

## REPORT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE & MISSION COMMITTEE

### GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2021

#### INTRODUCTION (CLAM)

*“Mission is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exist because worship doesn’t.” - John Piper.*

At the Commission of Assembly in 2020 the decision was taken to significantly alter our General Assembly committee structure - why? Whilst it would be over-simplistic to say it was for one reason only, arguably the most compelling reason felt by many was a growing desire, even urgency, to deliberately orientate around the call of the Great Commission:

*18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in [b] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” - Matthew 28:18-20*

This is not to say the Church did not seek to obey the words of Jesus before last year, nor does it negate the long history of our missional work, instead it is a recognition of two realities: **Context** - 21st Century Scotland is the fastest secularising country in the Western Hemisphere and therefore there is a critical need, in a positive sense, for a “call-to-arms”. **Focus** - whilst we recognise, remember and stand upon the shoulders of those who have gone before us we must ensure that as we re-organise our denominational structure to be more realistically streamlined, we do not lose focus. The Church of Jesus Christ exists because of God’s rich mercy and grace, and as His people we are to make Him known. Through our worship of the Triune God, we proclaim Him to the nations:

*9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. - 1 Peter 2:9-10*

This is why Matthew 28:18-20 and 1 Peter 2:9-10 have been read at some of the very first Christian Life & Mission Committee meetings. In essence the purpose of CLAM is to resource and support our congregations and presbyteries in the making of new disciples and the discipling of existing disciples, for that is what Jesus commands of us - to “make disciples” and to “teach them”, as we “proclaim [His] excellencies”.

As our denomination’s structure has changed we have shrunk from 7 General Assembly Committees to 3, with CLAM now taking on some, but not all, of the work of the committees that no longer exist. CLAM’s remit is narrower and more focussed - a deliberate decision made by the Commission of Assembly in an attempt to lessen the burden on those undertaking work for the denomination and enabling us to be more proactive in key areas. At its core CLAM wishes to resource and equip local congregations, because it is in our local churches that disciples are made and taught. CLAM also recognises the hugely significant role our

Presbyteries play in supporting and overseeing the congregations within its bounds. As a general rule of thumb any new ideas/projects/missional plans often originates in our churches. If a congregation thinks it has an idea worth exploring, but requires additional help and/or resourcing, the next step is to take the idea to presbytery. Presbytery may think the idea is worth pursuing, but upon investigation might find that further resources beyond its own are needed, be it advice/training/personnel and/or finances. This is where CLAM comes in, and so a presbytery could at this point request CLAM's assistance. It could be said, therefore, that a significant proportion of CLAM's involvement in initiatives is passive, which is true - we are here to respond to requests of assistance from Presbyteries and congregations. However, CLAM's remit includes church revitalisation and church planting, and so CLAM could also play a proactive role in initiating new projects where it feels it is appropriate.

The rest of the report contains summaries from CLAM's 6 working groups, however before moving to them the Christian Life & Mission Committee would like to give special thanks to two people. Having served for 11 years as Missions Secretary Famie Crawford will no longer be in the role because it was decided that the role would cease at the end of 2020. The previous Overseas Committee and the current Global Focus working group are extremely grateful to Famie for all her years of servant-hearted, unassuming and diligent work on behalf of the committee. CLAM also wishes to thank David Miller very much for all he has accomplished in his role as Reshaping for Mission coordinator these past 6 years. It would be hard to overstate the debt we owe David, and indeed it could be argued that much of the change and reshaping that has happened in the past decade is a direct result of the vision David had to see the Church "reshape for mission". We have much gratitude for these two people and give thanks for them both.

### **RESOURCING MISSION (RM)**

The Christian Life & Mission Committee has given its Resourcing Mission working group the following remit:

1. To encourage congregations, presbyteries and the denomination to be faithful in the Great Commission.
2. To oversee church plants, church revitalizations, and to stimulate mission in all congregations.
3. To ensure that mission remains central to the Church by engaging in consultation, resourcing, reviewing and accompaniment.
4. To be responsible for the selection, employment, training, deployment and supervision of any staff employed by the committee.

Furthermore:

1. *All part-time ministry appointments are now the responsibility of CLAM, which has delegated the responsibility to RM. This is therefore part of the remit of the group.*
2. *All (appropriate) schedules now come to CLAM, which has delegated this responsibility to RM. This is to encourage a missional mindset when making decisions re: denominational resources.*

Resourcing Mission (RM) is therefore the largest of CLAM's working groups due to the scope of its remit. In order to be diligent in the discharging of its duties RM normally includes four

items as standing items to be included on the agenda for every meeting: schedules, part-time appointments, projects and church planting:

**Schedules:** Presbyteries pass on all relevant schedules to RM, namely schedules regarding part-time appointments, fabric & maintenance and missional ideas - or to put it another way - all schedules come to RM. Having received schedules, RM's finance subgroup examines the schedules before presenting them to RM for approval. RM is grateful to all presbyteries for their diligence and there have been no issues of concern thus far.

**Part-time Appointments:** The oversight of part-time appointments used to come under the Ministry Committee but, now comes to RM(CLAM) in an attempt to unite the denomination's vision around the Great Commission. RM recognises the responsibility of the task and is in the process of reviewing procedures. In recognition of the impact of COVID-19, and to allow time for review, RM has agreed to extend all part-time appointments for a further year into 2022. Between now and then one of RM's tasks is to think through how best to review part-time appointments before undertaking a review of all part-time appointments in the spring of 2022 - whereupon it is likely, though not definite, that annual reviews will recommence once more.

**Projects:** The term "project" is a deliberately loose term designed to encompass any situation within the Church where RM is involved.

One of the reasons to change the denomination's structure was to make it clearer who exactly had oversight of projects, and to make it easier to support and resource potential projects. There are four projects the new RM group wishes to identify as projects that RM continues to be involved in. The Kilmaurs/Kilmarnock/Ardeer project continues, with Rev Nathan Owens being minister at Kilmaurs and Ardeer, and Paul Harkess assisting at Ardeer and leading the church planting initiative in Kilmarnock, and as such continues to receive financial resourcing from the denomination. This project has been approved to continue until November 2022, and a full review will be undertaken between now and then. RM continues to support Carnoustie, with Rev Dr Rob Barlow as minister, as a revitalisation project. The same is true of Dundee with Rev Dr Jane McArthur, and Torry. Historically the Church has had involvement in initiating these situations, has provided a variety of resources to aid the revitalisation and church planting initiatives, and as such RM is of the view that these four projects continue as ongoing revitalization projects under its oversight. RM is currently reviewing how best to accompany all projects, including how best to mentor all those employed and deployed in them.

If a congregation and Presbytery develops a new missional idea, and in exploring the idea discover the need of further resourcing, RM is here to help.

Over the past year RM has spent time reviewing previous and current projects in an attempt to learn lessons, both of success and failure, and we have also invested significant time thinking through how exactly RM will make a decision when presented with new ideas/projects/initiatives. It is recognised RM will likely have to make significant decisions on how best to use the resources available to the Church as we seek to obey the Great Commission. In every instance RM will do diligent research and utilise an objective set of questions to arrive at a recommendation; this recommendation will be passed on to the main

CLAM Committee for a decision. Often there exists a delicate and necessary tension between pragmatism on the one hand and discerning the movement of The Holy Spirit on the other.

**Church Planting:** Previously the denomination was involved in supporting a possible new church plant in Torry/Balnagask however that work has now moved in a different direction. As previously mentioned there is an ongoing, fledgling church planting initiative underway in Kilmarnock with Paul Harkess and Rev Nathan Owens. This has shown some encouraging but very early signs of fruit, however COVID-19 has understandably played a part in delaying any new church forming. RM very much continues to be open to the idea of planting new churches, and will continue to explore any ideas that come our way.

### **CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & FAMILIES (CYPAF)**

The group consists of seven members, all involved in local church ministry and a good mix of those from within the denomination and others relatively new to the denomination, which helps us have a wide perspective across our areas of responsibility.

Our first priority is to find the right platform that will best help us fulfil the first remit:

To encourage and resource outreach to, and the discipleship of, children, young people and families in local congregations.

This will enable those in the “hands on week to week” work in the local church, access materials and resources that will help and encourage them in their task.

We want to develop a network across the denomination that will share not only resources and ideas, but prayer and praise request for events, holiday clubs, etc. taking place. This will enhance the sense of “family” that is already much appreciated. A questionnaire will be created to help us discern what the best platform is that people are using, to make this happen.

A decision has been taken to re-subscribe to Urban Saints “Energize” on-line resources, allowing every congregation free access to all their materials (information as to how to do this is available from Church Office). Another decision taken, is to make known the list of resources available for churches to borrow, which are held in Church Office and to add to the list of resources in due course.

The biggest challenge are the restrictions due to the pandemic in holding denominational events such as SPARKS and The Youth Weekend. As soon as these are able to go ahead we are keen to develop these opportunities.

The postponed Youth Weekend from 2020 is booked for 19th – 21st November 2021 at Lendrick Muir. Please pray it will be able to go ahead.

The Easter Scheme 2020 was a challenge due to lockdown. However, it is hoped this year more churches will be able to be involved in the Easter Scheme for “Bibles for Lebanon”. Even if some events take place later on in the year contributions can still be sent in then.

We are excited with the new possibilities that have come by means of the technology used because of the pandemic. It is possible for training to be given using “zoom”. This would benefit people across the country rather than in a local setting. This technology could also be

used in a type of “Zoom Open House” event to introduce the CYPF Working Group, share our purpose, and find out what churches would appreciate in terms of support, as well as find out what would help them “on the ground”.

### **GLOBAL FOCUS (GF)**

The Global Focus Working Group had its first meeting on 22nd October and quickly identified the importance of embracing the two-way nature of partnership. Working with partners in a variety of locations with both similar and different challenges, priorities and openings, presents real opportunities for growth and learning on all sides.

From the beginning, good communication was identified as being the key to encouraging the wider membership of the Denomination to take an interest in and ownership of its cross cultural work. As part of a wider communication strategy, a regular E-update was established which would share prayer points and projects updates from Mission Partners and partner organisations.

Looking beyond the pandemic restrictions to the days when short and medium term mission placements will be available, a Mission Partner Criteria has been drawn up. This will be shared with anyone considering a mission placement who would like to apply for a one-off grant to assist with, perhaps, an airfare, vaccination costs or resources.

For many people, having to conduct meetings via Zoom or Microsoft Teams has proved an uncomfortable experience and they are looking forward to getting back to in-person meetings. While they do have their drawbacks one advantage of an online meeting is that participants are not tied to a specific geographical location. On two occasions overseas partners have joined in Global Focus Working Group meetings; firstly, Damaris, the Manager of Flying Mission Care Botswana and then Matthias, Manager of Flying Mission Zambia. To be able to have a direct conversation with Damaris and Matthias brought real insight and a greater understanding of the work they are involved in and the challenges they, and Flying Mission, face.

To try and encourage greater involvement in and knowledge of the work of Mission Partners associated with the Denomination and partner organisations of the Global Focus Working Group, the Global Focus Prayer Week was developed. This week of prayer had two main areas of focus; prayer for Mission Partners and partner organisations and an opportunity to prayerfully reflect on our own call to mission.

As a fun way to raise awareness, and some funds, a Photo Competition was launched throughout the Denomination. There are various categories and accompanying Scripture texts. The winning photograph will feature on the front cover of Stedfast and it is hoped to make a calendar out of all the category winners.

The new group has worked with commitment and enthusiasm in developing the work. The group has greatly appreciated the contribution from the General Secretary and Mrs Helena Jarvis and for all their support and hard work in the new initiatives to raise awareness.

### **CHRISTIAN LIFE ISSUES (CLI)**

Christian Life Issues Group have agreed that the major issues to focus on at this stage would be human gender and sexuality issues especially in relation to Scottish Government

legislation; the Hate Crime legislation, which have largely been at an advanced rate when the Group was formed; issues arising from Coronavirus, such as isolation and financial costs, and funeral costs care for carers that had already been subjects for the Assembly. The Report due to the 2020 Assembly had touched on the COP 26 Climate Change Conference and it would be worthwhile to pick this up again for the Conference now to be held in November 2021.

There have been financial contributions given to various bodies based on contributions agreed by the former Church and Society Committee as follows: Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office: £2,350, Christian Action Research and Education (CARE): £1,000, The Christian Institute £1,000, Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees: £750.

Members of the Group have attended various meetings including (via video-conferencing) of Christian Aid, Faith in Older People and the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office.

The Group has found itself at an embryonic level and time will be required for the Group's work to come to the normal functioning level. In addition, the legislative timetables at Holyrood and Westminster have been slowed due to the Coronavirus pandemic. It is anticipated that an e-newsletter will continue to be produced regularly within the denomination.

### **LOCAL LIFE & LEADERSHIP (LLL)**

Building on the work of the old Christian Education and Evangelism Committee, the task of the Local Life and Leadership Working Group (LLL) can be summarised in the words of Hebrews 10:24, 'And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.'

In an attempt to fulfil that task, the group's remit is two-fold:

1. To encourage local congregations to be faithful in the Great Commission of making and teaching disciples by providing resources, events and/or training.
2. To oversee the training and development of office-bearers in local congregations, both elders and deacons/board members/managers.

In this early stage of LLL's existence, the group's main focus has been identifying existing faith-building resources that we might recommend to congregations, and we are working towards starting a lending library of these materials that would be housed in Church Office. It is not always possible to know how helpful materials are without seeing them so congregations could borrow items from the library to use or simply to get a feel of before buying them for themselves.

The library will have three categories of materials available:

- Devotional resources for individual use
- Resources for using in small groups
- Resources for training elders and other leaders.
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The group would appreciate recommendations from members of the General Assembly of faith-building materials they have used.

As the General Assembly are aware, when the Christian Education and Evangelism committee came to an end it was working on "Journeys To Life" material. "Journeys To Life" is designed to be used by small groups within congregations to help increase people's confidence in

sharing their faith. This material is almost ready for distribution and when it is, LLL will have a role in promoting it and encouraging congregations to use it.

### **NATIONAL CHURCH EVENTS (NCE)**

The National Church Events Working Group (NCE) has the following remit;

“To develop, where appropriate, national church events that would help/ encourage/stimulate faithfulness to the Great Commission. These events could be in-person, online or both, multiple times per year or one time only”.

Building on the experience gained from having to replace the denominational ‘Dunblane Day’ conference with the ‘Unlocked’ Online Conference in August 2020, the group’s main focus has been to deliver another Online Conference ‘Live Streams in the Desert’ in February 2021. Unlike the Unlocked Conference which used a mixture of live and pre-recorded material this conference was entirely live and also offered four workshops. The main focus was to offer an encouragement to as many as possible bearing in mind the protracted effects of the pandemic.

The Live Streams conference attracted 145 participants and feedback has been very positive. The Unlocked Conference numbers were similar on the day but much of the pre-recorded material was left deliberately on the [ww.gatheringspace.org.uk](http://ww.gatheringspace.org.uk) website, for people to re-visit or view for the first time, and more than 350 individuals accessed the videos over the following three months.

Nonetheless the NCE group acknowledges the fact that only those members with online access and skills were able to access the material. Whilst it is clear that offering online events has a number of advantages, not the least in terms of cost and the fact that neither distance nor physical capabilities are obstacles to participation, we have to keep in mind that there are a significant number who are unfortunately excluded from participation by lack of internet access and understanding.

Whilst the group looks forward to working towards providing live face to face conferences, when the pandemic effects have diminished, we also recognise that online events should continue to be explored in the future. The working group now has sufficient experience and expertise to encourage the wider use of online events. These could be via either a conference format or by offering individual training courses and seminars. However, these efforts will benefit from a continued emphasis and encouragement for all members to be able to use online technology in order to access the benefits offered.

In the name of the Committee,

NATHAN R OWENS	Convener
JANE MCARTHUR	Vice-convener
ROBERT BARLOW	Vice-convener
ADRIAN ROOTES	Secretary

