



Questions from Report

Report R3.2 – General Secretary Question #2

Question

“I note in your report turnover of executive staff has been a major challenge for the role of General Secretary. I would agree this is a challenge. Is there a reason behind such a turnover that needs to be addressed, and if so, are we addressing it, and if so, how are we addressing it.” *Yvonne McRostie*

Answer

I am sure that the issues behind the turnover are complex and that there is no one reason. There are several individuals concerned and I cannot profess to know their reasons either. I do however believe that one contributing factor has been the evolving role of the general secretary over a number of years and particularly in the last few years.

There has been an increased emphasis on collaborative leadership and higher-level executive functions. At the same time, there still appears a wide disparity of expectation around the role, from that narrow definition in the regulations to that of a Chief Executive Officer. In my opinion, it is neither of those, and the role is far more complex. I believe the ambiguity/ conflicting expectations created has placed enormous pressure on the occupants both in terms of physical workload and performance expectations. I also believe that this has had a roll on impact on both the roles of Director for Finance and Property Services and Associate General Secretary.

The Moderator and the Synod Standing Committee (SSC) have spent considerable time on this issue, particularly after the departure of the last General Secretary. Actions taken were:

- A small task group from the SSC conducted a detailed exit interview with the last occupant;
- A gathering of SSC members, presbytery representatives, agency representatives and others were provided with background information, invited to participate in re-examining the general secretary's position description, so that a deeper common understanding could be formed, and provide feedback to the SSC;
- A revised position description was developed by the SSC because of that gathering
- A nomination panel was formed, which included a General Secretary from another Synod.
- The SSC decided to put on hold the appointment of an Associate General Secretary and revision to that position description until a new General Secretary was appointed.
- The a review of the role of the Director for Finance and Property Services will take place with the planned revision of the By-laws for the Department

A fundamental underlying issue is that we are an organisation that is experiencing a significant number of pressures to change. We are, on the whole not addressing those pressures adequately. Hence those pressures come to bear at particular points in the organisation, and those particular points have people occupying them.