to stop, stand back and reflect before we can reset our priorities. We

recommend this for *individuals* in any position of leadership in the church, that they set time for spiritual retreat within the course of the year. Spiritual leadership is about keeping the essentials central. We lead by the light we shed or the shadow we cast. Solitude with God is essential for every one in any leadership role.

We recommend that *Kirk Sessions* choose a time in the near future to give the congregation a sabbatical from activity. It may be a good exercise for Lent 2002 and 2003 to agree that usual church activities are suspended for six weeks. Set people free to meet as friends without an agenda. Offer spaces for retreat, reflection and prayer at home or at a retreat centre. Plan times for the leadership to step back from the routine and rediscover the grace of God in Jesus Christ. At the end of the time (between Easter and Pentecost?), allow time to share whatever God may have revealed. Choose one area of review of congregational life to look, listen, reflect and act. Repeat the process each year over the next five years.

We recommend that *Presbyteries* build in spaces for retreat together over the next five years. Changes will come, but the changes must not become ends in themselves. They are only valid as they lead us closer to God and to each other and to our neighbours.

We recommend that in anticipation of a major movement for structural change from 2002-5, *Boards and Committees* review programmes to be less proactive. As far as is practical, we urge a disciplined moratorium on new initiatives from the centre, to allow congregations and new-forming Presbyteries to discover their direction and take up responsibilities.

Sabbath is a time of realising that we do not run the world. It is a time to recover the rhythms of grace as we trust in God the Creator. It is a time to realise our responsibilities to the poor and the lost as we look around us. We recommend a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

Recommendation 25: That the leadership in every area of church life institute the discipline of a period of retreat, rest and reflection to allow space for God to change us.

3. Giving Permission to Change

In any change process, there are those who initiate change and those who authorise change. We are confident that the initiative for change is local and specific. There can be no diktat of Assembly that ushers in a new Reformation, but there can be permission to change.

We affirm that the Church of Scotland offers more freedom for change and innovation than most people believe. Among the many suggestions for change, the majority require no legal or procedural change. What we must address is rather the culture of inhibition and distrust, which creates a fear of change. Most of the changes that are needed can already happen, and can be richly supported, if people make the decision to make the change. We trust you. Take the responsibility. Take the risk.

Our response is simply to declare the Gospel of grace to a paralysed church: "By the grace of God you are free! Get up and walk!" Most people have to walk a very long way before they find any structural impediment to change. It is a matter of mindset and faith. Go for it!

Recommendation 26: That congregations take risks and try new ways so that faith may grow.

4. Looking for Levers for Change and Limits to Growth

In every situation there are levers for change and limits to change. On some estimates, the levers for change may be found in "the 15% rule": 15% effort in the right place produces 85% of the results.

Change in the church will not be the result of people following through a long list of recommendations. Change will come where people take the time to discover the one area that might make a difference for them and then they do it. We are part of a complex system of relationships and structures. We have suggested issues that may give you a handle on a lever for change. Find your lever and pull it.

There are limits to growth. In *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organisation*, Peter Senge claims that in our complex world we need to practice the art of being a “learning organisation”. If we keep pushing at the good idea, it will eventually slow down or burn out because it triggers the “balancing system” of resistance. Behind the resistance is a “limiting factor”. Once we discover the “limiting factor”, we release the good for growth. Once again, we have suggested some limiting factors. We pray that people may find the relevant one and have the courage to address it.

We do not claim to have identified more than a few potential levers and limits, but we offer them as potential leads to those that matter in the local situation.

Presbyteries can assist here. They can build this into a process of one to one visits or Quinquennial Visits to identify areas for growth or limits to growth. The Presbytery then builds up a “gap analysis” identifying where congregations need resources of people, training or finance. From that they create a “regional needs plan” to meet it. Presbytery will then be keyed into supporting the local congregation on its way to becoming a worshipping community sharing in Christ’s mission.

Recommendation 27: That Kirk Sessions and Presbyteries study the report as a stimulus to identifying the levers for change and the limits to growth in the local situation; that Kirk Sessions establish an “local needs” plan and Presbytery establish a “regional needs” plan of support, with special reference to recommendations 1-16 and 24-28; and apply, where appropriate to the Community and Parish Development Fund.

5. Supporting One Another through Change

We are aware that many people find change daunting. We would encourage people to see it as exciting. Anxiety and excitement are both a kind of fear. One expects a negative outcome and the other expects a positive outcome. As people of the Resurrection, we face change with hope, not fear.

However, we are aware that there is often low morale among congregations and among ministers. We believe that the way to face change is in the company of others who can travel with us through change. We commend the wisdom and experience of the many advisers and consultants in the employ of the Church e.g. in Parish Education, National Mission, Social Responsibility, and Stewardship and Finance.

The heart of the “local and relational” theme is to be worked out in the formation of local groupings. We recommend the formation of networks of common interest or common context to share struggles and ideas. Around the church there are churches that are strugglers, survivors, searchers and signposts. We encourage joining hands to move across the pain threshold of change. It is only as friendships form and trust builds that other decisions of cooperation may follow.

The story of the Commission has been recorded in **Appendix 7**. This story emphasises the journey of trust that has been travelled together. It takes time. It takes commitment and openness. It is our conviction that the renewal of the church will begin when leaders of local congregations take time out together in retreat, to reflect prayerfully and honestly on the

Gospel and our mission. Only communities of trust will sustain the process of local reform that emerges.

The experience of the Commission cannot be passed on. The process of the Commission can be offered as one way of creating the new environment of trust.

Recommendation 28: That congregational leadership teams form networks focused on a shared context or a shared concern in order to build trusting relationships as the basis of future cooperation.

Interdependence is key to our future. That applies in every area of the church. We welcome the development of new relationships among Boards and Committees through the Coordinating Forum, but recognise the imbalance of power based on budgets. It is essential that the larger Boards do not develop a “Premier League” that leaves the low budget committees in second place. The Gospel principle of the strong being at the service of the weak applies in this dynamic.

We recognise the importance of people fulfilling the remits of their area of work, but that creates its own tunnel vision. We recommend that the Coordinating Forum, representing all Boards and Committees, continue to develop their residential times to ensure that the constituent parts are set within a vision of the bigger picture.

Recommendation 29: That the Coordinating Forum develop its role of capturing the larger vision within which people are operating.

Celebration is one dimension of inspiring one another for the future. As the church moves into a new shape in the coming years, we recommend that celebration be built into these movements as milestones on the way. We recommend that a “stakeholders’ conference” be planned for 2005 as a national celebration, representing the churches around Scotland and partners from across the world, and with representation from various areas of national life.

This will be an opportunity to celebrate our faith and life together, a point of accountability of progress and a time to pledge ourselves to moving forward together into God’s future

Recommendation 30: That the General Assembly appoint a planning group to prepare a “Stakeholders’ Conference” in 2005 as a point of National Celebration and a milestone of progress.

6. Modelling Change: The Community and Parish Development Fund

We need examples of new models of the Church for our time to encourage us to face the future together. Innovative new beginnings are already emerging around the country. It is essential to fund those visions in such a way that they may be able to flourish and share their insights with the wider church.

There are many congregations around the country who have a big vision, but limited resources. We believe that one way to encourage growth is by making significant funds available.

We recommend the formation of a Community and Parish Development Fund of £7.5 million over 5 years. (**Appendix 8: Community and Parish Development Fund**) It would be the preferred option to give out substantial grants to congregations and local groupings allowing them to put together funding packages that would attract other funders. Making grants of up to £30,000 per annum over a five-year period would mean that congregations could begin to bring on board a variety of people to work in ministry teams. Many of those brought on

might be youth workers or worship leaders or local church administrators.

The aim would be to facilitate congregations to become vibrant worship centres. On this basis we could support around 50 congregations over a 5-year period. The money would be fast tracked, going directly from the centre to the congregation. The administration of this project would mirror the flexible management approach of the Rank Foundation. In essence they keep their management of the projects to a minimum. They seek to supply support where required by linking in other agencies to deliver the service. We would recommend that two field workers be employed to develop the use of the Fund to the fullest advantage.

We would invite major funding agencies to help us formulate the most effective way of administering this Fund. We would also negotiate with these trust and others ways in which they too could partner us in these huge community investment projects. The principle would work on the three Rs adopted by Rank Foundation. These are, to help projects develop in **Relation** to each other, to be prepared to take **Risks** with local congregations and local groupings, to find additional **Resources** to reward success. (At present up to 50% of Rank's projects in Scotland have a Christian basis to them.)

To ensure that the money is spent equitably and effectively, certain criteria would be established to include partnerships with other churches and an intentional process of sharing the fruits of the development with others. In this way the money of the whole church will be invested in some churches for the benefit of the whole church.

Recommendation 31: That there be established a Board of Community and Parish Development as described in Appendix 8, that the Board of Stewardship and Finance

- a) **set up a Parish Development Fund of £7.5 million over 5 years in terms of Appendix 8 and report to the General Assembly of 2002;**
 - b) **appoint and manage two field directors until the Board of Community and Parish Development comes into being;**
- and that the Nomination Committee nominate 12 people for the Board of Community and Parish Development and report to the General Assembly of 2002.**

7. Investing in Change: Reviewing our Financial Strategy

Change means funding the vision. Change in shape and priorities will mean a change in investment to support those changes. Investing in change means reviewing our financial strategy. While the main issues and recommendations are represented here, the detailed arguments for reviewing our financial strategy are set out in **Appendix 9: Reviewing our Financial Strategy**.

The Church of Scotland centrally has an approximate annual income of £100 million and around £300 million in invested funds. Over £40 million of the annual income comes by way of congregational contributions to Ministry Funds and the Mission and Aid Fund. While the sources and uses of this money can be described in terms of what is and what has been, the danger is that we continue to think along existing tramlines and simply move small amounts among the existing jam jars.

One of the fatal flaws in our system, which goes to the heart of future development, is the governance of the Church in relation to finance. There is currently no mechanism to establish priorities across the Church. The General Assembly is an impossible mechanism for such work and each Board has its own commitments to fulfil and corner to defend.

The Church's priorities continue to be shaped by inherited assumptions and patterns of funding. New patterns are emerging which will require a reallocation of resources. Without that substantial reallocation, financial restrictions will limit future movement.

Recommendation 32: That the Assembly Council, through the Coordinating Forum, establish overall priorities for the work of the Church in the light of the emerging shape of the Church and to convey these to the Board of Stewardship and Finance, so that these priorities can be incorporated into the Co-ordinated Budget proposals which the Board will be bringing to the General Assembly in 2002 and subsequent years, with appropriate amendments to the Constitution of the Coordinating Forum and the Board of Stewardship and Finance.

As we enter the Third Millennium, it is important to steward the resources of an emerging church for the missionary purposes of the Church of Scotland. In the emerging church, the nature of ministry will be more varied than “ministers of word and sacrament”, places of worship and mission may be temporary bases in the community rather than fixed buildings for generations and the context of mission may be to enter some of the “flow cultures” of our society rather than the immediate geographical area around a church building.

The strategic shift will include moves

from parish + building + minister

to networks of communities + multiple bases/venues + ministry teams.

Since the General Trustees steward a Consolidated Stipend Fund of £59 million for the benefit of 1400 congregations and a Consolidated Fabric Fund of £33 million for the benefit of 700 congregations, there are very considerable resources tied up in a historically inherited structure of 19th century mission models.

In 1995, an Act of Parliament removed a key obstacle to flexibility and ensured that the funds held by the General Trustees are under the sole jurisdiction of the General Assembly. If the purposes and shape of the church are redefined, then the funds may be used as the General Assembly decides for the benefit of congregations.

Recommendation 33: That the General Trustees, in consultation with the Board of Ministry and the Board of National Mission, monitor changing patterns of ministry and building requirements, and report on how best to fund the needs of the emerging church and report to the General Assembly of 2003.

Flexibility will be essential for the future of the church, a factor which affects the work of the General Trustees:

1. Congregations with large sums invested may wish to use these funds for another area of mission development, but that choice is not open to them.
2. Congregations have no choice on how funds may be invested between the growth of income and the growth of capital. The range of options is Stipend >Fabric>Minimum Stipend Fund or Fabric>Stipend>Central Fabric Fund.
3. Congregations do, however, have the choice to be generous with their Fabric Funds within the Presbytery, as befits a Presbyterian Church.
4. The choices may be extended in the case of the Consolidated Fabric Fund to include “or other purposes as agreed by Presbytery”. This allows a more strategic view to be taken of the missionary needs of the area and avoid tying money unnecessarily to buildings.
5. Uniting congregations should be more creative in the use of funds derived from the sale of properties.

Recommendation 34: That the General Trustees examine the Consolidated Stipend Fund and bring proposals to the General Assembly of 2002 that would allow congregations more flexibility of investment.

Recommendation 35: That the General Trustees examine the Consolidated Fabric Fund and bring proposals to the General Assembly of 2002 that would allow congregations more flexibility of investment.

Recommendation 36: That the General Trustees, in consultation with the Board of National Mission, examine the application of the proceeds of the sale of buildings following readjustment, and report to the General Assembly of 2002.

8. Moving through Barriers to Change

Throughout the report we have emphasised the grace of God at work in the church. Change occurs when we release what is good, by removing the barriers to change. We have reported on the openness to change around the church, but in our consultations we have been warned never to underestimate the resistance to change. One look at our history tempers our optimism.

We need only track back through the attempts in the 20th Century to introduce change to the Church of Scotland. Suggestions of community parishes, team ministries, lay witness, missionary congregations, cell-style churches, redesigned Presbyteries and calls for spiritual renewal can be traced through the Committee of Forty in the 70's, the Tell Scotland movement of the 50's, the Baillie Commission of the 40's and right back to the writings of John White prior to the formation of the present Church of Scotland in the 1920's!

At the risk of raising a cynical sigh of weariness, let John White speak into a new century:
 “Have we been using our great united forces for the winning of Scotland? The Church is not infiltrating through the Community as it can and as it ought....We are all to blame. Too many of our good respectable Church folks still think of their own church as if it were a private religious club. They miss the main function of Church life and worship - to go out to their brothers and sisters and compel them to come in.”

We listen to the passionate plea and say that it is time to throw off the burden of our history, and take responsibility for obeying the call of Christ in a culture that is seen as a totally new era of human history.

Two barriers to change lie deep in our nature: the twins of fear and power.

Fear. Fear has many faces. Some fear the mess of change, others fear the effect on people we serve. Some fear admitting our failure or taking the risk of failing. Some fear stepping outside the safety of the regulations or the tradition. Some fear the pain of the unknown. Some fear the exposure of weakness or the exposure to conflict.

We have no answer to that except the call of Jesus: Follow me. He calls us into faith, hope and love - each one an antidote to fear.

Power. Power is an issue that is very difficult to identify in our system. The resistance to power focused on individuals leads to circuits of power that operate in hidden ways, from passive aggression to outright manipulation. While we are familiar with the famous phrase that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely, it has also been said that what really corrupts is the fear of the loss of power. That may be the most sinister barrier to change of all. The power of money is equally crucial. We recommend that the Panel on Doctrine undertake a study of the Christian use and abuse of power.

If we are to follow Christ, we will be led to the place where we release our power into the hands of God, put power at the service of others, and face the future with a trusting powerlessness.

Recommendation 37: That the Panel on Doctrine undertake a study on the theology of power and report to a future General Assembly.

9. Trusting God's Spirit through Change

The Commission has become convinced of a mood for change across the Church. That mood has the potential to become a movement. The prayers of many people are being answered as the Spirit of God calls us onwards. We believe that we need to trust the Spirit and trust the people of God to listen and follow in the way of Jesus Christ in the place where we are set. The Commission considered different ways of ensuring that its proposals might be carried forward. In the end, the decision was made to offer these reflections and directions to the prayerful and committed attention of the Church.

While changes to Presbyteries and Central Administration will require careful consultation and management as they unfold, that process will be in good hands. The main emphasis of the report has been on the "local and relational" aspects of Church life. What that means for local Christian communities is for these communities to discern and determine.

That is a matter of trust. The responsibility belongs there. The resources are available in the grace of God and the people of God. There is no other plan.

We end as we began.

The purpose, shape and process of continuing reform lie in these timeless words of Jesus: "Follow me."

Recommendation 38: That all Kirk Sessions, Presbyteries, Boards and agencies of the Church study the report, take appropriate action and establish the necessary accountability for progress by 2005; and that the Assembly Council monitor developments through its ongoing consultations and assessments in 2002-3 and 2004-5.

Recommendation 39: That the Board of Practice and Procedure facilitate the study of the Report throughout the Church.

The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with us all.

