

## REPORT OF THE PANEL ON DOCTRINE

### GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2023

#### Interim Report

*“The General Assembly recognising that the Covid-19 pandemic has raised issues of the nature of public worship and the role of Government remit to the Panel on Doctrine the matters arising from the pandemic and invite them to report to the General Assembly of 2022.”<sup>1</sup>*

*“2. General Assembly ask the Panel on Doctrine to explore further the issues that arise from the Report.”<sup>2</sup>*

These two rather bald statements conceal a great deal of discussion within the Panel on Doctrine over the last two years. The first remit did look at church/ state relationships, but also began to look at the nature of public worship at a time when many of our churches were using some kind of video technology, mainly Zoom and YouTube to conduct services during covid lockdown.

There were, as the Assembly deliverance number 2 indicates, issues that had arisen which the Panel felt needed further consideration. One which arose during lockdown was that of conducting the Lord’s Supper in an online setting. The response at that time had been that it was not appropriate, in line with current practice. It was felt by some that we needed to re-examine in the light of developments in technology and serving those, for example, housebound.

We were also conscious of the needs arising of people who may be becoming further and further physically distant from a church which was biblically orthodox, not merely within our own denomination, but as a Scotland-wide and indeed, mission oriented matter. Questions of how we relate to such as these; pastoral care; involvement in church and so on needed to be teased out.

Because of the immediate interests in the issue of the Lord’s Supper, the Panel began to work on that subject, finding as we went on that although we had broad basic agreement, there were differing views on particular aspects. After seeking to wrestle with these for a time, we came to the view that there was a prior and more fundamental matter we needed to address: the nature of the church itself.

We had obviously been aware of this, as it is noted in the Panel’s initial report, and was there as we sought to draft a report for this year. But as we worked through, it became clear that this must be addressed first. Yes, we have a doctrine of the church, but the question is how this interfaces with the technology and distance issues of which the Lord’s Supper is but one aspect. We plan, therefore to address this and from there, hopefully, provide the General Assembly with the broad and particular guidance it needs.

In the name of the Committee,

IAN F R LLOYD  
JEROME O’BRIEN

Convener  
Secretary

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<sup>1</sup> Panel on Doctrine remit from General Assembly 2021

<sup>2</sup> Panel on Doctrine deliverance 2 from General Assembly 2022