

IPC Synod

Standing Committee

Minute of Meeting

Wednesday October 5th 2016 at 3 Queens Walk, Ealing

Sederunt:

Moderator: Leo Proot Clerk: Simon Barker
For UK Presbytery: Doug Curry, Chris Hatch, Ng Lee (observer)
For European proto-presbytery: Joel Rinn, Geoffrey Decan
For Korean UK Presbytery: Taero Yoon
For South Korean Presbytery: Puk Kyong Kim

		Action
1	Opening prayer - LP	
2	Synod Minute 2016 review – any corrections to be sent to SB by Friday	SB
	a. Numbering to corrected from item 11 to 13	SB
	b. In future specific action points to be highlighted with identified who will undertake it (recognised this might be less easy at Synod level than in other courts of the church since most actions are more local)	
	c. Level of detail in minute discussed – some difference of opinion on this – overall a desire for simpler minute of record. Desire to remove quoted texts into appendices.	SB
	The minute will be submitted for final approval at Synod in 2017.	SB
3	<p>The remit of the Standing Committee was adopted however it was considered that the approval of Synod for members from given Presbytery is superfluous. There is a need to clarify that the Moderator or his deputy is one of the two representatives from a given Presbytery.</p> <p>Motion to Synod from Standing Committee: To change one sentence of the Standing Committee remit from ‘one of whom....approved by Synod’ to ‘one of whom is nominated by the Presbytery and the other is the Presbytery moderator or his deputy.’</p> <p>Proposer Joel Rinn The committee unanimously supported this motion.</p>	JR

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Ordination certificates

- The idea of a denominational unified basic format was discussed and considered desirable by the committee.
- The official language of the certificate is recognized to be English, however the inclusion of other languages is recommended where appropriate.
- For teaching elder, it was agreed there is a need to include the titles 'Minister of the Gospel / Pastor' for clarity across national boundaries.
- The committee considered draft formats and agreed these should progress to Synod for approval.
- The committee considered it would be desirable to have some bilingual versions ready for Synod to consider. (see Appendix 1,2,3)

SB

LP/TY

5

BCO amendments brought to the Standing Committee

a) The need for a seconder when a motion comes from a Presbytery or Committee was discussed and it was agreed to remove this condition.

Motion to Synod from Standing Committee:

Insertion of text to section 2.2.1 of the BCO:

'In the case of a motion proposed to Synod from another Court, Commission or Committee of the Church, there shall be no requirement for a seconder.'

b) Motion concerning the issue quorum for Synod and potential for General Assembly.

A discussion paper of potential ways to fulfill the instruction of Synod was considered (appendix 4).

There was an extensive discussion including the following points:

- We are in danger of being inquorate as we grow denominationally due to practical issues of distance for many Synod members.
- Electronic participation was suggested as a possible way forward but its limitations were also noted.
- Desirability for active participation by all Presbyteries was highlighted. Point made that Presbyteries should be able and willing to commit at least 1/3 of their members to attend Synod for relationship building and therefore a quorate meeting should be achievable.
- The issue of maintaining effective participation in an enlarging group was noted.
- Ability to participate in respect of costs incurred may also be an issue and funding for Synod should be considered.

- The international status of our denomination demands we continue to respond to different languages and cultures.

The following possible ways forward were considered:

- Status quo should continue for the time being
- Continued discussion of the issue with feedback sought from Presbyteries.
- A definitive amendment to the BCO to effect the change proposed.

There was no consensus within the committee to proceed with the instructions of Synod on this matter. There was considerable

Resolved: To send a document out to Presbyteries on this issue including the following:

- To highlight that we should not change our principles of needing to build relationships within the denomination to cope with practical issues of attending meetings.
- To remind Presbyteries of the purpose of Synod and their responsibility to engage in it.
- To encourage active engagement in Synod so that a quorum remains achievable.
- To suggest that any future changes to Synod structure should be in light of the core values of our denomination.
- To seek Presbyteries feedback at Synod on the question.

Action: GD will draft the document.

GD

c) Types of Elders

- The different understanding of Out of Bounds status for Elders in Korean (non voting) vs UK (voting) Presbyteries was discussed.
 - The Committee established there is a common understanding of roles however the terminology 'Affiliate' and 'OOB' has been used differently to describe roles in each Presbytery. The Korean UK Presbytery does not consider that it is realistic for someone working exclusively elsewhere, to exercise an effective vote.
 - The UK Presbytery understanding for such an Elder who so disconnected from the functionings of Presbytery would be an Emeritus member.
 - It was clear that there is a language use difference here that had not been resolved prior to Synod adopting the change.
 - It was suggested Synod may wish to consider the possibility of changing OOB to non voting status to bring
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UK/European practice in line with Korean Presbyteries.

d) The position of Presbytery members not on Sessions was considered as requested.

The committee noted that change of status should be notified to Presbytery in line with BCO requirements. No further clarification was deemed necessary.

e) The position of a Presbytery whose number of churches falls below the specified minimum was discussed.

Motion to Synod from Standing Committee:

To be inserted in the BCO as 8.10

‘That a Presbytery whose number of established churches falls below the specified minimum should

- i) notify Synod Moderator and Clerk of the situation.
- ii) submit a plan for recovery within 2 years.
- iii) Synod should consider a move to proto-Presbytery status or a merger with another Presbytery if the Presbytery remains in the same situation for more than 2 years.’

f) The installation procedure for an already Ordained Minister (by another denomination) was considered.

- It was explained that there is the potential for a applicant for transfer into the IPC to have been Ordained in a way that would not be recognized as valid in the IPC in contrast to an evangelical reformed church ordination which would be considered satisfactory.
- There is no extant list acceptable denominational ordinations for transfer.
- It was noted that there should be reciprocal recognition of ordination between two given denominations.
- In all cases examination would be required in line with Section 5.8 of BCO.
- Section 5.14 of BCO clarifies the procedure.

6 Liturgy Book.

The Standing Committee discussed the draft. It was considered a helpful development and it was noted that it was not prescribed but rather a resource. The Committee considered that a paperback version of this book would be helpful at this stage with potential to refine further and possibly include some liturgy from

other languages represented in our denomination in due course.

-It was felt that a more formal hardback version could follow later.

SB & JG

- The need to ensure no copyright is infringed was noted but not considered a significant risk given the ancient nature of all the texts used.

7 Subordinate standards text

The need for feedback to SB (and Jonny Gibson) was highlighted, particularly on the appropriateness of the versions included in the text.

All
committee

8 Denominational History Book

- This had been available on line.

- The committee wished to check with Jonny Gibon when the timeline in the book 'stops' (it is assumed to be 2016 as likely to be last contribution for this edition).

JG

Noted that writing style may need some input – it is quite a personal account as it stands and might benefit from being less so.

Question: Has Jerram Barrs been involved to give a perspective?

Publication supported.

9 Relationships with external organisations.

- Noted that this should be authorized by Synod where it is to be a formalized arrangement on anything other than a local level.

Motion to Synod from Standing Committee:

'That Synod should form a 'Church Relations Committee' comprised of at least 1 representative of each (proto-) presbytery, with the capacity to investigate and make recommendations on relationships with external organisations (on anything other than a local level) to Synod.

A local church cannot bind the denomination into any external relationship.'

World Reformed Fellowship was discussed as a potential organization with which to link. There has been

a request from European Proto-presbytery for us to join this group from MTW since this would align us explicitly with their aims.

It was noted that 76 denominations are affiliated.

Motion to Synod from the Standing Committee:

‘That Synod resolves to join the World Reformed Fellowship.’

JR will propose

10 Nominations for Officers for 2017

- The process to nominate Synod office bearers was discussed and a history of lack of real engagement was noted.

- A desire to avoid any single Presbytery exerting dominance was expressed.

- SB agreed to be nominated to continue as Clerk though if others wish to come forward this would also be welcome.

- LP agreed to be nominated to continue as Moderator though if others wish to come forward this would also be welcome.

A suggestion was made that a 2 year term would give greater stability and could be considered in future.

11 Building relationships between our Presbyteries

Suggestion made that ‘sister’ congregations could be formed between Korean UK and English church with potential for combined worship, sports and social events.

Suggestion that 1 or 2 visit South Korean Presbytery. SB and CH have expressed an interest and will discuss with Kim. Kim to check dates of South Korean Presbytery for 2017.

It was noted that the absence of any funds at Synod level may well limit the ability of Synod members to build relationships across great distances.

12 ‘Consolidate’ proposal

The paper from Ranald Macaulay (appendix 5) was discussed. It was well received and recognized to be a

suggestion for the newer members of the denomination to familiarise with our historical foundations and cultural engagement issues.

- It was suggested that some of this content could be accommodated within the 'Catalyst' agenda. It was however felt that Catalyst content may be a different target audience and style of event.

A regular Schaeffer memorial lecture was suggested as another way to progress this.

It was felt that 2018 Synod could be a good aim for this as a starting point. To be discussed at Synod 2017.

13 Request for Prayer - for Moderator roles in Korean and South Korean Presbyteries.

14 Date of next meeting: 3rd March as Synod

The move to March for Synod was discussed.

SB asked to clarify to UK presbytery that Synod will occupy most of Friday 3rd March and so timing of any associated meetings needs careful liaison with LP.

SB to draft Synod agenda and circulate.

15 The meeting was closed in prayer

Appendix 1,2,3: Draft ordination certificates for Teaching Elders, Ruling Elders and Deacons

Appendix 4: Discussion paper on Synod Structure

Discussion paper for Standing Committee – Synod composition

Motion from Synod 2016

'This Synod instructs the BCO editorial committee to prepare proposals for Synod 2017 which would reduce the required participation in subsequent Synods to an elected sub-group from each Presbytery. The option to hold a General Assembly of all members of all Presbyteries should be considered'

Issues to consider

1. The growth in size of Synod renders a quorum more of a challenge. There were 81 eligible members for Synod 2016 so a 1/3 quorum of 27 was required, which was only just achieved (29) for parts of the meeting.
2. Tracking quorum status and thresholds for vote results is extremely challenging when the denominator in the room changes throughout the meeting. (For example a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority of 34 members is 26 whereas if 3 leave the meeting the threshold drops to 23).
3. The geographical spread (praise God!) of our growing denomination makes it a real challenge to gather in one place.
4. Language challenges are only going to grow – if we have other required languages in addition to Korean and English, simultaneous translation will have to use technology (headphone translation) to achieve this.
5. Need size to maintain credibility as 'widest' court of our Church and its validity to hear and rule on Presbytery appeals.
6. Clarity over voting membership is needed – proportionality for presbyteries?
7. Do we need to protect from single-presbytery dominance?
8. The need to ensure some participation from each Presbytery each time

Size and representation

The members of the Standing/BCOE Committee of Synod would seem like a sensible starting point:

- The moderator and clerk are ex officio (2)
- The moderator (or deputy) plus one from each Presbytery (8)

The question of how many more members are needed in total can be considered as follows (presuming a proportional representation system, taking off two per Presbytery who would already be included as part of the Standing Committee members, and rounding up decimals):

	Total	1/2	1/3	1/4	1/5	1/6
UK	30	15	10	8	6	5
Kor UK	21	11	7	6	5	4
Sth Kor	12	6	4	3	3	2
Euro	10	5	4	3	2	2
TOTAL SIZE		41	32	28	24	21

We need to remember these figures may increase (deo volente) if our Presbyteries grow...

Quorum

- There should probably be a minimum representation from any given Presbytery for a quorum to be established
- We should probably increase the % attendance required to be quorate with a smaller constituency for Synod.
- For example we could say Half (or 2/3) of the members must be present *and* at least half or 2/3 from each Presbytery's representatives must be present for a quorate meeting. We need to bear in mind travel issues if we make this threshold higher.
- We then need to decide if the threshold for voting is by simple majority or a supermajority is required in this condensed grouping.

An example ...

Assuming a ¼ representation of Presbyteries for Synod.

Size of Synod then = 28 Members + Moderator + Clerk

A requirement of 50% of these 28 potential members for a quorum would give:

6 from UK + 5 from Korean UK + 3 from SK + 3 from Euro = Minimum attendance of 17 + 2

If voting was by existing rules, then for ordinary business 15 out of 30 would be required to carry a motion with all present and 10 out of 19 for a minimum attendance.

For special business 23 out of 30 and 15 out of 19 would be required respectively.

This means we are expecting at least 3 South Korean brothers to come once a year. Is this reasonable or not?

These voting proportions would mean no single Presbytery grouping could impose its will on Synod but we might consider reassuring Presbyteries by the option to make this even more explicit:

- We could require additionally that any motion (or perhaps any special business) before Synod require the support of at least one representative from each (proto)Presbytery. This would prevent Synod enacting major change without every Presbytery being present.

The other option is the introduction of a 'Barrier Act' (this was used in the Church of Scotland to effectively delay (but not sadly to prevent) their divergence from scriptural standards). A 'Barrier Act' would require any item of Special Business brought before Synod to (on request of X number synod members) be referred back to constituent Presbyteries for their consideration *before* Synod ruled on the matter. This would effectively delay any decision by 1 year (unless an extra Synod or a General Assembly were subsequently called).

General Assembly

We have also been asked to consider the place for a General Assembly (in effect a meeting of all Presbytery members from all constituent Presbyteries).

Some considerations:

- Should this be ad hoc (and if so who calls for this ? Is it a Presbytery, more than one Presbytery, Synod itself or some combination of these?)
- Should it be programmed, say every 3 or 5 years in place of Synod (as well as ad hoc if required)
- Should it be all Elders or as for Synod now 2 Ruling plus all Teaching elders from constituent sessions of constituent Presbyteries?

- What quorum and voting rules for this?
- If we consider this supercedes Synod as a court of the church we will need to say so explicitly.
- The desirability of the option to appeal a Synod decision to GA needs consideration – is this going to be possible, and if so is it a tool only for Presbyteries or can anyone appeal to GA. Problem with allowing appeals of any kind is that natural justice does not support appeals for one party (Presbytery) over another (a member). It also slows everything down enormously. We might instead say 'Synods decision is final' unless a GA is called – and make criteria for calling a GA tight (2 presbyteries or synod must agree to it, for instance).

This document is not exhaustive, but will hopefully enable Standing Committee Members to come prepared to discuss the issues. Alternative methods of fulfilling the remit from Synod are certainly possible and any Member who has a desire to bring one forward should please send it to the Synod Clerk first for onward dissemination to other committee members before the meeting.

Appendix 5: Consolidate Paper

The two Latin words from which the word '*consolidate*' comes indicate a process of 'stabilization'.

The Shorter Oxford Dictionary gives a range of meanings each of which is useful: (a) '*to make firm or strong*' (b) '*to combine compactly into one ...connected whole*' (c) '*to cause parts of a wound or fracture to unite and so to heal*'.

Each of these is useful when thinking about the IPC today. The church has seen remarkable growth: new congregations have been planted; more are on the way; enquiries keep coming in from interested outsiders; several issues have tested our unity and sobered us helpfully; we now have a new BCO; the South Korean Presbytery is already up and running; another proto-presbytery for Europe is nearly there; a new website is about to be commissioned.

But increased growth always carries its own dangers, especially when geographical separation is involved. A sports team from the same city is more likely to enjoy better cohesion than one which draws its players from a wide catchment - and the IPC congregations are separated not just by hundreds of miles but by thousands!

The Church's history is also unusual as the recent '*IPC History*' makes clear. It started within a missionary context in Switzerland and this complicated things both geographically and administratively. Though it wasn't planned this way it started somewhat under L'Abri's shadow - which helps to explain why neither of the two original congregations (Huemoz and Milan) survived. It was a complex and confusing relationship.

At the same time, however, this L'Abri connection also brought benefits - in particular from its almost uniquely prophetic ministry. Thousands came to faith or were strengthened in their faith even during the Schaeffers' lives. When their books (and others from the L'Abri stable) started coming out after 1968 the number jumped astronomically including people like Chuck Colson, Tim Keller and Os Guinness. On top of that the variety of influences, not only in the West but in Asia, South America and Eastern Europe, was and still is outstanding and ongoing. The nine existing L'Abri branches - Holland, England, Canada, Australia, S Korea, Brazil, Switzerland and two in the States - inadequately reflect the richness and variety of the Schaeffer legacy.

But this brings us back to our opening definitions. Given the dangers of a widely dispersed international organisation and the confusions arising out of the L'Abri/IPC background this is a time for consolidation. The IPC has extraordinary potential with its many individual parts, but it is in urgent need of those three aspects of the word '*consolidate*' mentioned earlier: to be '*combine(d) compactly into one ...connected whole*'; to have the '*parts of (its) wound or fracture ... united and so heal(ed)*' - and (as a result) to be made '*...firm (and) strong*'. So the suggestion is that at one or other of the four annual Presbytery Meetings - or more frequently if this is considered helpful - a half-day will be devoted to questions relating to IPC's history and its need for consolidation. Costs could thus be kept minimal, those choosing to attend from the presbytery coming a bit earlier for suitable lectures and discussions. Perhaps initially speakers with a clear understanding of the L'Abri background should be invited and the sessions designed as much for discussion as for actual instruction. In short the object would be a better understanding of our heritage through a better understanding of the ministry from which it came.

RM