

SPECIAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY



REPORT

18 December 2025

THURSDAY, 18 DECEMBER 2025

Assembly Buildings

Refreshments will be available prior to business

- 11.00am** **Opening of the General Assembly**
Constitution of the Assembly and Worship
- 12.30pm *LUNCH*
- 1.30pm** GENERAL ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE
- GENERAL COUNCIL:
Section 1 of Report and Resolutions 1–3 (pages 11 and 22)
Introduction and Posture; Elevating the position of Safeguarding in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.
- [3.15pm] Refreshment Break*
- [3.45pm]**
- GENERAL COUNCIL:
Section 2 of Report and Resolutions 4–6 (pages 19 and 22–23)
Governance, culture and integrity; Recruitment of Clerk of Assembly and General Secretary.
- GENERAL COUNCIL: Section 3 of Report and Resolutions 7–8 (pages 20 and 23)
Moderator of the General Assembly 2026 and format of General Assembly June 2026.
- GENERAL COUNCIL:
Section 4 of Report and Resolutions 9–10 (pages 21 and 23)
Compromise Agreements
- 5.30pm** **CLOSE OF ASSEMBLY**

Times in brackets may be anticipated but not passed

GUIDE TO SPECIAL ASSEMBLY PROCEDURE

Using this Guide

In this guide you will find definitions and explanations of important elements of the Special General Assembly.

If you want to know how to do something at the Assembly such as asking a question:

- You will also find practical guidance in boxes with bullet points.

Each section finishes with guidance in italics about where to find further information.

Reports of General Council

Almost all of the time of the business of the Special General Assembly is taken up with the report of the General Council.

At the start of the business session, a member of the Assembly (usually the convener of the council) will speak about the written report and propose the resolutions – this is known as ‘presenting’ the report. Then another member of that council will speak and will second the resolutions. The business will be dealt with in sections, each with its own proposer, seconder, and resolutions.

Every report must be ‘received’ by the Assembly. This does not mean that the Assembly agrees with everything that the report says, nor that it accepts responsibility for what a report contains. Rather, it means that the council has presented its report to the Assembly in an acceptable way, and that the Assembly has received the report from the council. The report does not have the authority of the Assembly, only that of the council.

If a member of the Assembly believes that something important is not covered in any of the existing resolutions from a council or commission, they can submit an additional resolution.

If you want to submit an additional resolution:

- You should send the additional resolution to the Clerk of the Assembly in writing by noon on Wednesday 17 December 2025 – email to clerk@presbyterianireland.org
- You will need a proposer and seconder for the resolution. If you are a member of the Assembly, you are able to propose or second it yourself. If you are not a member of the Assembly, you may ‘present’ a resolution, but only Assembly members can propose and second.

You can find further information on the General Council in the Code Pars 268–272.

You can find further information on reports and resolutions in Pars III–V of the General Assembly’s Standing Orders and the Code Pars 144–7.

Ordering of Business

Each session of business is normally ordered in the following sequence:

- Speech by the proposer of a report and accompanying resolutions
- Speech by the seconder
- Questions
- Debate on each resolution
 - Speeches may be made about the resolution
 - Amendments may be proposed, although this is the exception
 - Speech by proposer of the amendment
 - Speech by seconder of the amendment
 - Questions about the amendment
 - Debate about the amendment
 - Closing speech by the proposer or seconder of the amendment
 - Vote to make the amendment the substantive resolution – which will still need to be debated and voted on
 - The proposer or seconder may close debate on the resolution with a speech
 - Vote on the resolution
 - Any dissent is recorded
- Debate on the final resolution 'That the report be received,' following the same sequence as above.

Questions

After the report has been presented and seconded, there is an opportunity for questions to be asked about anything in the reports and speeches.

Questions must be strictly asking for information about something in the report or speeches. A question should not be asked to score a point, or to make a speech.

If you wish to ask a question:

- You can ask without giving any advance warning, but you will get a better answer if you submit your question in advance.
- If submitting your question in advance, you should write it out and place it in the box provided at the front of the hall, or you can submit it by email to deputyclerk@presbyterianireland.org.
- You should do this at least 15 minutes before the report in question. The more notice you give of a question, the more time there will be for the person responding to provide you with a full and accurate answer.
- Make sure that you are sitting in the main part of the hall, not the public gallery.
- Before asking your question, you should come up to the front in good time, and sit in the seats reserved for speakers, close to the microphone. By doing so, the Moderator will know that you want to speak and will invite you to do so when it is your turn - don't wait in your own seat.
- If the Moderator stands up again to speak while you are speaking, you must stop and listen to the Moderator.
- Normally, no one is able to ask more than two questions on any report, and the total time for questions is limited to 10 minutes.

You can find more information on Questions in the Code Par 153.

Debate

After questions have been asked and answered, the resolutions from the council are debated and voted on one at a time. The resolutions are numbered and printed in the Report Booklet.

In the debate, speeches are made either in support of, or in opposition to a resolution.

The final resolution of every report is 'that the report be received.' This is the opportunity for speeches to be made (but not ask questions about) on any matters in the report or for which the council should bear responsibility, but which are not included in any previous resolution.

If you wish to speak in a debate:

- Make sure that you are sitting in the main part of the hall, not the public gallery.
- Come up to the front in good time and sit in the seats reserved for speakers, close to the microphone. By doing so, the Moderator will know that you want to speak and will invite you to do so when it is your turn – don't wait in your own seat.
- If the Moderator stands up again to speak while you are speaking, you must stop and listen to the Moderator.
- To make sure everyone has a fair chance to speak, you can only speak once to each resolution, and there is a strict time limit on speaking.
- Those who present and second reports and resolutions are normally allowed up to seven minutes.
- Other speeches are usually limited to four minutes, although these timings may be reduced by the Moderator if there is a backlog of business.
- There are two lights to help you know when your time is running out. The red light turns solid and a buzzer sounds when your time is up. You must stop speaking at this point.

You can find further information on Debate in the Code Par 148–155.

Voting

When the Moderator thinks that a resolution has been sufficiently debated, they will move the Assembly to vote on it. Only voting members can vote.

There are three ways a vote can happen :

- Most votes are voice votes. The Moderator will ask everyone in favour of the resolution to say 'Aye', and then ask everyone opposed to it to say 'No'.
- If the voice vote is close, then the Moderator may call for a standing vote. First, everyone in favour will be asked to stand while holding up their voting cards. Then everyone opposed will be asked to stand while holding up their voting cards. A rough count will be taken by the Moderator. Only people on the ground floor of the hall can vote. Anyone in the public gallery will not be able to vote, so it is important that you are seated on the ground floor.
- If this vote seems close, then the Moderator may call for a card vote. When you arrive at the Assembly, you will have been given a voting card with tear-off strips for yes and no. During the vote, tellers will move throughout the ground floor with voting boxes. Put one voting strip into the box – either yes or no. The tellers will then count the votes and report the result to the Moderator.

Sometimes, the Moderator may decide to go straight to a card vote. A card vote must happen if 25 people ask for it.

Proxy voting for a member of the Assembly who cannot be present is not allowed.

You can find further information on Voting in the Code Pars 156–160.

Dissent

After a vote, you may disagree with a decision the Assembly has made.

If you feel very strongly that a bad decision has been made, then you can register your dissent in the minutes. However, if you are a minister or elder, even when you disagree, you still have a responsibility to loyally implement the decisions of the Assembly.

If you wish to register your dissent:

- Speak to the Deputy Clerk immediately after the vote has taken place.
- You can then sign a statement that the Deputy Clerk will print, which says that you dissent from the decision the Assembly has just taken.
- This is then recorded in the minutes.

You can find further information on Dissent in the Code Pars 104 and 160.

Amendments

As well as voting yes or no to resolutions, members of the Assembly can also amend resolutions.

An amendment is a change to the wording of a resolution. This may clarify what the resolution states or substantively change what is being proposed, but it cannot introduce another subject and it cannot be an outright negation of the original resolution.

When a valid amendment is proposed and seconded at the Assembly, then:

- Debate about the original resolution is paused
- The proposer and seconder may each give a speech about the amendment
- The Assembly may ask questions about the amendment in the same way as with a resolution
- The Assembly may debate the amendment
- Either the proposer or seconder may give a closing speech
- The Assembly votes on the amendment

If the vote on the amendment passes, then the amendment becomes the substantive resolution and debate continues about whether to pass that amended resolution.

If the vote does not pass, then the original resolution is not altered and debate about it resumes.

If you want to propose an amendment:

- It was agreed at the 2025 General Assembly: *“That at the 2025 General Assembly, and all subsequent General Assemblies, substantive proposed amendments, which have not been submitted to the Business Committee for licensing one week in advance of the Assembly meeting, will only be permitted, at the discretion of the Moderator, if they genuinely arise in the course of the debate, or if they relate to additional resolutions tabled in the Supplementary Business”* (GAM p.32).
- Recognising that this is not possible at the Special General Assembly, the General Assembly Business Committee has resolved that any amendment must be submitted in writing to the Clerk of the Assembly by noon on Wednesday 17 December 2025.
- If an amendment genuinely arises in the course of debate, it must be submitted either in writing to the Clerk’s desk or by email to deputyclerk@presbyterianireland.org
- You must have a proposer and seconder for the amendment.
- You cannot introduce another subject in your amendment or propose outright negation of a resolution.
- If you speak to the proposer and seconder of the original motion in advance, they may accept your amendment without the Assembly voting on it. If it is not accepted and you still wish to propose the amendment then, if you notify the Clerk, it will appear in the Supplementary Reports. If an amendment is accepted before the Assembly starts, then the updated resolution can be distributed in Supplementary Reports.

You can find further information about amendments in the Code Pars 148–152 and Par VI of the General Assembly’s Standing Orders.

Further information on the General Assembly can be found in the Code Pars 97–112.

The General Assembly’s Standing Orders can be found in the Code.

The Code is available at www.presbyterianireland.org/thecode

GENERAL COUNCIL

SECTION 1

Convener: VERY REV DR DJ BRUCE

Secretary: THE ACTING CLERK

REPORT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE

To prepare for the Special Assembly the Business Committee met on Monday, 1 December 2025. It was noted by the Committee that the Special Assembly, called by the Moderator, would consist of two parts. Worship would commence at 11.00am and business would begin at 1.30pm. There would be a break for lunch in between. There would be no lapsed business, as such, as business would simply commence and conclude when it was finished.

The Committee drew up arrangements for the meeting of the Special Assembly and presented them to the General Council at its meeting on Thursday, 11 December 2025.

The following arrangements were presented and received by the General Council:

1. The Special Assembly would be held in public and would be livestreamed. The recording would be made available for later viewing as soon as possible. The Assembly would be open to the media.
2. There would be one item of business – a Report from the General Council.
3. Details regarding the registration of ministers and Assembly representative elders had been sent out from the Clerk's Office.

The Business Committee agreed that with time restrictions there could be no registration cards issued before the meeting of the Special Assembly. Therefore, ministers and elders would come to registration in the downstairs Conference Area of Assembly Buildings where Voting Cards would be given out.

Non-voting members of Assembly should also register.

4. The report of the General Council would be sent out electronically as a PDF as soon as possible. Hard copies would be available at registration.
5. The Committee agreed and recommended to the General Council that for this Special Assembly proposed amendments should be with the Acting Clerk no later than 12.00 noon on Wednesday, 17 December 2025. This recommendation was formally put as a resolution to the General Council and agreed.
6. The Business Committee would meet on the afternoon of Wednesday, 17 December 2025 to license business. The decisions of that meeting would be found in the Supplementary Report Booklet (if required).
7. The Committee has requested that as far as possible, questions to the Report should be submitted in advance.
8. Access to the ground floor would be reserved for members of the Assembly. Assembly members would be asked to fill the ground floor of the Assembly Hall first. Members of the Assembly may also sit in the gallery. Overflow seating would be provided in the Minor Hall and in the downstairs Conference Area.

If a vote is taken, then votes would be counted on the ground floor and gallery only.

9. Normal practical arrangements would be managed by the Convener of the Arrangements Panel.

An Additional Report was also presented to the General Council and four recommendations agreed namely:

- (a) Lanyards to be worn by all members of Assembly.
- (b) The Board Room is set aside for the press.
- (c) Permission was given for the Head of Communications to have a briefing with the press to set boundaries and organise logistics. The press would wear a badge indicating “press” at the Assembly.
- (d) No media interviews are permitted on the Church premises without the agreement of the PCI Communications Department.

In conclusion, some matters relating to livestreaming were noted.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

I. Introduction and Posture

1. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has recently spoken publicly to acknowledge failings in denominational level safeguarding over a period of thirteen years. This has resulted in some people being harmed by actions and inactions in the name of the denomination, and in some people being placed at unnecessary risk.
2. These failings were listed as follows by the Convener of the General Council on 12 November, and by the Acting Clerk of the Assembly in a statement that was read in all churches on Sunday, 16 November:
 - failure to make referrals to statutory authorities when these were required;
 - not responding adequately to concerns expressed to us about individuals in congregations;
 - failure to respond properly when people asked for help when they had suffered harm;
 - failure to keep proper and adequate records.

These statements in full are included in Appendices 1 and 2.

3. Along with this acknowledgement, PCI set up a telephone and email response line, through which anyone impacted by these issues could make a disclosure or seek support. The Church also signposted to Victim Support, the PSNI, An Garda Síochána, and other agencies.
External and independent counselling has also been made available.
4. Prior to any public statement the Church had been in contact with some statutory authorities, sharing fully with them information on safeguarding failings.

5. On 17 November, the Civil Authorities in Northern Ireland launched a criminal investigation into these failings. This may, or may not, result in criminal charges.
6. In addition to safeguarding issues, there is an awareness that there are other significant matters that demand consideration by PCI which may not fall under criminal charges but involve governance, culture and integrity issues.
7. This is a shameful position for part of the Church of Jesus Christ to be in. In light of this, there is no alternative but for the Church to adopt a posture of a broken and contrite heart, i.e., a recognition of the need for repentance, humility and lament.
8. Recognising that this is the case, what should this mean in practice for PCI as it seeks to move forward and respond to the situation it is in?

The General Assembly Advisory Committee met on 4 December 2025, and brought a report to the General Council on 11 December 2025, that seeks to prompt discussion and bring some specific recommendations, as to how the Church might respond.

II. Response

Section 1 – Elevating the position of Safeguarding in PCI

9. It has become apparent that it is untenable for the function of Safeguarding to be included within the Council for Social Witness as both Care Services and Safeguarding are separate specialist areas.

It is clear that Safeguarding has been under-resourced, and now needs increased resources and staff members who work exclusively in that area.

10. The Safeguarding Development Committee¹ has already been placed, for the time being, directly under the General Council.
11. The current situation is that the PSNI criminal inquiry is underway and a Safeguarding Board of NI Schedule 12 audit is being undertaken by an independent, external assessor. PCI expects, will welcome and will co-operate fully with, any external, independent inquiry which may be instituted in the future (see recommendation 11.h below). It is realised that the current audit and any future inquiries will produce additional information which will require a response, however, at this time, the following interim recommendations are brought, after consultation with the Safeguarding Team:
 - (a) That a Safeguarding Department be created, not sitting under any of the Assembly Councils.
 - (b) That line management of this Department will be under two strands:
 - (i) PCI line management. In order to ensure independence, this should not be part of the responsibilities of the Clerk of the General Assembly and General Secretary. Rather, direct line-management should sit with the current Financial Secretary. If changes are made to the role of Clerk of the Assembly and General Secretary, line management should remain separate from Clerkship functions.
 - (ii) External oversight. A Safeguarding Supervision Panel should be established, consisting of the PCI line manager (see above), the Convener of the General Council, three independent safeguarding practitioners appointed externally to PCI, one of whom will chair the Panel. The Panel will meet not less than quarterly.

¹ The Safeguarding Development Committee oversees both continuing safeguarding work in congregations and the development of improved safeguarding approaches for the denomination.

- (c) That there be two senior level posts – a Head of Safeguarding; and a Safeguarding Lead, at an appropriate level of seniority within PCI, with appropriate professional social work and administrative support. The existing Safeguarding Lead and Secretary of CSW currently work with external support, supervision and accountability – this will continue.
- (d) That both roles require Social Work qualifications, or other alternative qualifications, and Safeguarding experience.
- (e) That the Safeguarding Development Committee will remain under the General Council.
- (f) That the Safeguarding Department will be funded from congregational assessment, the rate to be determined.
- (g) That any consequent deficits in capacity in CSW will be addressed by that Council.
- (h) That at an appropriate time, a full, independent, external review of PCI Safeguarding at all levels is conducted.

APPENDIX 1

STATEMENT OF VERY REV DR DAVID BRUCE, CONVENER OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL WEDNESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2025

Ensuring the safety of all those who take part in the life and work of our congregations has long been a priority for us. In the day-to-day life of the church and linked organisations, Ministers, leaders and designated persons who hold safeguarding responsibilities within our congregations work solidly to make safe arrangements for children and adults across our church. They are supported in this role by the Safeguarding Team based in Assembly Buildings, who both organise safeguarding training and provide professional advice in difficult situations. Indeed, the Taking Care guidelines implemented by PCI some years ago provided a robust framework for safety in our congregations.

Our current Safeguarding Team has identified a number of situations between 2009 and 2021, with one as late as 2022, where our central Safeguarding function failed to deliver an adequate safeguarding service to our congregations, linked organisations and people who asked us for guidance. In most instances, there was a basic failure to follow our own Taking Care guidance. These failings were magnified by major gaps in necessary recordkeeping, so it is inevitable that we have not identified all situations where practice was unacceptable.

The failures identified to date include:

- situations where we failed to make referrals to statutory authorities when these were required;
- situations where we did not respond adequately to concerns expressed to us about individuals in congregations;
- situations where we have failed to respond to people who, having suffered harm, have sought our help;

- situations where some offenders returning to worship in Church, following referrals to us by statutory bodies, were inadequately monitored.

The person with lead responsibility for this work during these years is no longer in post. The leadership of PCI is working closely in support of our current Safeguarding Team members to both follow up with those who have been let down where possible, and to improve our safeguarding governance arrangements and practice.

To address these failings, we have taken the following main steps.

- We have liaised with appropriate statutory bodies in relation to both the overall failings identified, and individual poorly-handled situations where appropriate.
- All situations where offenders requiring supervision when worshipping with us have been reviewed and appropriate arrangements have been put in place in each case.
- We have increased our staffing dedicated to safeguarding, and have reviewed and are updating both policies and procedures. You will appreciate this is an ongoing process that will continue in the months ahead.
- We have put in place arrangements for people who contact our Safeguarding Team to escalate their concerns if they believe they have not been responded to swiftly.
- We have enhanced the training curriculum being delivered to church leaders locally and our central staff in Assembly Buildings.
- We are currently refreshing our governance framework and arrangements for raising concerns about practice, also termed whistleblowing, within our central staff team.
- We have set in place regular external cross-professional supervision for our Safeguarding Lead and Director.
- We have implemented Practice Standards for Safeguarding, reporting against these to a revised oversight body to the General Council, which I convene.
- We are commencing an audit of our safeguarding arrangements against a framework devised by the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) and we will submit this audit to SBNI once it is complete.

Above and beyond all of these necessary steps however, rests our primary concern, which is the people who have been harmed, otherwise placed at risk, or simply didn't hear from us when they needed help or guidance. We have let you down, and for this I am truly sorry. It should not have happened. I want you to know that we will do everything we can to both put in place better arrangements to prevent this occurring again, but importantly to put the appropriate help and support in place for you now.

Anyone in our congregations or those more broadly associated with us, either now or in the past, who may have been impacted can contact us directly through a dedicated response line, or email address. The details are Tel Number +44 (0)28 9041 7308 or via email: SAT@presbyterianireland.org These details will also be on the PCI website and we are available to take calls from 9am on Thursday 13 November 2025.

I would reassure anyone contacting the team that they will be listened to, heard and responded to, as they should have been previously. Our response team, trained to take a trauma informed approach in this extremely sensitive work, will be able to both screen situations in terms of possible ongoing risk and work with individuals to access the most appropriate support for their needs. In the short-term, we have

commissioned an arms-length pastoral support and counselling service able to provide a faith-based or non-faith-based service, according to the preferences of individuals affected by this situation. For the longer-term, we will be engaging with individuals impacted by this failure to develop an enduring support arrangement for people involved in church safeguarding-related situations.

To conclude, I say to you, the members of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and others associated with us now or in the past, our failure in doing what you have charged us with doing, is without excuse.

I ask you to pray – that those who have been harmed might find healing in the time ahead, and that together, we might recover the qualities of caring compassion which lie in our heart as a people, but which through these evident failings have been so seriously compromised.

APPENDIX 2

STATEMENT OF REV DR DAVID ALLEN, ACTING CLERK OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, READ AT SERVICES OF WORSHIP ON SUNDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2025

Safeguarding Review Update

By now you may have heard the distressing news reports about serious safeguarding failings in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. I want to share some things about that with you.

An investigation into the handling of past safeguarding issues at Assembly Buildings level has taken place.

Between 2009 and 2021, with one additional case in 2022:

- we failed to make referrals to statutory authorities when these were required;
- we did not respond adequately to concerns expressed to us about individuals in congregations;
- we failed to respond properly when people asked for help when they had suffered harm;
- we failed to keep proper and adequate records.

Also, we were told by statutory authorities that some offenders wanted to return to worship in Church, and we didn't monitor them as we should.

This was addressed as soon as we discovered it, with the statutory authorities and all required safeguards are now in place.

These failings do not involve our current safeguarding team, and did not involve everyone who was part of our team in the past.

Alongside these failings, there were, and are, staff members doing outstanding work, and we thank them for it. However, I must say now that these failures are inexcusable, and no excuse is being made for them.

On behalf of the Presbyterian Church, I am deeply sorry.

I'm sorry, firstly, because people have been let down by us.

Through past actions, or not acting as we should, we have put people at risk, and we know that some people have been harmed.

We have betrayed the trust that people placed in us and I am deeply sorry for the hurt and grief that this has caused. On behalf of the Church, I apologise unreservedly to everyone affected by this and to the wider Church. We want to do everything we can to support victims and survivors of our failings.

We are truly sorry.

If you are thinking about disclosing a concern about harm or abuse that has happened, whether that was in the church or somewhere else, I want to encourage you as strongly as possibly to do that.

You can contact us, at the PCI response line. If you don't want to speak to PCI, then please get in touch with the Police or Victim Support. All contact details are available by scanning the QR code displayed on the screen, by going to the PCI website, or by phoning Assembly Buildings and asking for Safeguarding.

I'm sorry as well, because we are part of the Church of Jesus Christ. He gave His life for us and He is the Head of His Church. He calls on us to minister and reach out to those around us, showing His love, speaking His Word, and doing all that we can to bring honour and glory to Him.

We have failed our Saviour and Lord, we have dishonoured Him.

I am inexpressibly grieved and ashamed by this – to dishonour our Lord in this way is beyond words. I ask you to join me in lamenting this, in seeking His forgiveness, and in asking for grace to do whatever He calls us to in light of our sin.

Last Wednesday was the first time we were able to tell people that we had found certain things. That was just the start of a very difficult process that's going to last for some time.

We will not sweep this under the carpet, we will open ourselves to external review, and will cooperate fully.

An external audit is already underway, designed by the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland, called Section 12. This audit will review our practices and processes, and will be submitted to the Safeguarding Board.

We have been talking to statutory agencies, and are continuing to do that, because we want to do things right, and we want their help in that. Again, we are co-operating fully.

On 1st December, Dr Richard Murray is due to become Moderator of the General Assembly. That day, he intends to announce that a special meeting of the General Assembly will take place next month.

This was a central failing, and I want to acknowledge people who provide compassionate and safe care in our local safeguarding teams. Thank you for doing that.

For many years, we have been blessed by a team of trainers in safeguarding, and hundreds of designated persons in our congregations.

This is vital local work, and at a time when so much has been called into question, thank you for what you do.

Sometimes, when awful things happen, like this, we wonder what we can do. What we can do is pray.

Please pray to the Lord God Almighty, who is our Loving Heavenly Father.

Pray for those who have been affected by this – those who have been harmed and their families; those who will now be anxious and worried; those who feel betrayed; those who are now suspicious of us; and those who blame us, and may be tempted to blame God.

Pray that those who need help and support will seek it and get it, that they will find comfort and support; and pray that even though the Church has failed them, they will know that the Lord has not.

Please pray for all of our Safeguarding teams and those involved in ministry within the lives of our congregations.

I want to finish by saying again, that we are deeply sorry. We should not be in this situation. Join with me in pleading with God to be merciful to us, to forgive us, to purge us of our wrong-doing, and to make us more like the Lord Jesus.

Pray that His will would be done, here on earth, as it is in heaven.

Thank you.

GENERAL COUNCIL SECTION 2

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Addressing Issues of Governance, Culture and Integrity; Recruitment of Clerk of Assembly and General Secretary

12. While some issues reported through the PCI and PSNI Helplines and other avenues will be safeguarding and PSNI related, some will not. These will relate to issues of governance, culture and integrity at a denominational level. These areas should be examined by the Church.
13. The recruitment of a Clerk Designate is due to begin in early 2026, with appointment at the General Assembly of June 2026, and commencement in September 2026. The GAAC recommends that this process should be reviewed urgently, with at least two issues being considered:
 - The Job Description which combines both functions, with consideration being given to splitting the roles of Clerk of Assembly and General Secretary
 - Whether this role, and the Deputy Clerk, should continue to be employed roles, or should revert to being paid officeholders, as is the case with other ministers

GENERAL COUNCIL SECTION 3

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Moderator of the General Assembly 2026 and format of General Assembly June 2026

14. In light of what is stated in Pars.1–8 above, it would be inappropriate for PCI to engage in some, although not all, of the normal formal and public duties of the Moderator of the General Assembly.
15. Having considered this, and examined the option of suspending the normal election process for Moderator, the General Council recommends that the election of a Moderator for 2026/27 is held in the normal way, but it is clearly understood that this will be primarily a 'pastoral' moderatorship, with fewer formal and public duties, but will instead concentrate on pastoring PCI as a denomination.
16. The General Council also recommends that:
 - (a) Consideration should be given as to whether the ceremonial element of the June 2026 Assembly should be reduced.
 - (b) Consideration should be given to the reports to the Assembly being more intentionally focused on God and His work, as follows:
 - (i) Part One - What God has done in each Council's area of the Assembly's work; the Council is reporting it, for encouragement, thanksgiving and learning. Thanksgiving is offered to God.
 - (ii) Part Two – What the Council believes God is prompting the Church to be and do in future in the Council's area of the Assembly's work; what the Council is seeking the Lord's guidance for (these are the resolutions, for prayerful reflection and decision-making by the Church), and prayer from the Church for the future.

This will lead to prayer being offered.
 - (c) The duration of the June 2026 Assembly should be considered, in order to give adequate time for consideration of reports, worship, prayer and informal fellowship and interaction.

GENERAL COUNCIL SECTION 4

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Compromise Agreements

17. It is public knowledge that, in keeping with most other employers, PCI has used a small number of Compromise Agreements which may include elements of non-disclosure in employment matters. These are agreements that are entered into voluntarily by both parties, in conjunction with legal advice. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland, as an employer, has only entered into agreements with the advice of its insurers and legal team.
18. The GAAC recommends that the General Council establish a Task Group to consider all aspects of the use of Compromise Agreements in employment matters, with the aim of the Council bringing a report to the General Assembly of June 2026.

RESOLUTIONS

GENERAL COUNCIL – SECTION 1

GENERAL ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE

1. That the report of the General Assembly Business Committee be received.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

2. That Section 1 of the report is received.
3. That the interim recommendations in Section 1 of the report are adopted as a framework, and that specific proposals, with details, be brought to a subsequent meeting of the General Council.

GENERAL COUNCIL – SECTION 2

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

4. That Section 2 of the report is received.
5. That a General Council Task Group be established to inquire into issues of governance, culture and integrity within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland with the aim of improving the proper functioning of our Presbyterian form of Church government. The membership of the task group will be appointed by the Office Bearers of the General Council, in consultation with the Council.
6. That a General Council Task Group be established to revise the Appointment Process, Job Description and Personnel Specification for the post or posts of Clerk Designate of the General Assembly and General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and that the General Council bring a report on these matters to a Special meeting of the General Assembly on Tuesday 17 February or other date as called by the Moderator of the General Assembly, and that the Task Group comprise:
 - The Moderator of the General Assembly
 - The Acting Clerk of the General Assembly
 - The Deputy Clerk of the General Assembly
 - Very Rev Dr David Bruce (Convener of the General Council)
 - Rev Albin Rankin (Clerk of East Belfast Presbytery)
 - Mr Hugo Wilson (Convener of the Support Services Committee)

- Mrs Avril Heenan (General Assembly Structures and Resources Review Panel)
- Rev David McCullagh (Clerk of Newry Presbytery)
- Rev Andrew Faulkner (Convener of the Council for Training in Ministry)
- Mrs Sarah Leung (Head of Human Resources)
- Mr Ken Swarbrick (Financial Secretary)

With the power to co-opt up to two others.

GENERAL COUNCIL – SECTION 3

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

7. That Section 3 of the Report is received and that the General Assembly Advisory Committee bring a report on whether to extend the format relating to Pars.14 & 15, including the Moderator in a full-time capacity, to a future meeting of the General Council.
8. That the General Assembly Business Committee bring a report to the General Council on the matters contained in Par.16 above, with the General Council reporting to the Special General Assembly on Tuesday 17 February or other date as called by the Moderator of the General Assembly, and that overseas delegates be invited as normal for the General Assembly in June 2026.

GENERAL COUNCIL – SECTION 4

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

9. That Section 4 of the Report is received:
10. That the General Council establish a Task Group to consider all aspects of the use of compromise agreements, and that the Council reports to the General Assembly of June 2026.

