

## **Report of the Special Committee on Denominational Structure**

The Special Committee on Denominational Structure was asked to continue its work by Synod 2015 and has met twice this year. This report is submitted to Synod in consideration that the work of the committee is now concluded.

The Committee has discussed in detail a document 'Introduction to the IPC' as a vehicle to consider our denomination and what we understand it to be. We have gained new understanding and shared perspectives of our respective Presbyteries. The edited document is found in Appendix 5 of these Synod papers and is commended by the committee as a helpful introduction to the IPC.

The Committee has considered different models for our denominational structure ranging from the current situation through separate Synods to a looser fraternal affiliation. The committee recognises the benefits and blessings of remaining a single denomination and Synod, which is our recommendation; though it also recognises there are important areas that require ongoing effort by all of us. In particular all Presbyteries have agreed to work from a single BCO and the desire to move towards a BCO where exceptions are no longer necessary in the long term has been clearly expressed. Challenges of reaching beyond the 'norms' of our churches (across language and social and ethnic barriers) were clearly shared and recognised to need our collective wisdom. The place for our Presbyteries to help one another in this work was considered an important way forwards.

On a practical level the committee recognised that the business of a well functioning Synod will surely grow, and therefore historical timescales for our meetings would not be adequate. The committee therefore sought a change to the timing of the meeting to the Friday afternoon. If this works well for Synod 2016 this model is suggested moving forwards.

The committee has functioned as the BCO Editorial Committee *pro tem* since the Synod in 2015 had mandated that such a committee be established. It is the recommendation of the committee that the standing orders as detailed in Appendix 2 be adopted for this purpose moving forward.

The committee considers the work of deciding on our structure is now complete – we are a single denomination with a single Synod and a single BCO. We need to continue to realize our desire to extend these formal arrangements into real relational support for one another across the natural barriers that exist, so that the gospel may flourish amongst us and through us.

The committee recommends a Standing Committee of Synod should be appointed on an ongoing basis to meet between Synods in pursuit of this purpose, chaired by the Synod moderator, with members appointed by Synod from among their number. In the interests of rationalizing the number of committees and meetings Synod is asked to consider this committee simultaneously fulfilling the remit of the BCO Editorial Committee.

Ends.