



History of CARTA from 1934

Introduction

This is based on an examination of the records of the Committee availed to the Secretary of the Review Group and the reports of the Committee and its predecessors from its foundation in 1934. Some are typed and some in handwriting that is very difficult to read.

They indicate in broad outline:

- The problems and challenges to the Committee and the Church in relation to buildings and design and content have not changed dramatically in nearly 80 years.
- The Committee is as committed today as it was in the past to the principles set out in the *First Book of Discipline* that the buildings of the Church serve 'the majesty of the Word of God as well as the ease and commodity of the people'.
- Musical instruments and their location in buildings have always needed careful attention.
- Stained glass installation requires monitoring and careful scrutiny.
- Colour schemes are important in a number of ways.
- Lighting in appropriate forms is crucial.
- Hearing, seeing and allowing space for liturgical furnishings to 'speak' in worship are considered vital.
- Some congregations ignore the Committee and proceed without advice, often to the detriment of the building and its mission.
- The Committee with the General Trustees has a special duty of care to ensure that the buildings of the Churches built prior to 1840 are not destroyed or lose characteristic features through adaptations and alterations that are intrusive.
- The concern for beauty as an aid to worship and devotion is paramount.
- Seating arrangements should assist the congregation and reflect the character of the building.
- The primary function and purpose of Church buildings is worship and mission, and community interests must be secondary if they interfere with the provision of a suitable setting for Reformed worship in the Presbyterian tradition.
- The membership has varied in numbers, but at present is at one of the lowest levels (16) of its history at a time when critical work is expected and more work than for some time is being sent to the Committee for attention.
- For only 10 years was the Committee **NOT** a constituent part of the work of the mission agency of the Church. And from 2005 it returned to that association which had existed from its inception in 1934.

- The Church has recognised the challenge of the duplication of buildings in areas where not all are required and the need for a missionary strategy to plan and think critically about their location and the way in which their maintenance costs can be addressed. The recognition of the problem has never – sadly – led to a series of effective proposals to address it.
- The Committee is not devoted to preservation of the past, but the conservation of the best of the past heritage with respect to the creators of the buildings we have inherited. The Committee is there to assist congregations in their attempts to adapt them sensitively so that they might be useful in future and in the present.
- Buildings may proclaim messages and theological statements that are not obvious to the outsider and the Committee is there to address the issues of how the building may be an instrument of mission, as the congregation witnesses and worships.
- Buildings in the Church of Scotland are not rendered sacred by any act of dedication or consecration, but are made holy by the gathering of God's people within them and the actions of those people in worship. Calvin was strongly of the view that we needed to be warned against 'imagining that churches are the proper dwellings of God' when it is Christian people who are the 'true temples'.

1933

There was a debate in the General Assembly as a result of an Overture from the Presbyteries of Edinburgh and Stirling and Dunblane anent guidance to Presbyteries in relation to artistic questions, church fabrics and furnishings and other such matters. As a result of the debate, no decision was made other than to refer the matter to the General Administration Committee for a report to the General Assembly 1934.

It is clear that there had been two committees prior to this date in both the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church before the union of 1929, and that they were formed to deal with the need to advise churches in relation to War Memorials after the First World War. The proposer of the motion at the General Assembly, Dr Millar Patrick (later Convenor of the Committee), had highlighted the fact that these committees had guided congregations and saved them from 'irreparable mistakes' and the Church needed 'wise guidance' in relation to rearrangements, remodelling and new buildings.

1934

The General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Committee of General Administration, agreed to appoint a Special Committee, not exceeding fifteen members, including not only artists and architects, but ministers and lay people of recognised competence. Its function was advisory only and it would meet as occasion required.

No formal remit was given to the Committee and at its first meeting after the General Assembly had appointed its membership and constituted it the Committee agreed some general principles:

1. The desirability of congregations or individual donors asking the advice of the Committee at an early stage in their consideration, especially before plans or designs were prepared.
2. The need to cooperate with the General Trustees and the Church and Manse Buildings Committee in cases which came under their notice.

3. With regard to stained glass windows, it was generally agreed that a much higher standard of design and execution should be aimed at throughout the Church; that, wherever possible, the subjects should be selected in accordance with a definite central idea and, where heraldic devices were introduced, these should be correct.
4. That church furnishings should be designed and made for individual churches and not ordered out of a dealer's stock. The high quality of craftsmanship available in Scotland at the disposal of the Church was emphasised.
5. In the meantime, it was inadvisable to make up a list of architects who should be recommended to congregations.
6. That a portfolio might be begun containing photographs of church fabrics of modern Scottish origin. It was considered that this might become a valuable guide and a source of inspiration, but that such a portfolio should not be used to encourage slavish technical imitation.

1935

The Committee's existence was publicised by an article in *Life and Work* in November 1934. Its work necessitated some negotiation of status and function with the Ecclesiastical Buildings Committee of the General Trustees and the Church and Manse Building Committee. Once these were successfully completed, it developed as an advisory committee which a number started to seek advice from all over the country. In particular, it was noted that the Committee advised on the stained glass to be incorporated into the General Assembly Hall of the Church of Scotland (this was the hall from the United Free Church which had entered the Union in 1929).

It was seen as a group which provided guidance: 'especially in rural, isolated areas, when it is sometimes difficult or impossible to obtain disinterested and understanding advice'. 14 cases were recorded.

Examples of the work of the Committee included addressing the terribly dark and difficult colour scheme in a church where the varnish had never dried effectively and negatively affected the use of the building for worship. The Committee explicitly stated that 'electric lighting to imitate candles was emphatically to be condemned'. Imitation wood or stone in a church building was not to be permitted, and the General Assembly Hall was to be redesigned and beautified in collaboration with the Committee.

The Committee was asked for guidance regarding the conversion of what was thought to be a piscina to a baptismal font. (A piscina is a shallow basin placed near the altar of a church, or else in the vestry or sacristy, used for washing the communion vessels).

1936

The Committee noted that it was not empowered to give technical advice or usurp the functions of architects or designers. Instead, it was to give advice and guidance based on liturgical and theological insights, relying on the skills available within the membership of the Committee. The Committee began to note a variety of requests coming for attention, including reordering, redecoration and stained glass. It was also consulted over the choice of furnishings. It found it very challenging to deal with colour schemes and the use of stencilling, which it believed was 'inappropriate for a building designed for worship of God'. The Committee remarked on the danger of memorials, such as windows, of poor quality being installed, something that would be difficult to correct. 15 cases were recorded.

The Committee noted that one congregation had refused to provide 'a very necessary communion table'. Some churches in the 1930s obviously lacked a communion table, and some were designed as new artefacts or alternatives to what was being used. The Committee often inveighed against the prominence given to organs.

1937

The Committee became known as *The Advisory Committee on Artistic Questions*. By this stage it believed it was no longer in apprenticeship and often found itself giving advice to congregations on a variety of matters when invited to visit for one particular purpose.

One of the major issues of concern was the placing of organs and, in particular, the organ console, which often could interfere with the focus of worship. It was also noted that the installation of electric light in churches needed careful handling as often the installations were unsightly and inappropriate in style, and created 'intolerable blemishes'. 40 cases were recorded along with numerous other enquiries.

The Committee decided to recommend in the strongest terms who would be a suitable stained glass artist to be used by a congregation.

The Committee had a very small attendance – only just quorate at most meetings.

1938

The Committee was convinced that buildings must reflect their primary purpose, which was to worship God and that beauty was important in that respect. It wanted the removal from the walls of all that might distract worshippers and wished to emphasise the centrality of Word and Sacrament in the design of church buildings, with pulpit, communion table and font. It also repeated its warnings about the intrusion of organ consoles and expressed opposition to the idea of the console being combined with the communion table.

One donation of a memorial gift (an alms dish) was refused by the Committee on the grounds that it was 'a gift not worthy'.

Removal of paintings of the 10 Commandments (a Jewish tradition and introduced in Churches in the Victorian era) was authorised.

The Committee recommended the use of bronze rather than brass for memorials and plaques, and 'corrected blunders in symbolism in a communion table'. Seats and the design of a chancel interior ought 'not to block the view of the communion table'.

The committee sought to provide photographs of the best examples of new buildings and furniture for the photographic montage at the Empire Exhibition in Glasgow that year.

The Committee's reach spanned the continents to advise the congregation in Calabar founded by Mary Slessor.

1939

The width and diversity of the work of the Committee was celebrated and it was noted that churches throughout Scotland and beyond had called upon the Committee for advice. While reordering of church buildings was taking place, the Committee again issued warnings about the importance of not giving the organ a commanding place, declaring that 'the organ is but an acolyte in the worship of God' and that the organ console should be 'as little as possible in the view of the congregation'.

It was noted that all proposals for memorials should be seen by the Committee to ensure that they were harmonious with the style and structure of the building. The hope was expressed that the church as a whole was becoming more aware of the need for 'seemliness, dignity and beauty in the building intended for the worship of God'.

Organ case designs were examined and suggested changes offered. Stained glass received special scrutiny and the encouragement of what were considered to be 'appropriate figures, scenes and symbols'.

The Committee were saddened by the ignorance of the church about its work and proclaimed itself to be 'a disinterested court of reference to appeal to, assuring (congregations) of dispassionate guidance in the light of larger ideals and experience of the church'. 50 cases were recorded.

1940 – 1944

The Work of the Committee was extremely restricted during this period and it only operated for emergencies and necessary repairs and alterations resulting from the impact of the Second World War.

1945

There were signs of major projects and developments being considered as soon as materials were available as a result of the cessation of the war effort. It was noted that in 1919, after the First World War, a War Memorial Special Committee had been formed. In these times, it was agreed that the mood of the country had changed and, while war memorials would be necessary, this committee would take the lead as an advisory group. 19 cases were recorded.

It was noted that in the eleven years of its life there had been very little alteration in the membership: as some were no longer able to serve, a recruitment drive would be necessary. It also believed that it should encourage regional groups to support the work and enable the whole of the country to be served.

Dr Millar Patrick retired, the Convener who had served from 1933. He had been the one who had proposed the formation of the Committee in 1933 with the Overture from Edinburgh Presbytery to the General Assembly.

1946

The Committee was reconstituted at its own request and noted that it dealt with a wide variety of requests. In order to facilitate its business, the Committee formed geographical panels to ensure that travel costs to congregations in response to requests were limited. It made other pleas that beauty in the buildings be seen as means of contributing to worship. 50 cases were recorded.

1947

This year the Committee rehearsed its history in its report to the General Assembly. Together with the General Trustees, it emphasised that any scheme of improvement requires consultation with the Committee at an early stage and long before the submission of the scheme to the General Trustees for approval. It noted good relationships with the General Trustees in its work.

At this time funding was raised as an issue. Previously all site visits had been paid for by Kirk Sessions. Now it was agreed that there might be consideration of making central funding available to the Committee to ensure that it could produce 'propaganda' (sic) or literature to promote its work and encourage well considered and thoughtful proposals.

1948

A range of requests was noted and the geographical spread from all over Scotland and throughout the world where the Church of Scotland was represented.

The following statistics were noted:

- War Memorials 17
- Memorial Tablets (not related to the war) 7
- Renovation and Total Reconstruction 7
- Reconstruction of Chancels and Redecoration 16

It was noted that sometimes the advice given by the Committee was not well received by the local groups, but this was balanced by the number where its guidance had been appreciated. The Committee committed itself to 'removing blemishes wherever they exist so that the place may be worthy of the worship of God'. An increase in work load was noted with 75 cases recorded.

1949

The Committee noted once again the wide geographical spread of requests and the number of cases of war memorials and stained glass which had been considered.

The Committee believed it was important to encourage the design of furniture for a particular place, to reflect the tradition, the local situation and the wood of a particular area. It believed that it was inappropriate for congregations to rely simply on stock items from an ecclesiastical furnisher.

It also believed that it was imperative that stained glass artists should be used in the design of stained glass rather than those with no knowledge of the medium.

The Committee emphasised the importance of recalling the doctrine and worship of the Church of Scotland in any proposal. The Committee believed this was vital to eliminate the introduction of features which would be alien to the Presbyterian tradition or meaningless in a Scottish Kirk. A further increase in the number of cases was noted - over 100.

1950

Once again small and large requests were received seeking advice, guidance and perspective, totalling 91 in number. The submission of photographs with applications for assistance was commended as a means of helping the Committee understand proposals, particularly in relation to war memorial additions.

The use of regional committees based on the synod boundaries was commended and the production of more literature for the advice of congregations was to be developed with funding from the General Assembly.

The Committee commented on the importance of any addition, especially stained glass, needing to 'fit' the building and that colour was extremely important in assisting worship. 91 cases were noted.

1951

The Committee rejoiced in its endeavours all over Scotland to beautify places of worship and dealt with 81 cases. It believed its purpose was to bring an atmosphere of reverence and devotion into places of worship and therefore it needed to be careful, sensitive and discerning in its engagement

with congregations. The number of cases had declined slightly, which was believed to be related to the general cost inflation at that time. Statistics indicate the following:

- Stained Glass 12
- Redecoration 14
- New Furnishings 18

The Committee noted co-operation with presbyteries had been developed and the synod panels were proving to be useful.

1952

At this time, the death of the first Convener who had initiated the foundation of the Committee, the Rev Dr Millar Patrick, was noted.

The idea of an information book outlining the principles of church design was discussed as an aid to the development of good practice within the Church of Scotland.

It was believed that every alteration or new design should reflect and be faithful to the doctrine and tradition of the Church of Scotland, but also acknowledge contemporary needs.

The number of cases declined to 54: this was believed to be related to the need in congregations for money to be devoted to maintenance.

The Committee welcomed involvement in the rededication services of church buildings where the Committee had been involved in the planning and execution of alterations.

The Committee expressed concern about the need for the church to express support for the preservation of churches built in the seventeenth and eighteenth century which were 'of merit'.

1953

The range of requests and the geographical spread of visits were all noted. As were 76 cases where the Committee had been involved.

The book on church design had been received favourably and acknowledged as helpful to congregations.

1954

Concern was focussed on the design of communion tables and the need for these to be considered carefully and appropriately presented. It was acknowledged that there were fewer memorials and large scale reconstructions and only 50 cases were considered.

Colour schemes were once again emphasised as extremely important and requiring careful thought and harmonious design.

It was agreed that two members of the Committee should undertake each visit and that the congregations should defray their costs.

A cheaper edition of the book on church design was produced.

It was again emphasised that art was the servant of worship and contributed to the spiritual dimension.

1955

The Committee worked on two principles:

1. To advise congregations about furniture and improvement of church buildings.
2. The need for good design and decoration in the church building as an aid to spiritual devotion.

Redecoration was again stressed as extremely important. 53 cases were noted.

The colour of pews was a concern and congregations were urged to consider stripping pews to a neutral state, so lightening the church, or painting them in a colour which contrasted with the wall colour. The intention was to ensure that any change was not crude or garish, but would enhance the overall impact of the building.

There was an emphasis on the need for congregations to apply early for advice.

1956

There were 69 cases considered by the Committee and some of these focussed on organ installation and the reordering of crowded chancel areas.

Eighteen cases of major reconstruction were before the Committee.

There were 32 cases of redecoration, which the Committee believed had been encouraged by the report to the General Assembly of 1955 which had emphasised the need for brighter and livelier colour schemes.

Achieving the highest quality of design in stained glass was critical in the view of the Committee: this not only increased the impact of the building on worshippers but acted as an aid to devotion.

1957

66 cases were reported and discussed at the Committee, whose General Assembly report emphasised the purpose of the Committee.

1958

The Committee dealt with 69 cases and believed that its work and ideals had now been accepted as integral to the life of the church.

57 visits had taken place and the General Assembly was informed of the process of reporting and approval by the Committee.

It was seen as vital that congregations consult the Committee prior to any redecoration programme so as to prevent the adoption of inappropriate proposals which were not applicable to a church environment.

Emphasis was laid on the need for artists to be encouraged by commissions from congregations so that any alteration or addition was tailored to suit the particular church building. Concern was expressed about the need for the heritage of sacramental vessels to be preserved.

1959

The focus was on the 25 years of progress made by the Committee since its formation and its service in the cause of supporting good taste and practice in ecclesiastical design within the Church of Scotland. Good co-operation with the General Trustees was also acknowledged.

65 cases were dealt with and the Committee reported the following types:

- 24 redecoration
- 20 reordering
- 5 stained glass
- 3 communion vessels
- 13 miscellaneous

1960

At this time the convenorship of the Rev Dr J Arnott Hamilton was celebrated. He died in 1960 and had been convener for 14 years from 1945, and was the last of the original members appointed in 1934. He developed the system of using synod area panels to facilitate the work of visits.

44 cases were reported:

- 19 redecoration
- 6 alteration and rearrangement
- 3 stained glass
- 4 memorials, heating, lighting and electrical
- 7 miscellaneous

There was disappointment in the Committee regarding the number of congregations who failed to ask and engage with the Committee and the expertise offered.

Concern was expressed at the number of alterations undertaken in 17th and 18th century churches which resulted in the destruction of their distinctive character. In particular, the Committee deplored the development of chancels at the east end. In the General Assembly of 1960, the General Trustees were instructed to ensure that the Committee was consulted for advice by any Kirk Session or Presbytery in relation to any proposed scheme of reconstruction, refurnishing or redecoration of churches built prior to 1840. This apparently has not been rescinded by subsequent General Assemblies.

The Committee was also concerned at the number of memorial tablets and plaques placed in church buildings, and wished, with the General Trustees, to encourage congregations to seek guidance on more appropriate forms of memorial.

1961

The Committee emphasised to the General Assembly its process and position as a standing committee of the General Assembly, and the use of synod panels.

While congregations were not bound to accept or consult the Committee, the Committee believed its recommendations offered objective advice and encouraged the development of a holistic approach to alterations.

55 cases were considered in the following categories:

- 17 redecoration
- 10 reordering
- 3 stained glass

- 4 heating and lighting
- 21 miscellaneous

A plea was made to the General Assembly about the need for the church not to allow the ruin of 17th and 18th century churches by inappropriate alteration.

Once again stained glass was raised as a topic which needed careful treatment and consideration.

1962

The Committee now had 24 members. They consisted of

- 9 architects
- 1 artist
- 1 layman
- 13 ministers

The number of cases considered by the Committee was 93 in the following categories:

- 32 alterations and reordering
- 28 redecoration
- 11 stained glass
- 6 memorials
- 9 furnishings
- 7 miscellaneous

1963

At this time 67 cases were considered in the following categories:

- 11 alterations and restoration
- 25 redecoration
- 7 stained glass
- 2 memorials
- 12 furnishings
- 10 miscellaneous

The Committee urged congregations to refrain from the installation of many memorial tablets describing individual ministers and encouraged the use of one single list of ministers. Congregations which undertook major changes were encouraged to ensure that they had a photographic record of the building ('before and after pictures'), which would be valuable.

1964

In this year 60 cases were considered with the following noted in particular:

- 20 redecoration
- 15 reordering

- 25 miscellaneous including stained glass, lighting and furniture

A new book on the design and furnishing of churches was commissioned from Mr Esme Gordon, an architect who had served on the Committee. The Committee was involved in the provision and editing of the book. It was hoped that the book would assist congregations in the development of appropriate proposals.

1965

During this year 56 congregations were in touch, some of whom required advice on more than one matter, so that the total was 61 individual cases.

- 27 redecoration
- 14 renovation and reordering
- 4 stained glass
- 4 memorials
- 8 furnishings
- 4 miscellaneous

The book on design was commended to the Assembly and a number of copies had been sold during 1964. The General Assembly was informed that it was possible for congregations to receive advice on bells by contacting the Secretary of the Committee.

1966

In this year 82 requests were received in the following categories:

- 29 redecoration
- 15 renovation and reordering
- 16 stained glass
- 3 other memorials
- 11 furnishings
- 3 lighting
- 5 miscellaneous

The approaches to the Committee came from congregations, presbyteries, the General Trustees and sometimes from Committee members.

The increase in stained glass proposals led the Committee to emphasise that this was a very complex and very challenging art form which demanded high technical requirements in the process of production and careful design. The Committee regretted that some of the work proposed was of indifferent quality and wished to encourage congregations to use professionals who had the capacity to understand the production issues and the religious values involved.

An interesting issue arose in this year. The Committee and the General Trustees had allowed the organ console at Dumbarton Knoxland to be moved to the front of the communion table; this was strange given its earlier objection and the importance the Committee attached to the need to ensure that organs were not dominant nor in any way in competition with the communion table. The

Presbytery of Dumbarton objected to this alteration and there was a case transmitted through the Synod of Clydesdale to a Special Commission of the General Assembly. The Presbytery won its argument and the congregation and its board were instructed to let the console remain where it was as it had been agreed that it was in “the best available position aesthetically and liturgically”. The Commission noted the original position of the console was in front of the pulpit and that the problem with damp (which the congregating claimed was the reason for the move to the front of the communion table) could be addressed by proper ventilation.

1967

There were 71 requests before the Committee this year:

- 18 redecoration
- 20 renovation and reordering
- 12 stained glass
- 6 memorials
- 12 furnishings
- 3 lighting
- 5 miscellaneous

The Committee sent a copy of the handbook on the principles of church building to every congregation.

1968

This year an increase in cases to 94 was noted. Statistics are as follows:

- 23 redecoration
- 22 renovation and reordering
- 19 stained glass
- 4 memorials
- 7 furnishings
- 10 lighting
- 5 extension of buildings
- 4 miscellaneous

It was noted that in some instances where congregations had not sought guidance and advice, the presbytery involved had come directly to the Committee before making any decision. The Committee emphasised its remit as being the whole of Scotland and recorded the work in Orkney and Shetlands which had been undertaken to assist congregation in these areas.

1969

Advice was given on 98 requests this year. They ranged as noted below:

- 17 redecoration
- 15 renovation and reordering

- 33 stained glass
- 6 memorials
- 2 furnishings
- 8 lighting
- 6 extension of buildings
- 11 miscellaneous

The increase in stained glass applications was seen as being important and a recognition that the Committee's pleas on this issue had been heard.

1970

Advice was given on 96 cases, involving visits and detailed consultation with congregations. The close cooperation with the General Trustees was acknowledged as being extremely helpful to the work of the Committee and beneficial to the congregations involved. Congregations were reminded again of the legal obligation to consult the Committee in relation to buildings which were erected prior to 1840.

Alterations demand careful consideration of several matters – not just the provision of additional accommodation, but the impact of structural changes and partitions which often affect acoustics and sight lines. The Committee was of the view that the whole alteration must not 'disfigure' the building and its integrity of design.

Congregations were encouraged to contact the Committee for the names of those artists who had done work previously and then to go and see the work produced before entering into any contract with an artist or craftsman. All costings and detailed drawings of any proposed additions ought to be brought to the Committee, which also stressed the legal and moral obligation of a congregation to ensure contracts were in place and that these included the means and methods of payment.

The Committee also issued a strong desire that congregations did not introduce more memorial plaques, stating that wall plaques for individuals are "not generally desirable in a church and they become more undesirable as they multiply in number". There was a hope expressed that more suitable and appropriate means might be found of using money given by a donor to enhance the dignity and beauty of the building.

- 18 redecoration
- 22 renovation and reordering
- 20 stained glass
- 8 memorials
- 12 furnishings
- 6 lighting
- 10 extension of buildings
- 11 miscellaneous

1971

There were 73 requests considered this year:

- 9 redecoration
- 20 stained glass
- 9 memorials
- 9 redecoration
- 12 furnishings/miscellaneous
- 7 lighting
- 10 extension of buildings

The committee noted the introduction in new church buildings of large gathering spaces in the vestibule area and commended this to the whole church as an idea to consider when altering a church that no longer required a large seating capacity.

The Committee again drew attention to organs sometimes becoming the most prominent and dominating feature in the sanctuary. This caused distraction from the pulpit and communion table and the preaching and sacramental action of the service of worship. Removal of organs to less prominent places was encouraged. Organs needed to be heard but must not be allowed to dominate the scene.

Miss Margaret Brodie, an architect, was appointed as Vice Convenor.

1972

A slight increase in cases to 86 was recorded as follows:

- 16 redecoration
- 22 stained glass
- 5 memorials
- 8 furnishing
- 16 redecoration
- 9 miscellaneous
- 10 lighting
- 5 extension of buildings

1973

In this year the largest number of cases ever was reported at 123.

- 23 redecoration
- 19 stained glass
- 16 memorials
- 11 lighting

- 6 furnishing
- 5 organs
- 13 miscellaneous
- 9 extension of buildings
- 14 alterations
- 7 re-use of furnishings and memorials from redundant churches

Agreement was reached with the General Trustees to eliminate duplication, whereby all alterations where structural alterations were not involved were to be passed directly to the Committee. In any case of dispute the General Trustees would have the final decision making power.

The proliferation of memorial plaques and their position in places of prominence that interfered with the liturgical symbolism was condemned; it was suggested that simple lists were made or alternative sites found outside the sanctuary.

A new challenge of reusing stained glass in alternative buildings was emerging: this had been successful done in some instances, but it was often difficult. A survey of stained glass was also undertaken in the Church to identify places where examples of an artist's work could be located.

1974

The number of cases was 123, divided up in the following categories

- 26 redecoration
- 11 improvement of chancel area
- 24 stained glass
- 15 memorials/plaques
- 15 lighting
- 6 furnishing
- 4 organ
- 17 miscellaneous
- 24 extension of buildings/alterations
- 8 re-use of furnishings and memorials from redundant churches
- 5 hall building
- 2 crosses

Some of the increase in cases was accounted for by the referral of all non-structural items from the General Trustees to the consideration of the Committee. The arrangement worked well. It gave authority to make decisions when there was no dispute and also retained the Committee's advisory role.

The Committee was very concerned at the number of applications for memorial plaques and, while it appreciated the motivation behind these, it believed the past practice, before 1934, of allowing this to develop with no restriction was unwise and that it had to be looked at sensitively and carefully.

The Committee was committed to guiding congregations towards the provision of useful items as memorials.

Lighting was highlighted as a major contribution to the worship of a congregation, and the need for fittings to be worthy and appropriate to the church building.

Stained glass remained a serious issue. Congregations were advised to make early contact with the Committee to ensure that the church is suitable for stained glass (as not all are), that the topics and style are appropriate, and that suggestions of qualified expert artists are given. Special care and attention has to be paid, in the light of what is in the church already, to the particular style and design chosen, and congregations should follow the correct procedure of first preparing the brief and then having the design approved before steps are taken to install it.

Organ alterations were seen as an opportunity for congregations to correct the Victorian style of installation, which allowed the organ to dominate the sanctuary, by relocating the instrument in a less obtrusive place.

The Vice Convenor at this time was the only woman on the Committee, Miss Margaret Brodie, an architect, who was nominated as the new Convenor. This was a very early example of appointing a woman to the role of Convenor.

1975

There were 94 requests for assistance, in the following areas:

- 12 redecoration
- 3 improvement of chancel area
- 13 stained glass
- 13 memorials/plaques
- 11 lighting
- 6 furnishing
- 8 organ
- 8 miscellaneous
- 12 extension of buildings/alterations
- 4 re-use of furnishings and memorials from redundant churches
- 1 cross installation

The large drop in the number of cases was due, it was suggested, to the economic situation: there was a major decline in the number of stained glass and redecoration proposals.

The Committee hoped (in view of some decline in the number of applications for installation of memorial plaques) that its message was getting through that there were other more desirable and appropriate means of recognising and recalling the services of individuals.

1976

The number of cases rose slightly to 113 in these areas:

- 16 redecoration
- 3 improvement of chancel area
- 24 stained glass
- 9 memorials/plaques
- 7 lighting
- 5 organs
- 11 miscellaneous
- 25 alterations/improvements
- 11 adaptation of buildings/alterations
- 5 re-use of furnishings and memorials from redundant churches

The Committee acknowledged that there were several matters to be considered when unions took place and buildings had to be closed, but wanted to urge consideration of the preservation of the national heritage as important.

The geographical spread and the range of types of buildings, large and small, which the Committee had been involved with, were celebrated. The good relations with the General Trustees and the joint collaboration with them over the preservation and development of pre-1840 churches were also noted with pleasure.

1977

The need for the Committee to be involved in expressing a view about boiling son the particular merit and aesthetic importance of a church building was noted in the arbitration process. This was a major issue of concern that lasted many years. The Committee believed that its views and perspective ought to be available to congregations discussing union and the disposal of buildings. It saw part of its role as a guardian of the heritage of the Church – as in the case of pre-1840 buildings– together with the General Trustees.

140 cases were dealt with and about a third came through referrals from the General Trustees.

Publicity to alert congregations to the services provided by the Committee was distributed through session clerks.

1978

As a result of the previous year's report some cases were referred to the Committee for advice and guidance regarding the merit and importance of buildings in a time of consideration of closure and disposal.

A committee with specific responsibility for organ advice was proposed and established due to the complexities and technical issues involved in giving advice in this area.

1979

This year the Committee's name was changed to the Advisory Committee on Artistic Matters, in an attempt to find a name that more adequately reflected its work and purpose. The Committee hoped that another more appropriate name would be found in future.

There were continued concerns regarding the number of buildings closed without any reference to the Committee for advice.

The range of cases continued to be a challenge.

1980

There were 161 cases considered.

The Committee resolved, even when not asked, to prepare reports on buildings where there may be a question of closure raised, as often the consultation took place too late, or not at all, and decisions were made without adequate information.

The organ sub-committee dealt with 21 cases where advice was required. While this was an important area, no compulsion was proposed as the amount of work which might result would be too much for the secretarial arrangements in place at that time.

1981

176 cases were dealt with, in the usual variety of areas.

The Committee noted with satisfaction the many proposals to use space under galleries in a creative manner to satisfy the need for alternative and flexible accommodation.

23 requests for organ advice had been received. Several congregations had benefited from advice that prevented unnecessary expense as a result.

The idea of a repository for redundant furnishings was raised as it was hoped to provide a means of 'recycling' such items.

The Committee also wanted to emphasise that some buildings were not appropriate for the installation of stained glass; this meant that early consultation was required to prevent waste of money and effort and the upset caused by the refusal of permission.

The closure of many churches, large and small, led the Committee to argue that the Church must form a Fund for Redundant Churches, in the hope that it would attract public money, and asked the General Assembly to note that it was attempting to investigate this possibility.

1982

This year there were 161 cases from all over Scotland requiring visits and reports. The portioning off of areas to provide additional accommodation within churches either above or below galleries, or creating a flexible area at the front, were extremely common requests.

Transferring furniture and stained glass into other churches after a union continued to be a challenge and the Committee regretted that its advice was not called upon earlier in the process in some instances when the closure was first proposed.

20 requests for organ advice were received.

The idea of a depository was developed and some money was made available for this purpose. In addition it was proposed that the idea of a museum to preserve the heritage of fine furniture and

other historic items be investigated; it was suggested that this include pewter, communion ware, stained glass and communion tokens and collection ladles.

Publicising the Committee's work continued to develop and an information sheet for the use of candidates for ordination was proposed.

1983

The help of the General Trustees enabled the depository to become a reality (in a disused church near Brechin), as well as the new guide book on maintenance of church buildings and interior fixture and fittings. These were seen as crucial contributions to the assistance of congregations.

161 cases were considered. The amount of work done by the visitors and the organ advisers was praised as an invaluable and sacrificial service given by volunteers on the basis of their commitment to the heritage and development of church buildings.

The Committee again complained that its advice had not been heeded in relation to some buildings designated for closure, with the resulting loss of a major building of merit and importance.

11 requests for organ advice were received. Congregations were advised to ensure that they dealt with reputable and reliable companies when commissioning an organ installation or repair.

1984

167 requests were received, with 13 relating to organs.

The book on *Care for Your Church* had sold out in the first year, and was also used in Roman Catholic and Scottish Episcopal Churches.

The depository was working well with demand outstripping supply in particular for lecterns or tables.

The Committee cooperated with a number of civic bodies who were involved with the development of projects in former church buildings to ensure that they continued to serve their communities.

1985

The Committee continued to support congregations in the adaptation of areas under galleries for other uses, and the clearing of 'so called chancels' to allow more movement and the use of drama in worship.

The Committee agreed to the use of chairs rather than pews to give congregations the opportunity of having the communion table in the midst of the people, thereby making a strong statement about the understanding of the Church of Scotland regarding the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

The organ committee continued to offer advice and a new scheme for advice was to be developed. The Committee was concerned that some congregations "squandered money on short term solutions and electronic instruments" rather than considering a stage by stage rebuilding of an instrument that would subsequently last many years more.

The depository continued to serve the Church well and the opening times expanded; this provided a resource for other denominations.

While the arbiters did use the services of the Committee regarding the merits of buildings, the Committee continued to offer advice unasked to congregations considering closures.

With the support of the General Trustees, the following provisions regarding memorials were agreed:

1. Donors should be encouraged and, if possible, persuaded to present gifts which may be of use in the services of the Church or which will add to the beauty of the building, rather than plaques. A small and inconspicuously placed inscription can be added on or near the gift if desired.
2. Plaques to the memory of private individuals are strongly discouraged.
3. Memorials of whatever form must be of real artistic quality designed by a competent authority, should harmonise with their surroundings and enhance the atmosphere of worship. Anything of an assertive character which conflicts with the general character of the church should be ruled out.
4. Where a stained glass window is proposed, the design should be by a recognised artist who will have regard to the character of the church and to any other windows already in position there.

These were commended by the General Assembly to the notice of all presbyteries and the General Trustees. All proposals were to be referred to the Committee **prior** to approval by the presbytery.

Memorial gifts may include (as a guide offered by the Committee): alms dishes, offering plates or bags, Communion table, cups, baptismal bowl or bracket, chairs, pulpit, pulpit fall, font, lectern, table lectern, praise boards, flower stands, stained glass window, doors and gates.

The Committee again asked congregations to recall the need to consult the Committee before developing ideas for stained glass windows in particular. This would lead to less difficulty if it was impossible to approve designs or allow them into Georgian buildings, where stained glass would be incongruous.

1986

162 requests were received on a wide variety of topics. Close links with the Panel on Worship were forged to enable congregations to reorder church interiors in order to offer more opportunity for active participation by members of congregations in worship. Good relations continued also with the General Trustees.

Concern was expressed that the current "ecclesiastical exemption" of the Church had allowed the destruction and demolition of listed buildings. This did not reflect well on the denomination and its reputation for care of its architectural heritage. To allow ecclesiastical exemption to continue as the General Trustees and the Committee would wish, Presbyteries have a major role in exercising care and ensuring the Committee is involved in advising on all matters relating to listed buildings.

The organ committee was strengthened and outside consultants from the Church of England were also involved, ensuring that congregations received the best advice possible.

23 new stained glass proposals were dealt with, indicating an upsurge in this area. The list of approved artists had also been expanded to include younger artists.

The Committee recommended the gathering together of memorial plaques and their removal from chancel areas to a less prominent and less distracting position.

A major concern was the use of the wrong kind of paint in a very historical church with a two tier pulpit and a 40 foot long communion table from 1836.

The Assembly Council apologised for arranging a meeting of the new working party on buildings and mission without representatives of the Committee.

Problems with the arbitration process were noted.

Concern was expressed about the alteration of the chapel at 121 George Street to a new design which departed from the Scottish Reformed tradition and introduced a chancel area.

The Committee rejected some embroidered panel designs as inappropriate and unsuitable.

1987

At the General Assembly it was noted that the Assembly Council had become concerned about the degree of energy and finance applied to the provision and maintenance of Church buildings, and wished to have a consistent policy in this matter.

In its report to the General Assembly, the Council considered the property problem had reached crisis proportions. The buildings from before 1800 were of major concern due to their age and the Church's Victorian heritage also required a lot of investment. The number of buildings of the post war period needing serious attention was also a serious problem. The number of buildings due to the proliferation of denominations in the 18th and 19th centuries meant there were far more buildings in Scotland than required to "bring the ordinances of religion to the people of every parish of Scotland through a territorial ministry" (the Third Declaratory Article). The uneven distribution of buildings, the fact that the major towns had too many, and the complexities of rural population shifts all gave rise to serious concern.

While buildings may be seen as contributing to the mission of the congregation, it was noted that often the maintenance costs and the volume of repairs absorbed the energy and commitment of congregations to a disproportionate degree.

To the Assembly Council, the mission imperative in some instances meant that congregations had to move and buildings must be sacrificed if they were hindering mission. Wide ranging discussion would help make this a reality in the church, and this was proposed. The intention was for the Church to be missionary and imaginative, with new ideas to develop buildings in new ways, making an appeal to the wider community and developing resources that truly serve the needs of the contemporary congregation in its work and witness. Investment in repairs ought to be considered carefully so that the building did not become a barrier to new initiatives in mission in the future.

The Council bemoaned the fact that the buildings of the past were built in a way that did not recognise the needs of the congregations - often by wealthy people who did not really understand that a simpler building would suffice. This had led to some congregations becoming "prisoners of history" in an attempt to preserve their historical heritage. The Council agreed that the General Trustees were correct in 1985 to insist that the Church had the **right** to make decisions on worship provision without any interference by the civil authority, as a right **recognised** and **not** conferred by the Church of Scotland Act of 1921.

A Joint Committee was formed to develop a comprehensive view of the Church's property resources, a strategic policy for their deployment, and a plan for regular presbytery and congregational review of and evaluation of buildings as centres for worship, mission and service in community, with concern for careful stewardship of property resources, and to make recommendations for action as required. In the event, not much was achieved by this proposal.

The Committee became involved with the work of this group, which had representatives of the General Trustees and six other committees and boards. The Committee was disturbed by the definition used to identify 'a necessary church': viz. "if the building went on fire it would be replaced". This was regarded as unsound.

Again concerns were recorded about the choice of paint in a pre-Reformation church.

The Committee reported it had responded to 141 requests. The continued removal of the clutter at the east end of some churches continued to create space for movement and allow members of the congregation to become participants in the act of worship and not merely spectators of a platform performance.

Continued concern was expressed about the ignoring of the Committee in relation to the choice of buildings in unions and about the long term planning of presbyteries being based on sociological grounds without any consideration of the spiritual heritage of the buildings and their architectural merit and history. The Committee was of the view that the whole process should aim to ensure that the unique heritage of buildings, reordered and adapted to meet the needs and opportunities of new and evolving forms of worship, was conserved by the Church of Scotland.

The Committee again asked the General Assembly to insist that presbyteries contact the Committee in all cases where changes and choices regarding buildings would be necessary.

16 organ cases were considered. The requests for advice about stained glass continued, related in some instances to the anniversary of The Guild. This led to the Committee reminding congregations about the need for all proposals to be based on artistic merit and competence and for the Committee to be contacted.

The depository still served a useful function but more space and a more convenient location was sought.

1988

145 requests were received, and many enquiries for advice. More and more requests for the opening up of the "east ends" of churches were approved as encouraging the introduction of creative worship developments.

The removal of War Memorials and cherished stained glass from redundant buildings was seen as major concern.

Craftsmanship in the design and production of artefacts and furnishings in the building was commended as a vital reflection of the worship of the community. The use of the best available material is to be encouraged and all pseudo and synthetic offerings are to be avoided. This led to some comments about the use of synthetic resin to resemble stone and the introduction of electronic organs and electric lights in the form of candles.

The Committee wanted to insist that all Quinquennial visitations explored and recorded if any building or furnishing alterations were being considered and for this information to be sent on to them so that appropriate advice was sought, thereby saving expense and time.

The Committee noted that two of its members were part of the group set up by the General Assembly as outlined in the Assembly Council proposals in relation to buildings and the needs of the Church.

The Committee regretted that the alteration of the chapel in the Church offices had destroyed its distinctive character in the Scots Reformed tradition, particularly the introduction of an irrelevant chancel area.

The depository was offered another home in Edinburgh, but costs of insurance etc made this impossible to accept.

The Committee and the General Trustees agreed to oppose a proposal that the Committee be put under the aegis of the General Trustees following changes in the arrangements for the central administration of the Church involving the division of the Ministry and Mission Board. In the end, it was decided to leave the Committee in the area of National Mission.

The Secretary was now in the office only one day a week and congregations were asked to be patient if their enquiry took longer to answer.

A lighting consultant was to be appointed by the General Trustees.

1989

212 cases were considered: often these involved liturgical and architectural issues, and included opening spaces, creation of rooms in buildings under galleries, and reordering of interiors.

23 stained glass applications were received. A warning regarding the darkening effect of stained glass was issued as it can impact seriously on the light, so that applications may be refused.

One heating request was refused on the grounds that the "appearance of the heaters was horrific in relation to the architectural sensitivity of the Church".

15 congregations received organ advice.

Some instances of the Committee being involved in the choice of buildings were noted.

An application form for advice was proposed, first for stained glass proposals and then others. This did not happen until much later in 2008 and was much resisted by Committee members and congregations when introduced.

The Committee refused to supply names of repair agents as this was not within its competence. The artists on the lists supplied by the Committee had been subject to scrutiny. Congregations were recommended to seek references for all repair agencies and companies.

The Committee recorded its displeasure at the timing of its report at the General Assembly but welcomed the changes which allowed the continued presentation of its report as a distinct report separate from those of other Boards and Committees. The proposed membership was 18 including the Convenor and Vice Convenor; under the current arrangements it was 21 plus those two officers. The number of cases coming for attention led the Committee to argue for a retention of the number currently available for the visits (23). This was eventually agreed.

Great debate took place at one meeting resulting in the recommendation for the removal of what was thought to be Masonic symbols from a proposed stained glass design (this was at the time of a huge debate in the Church regarding the Masonic Order). Enquiries, however, revealed that the allusion was to the masons who had built the church in the early 12th century!

1990

In this year 201 cases were considered from all over the nation. Reordering and the development of space under galleries still were major items. The demand for more stained glass also went on as did, regrettably in the view of the Committee, the number of requests for memorial plaques.

11 congregations received advice on organs. There were signs of a growing appreciation that the organ is a major asset worthy of repair and maintenance. Six new pipe organs with mechanical action were introduced in this year to churches.

The Committee was now to be granted secretarial and clerical support from the Board of National Mission and its membership affirmed at 23.

1991

In this year 310 cases were considered – a huge increase. Some were due to stained glass retaining its popularity and the introduction of flexible seating in reordering schemes, but the Committee became concerned that flexible seating should not be regarded as a way of making the sanctuary into an additional church hall.

32 congregations received advice regarding organs. The Committee advised congregations to have comparative estimates as it was critical that the real needs of the organ and the right kind of remedial work would be undertaken.

The Committee also sought to make comment – without any real *locus* in the matter – on the number of new manses being built which - in the view of the Committee – substituted 'kit homes' in place of the grand houses that had been sold off. It sought to offer advice when requested by congregations.

Congregations were urged to make photographic records of stained glass so that, if there were any need for repair, that could be carried out; without photographs this is virtually impossible. In case of theft, it was always good to have a photograph of every moveable item in the church.

The Committee was given - at the request of the General Trustees - the additional duty which it accepted - of advising congregations regarding the appropriate disposal and transfer of furnishings and fittings from a redundant church building.

1992

The Committee dealt with 229 new cases, and much time was absorbed by new buildings and the provision of new social space in existing buildings. The Committee regretted the ignoring of its role in all proposals and developments, and reminded congregations that while its title is "Advisory" that does not mean it is "optional". All matters that involve the General Trustees in relation to interiors may come before the Committee for advice and guidance.

The Committee hoped that new forward planning management of buildings – as a result of the discussion from 1991 onwards - would result in helpful legislation to develop an appropriate framework for planning.

1993

The Committee, realising that there was some confusion regarding the nature of an "artistic matter" and when the Committee was to be consulted, tried to clarify this by reissuing some literature to all Presbytery Clerks.

The Committee appreciated the words of the Moderator (the Right Revd Hugh Wyllie) in relation to the arts in the service on the Gospel (at the Glasgow School of Art):

“A church must be more than a museum of past art. It must be a place of active and alive worship rejoicing in the use of art presenting the truths of God and the needs of the world in present day symbols”.

Floodlighting of churches was a new area is of concern and guidance was given on the use and time for switching this off.

Organ replacement and repairs were expensive and the Committee cautioned against the use of stop gap and supposedly cheap solutions that might endanger the heritage of music in a congregation and was likely to be costly in the long term.

The depository closed as a result of the costs involved. The Committee developed its “Exchange and Transfer” service for the use of congregations seeking to dispose of and to acquire furniture and other fittings.

Area panels for visits were still being used and developed in membership.

1994

A large number of new cases were recorded, 389, and the following statistics were provided:

- 44 external alteration
- 70 reordering/alteration of interiors
- 12 new buildings/extensions
- 41 replacement of windows/stained glass installation
- 22 plaques/memorials/textile hangings
- 47 refurbishment/redecoration
- 27 organ advice

The Committee again recorded the waste of time and money due to the lack of early consultation with it about buildings and stained glass proposals.

The Committee was concerned at the lack of knowledge about the organ advice available through the Committee as a service to congregations. It was emphasised that a pipe organ will work for 30 years with little maintenance and many for 50 years without major work. This is not the case with electronic alternatives, which, with an average life 13 years before trouble begins and replacement needed between 18 and 20 years, are soon out of date and, if they cannot be repaired, require to be replaced at a similar cost to the money spent on maintaining an instrument of lasting worth.

The Committee reminded the General Assembly that the chancel and the whole of the building are the sanctuary and worship area and that there is nothing in Scottish Reformed theology to elevate the importance of chancels.

1995

An average of 60 cases in 9 meetings was considered by the Committee during the year. The major issues were the reordering of interiors and this was of great satisfaction to the Committee. The reasons for the requests were noted as including:

1. to provide flexibility for new forms of worship
2. to create space for fellowship
3. to enlarge a platform area to enable the communion table to be brought forward so that no physical or visual barrier existed between table and congregation

The most challenging problem was the replacement and repair of windows and the need for careful use of wood rather than artificial alternatives, especially in the historic listed buildings of the Church. The wood is long lasting and appropriate and hardwood must be used. Air circulation must be considered carefully in the use of double glazing to prevent further problems appearing.

Congregations were warned that stained glass proposals had to be made by artists who produce stained glass; otherwise there may be problems, as artists who are not familiar with the process of installation are liable to be unaware of issues requiring consideration.

The Committee regretted the loss of traditional names for parishes when unions took place, destroying the heritage of identifiable names that have been so important in previous generations.

The use of the *Exchange and Transfer* process was considered to be working well and a satisfactory alternative to the depository.

The arrival of a Secretary who was shared with the Panel on Worship and the Panel on Doctrine meant the independence of the Committee, after 60 years, from the Board of National Mission.

1996

The Consultative Committee on Church properties noted – as had been done by the Assembly Council some years earlier - that the Church of Scotland had too many buildings and that these are not always situated in places of need or missionary strategy, but are due to the consequences of division in the Church in the last two centuries. The Church had to rationalise its commitment to the maintenance of buildings to limit the present level of expenditure. This expenditure can only be curtailed if the church systematically divests itself of duplicate buildings. The Church also had the problem of buildings that are too large for current congregations, who cannot afford to adapt them or carry out the necessary repair work.

The Committee dealt with an increasing number of requests for adaptation of buildings to enable greater participation in worship and, very importantly, increased access and accommodation for those with physical disabilities and needs.

The external appearance of buildings had also received attention, as these had to be presented in a way congruent with their style and history, while also engaging with their communities in an effective way. Joint visits with the General Trustees were taking place to enable this to happen.

The Committee recommended the use of second hand pipe organs rather than electronic instruments in many cases as a good economic alternative to the latter.

The problem of lack of early consultation was again raised and Presbyteries were reminded of the need for and the advantages of early contact - saving time, money and effort and the avoidance of some very awkward problems.

The Committee reiterated the point that, although its title contained the word “Advisory”, this did not imply that consulting it was optional. It pressed the case that the term “Consultative” may be a more accurate reflection of the obligations and responsibilities of all parties involved. It determined to raise this issue with those who might address this problem.

1997

Once again the Consultative Committee on Church Properties brought to the attention of the Church the problem of too many buildings hampering the mission work of the Church. It made a plea for imaginative local solutions and a more comprehensive effort on a national scale to address the challenges.

The name of the Committee changed to become *The Consultative Committee on Artistic Matters*.

The Committee decided to address the challenge of why it existed and asserted that it had the right to make comment on building proposals and to refuse to approve some of them. These were:

- the experience of the Committee over the years and the fact that its members had seen a lot of other examples and can bring that experience to current issues.
- the fact that the Committee offers objective advice from beyond the local.
- the need to record not just the past and the present, but the future impact of any change or proposal.
- the need to harness the enthusiasm of the local group to achieve what may not be in their vision at present, but with support and interest of the Committee, may create something far greater and more effective for the mission and worship of the congregation.
- The Committee exists to ensure that the proposal serves the needs of the current congregation and also honours the tradition and conserves the best of the heritage of the past which gave us the building in trust.
- The future users of the building need to be considered – are they to be limited or enabled by what is installed or inserted?
- What are the theological and liturgical implications of what is proposed – what will it say to people about God and how will it enrich the worship of God's people? The Committee is there to help congregations, in their place and time, encapsulate the Reformed worship principles that are congruent with the needs and theology of our Church.
- The Committee also needs to remind congregations of the beauty and the style of what is being proposed as it may influence and shape the future. What is executed needs to reflect that which is best in art and theology, as was the case in much of what the Church has inherited. Is what is proposed too limited to this time and place and what will it mean in 100 years time?

These issues should guide the Committee and the congregation in their collaboration to ensure that what is proposed is of lasting worth and will engage both the membership and the parish beyond and stand the test of time.

The Committee drew attention to the urgent priority of disabled access and accommodation being sensitively handled by congregations, ensuring that what was installed and its position would lead to inclusion and welcome, rather than further separation and exclusion. Any idea of segregation and isolation must be opposed and positions found that enable the person who uses a wheelchair or has limited mobility to have the sense of being part of the congregation, able to see and hear effectively. Steps and access are to be considered and all barriers removed wherever possible and imaginative solutions found to ensure that all people are welcome in God's house.

1998

The Consultative Committee on Church Properties ceased to exist. Its work had not been well received in some instances and a more coordinated approach was thought to be necessary. The Committee highlighted the number of churches which were now welcoming visitors weekly by opening their buildings to the public: this had increased from 239 in 1996 to 443 in 1998.

The Committee reminded the General Assembly of the details included in the Book of Exodus, Chapter 28, of the robes and vestments of the priests, and the need for similar care and attention to the interior of churches today. The building was not a “shell with seating” but a place where many factors issues come together to create its character and atmosphere.

The purpose of any change was identified as needing to fulfil certain criteria. How may it enable people to approach God and hear from God? Similarly, how will this change assist the congregation’s members to relate to each other as a community of faith? These two dimensions are often difficult to reconcile. Will this change take the awe and reverence away by rendering the building too “cosy”? Will this adaptation make it too ordinary and no longer having the character of a place with a particular focus on worship? These questions should be considered in determining how the Committee addresses a proposal for a change of furnishing or colour, or the introduction of new elements. Buildings need to merge old and new in an effective blend that reflects the Gospel and the worship of the people of God and their particular needs and concerns in the current age, while not restricting the building’s possible development in future, nor denying the past heritage of the faith community that they succeed.

1999

The Committee discussed the use and tradition of pews and the advantages and disadvantages of their removal, along with the choice of alternative seating and, in particular, how seating reflects a church’s historical roots, sociological understanding and experience, as well as how it either restricted or contributed to the worship experience. The Committee wanted to help congregations think of alternative seating for those who are adversely affected by pews or by chairs that do not suit their physical abilities or condition. Removal of pews often destroys the character of a building and has to be carefully considered when the building is of particular significance and was built before 1840.

When pews are arranged round the communion table this is of great theological and liturgical significance, which may lead the Committee to be reluctant to allow their removal. The symbolism of the gathering of the people of God is vital.

Consideration of multi-faith chapels in public buildings like hospitals gave the Committee an opportunity to declare once again that the Reformed Church does not believe that a place is holy in and of itself, but is made holy by God and the gathering of God’s people and their actions. The Word of God read and preached and the Sacraments celebrated make the community’s place “holy” when used for that purpose.

The Committee commended the disposal of communion vessels to museums when required, in order to preserve the heritage and allow them to be seen in public. The Committee also commended the transfer of vessels surplus to requirements to other congregations either at home or abroad.

The amount of work coming before the Committee led it to invite the General Assembly to increase its membership to 22 plus the Convenor and Vice Convenor, together with a representative of the General Trustees, five co-opted members and two from the Church Extension Committee.

The recent name change was not proving helpful, so the Committee asked for a further alteration to *Committee on Artistic Matters* as it believed this implied responsibility for a wide range of issues and types of enquiry.

One case where the Committee had a strange “rethink” (in contrast to its original policy formulated in the 1930s) was in regard to stencilling. It was discovered in a building being restored and the Committee at first recommended it be retained, then changed its mind because of the building’s dark appearance. The Committee later encouraged the retention of stencilling in a church in Glasgow – to mixed reactions. Stencilling obviously can, in some instances, be appropriate and attractive, but not all would agree with the idea of it being kept.

2000

The Committee reminded the General Assembly of the need to recall the Reformed heritage of the Church in relation to the provision of items in church buildings, which focused attention on the bell for calling people, the pulpit for preaching, the basin for baptism and the table for the Lord’s Supper. The church is not a random selection and gathering of people, but a community built and nourished in faith and action by the Word of God and the worship offered to God.

Buildings must reflect the purpose of worship and enable people to come together for an intentional way in which the mind and spirit are touched and nourished. The order and atmosphere of uncluttered surroundings allowing the individual and the community to focus attention on God and upon the spiritual in worship is vital. Although the Reformation removed certain items from churches – to the great regret of some – It restored the idea of the worship being understandable and of gathering round the Word and being enabled to go on a journey of faith beyond its walls. Buildings have to recover these as the key elements in their purpose and design.

In our buildings the past is celebrated and honoured and new items are added with the same care and attention to purpose, craft and detail as in the past. The heritage is enriched by each generation’s contribution to the continuing story of faith in a place. How will any change enable lively and relevant worship to happen and how does it reflect the theology and the experience of the congregation, its community and the Gospel? These are the questions we need to ask.

Enquiries continued to be received from Europe and across Scotland about the usual range of alterations. The moving of an organ console posed a problem that the Committee had not faced before – the disturbing of a major family tomb under the church.

It was noted that one church at least had received a War Memorial from a building of a major company whose site had been sold and that it was deemed appropriate for this to be left in the keeping of the Church to allow public access. The Committee advised on where the Memorial ought to be placed to allow it to be seen, but without intruding on the congregation’s worship space.

A series of changes in the requests to the Committee emerged at this time.

- More designs for stained glass windows to celebrate the millennium were proposed.
- The change in the number of requests related to disabled access provision – not just the introduction of ramps to allow wheelchair access, but areas in churches where those who used wheelchairs could be accommodated in an inclusive manner. The Committee recommended

alterations to seating arrangements that would allow the person in a wheelchair to be accompanied. It was agreed to encourage the removal of pews to accommodate this change and provide clear audibility and sight lines, but an attempt should be made to preserve symmetry by removing pews on each side of the building.

- One new area of interest was the use of screens and audio vision installations in worship. The Committee sought ways of introducing these in a way that was sensitive to the design of the building and allowed for appropriate visual effect when in use without becoming unobtrusive when not part of the service. Several proposals were refused and much effort was expended to find an appropriately non-invasive means of providing what was wanted. This continues to be a challenge.
- Changes to chancel areas or to the front of the sanctuary were now sometimes proposed to accommodate praise bands. How this fitted with the principles of Reformed worship was problematic, as large platforms suggest that the congregation is an audience at a performance rather than participants in worship.
- Aerial installations in church towers for mobile telephony offered a new source of income and needed careful consideration. The Committee developed with the General Trustees a cooperative policy which insisted on appropriate design and alterations which were sensitive to the building and the replacement of louvers where necessary.

2001

The Committee had an article included in the April edition of *Life and Work* on the sacramental vessels survey and its importance.

One case considered by the Committee revealed what was thought to be an 'ambry' in a pre-Reformation church – a recessed cupboard in the wall of a church to store sacred vessels (there is one in St Salvator's Chapel at St Andrews University).

The Committee noted that at a conference held by the General Trustees the need for congregations to do the following was highlighted:

1. Lodging with fire departments a list of items to be given priority in the event of a fire
2. The importance of checking buildings for safety issues after the departure of workmen
3. The earlier advice to make photographic records of stained glass and any other distinctive items that might require to be replaced after a fire or after some other destructive incident.

Several proposals for the use of carpet were refused due to their impact on the acoustic of the building; when carpet is used it is advisable that it be a woven variety. Acoustic problems caused by roof trusses were also considered.

The Committee preferred the reintroduction of a cock rather than a cross as a weather vane on church spires, partly because it symbolised betrayal and partly because it moves to show the direction of the wind.

Disabled access and the introduction of accessible toilets were featured largely on the agenda.

2002

The Committee focused its attention on the development of stained glass and how it had an impressive history in the Church of Scotland, despite the Reformation period when some destruction of stained glass took place. This highlighted the importance of good design which would result in a window that had a lasting and influential impact on the worshipping life of a congregation both in the present and the future.

The Report to the General Assembly brought to the attention of the Church the implications of the forthcoming 2004 Disability Discrimination Act, which required “reasonable adjustments” to the physical features of buildings, including churches.

The Committee also was concerned that its dual responsibilities be kept in balance – that of ensuring that the best features of the heritage of church buildings were conserved for the future, while ensuring that the congregations of the present are able to change buildings to make them effective for worship and witness now.

2003

The location of sarcophagi in a historic church was considered by the Committee, which recommended that they be placed below the floor or in a separate mausoleum.

Approval was given for a brick panel commemorating the millennium to be placed in a church – this was later regretted when the panel was examined and seen to be inappropriate.

It was agreed to inform all auction houses that any church wishing to sell sacramental vessels must provide evidence of that it has the permission of the Committee, as delegated by the General Assembly. This followed the unauthorised sale or disposal of several major collections. An example of new sacramental vessels was approved by the Committee.

The relocation of a public War Memorial from the grounds of a redundant church to those of the new place of worship was agreed.

2004

The Committee highlighted the need to prevent changes to the interior of churches resulting in the “domestication” of these buildings. The Church is a gathering place and is “the house of God”, but it risks becoming merely a “home for the people of God” a place of material comfort and a refuge from a hostile world. The transcendence of God needs to be recalled alongside the valuing of God in the midst of God’s people. There must be a distinctive worship space in the building, and the Committee was concerned that some of the proposals it received demonstrated a determination to deny this important element of a church building. While providing a comfortable environment for its members, the Church must resist the temptation to be inward looking and exclusive. In its environment, the Church offers a witness and message about the Gospel, one of inclusion where there is room for those who are seeking and exploring faith. Care must be taken to ensure that the building is true to its missionary aspect as well as its welcome of members.

Adaptation of a building was discussed and approved so that the congregation could host a group from the parish who were worshipping according to the Orthodox tradition.

In the case of a building dating from the 12th century it was agreed that reasonable access could not be provided and an alternative venue using close circuit television could be provided.

2005

The Committee was reduced in size under the new arrangements for the central administration of the Church: 10 members plus Convenor and Vice Convenor and co-opted specialists. Its original membership in 1934 had been 15.

The number of requests continued to be large, many of which were telephone requests for advice in addition to those which required visits. The number of adaptations required for disability access continued to rise, showing the commitment of congregations to the fulfilment of the requirements of "reasonable provision". The Committee was concerned to ensure that the design of ramps and installations was appropriate to the ethos of the individual church building. The quality of design must reflect the best that is possible, and the use of suitable materials and the style of hand rail were other important considerations.

The Committee's work was to assist congregations from being trapped in a time warp by a building from another generation, age and style of worship. Congregations were encouraged to obtain a conservation statement, as this was often a very effective way of generating new ideas of how a building can be transformed and its inheritance used to create a place where the past is not lost and the future needs are accommodated.

The survey of the sacramental vessels started in 2001 had now covered 10 presbyteries and was supported by grant assistance from the Scottish Goldsmiths' Trust.