

July 2020

To members of General Assembly

Dear Friends,

This letter should have said, 'Welcome to Birmingham, and to the splendid facilities of Aston University.' Sadly such a letter is not possible. The restrictions and safety concerns of the Covid emergency prevent us meeting physically. Eating together, greeting each other face to face, listening at length to friends' concerns, gaining the insight that comes with meeting for a few days – none of this can be part of our Assembly, in the way we had intended.

However, this Book of Reports tells of all the important work that has been done in the name of our Church over the last two years. Many of us are keen to learn about this. Committees want to account to the Church for what they have done. The Church needs a good record of its actions and commitments. So read and rejoice, in the good work of our staff and committees. If you have questions or comments, feel free to correspond with the people whose names are at the head of each report.

There will be a virtual meeting of Mission Council for a few hours on Friday 10 July. This will allow a selection of Assembly business to be taken forward by a reasonably wide and representative forum of the Church. It may also teach us something about the potential and limitations of remote meeting. We shall aim to make this meeting interactive, with an opportunity for everyone on Mission Council to feel fully involved.

There will also be a short online meeting of General Assembly on Saturday 11 July. Its main content will be worship, as we induct the new Assembly Moderators and General Secretary into office. This will not be very interactive. About a dozen people will be visible on screen, and a great many more will be able to tune in, as it were from the pew. I hope that many of you will want to join us for this.

All of the above is both short of what we originally wanted, and a positive outcome of the efforts of many of the Church's staff and volunteers. I thank all of them, and look forward to seeing many of you on screen in July.

Finally, thank you for the privilege of serving as your General Secretary for six years. I have met many wonderful people around our Church, and have seen a great deal of inspiring, imaginative and effective work. Thank you for your part in all of this. I commend confidently to you our new General Secretary, John Bradbury. John is gifted, thoughtful and energetic. You will surely offer him the same warm welcome and strong support you have given me.

Yours sincerely,

