

ASSEMBLY TRUSTEES

ONLINE WEBINAR hosted by the Moderator of the General Assembly

Friday 22 May: 11.00am – 12.30pm

The Covid-19 Pandemic has brought with it unprecedented changes to the landscape in which the Church is operating. At great speed and with extraordinary imagination ministers and congregations have worked to overcome the challenges of self-isolation and social distancing. There is, in fact, evidence that with the use of modern technology and an extended online presence the reach of the Church has greatly increased. In spite of the great distress and disruption that Coronavirus has caused, this is a time to thank all those who have anchored our life in such difficult times. We will never know the full extent of the way in which ministers and members alike have dealt with people's private anxiety and grief and contributed to the well-being of the nation. For this we give thanks to God.

It will not surprise anyone to know that just as local congregations have found themselves responding to the challenges of lockdown, so too, the Assembly Trustees, who have oversight of the national work, have had to deal with the wider implications for the Church. Currently the Trustees are working on a Report, to be issued after our meeting on Wednesday 13 May, which attempts to combine some of the material that would have been contained in our Assembly Report; but, updated to take into account the extended scale of the challenges that we now face.

The tasks which we were set in 2019 of wiping out the recurrent deficits in the annual budget, reducing central administrative costs by up to 30% and creating a £25m Growth Fund were challenging enough, but the economic implications of the Pandemic create a very different set of co-ordinates. Much of our original planning is being set to one side in order to address both the changed scale of present economic challenges and how best to invest in the kind of Church we need to be when we emerge into the 'new normal'.

Our Report will highlight:

- a predicted downturn in congregational income which may continue well into 2021 or until a vaccine becomes generally available
- the need to suspend plans to create a Growth Fund and instead use any spare capacity to invest in the resources that will be needed for the renewal of church life post-virus
- the paring down of the central services to provide all but essential services during May and June and thereafter returning to address the required process of downsizing the central administration.
- a proposal to incentivise the implementation of a more robust Presbytery Planning process alongside an acceleration of the Well Equipped Spaces programme

- a commitment to work with and support CrossReach during what is the greatest crisis the Care Sector has ever faced

These are just some of the steps that are being taken to enable the future growth and development of the Church both in the places where we live and in the online communities which have become so much a part of our life.

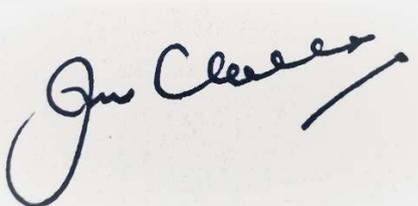
We recognise that there will be much interest in this Report; so, on Friday 22 May, 11.00am - 12.30pm, during what would have been General Assembly Week, the incoming Moderator, Dr Martin Fair, will host a Webinar. At which the Chief Officer, Dave Kendall, and myself as Convener of the Assembly Trustees can bring the wider Church up to date with the ways in which we are addressing the challenges that we are now facing.

Details of how to sign-up for this event will follow in the next couple of days but in the meantime we would ask you to put this date and time in your diary. We will also be giving you an opportunity to tell us what you believe are the most urgent needs of the local church and to submit, in advance, questions that you feel need to be addressed at this time.

In the meantime, as we pray for each of you, we ask that you remember the Trustees and our work in your prayers and devotions.

We look forward to meeting you online.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Chalmers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

John Chalmers
Convener of the
Assembly Trustees

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Kendall". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Dave Kendall
Chief Officer