

CHURCH AND SOCIETY MAY 2018

Proposed Deliverance

The General Assembly

1. Receive the report.

Flourishing Local Communities

2. Celebrate the work going on through congregations the length and breadth of Scotland to help our communities to flourish.

Building an Economy Driven by Equality

3. Welcome the ongoing partnership with the Islamic Finance Council to develop an ethical finance framework.

Caring for Creation

4. Recognise the urgent need to make a just transition to a low carbon economy, commend the work of the Church Investors Group and others in promoting engagement, and welcome the proposal from the Investors Trust to promote stronger Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance in the Church's investments.
5. Welcome the growing success of Good Money Week and forthcoming consultation by OSCR on charity trustee investment duties and recommend that the Council of Assembly now considers as a priority the preparation of a statement of investment principles for the Church.
6. Urge that, if the business plans of oil and gas companies are not aligned with the Paris climate agreement within two years, the Investors Trust and Pension Trustees withdraw from investing in them.

Doing Politics Differently

7. Welcome the launch of Meet Your MP and encourage congregations to build positive relationships with their local politicians.
8. Welcome the expansion of work around Participatory Budgeting being supported by the Council and encourage local congregations to get involved in Participatory Budgeting locally.

Building Global Friendships

9. Reaffirm the belief that possession, use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is inherently evil, congratulate the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons on being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, welcome the establishment of an international Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and urge the UK Government to engage with the treaty process as a way for the UK to disarm its nuclear weapons.
10. Note the United Nations process, which is leading two new Global Compacts on refugees and on migrants, instruct the Council to participate in international ecumenical and UK civil society efforts to call for decisions which place human dignity and welfare at the heart of considerations, and encourage congregations and church members to pray for successful outcomes of the negotiations.
11. Instruct the Church and Society Council to facilitate informed public conversation about our future relationship with Europe.
12. Instruct the Church and Society Council to monitor the impact of leaving the EU on the Devolution Settlement and call on the UK Government to ensure that powers returned from the EU are devolved to Scotland in line with that Settlement.
13. Call on the Scottish and UK Governments to establish and maintain high standards of environmental protection following the UK's planned departure from the EU.
14. Call on the Scottish and UK Governments to establish and maintain high standards of political, social, economic and cultural rights, and in particular that human rights and equalities remain at the heart of Scottish society as outlined by the Scotland Declaration on Human Rights.
15. Urge the Scottish and UK Governments to seek the strongest possible social, cultural and economic ties with other European countries.

Ensuring the Health and Wellbeing of All

16. Commend the efforts of Alcohol Focus Scotland, the Scottish Government and others to reduce the harm caused to individuals and society through the misuse of alcohol, and welcome the introduction of minimum unit pricing for alcohol.
17. Instruct the Council to promote and emphasise the intrinsic worth of each individual as an image of the living God, and to work with the wider church, and with partner agencies to seek the health and wellbeing of all.
18. Note that July 2018 will see the marking of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the National Health Service (NHS), and recognise that while the NHS remains a valued part of our social fabric, its long-term future is under serious pressure, and in light of this appoint a Commission on the long-term future of the NHS in Scotland as described in the report.

Investing in Young People

19. Recognise the significant contribution that the Church of Scotland has made to Scottish Education and thank the members of the Education Committee, both past and present, for all their commitment and endeavours in this area.
20. Instruct the Church and Society Council, the Mission and Discipleship Council and the Ministries Council, to coordinate the Church of Scotland's contribution to the nurture and support of young people by establishing a cross-council Young People and Education Action Group, with the necessary resources and support, as outlined in Section 13.4 of the report.
21. Instruct the Council to present an implementation plan for the Young People and Education Action Group's work, produced by the Young People and Education Action Group and based on the principles outlined in the report, to the General Assembly of 2019.
22. Instruct the Council to ensure that by the General Assembly of 2019 the Education Committee has passed on work agreed by the Council to the Young People and Education Action Group.

Report

1. INTRODUCTION: GOD IS WITH US

1.1 This is the year when the Council began to implement Speak Out, the long-term hope for change which it presented to last year's General Assembly. It is a belief in a fairer, more equal and more just society; communities, nations and a world which more authentically reflect the heart and passion of God for all creation. It is a hope rooted in faith and surrounded in prayer.

1.2 In communities, nations and a world characterised by continuing uncertainties –and the last year has certainly had its times of uncertainty, as will the coming years– this can be a challenging hope to cling on to. It can be easier to become drained of hope or so inwardly focused that we fail to recognise God's continued presence and activity in the world.

1.3 Rev Dr Sam Wells, vicar at St Martin in the Fields (London), who spoke at last year's General Assembly writes: *"God is with us. These four words express the character of God, the identity of Jesus, the work of the Spirit. They are the Christian testimony about the past, witness in the present and hope for the future."*^[1]

1.4 Our activity seeks first and foremost to point towards God and to recognise where God is already at work. It takes place in the here and now although it points towards and hopes for a different future. It celebrates the ongoing work of the Spirit and exposes those activities which run counter to God's love for the world and passion for justice.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 Flourishing Local Communities (Section 4)

We report on work that we have engaged in with a range of congregations across Scotland as well as ongoing activity in the spheres of asset-based community development, the development of local democracy and tackling homelessness. We also note work that has gone on around welfare reform, including the roll out of Universal Credit and campaigns to end the freeze on benefits.

2.2 Building an Economy Driven by Equality (Section 5)

We report on work undertaken in partnership with the Islamic Finance Council on development of a framework for ethical

finance as well as highlighting a number of areas of ongoing work as we advocate for an economy driven by the need for greater equality.

2.3 Caring for Creation (Section 6)

We report on our ongoing work to tackle climate change and advocate for climate justice. We also report on partnership work to develop increased awareness around conservation and biodiversity.

2.4 Caring for Creation – Fossil fuel investments and the transition to a low carbon economy (Section 7)

We bring proposals that the Church of Scotland should, over the next two years, divest from fossil fuel companies unless there is clear evidence that these companies are themselves modifying their policy and practice and the Church should, at the same time, develop a statement of investment principles.

2.5 Doing Politics Differently (Section 8)

We report on our ongoing relationships with the Scottish and UK parliaments as well as highlighting our work, through *Meet Your MSP*, *People's Politics* and *Participatory Budgeting*, to develop new models of democratic participation.

2.6 Building Global Friendships (Section 9)

We report on our ongoing work advocating for and supporting asylum seekers and refugees, as well as the Church's continued opposition to nuclear weapons and our promotion of Fairtrade.

2.7 Building Global Friendships – Constitutional Relationships in Scotland, the UK and Europe (Section 10)

We report on the complex and constantly changing inter-relationships between Scotland, the rest of the UK and the rest of Europe, and advocate for ongoing close relationships between Scotland and the rest of Europe following the UK's planned departure from the EU in March 2019.

2.8 Ensuring the Health and Wellbeing of All (Section 11)

We report on issues of mental health, the minimum unit pricing of alcohol and plans to develop a Commission looking at the future of the National Health Service in Scotland.

2.9 Investing in Young People (Section 12)

In the Year of Young People, we highlight steps which we are taking to tackle child poverty and the ongoing work of the Education Committee.

2.10 Investing in Young People – A review of the Church of Scotland's work in education (Section 13)

We bring recommendations to establish a Young People and Education Forum, operating across the councils of the Church, to coordinate the Church's work with children and young people, including in the sphere of education.

2.11 Society Religion and Technology project (Section 14)

We report on the work of the Society, Religion and Technology Project, including proposals to celebrate the project's 50th anniversary in 2020.

2.12 Campaigns (Section 15)

A list of all the campaigns that the Council is involved with on behalf of the Church of Scotland.

3. ACTION RELATING TO THE 2017 DELIVERANCE

3.1 The following table summarises actions taken in relation to the Church and Society Deliverances agreed at the 2017 General Assembly.

2017 Deliverance	Activity and Outcome
<p>2. Express profound sadness at the attack at Manchester Arena and the tragic and pointless loss of life; affirm the courage and grace with which Manchester is already responding; call on the Church to continue to foster deep relationships across communities; and commit us to pray for all those affected.</p>	<p>In March, the Joint Public Issues Team held its biannual conference in Manchester where part of the conference reflected on the Church's response to hate crimes and acts of terrorism. At the time of writing the Joint Public Issues Team are considering a piece of work to explore what can be drawn from Christian theology and traditions to speak into the reality of terrorism.</p>
<p>4. Celebrate the outstanding work which local churches are already undertaking to make Scotland fairer, more equal and more just – more like God intends.</p>	<p>Over the course of this year Council and staff members have visited local congregations to learn more about how congregations across Scotland are already making a difference, to hear something of the local congregational experience, develop relationships with those working at a local level, and to share some of the thinking behind the ethos of Speak Out.</p> <p>From the visits there were a number of interesting and exciting projects. Many of these, while small in nature, made a real difference to their communities - providing opportunities for relationships and encounter. Nearly all the congregations visited were doing something in their community that related to the themes of Speak Out.</p> <p>The Council continues to believe that the Church is at its most authentic in its local expressions and that there is much to be gained from enabling local experience to shape and drive what the Church does and says nationally.</p>

<p>5. Instruct the Council to work in partnership with other Councils and Committees in the implementation of the plan.</p>	<p>Over the last year the Church and Society Council has been collaborating with both Ministries Council and the Mission and Discipleship Council around investing in young people. It is hoped that, if the report's recommendations are accepted, this will enable greater collaboration between the three councils in this area.</p> <p>Throughout this year the Council has contributed to the Mission Forum on its work around ethnic minority churches as part of its Building Global Friendships theme and has contributed to the Ministries Council Ascend talks.</p> <p>Through its close involvement with SCPO, Eco-Congregation Scotland, JPIT and SFAR, the Council continues to work ecumenically and as a result maintains positive relations with the Ecumenical Relations Committee. To this end the Council has a representative on the Columba Declaration contact group.</p> <p>The Council will continue to seek opportunities to collaborate more closely with councils and committees over the coming year.</p>
<p>6. Instruct the Council to develop resources to enable congregations to engage fully in the work of Speak Out.</p>	<p>This remains an ongoing piece of work. The Council, in collaboration with others, has produced a <i>Faith Action For Nature</i> resource as part of its <i>Caring For Creation</i> work, has delivered training on Participatory Budgeting as part of the Council's <i>Doing Politics Differently</i> work and has contributed to <i>Sanctuary in Scotland: Information on refugee issues for faith groups in Scotland</i> as part of building global friendships.</p> <p>These resources deal with specific projects within Speak Out, but there are plans to create more general resources to enable congregations to engage fully in the broader work of the Council.</p>
<p>7. Instruct the Council to establish a robust monitoring and evaluation framework which will enable the Church to scrutinise, measure and learn from the work of Speak Out.</p>	<p>Initial conversations have taken place with several potential partners with expertise in monitoring and evaluation as well as those with specific theological skills.</p> <p>The Council is keen that any framework should assist in its stated aim of maximising the learning as a result of Speak Out to develop and enrich the Church's public theology.</p>
<p>8. Instruct the Council to develop appropriate resources to ensure the wider discussion of the issues raised in the Surveillance and Social Justice report.</p>	<p>Resources on this piece of work are still to be published. The Council, through the Society Religion and Technology Project, continue to engage with this issue.</p>

<p>9. Instruct the Council to continue to challenge organisations, including governments, in their inappropriate use of surveillance, especially with regard to the poorest and most marginalised in society.</p>	<p>The Council maintains a watching brief and responds as appropriate.</p>
<p>10. Note the imminent introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation and encourage the Council to monitor its effects on vulnerable people.</p>	<p>Through the Society Religion and Technology project, the Council has been involved in monitoring implementation of GDPR.</p>
<p>11. Deplore the reported rise in xenophobic and racist attacks on people following the result of the EU referendum and affirm the valuable role of citizens from other parts of Europe living in Scotland.</p>	<p>The valuable role of citizens from other parts of Europe living in Scotland was affirmed in a submission to Scottish Parliament Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee call for evidence on Article 50 withdrawal negotiations. It was also the subject of one of the short films produced for the planned <i>People's Politics</i> event ahead of the General Election. The films were released on the Church of Scotland website.</p>
<p>12. Encourage congregations to discuss our future in Europe respectfully, using the "Conversation Welcome" resource produced by the Joint Public Issues Team, and to raise their concerns and aspirations with their elected representatives.</p>	<p>The changing political landscape has made it difficult to promote interest in <i>Conversation Welcome</i>. The resource continues to be available through the Joint Public Issues website and training on the resource was offered at the 2018 JPIT conference.</p>
<p>13. Call on the Scottish and UK Governments to ensure that the rights and contributions of nationals from other EU countries resident in Scotland and UK citizens resident in EU member states are recognised and protected.</p>	<p>This was the subject of one of the short films produced for the planned <i>People's Politics</i> event ahead of the General Election. The films were released on the Church of Scotland website.</p> <p>Subsequently, a letter was written to the Prime Minister raising these issues and the point was reiterated by the Very Rev Dr Derek Browning when he met the Prime Minister during his visit to Westminster.</p> <p>Similarly, these points were expressed in a submission to the Scottish Parliament's Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee call for evidence on Article 50 withdrawal negotiations.</p>
<p>14. Instruct the Council to ensure the voice of the Church is heard in the public debate around the Article 50 negotiations.</p>	<p>Public debate has been limited; however, the Council has engaged with politicians in the UK and Scottish Parliaments and has met the Scottish Government Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe.</p>

<p>15. Call on the UK Government to increase the target number of individuals to be resettled under refugee humanitarian programmes in proportion to the scale of global need and the relative size of the UK population and economy.</p>	<p>In the summer of 2017 we wrote to the then Immigration Minister, Brandon Lewis MP, with a number of the issues raised by last year’s General Assembly. We received a reply which outlined the UK Government’s existing rationale for its policies, some of which remain at odds with the view of the General Assembly. In November the Home Office and Church of England hosted a meeting at Lambeth Palace to consider the potential for future resettlement targets after 2020 (when the most important current programme comes to an end). The Church of Scotland was represented at this meeting through our Methodist Church partners in the Joint Public Issues Team. The point about additionality in the community sponsorship programme is one which is increasingly acknowledged as an important issue, and we shall continue to raise this matter with MPs, civil servants and others interested in the programme.</p>
<p>16. Call on the UK Government to allow individuals resettled through community sponsorship to be counted in addition to, rather than as part of, its target number for refugee resettlement.</p>	
<p>17. Encourage congregations that may be considering applying for community sponsorship to be aware of the wider implications outlined in the Report at paragraph 7.4.5.</p>	
<p>18. Call on the UK Government to implement the recommendations of the 2015 UK Parliamentary Inquiry into Detention and to make provision for child refugees to have access to a right to family reunion.</p>	<p>The UK Government has made no indication that it will change its policy on detention, despite reports of appalling conditions at some of the immigration removal centres over the past year. The Council supported a campaign to back a Private Member’s Bill (the Refugees (Family Reunion) (No.2) Bill) from Angus MacNeil MP to improve the right to family reunion for child refugees. This passed its House of Commons second reading on 16 March and will proceed to the next stage.</p>
<p>19. Call on the Scottish Government to extend its strategic framework for refugee integration and ensure the participation of the Church at a local and national level, both as an organisation committed to working with refugees as well as a body which includes asylum seekers and refugees as members.</p>	<p>The Scottish Government has involved the Church of Scotland and other faith groups in a Refugee Integration Forum which meets regularly and brings together a wide range of people and agencies working with refugees in Scotland. There has also been more involvement with community and grass-roots organisations, which included a community engagement exercise that took place over the summer and gathered views from hundreds of people – including many refugees and asylum seekers– on the development of a new Refugee Integration Strategy. The Church of Scotland was represented on a working group looking at communities and social connections for the new strategy, which was launched in January 2018 and is called <i>New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022</i>.</p>

<p>20. Call on the UK Government to end its policy of destitution for failed asylum seekers.</p>	<p>In the summer of 2017 we wrote to the then Immigration Minister, Brandon Lewis MP, with a number of the issues raised by last year’s General Assembly. We received a reply which outlined the UK Government’s existing rationale for its policies. The UK Government continues to have as its aim the creation of a ‘hostile environment’ for immigration, and destitution for refused asylum seekers appears to be part of an attempt to deter people from seeking asylum in the UK. Congregations or individuals who wish to offer practical support to people who are in the situation of being made destitute should consider giving to the Refugee Survival Trust (www.rst.org.uk), or if they have a spare bed, offering temporary accommodation to homeless people through Positive Action’s Room for Refugees scheme (www.roomforrefugees.com.)</p>
<p>21. Encourage congregations and church members to take part in opportunities for encounter and learning with asylum seekers and refugees, through appropriate groups or the programmes from the Scottish Refugee Council including Cup of Tea with a Refugee and Refugee Festival Scotland.</p>	<p>Through the work of Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees, support and advice is available to congregations wishing to embark on new projects or ideas.</p> <p>Congregations are also reminded that the Go For It Fund is available to support work which meets identified needs in the community and tackles poverty and/or social injustice. Further information on the work of Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees is available in Section 9 of the report.</p>
<p>22. Acknowledge the generosity of many congregations in donating aid and money to support refugees; encourage giving money rather than purchasing new goods for donation, and where donated goods are offered that these are given in response to a specific list of requested items and to a registered charity.</p>	<p>If individuals or congregations wish to donate money to support the work of Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees, this is now possible through an online giving webpage: www.mydonate.bt.com/events/sfar/441943</p>
<p>23. Affirm the place of pilgrimage within the life of the church and encourage congregations to explore opportunities for pilgrimage locally and how to provide practical and spiritual support for pilgrims passing through the parish.</p>	<p>The Church is an active member of the Scottish Pilgrim Routes Forum through which it is exploring with others how it can support and develop pilgrimage in Scotland. It is also exploring with Church of Scotland congregations how it can share and support work caring for pilgrims.</p>
<p>24. Instruct the Council, in partnership with the Mission and Discipleship Council and others to develop resources to support pilgrimage in Scotland, and to explore and develop ways of assisting congregations on pilgrim routes to fulfil the missionary purposes of the Church.</p>	<p>The Council, with the Mission and Discipleship and Ministries Councils, is reflecting on the new commitment to support pilgrimage and what resources will be required to assist congregations. Congregations in Fife and elsewhere are developing resources to promote pilgrim routes, which we will share widely across the church.</p>

<p>25. Welcome the growth of interest in ethical finance initiatives in Scotland; urge congregations to support the Christian Aid Big Shift campaign on banking and investigate what it means to become an Ethical Money Church.</p>	<p>In partnership with Eco-Congregation Scotland and <i>Good Money Week</i> the Council has supported the campaign in Scotland. The Rev Sally Foster Fulton of Christian Aid Scotland made the keynote address on living out our faith through the use, sharing and justice of our resources and Christian Aid Scotland's Senior Advocacy and Policy Adviser, Chris Hegarty, talked about the <i>Big Shift Campaign</i> at our <i>Good Money Week</i> conference in October 2017.</p>
<p>26. Instruct the Council to consider the effectiveness of microcredit schemes in lifting people out of poverty and report to a future General Assembly as part of the Council's focus on an economy driven by equality.</p>	<p>There has been a delay in appointing a programme manager with responsibility for developing the Council's work in this field. The Council would intend to bring a report to the 2019 General Assembly.</p>
<p>27. Welcome the impact of 'Meet Your MSP' and encourage congregations to build positive relationships with their local politicians.</p>	<p>A report on the Meet Your MSP Project is provided within Section 8 of the report.</p>
<p>28. Welcome the work on Participatory Budgeting initiatives being undertaken by local congregations supported by the Council.</p>	<p>A report on Participatory Budgeting initiatives undertaken by local congregations is provided within Section 8 of the report.</p>
<p>29. Encourage the Council to reflect on changes in the way that decisions are made at the level of Government and report to a future General Assembly.</p>	<p>The Scottish and UK Governments are currently focusing significant energy on the implications of Brexit. With some political parties calling for second referendums either on Scottish Independence or membership of the EU it is close to impossible to report on decision-making processes without appearing to take a view on one of these controversial issues. The Council reflects regularly on how Government works and how the Church can be part of that process and will report to the General Assembly in 2019.</p>
<p>30. Commend the work that the Council of Assembly is doing to explore the best way to take forward broader gender justice work in the Church.</p>	<p>In December 2017, the Council of Assembly approved the appointment of a Gender Justice Officer for a five-year period. Recruitment for this post took place in March 2018. More information on this role can be seen in the report of the Council of Assembly.</p>
<p>31. Welcome the work being undertaken by the Violence against Women Task Group and Development Officer and urge the Church to continue to work to end violence against women.</p>	<p>The Violence Against Women Development Worker post came to an end in June 2017, having completed work on behalf of the Council on a longer-term gender justice strategy for the Church. During the past year the Violence Against Women Task Group has continued to function effectively.</p>

<p>32. Condemn the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) as an act of violence against women and call on the Council to urge the UK Government to seriously consider an individual's risk of falling victim to FGM when determining asylum applications.</p>	<p>These issues have been raised in a letter to Rt Hon Amber Rudd, Home Secretary.</p>
<p>33. Commend the new resources created by the Violence against Women Task Group for study and action by local churches and Kirk Sessions.</p>	<p>The resources were distributed to congregations at the end of 2017. Posters have been produced, to be displayed in church premises, highlighting domestic violence and sexual violence.</p>
<p>34. Instruct the Council to reflect on the issue of prostitution and the Church's response to it and to report on this subject to a future General Assembly.</p>	<p>The Council will bring a report to a future General Assembly.</p>
<p>35. Call on the UK Government to ensure that ship to ship transfers of crude oil are not permitted in the Inner Moray Firth.</p>	<p>The Council was represented at meetings with scientists and community representatives in Cromarty in November 2017 but were unfortunately unable to meet with the Port Authority. The original proposals for ship to ship transfer submitted in 2015 were not acceptable to the Marine and Coastguard Agency (MCA) but a further application may be made in 2018, at which time the Council could respond to the MCA.</p>
<p>36. Welcome the development of Visitor Centres in Scottish Prisons, welcome the engagement of the Church in this development, and encourage the Council to continue to pay attention to this and other matters relating to imprisonment and penal reform.</p>	<p>The last year has seen the development of four new Prison Visitor Centres, bringing the total to 11 Prison Visitor Centres across Scotland. The Council continues to be represented on the Group's Executive and CrossReach is responsible for running two of the centres.</p>
<p>37. Call on political decision-makers and influence shapers to refrain from personal attacks but instead seek to discuss, debate and engage in conversation with respect, grace and always seeking the common good.</p>	<p>The Council continues to encourage politicians and others to engage with these issues at hand in a respectful and meaningful way. It is the Council's belief that acknowledging that the God-given humanity of all lies at the heart of good political process.</p>
<p>38. Instruct the Council to continue to monitor the ongoing debate about Scotland's Constitutional Future and to report to the General Assembly of 2018.</p>	<p>A full report, <i>Constitutional Relationships in Scotland, the UK and Europe</i> is available at Section 10 of the report.</p>

4. FLOURISHING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

4.1 In February 2018 the Council appointed a Programme Manager to take forward the work around Flourishing Local Communities. This is a two-year fixed term post that is funded from the Council's reserves. The Council hopes, and intends, that the additional staff resource in this area will contribute to the ability of local congregations to ensure that their communities are places where people can experience life in all its fullness. Work in this area will be done

collaboratively with a range of others including the Priority Areas Committee, the Go For It Fund and CrossReach to maximise shared impact at both local and national levels.

4.2 Learning from Local Congregations

4.2.1 Over the summer of 2017 Council members and staff visited over 25 congregations and projects within 11 Presbyteries.^[2] The intention was to learn more about how congregations across Scotland are already making a difference, to hear something of the local congregational

experience, develop relationships with those working at a local level, and to share some of the thinking behind the ethos of Speak Out.

4.2.2 Nearly all the congregations visited were doing something in their community that related to the themes of Speak Out. Often these were small but significant. Indeed, the importance of small, relatively low-cost pieces of work was one of the hallmarks of many of the projects that the Council visited. In general, projects tended to be larger where congregations had accessed additional funding. From the visits there were a number of interesting and exciting projects going on, demonstrating how churches are making a real difference in their community, providing opportunities for relationships and encounter. Below are some of the highlights from the visits, although it should be acknowledged that these represent only a small sample of the good work that is going on across Scotland. More examples of inspiring work can be found on the Go For It Fund pages of the Church of Scotland website (http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/serve/go_for_it), the Priority Areas blog http://cos.churchofscotland.org.uk/blogs/priority_areas/), and in almost every Church of Scotland congregation across Scotland.

- Callander Kirk's annual pilgrimage: An annual pilgrimage to Trossachs Church which culminates in a service and family picnic at the church.
- Carlops Church's welcome booklet: A welcome booklet for every new person moving into the village. The booklet highlights different activities, groups and resources within the community as well as the area's different festivals and traditions.
- Auchtermuchty Church visitation team: Although vacant for some time, the members of the congregation have set up a ministry of visitation. The team of 9 has been running well for several months, and each person has a particular lead responsibility. They will meet anyone who wants this service and will act appropriately, depending on what is needed.
- Old Kirk Muirhouse's Christmas presents: The congregation works to provide a present for every child in the parish at Christmas time.

- Castlemilk Parish Church Carpenters Workshop: The product of a union between Castlemilk East and West Churches, Castlemilk Parish Church sought to use the wood from the pews of the old churches to make fittings for their new building. To do this they train local volunteers to do the woodwork.
- Keith North Church Tuesday Table: Having set up a foodbank, Keith North Church realised that a number of people in the community were asking for 'cold parcels' because they did not have the facilities to cook or heat food. Tuesday Table is a response to this where every Tuesday, using food donated by the local Tesco, the church creates a community café in which all are welcome. People can pay what they feel like for the food, the local school music group is involved in providing recitals, there is a clothes swap shop, and the sanctuary is opened as a reflective space.
- Allan Park South Church's Wellbeing Choir: An intergenerational choir that meets every week using a mixture of Scottish tunes, popular music, songs from musicals, and contemporary Christian songs.
- Logie Kirk University Debates: As part of the university chaplaincy, the Minister for Logie Kirk, along with the Friends of Logie Kirk, organised biennial debates at the university focusing on key societal issues.

4.2.3 While the visits undoubtedly highlighted inspiring projects and examples of congregations engaging with their communities in transformative ways, the visits also raised some of the challenges that many congregations felt they were facing. The most cited of these challenges was a lack of resource to meet local need, while low attendance and elderly membership were also raised. A number of congregations mentioned that their membership would struggle, or were reticent, to take on long-term or ongoing commitments, as many did not have the energy to commit to ongoing projects. However, short-term specific projects were seen as being more possible. Poverty and the existence of foodbanks were the two societal issues most regularly raised during the course of visits with concerns about loneliness and isolation also featuring strongly.

4.2.4 In responding to these challenges a number of congregations spoke of 'freeing up' congregation members to be involved in the community and in community projects, rather than trying to deliver projects through the church. In

terms of the input of the Church and Society Council, a number of possibilities were suggested, including providing faith-based resources to enable congregations to engage with the issues, meeting with congregations face-to-face and relationship building, linking local and national initiatives (e.g. job clubs), linking up congregations who are working on or have a shared interest in similar initiatives, helping congregations to get youth workers, supporting Presbyteries to engage on certain issues, or providing information and updates. The Council continues to take these challenges on board as it seeks to better resource and learn from the lived experience of local congregations. As with all its work, this will only be fruitful if it is done collaboratively, working alongside others, both within the Church and in wider society.

4.3 Asset-Based Community Development

4.3.1 In June 2017 the Council hosted an evening bringing together a range of partners from across the Church with a particular interest in Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) with Cormac Russell, managing director of Nurture Development and one of Europe's leading exponents of ABCD. The event resulted in a number of new links being made both with the policy and practice of ABCD. The model is being taken forward particularly within the Priority Areas network and Cormac Russell was a keynote speaker at the Priority Areas Gathering in November 2017.

4.4 Local Governance Bill

4.4.1 In recent years there has been a significant level of policy and legislation in the Scottish Parliament around local democracy and increased public participation including, for example, the Community Empowerment Act (2015) and the increased interest in Participatory Budgeting (see Section 8 of the report). This increased interest can be understood as being driven by three inter-related pressures: the increased engagement following the referendum on Scottish independence; low voter turnout, particularly in local elections and in the many of the economically poorest neighbourhoods; and an increasing concern that representative democracy is under threat with the global rise of authoritarian politics and so-called fake news.

4.4.2 In late 2018, the Scottish Government plans to bring legislation before the Scottish Parliament to further increase participation. Over the coming months, the Council will engage with local communities to gather insights into how participation and involvement can be further enhanced.

4.5 Homelessness

4.5.1 The Council strongly welcomed the creation of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group by the Scottish Government in September 2017 as part of its Programme for Government and the energy with which the Action Group has gone about its work since it was founded. Scotland has some of the most progressive homelessness legislation in the world, but the reality is that this legislation has not succeeded in eradicating homelessness. Indeed, there is clear evidence that homelessness, particularly rough sleeping has been on the rise in recent times.

4.5.2 The Church, through initiatives such as the Lodging Housing Mission, Fresh Start, Churches Action for the Homeless, Greyfriars Community Project and Scottish Churches Housing Action, has done a great deal both to address practically the needs of homeless people and to advocate on their behalf. The Council was delighted that the Very Rev Dr Russell Barr was appointed to the Action Group and also that the group has worked closely with those who have a direct ongoing experience of what it is to be homeless and housing insecure. Success is always more likely when those who know about the issues from direct experience are involved in the development of and implementation of policy and practice.

4.5.3 Many church members, including the then Moderator Very Rev Dr Derek Browning participated in Sleep in the Park (December 2017) which not only raised substantial funds to address homelessness but also did a great deal to ensure that the issues of homelessness remain high in the public consciousness.

4.6 Welfare Reform

4.6.1 Since May 2017 the Council has continued to call for a pause to the roll-out of Universal Credit as initial evidence suggests that the introduction of the scheme, among other things, has resulted in a 15% rise in rent arrears issues (compared to a national decrease of 2%) and an 87% increase in Crisis Grant issues (compared to a national increase of 9%).^[3] A briefing on the problems with Universal Credit was prepared by JPIT and distributed to MSPs ahead of a debate in the Scottish Parliament on 3 October. The briefing was referenced during the debate. A similar but updated briefing was circulated to MPs ahead of a debate in Westminster on 18 October. The Council has also supported Glasgow Presbytery in writing to the Department of Work & Pensions about their ongoing concerns on the impact of Universal Credit and has

written to all Presbyteries asking them to consider doing likewise. A number of Presbyteries have done so.

4.6.2 In October the Council, along with other members of the Poverty Alliance, signed a letter to the Chancellor calling for an end to the freeze on benefits. Research from Sheffield Hallam University suggests that the freeze in working-age benefits will lead to households in Scotland losing an estimated £300m a year. It is expected that this will affect 700,000 families in Scotland, with an average loss of £450 per family per year. This is a substantial amount of money, especially for families on low incomes. Ending the freeze on working age benefits is the first step in building a fairer, more equal United Kingdom. More information on the campaign can be found at <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/200687>

4.6.3 The Council has also been active following the decision of the UK Government to close a significant number of Job Centres across the UK, with the Council secretary invited to give evidence to the Scottish Affairs Committee on this issue. The Council have subsequently been working closely with a range of partners and, in particular, the Priority Areas Committee, to continue to highlight the issues and to consider ways in which churches might provide support in communities most severely impacted.

5. BUILDING AN ECONOMY DRIVEN BY EQUALITY

5.1 Shared Values Framework with the Islamic Finance Council

5.1.1 Together, Islam and Christianity represent over half of the world's population. They are influential in not only informing the value systems in countries where they constitute the majority of the population, but also in shaping the wider moral landscape within which the rest of the people on the planet live their lives.

5.1.2 It is now commonly acknowledged that short-term and unethical economic practices jeopardise the ability of humans to flourish in their role as God's vicegerents on earth. In light of the major financial instability at the onset of the present century and the resultant scrutiny over the workings of the financial sector, it has never been more timely for these two great religious traditions to set forth those inalienable values and principles which lie at the centre of their understandings of what should guide a truly ethical economy.

5.1.3 In February 2018 the Council approved a shared values framework that resulted from these workshops. It is the Council's belief that the values identified within the framework not only accurately represent the shared principles between Christianity and Islam, but can help shape a fairer and more sustainable future for all. The values are:

- **Stewardship**

The wealth we have control over is ultimately a trust from God to be used in accordance with sound moral principles. Dominion over the resources of the earth is tempered with a responsibility that this be done in light of the divine commands to temperance, purposefulness and care. This dominion is understood in the light of scriptural sources as being one that is not exploitative, but based on cultivating and nurturing civilisation.

- **Love of the Neighbour**

This has been identified –alongside love of God– as one of the two core shared values between Islam and Christianity. It has a wide-ranging impact on how we view the function of a just economy and follows on from the shared principle of the stewardship of humans on earth. It serves to test our claim to love God for "*whoever does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen*" [John 4:20]. The implication of 'love of neighbour' in both Christianity and Islam, is that for it to be a true embodiment of love, it must be marked by both generosity and altruism towards the other.

- **Human Flourishing**

The two faiths share in the understanding that one of the inalienable rights of humans is the freedom and ability to express and nurture our dual functions of creativity and productivity in the service of the common good. It is through this that one is able to fully live a life proclaiming the worship and adoration of God and it is this that is at the core of human flourishing.

Sustainability and Purposefulness

Human vicegerency over the earth underlines the need for the use of natural resources in a manner that is sustainable and purposeful. This is indicative of a 'Theology of Sufficiency': an acceptance of the limited nature of the earth's natural resources which in turn invokes a moral obligation on us all to place tangible societal restriction on avarice and wanton greed. Avarice is one of the seven deadly sins in Christianity and, in the Islamic tradition, is considered a cardinal vice precipitating the spiritual death of the soul.

Justice and Equity

The two faiths share at their core a call to fairness, equity and justice in one's financial dealings with others, and is derived from the theme of love for one's neighbour. The use of natural resources and specifically economic activity should be marked by a commitment to equity. All human activity, to be morally commended, should be purposive and embody equity and justice.

Common Good

A purposeful approach to economic activity is where good is not just restricted to the personal benefit of the individual investor, but to the common good of all. Those involved in economic activity should seek to promote mutual benefit. In keeping with the expression of the Scholastics, property is private in terms of ownership, but common in terms of utility. The creation of a strong sense of a common good and mutuality amongst the members and institutions in a community is a hallmark of a society that has placed justice and equity at the core of its values.

5.2 Citizens Basic Income

5.2.1 The Council's 2015 report on taxation recognised of Citizens Basic Income that *"The idea is worthy of further and more in depth study and one which organisations with greater understanding of the complexities of our tax system would serve us well by looking into."* As such, the decision of the Scottish Government in September 2017 to fund research into the viability of such a model in Scotland, is to be welcomed. The Council will seek to keep a careful watching brief on this research as well as advocating for practical pilots across Scotland and to report to a future General Assembly.

5.3 Taxation

5.3.1 The Council, in line with the policy of the General Assembly, continues to put the case for fair and progressive taxation. In line with this policy it wrote to both the

Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Cabinet Secretary for Finance ahead of the UK and Scottish budgets, advocating increased public spending to tackle child poverty and climate change.

5.4 Churches Mutual Credit Union

The continued growth of the Churches Mutual Credit Union (CMCU) (see tables below), particularly in conjunction with CrossReach and the Guild, has been very encouraging. In addition, many opportunities to encourage interactions between local churches and credit unions have arisen.

	2016	2017
Church of Scotland	97	119
Scottish Episcopal Church	5	6
URC - Scotland Synod	3	3
Roman Catholic	0	2
Methodist	1	0
	106	130

	2016	2017
Church Central Office Employee	11	12
COS Charities	2	8
Diocesan, Presbytery or Regional Office Employee	0	1
Elder	43	46
Lay Minister	2	2
Minister in Training	1	1
Retired Stipendary Minister	3	3
Stipendary Minister	40	52
Stipendary Minister - Household Member	2	2
Vestry, Synod or Kirk Session Member	2	3
	106	130

5.5 Good Money Week

5.5.1 In October 2017 the Church of Scotland and partners Christian Aid Scotland, Eco-Congregation Scotland, Oikocredit UK & Ireland and the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility (ECCR), came together for the Good Money Week conference, *What have faith and money got to do with climate change?* Sponsored by Oikocredit UK and Ireland, Ethical Futures and Anderson MacPhie Financial Services, and chaired by Dr Katherine Trebeck, Senior Researcher at Oxfam, the event was a good example of partners working together on a topic that is of growing importance to congregations and denominations. The conference explored the key issues around how we can invest our money ethically to have a positive impact on the climate. The conference attracted a large attendance, reflecting the continuing increase in awareness of ethical finance and the desire to explore how investing can help create an economy driven by equality.

6. CARING FOR CREATION

6.1 Climate Change

6.1.1 At the heart of the Council's work is a concern about the growing impact of climate change around the world. At the UN climate change conference at Paris in December 2015 a commitment was made to limit the rise in global temperatures to two degrees Celsius. The critical importance of this decision was emphasised again at the UN conference in Bonn in November 2017 (CoP23) where we brought together, with the World Council of Churches, the First Minister Nicola Sturgeon and delegates from Pacific churches experiencing the impact of climate change. Frances Namoumou from the Pacific Conference of Churches and Tafue Lusama from the Congregational Church in Tuvalu were able to share their stories of the impact of droughts, flooding and sea level rise and also to explain how churches are working with governments to help those affected; for example in moving away from flooding to higher ground. Climate forced migration is a threat to many Pacific islanders and will add to the growing number who are forced to leave their homes each year. Worldwide the UNHCR estimates that in each year since 2008 over 21 million people have been forcibly displaced by 'weather-related sudden onset hazards' such as floods, storms, wildfires and extreme temperatures. More have to leave their homes in the context of slow-onset hazards, such as droughts or coastal erosion linked to sea level rise. In Cape Town the impact of drought has resulted in

a crisis in water supplies this year with worrying implications for the rapidly growing urban population. Climate change is a growing contributor to forced migration and is projected to increase displacement of people in the future. The work of Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees in part reflects the growing number of climate forced refugees.

6.2 Conservation

6.2.1 Care for creation is not limited to climate change. Concerns about loss of biodiversity (the variety of life) and how we care for other species on earth are posing questions for congregations about our way of life and how it is damaging the earth, our common home. One example is our use of disposable plastic bottles. Eco-Congregation Scotland campaigned for a Scottish deposit return scheme for plastic bottles as part of the *Have You Got The Bottle?* campaign. This campaign pressed for the introduction of a deposit return scheme for plastic bottles and other drink containers to reduce the amount of waste, particularly the amount of plastic ending up in the sea. In September 2017 the Scottish Government announced that it would go ahead with the scheme and has been consulting on how it will operate. Also in partnership with Eco-Congregation Scotland, we are encouraging congregations to learn about practical conservation through the project *Faith Action for Nature in Scotland*, developed with the RSPB, one of Scotland's largest conservation NGOs. The project will encourage church members to take practical steps in their communities to learn about and promote nature conservation.

6.3 The Moray Firth

6.3.1 At the General Assembly 2017 the Very Rev Dr Alan McDonald raised concerns about the proposal from the Cromarty Port Authority to transfer oil from ship to ship in the Moray Firth. The Council was represented at meetings in Cromarty to learn about the proposals. The Moray Firth is famous for its wildlife, particularly for bottlenose dolphins, and is subject to high levels of protection under UK and EU environmental designations. Any oil spill would have potentially disastrous local consequences yet neither the local community, Highland Council or Scottish Government are formally part of the decision-making process. The Marine and Coastguard Agency, the agency with the power to agree or reject the proposal, was critical of the first application and we wait to see if a second application is forthcoming. In the meantime, we may reflect on the safety of the marine environment and the threats to it that have been memorably highlighted by David Attenborough in *Blue Planet II*. While the

undersea world is effectively invisible to most of us it remains a vital part of God's creation that we have perhaps overlooked for too long.

6.4 Questions Around Economic Growth

6.4.1 Underpinning many of our concerns is the growing awareness that the consumer economy and uncritical acceptance of economic growth is at the root of many of our environmental problems. This was explored in the Good Money Week conference 'What have faith and money got to do with Climate Change?' in October 2017. It also informs our participation in the work of the Conference of European Churches which will be debating a report on 'Sharing God's earth and its riches justly' at its assembly in Serbia in June 2018.

7. CARING FOR CREATION – FOSSIL FUEL INVESTMENTS AND THE TRANSITION TO A LOW CARBON ECONOMY

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 The General Assembly 2016 agreed that: "*Scotland needs to play a leading part in the global drive to reduce carbon emissions through major changes in energy production and consumption and that the Church's ethical investment policies should be aligned with this objective.*" As a result, it instructed the Church and Society Council to explore with the Trustees of the Church of Scotland Investors Trust, the Church of Scotland Pension Fund and others to explore: "*how to alter existing investment policies to promote the transition to a low carbon global economy by 2050 and to report back to the General Assembly in 2018.*"

7.1.2 A working group was set up in 2016 to explore these issues and to engage with a range of expert witnesses. This report summarises the issues that have emerged in the discussions of the group and makes recommendations on fossil fuel investments.

7.2 The Theological Imperative

7.2.1 Since none have seen God, the creation, of which human beings are a part, is the means through which God becomes apparent to us. It is only as creatures of the earth that we have the capacity to know God. We are made in the image of God, but we are neither superhuman nor angelic, we are of the earth and the earth is our home. As Genesis 2:15 puts it, we were put in the garden "*to tend it and care for it*".

We stand in awe before the immensity of time and space, before the grandeur of the earth and the wonder of life. The earth is our sanctuary, our sacred trust and a cause for gratitude, wonder and tender care.

7.2.2 Over the last few generations, we have come to the realisation that human beings are having an impact on the wellbeing of the earth. The earth's continued flourishing appears to depend upon our taking that sacred trust, articulated in Genesis 2:15, seriously. Many of us witnessed recently, in the BBC's *Blue Planet II* series, the damage being caused to the oceans which once we thought so immense that nothing we could do could bring harm to them. Our activity has resulted in the loss of habitat for many animals and plants and there has been a dramatic decline of certain species. In addition, some of the world's poorest people are being impacted the most. Of course, if the scientific consensus is correct and we do nothing to reduce our impact on the environment, the effects currently being felt by vulnerable species of plants and animals and the poorest people will affect us all. The creation depends on our willingness to tend and care and in many respects this is a new and fundamentally challenging insight. And, whilst climate change has always occurred throughout earth's history, the scientific consensus now agrees that human activity, since the time of the Industrial Revolution, is having a significant impact on the world's climate.

7.2.3 If, as Jesus teaches, we must care for the least of these, then the fact that our industrial activity which, at times has the greatest negative impact on the poorest and those least able to insulate themselves from the impacts of damaging human activity, calls us to re-examine priorities. Whilst many have argued, rightly, that our industrial activity helped lift people out of poverty and enabled the world to develop, we need also to face up to the reality that that same activity may have the effect of ending viable human life on the earth, unless we choose an alternative path. So, climate change offers a stark challenge to what has been for decades a settled way of thinking and invites us to seek new ways of providing for human need.

7.2.4 In this regard, climate change is not just a management challenge that requires a technical fix, it calls into question much of what we have taken for granted about our relationship to the earth, which has often been based on an idea that the creation is simply there as God's gift for us to plunder, use and discard. Theologians have suggested that the

'dominion' motif, present in Genesis 1: 28, (Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion....) has been misinterpreted as an invitation to heedless exploitation.

7.2.5 Humanity may have a special place in the creation, but with that goes a profound responsibility. In the light of the science that makes clear the negative environmental consequences of our continued use of fossil fuels and in the light of our sacred duty towards the whole earth community, we are surely called to live our lives within the capacity of the earth to sustain a thriving, living community of both human beings and other living species. There are strong arguments in favour of leaving in the ground much of the fossil fuels as yet not exploited.

7.2.6 Whilst for the time being, we remain dependent on fossil fuels, we seek to urge our world in the direction of a transition to a low carbon economy and encourage intentional investment in a future that has less impact on climate, is less destructive of habitats and impacts less negatively on the world's poorest communities. It makes sense for us to seek to match our investment priorities with our values and the Short Life Working Group on Fossil Fuel Investments has over the last two years wrestled with this issue, and brings this report in the hope that the Church of Scotland might share with many others in the journey towards a less harmful future.

7.3 The Context – Climate change in 2018

7.3.1 The Church of Scotland has become acutely aware of the impact of climate change from its partner churches around the world. We have heard from World Mission Council partners, from Christian Aid and others about climate change impacts in Malawi, Zambia and other East African countries leading to repeated drought and flood; from Bangladesh about the growing risk of tropical storms and flood; from Pakistan about intense summer heat; and from Jamaica in the Caribbean or Tuvalu in the Pacific about the consequences of rising sea levels and tropical storm damage. We have heard from the Church of Norway about the melting of the Arctic ice cap and the implications this may have for all of us in the northern hemisphere about the growing risk of flood here. These stories about the human impacts of climate change reflect the scientific consensus on climate change; a consensus that was set out in detail in the Fifth Assessment report presented to the United Nations in 2013 and that underpins the Paris climate agreement of 2015.^[4] The many

thousands of pages of research detailed in the report can be summarised in a few short words: that climate change is happening; that we are causing it, principally by burning billions of tonnes of coal, oil and gas each year; and it has profound consequences for our common home the earth, and for life on earth.

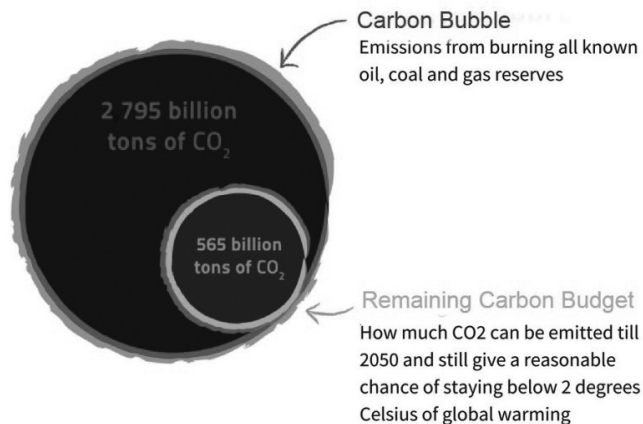
7.4 The Paris Agreement and the Transition to a Low Carbon Economy

7.4.1 The agreement reached at the Paris Climate Conference (CoP 21) in December 2015 was a turning point in the global response to climate change. The Conference agreed that global warming must be limited to two degrees Celsius if we are to avoid the most extreme consequences of climate change. The conference also agreed we should try to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. In order to put the agreement into effect there must be a rapid transition to a low carbon economy. Each signatory to the agreement has to put into effect a plan to reduce its own carbon emissions by an agreed amount called 'nationally determined contributions'.

How much carbon can we safely burn?

The reserves of coal, oil and gas in the ground would, if all burned, produce global warming far in excess of two degrees Celsius. In the absence of effective carbon capture and storage the only safe way to meet the Paris target is to leave the great majority of reserves in the ground, a resource that future generations can perhaps manage more safely for the benefit of all.

Source: Carbon Tracker



7.4.2 The Church of Scotland welcomed the Paris Agreement and called on the UK and Scottish Governments to implement it as a priority. The challenge facing Scotland and other countries is to ensure that plans are in place to support the transition to a low carbon future to meet the Paris targets. In this context the Church welcomes the Scottish Government’s Energy Strategy published in 2017, the first attempt by the Scottish Government to map a route to a low carbon economy in Scotland; a future in which electricity generated from renewable sources and other low carbon technologies replaces gas and oil as sources of energy for heating and transport almost entirely. This prospect is not only one of technological transformation but also a spiritual challenge; the opportunity to imagine a future in which our relations with our neighbours around the world are more equal and in which our relationship with the earth that sustains us is less exploitative and more respectful of God’s plan.

7.4.3 The Church of Scotland has responded to the crisis of climate change through the Climate Change Project established in 2007 in partnership with Eco-Congregation Scotland. What we have learned has in turn challenged the Church as a whole to reflect on its mission and message: what does it mean to care for each other and to care for creation in an age of climate change and how do we bring hope for the future? In his encyclical *Laudato si*, Pope Francis

sets out some of the great issues we face: that we have become preoccupied with progress and material wealth; this has led us to exploit the earth’s resources and that we have only now come to recognise the consequences of our actions. And of our exploitation of the earth’s resources none has been as ruthless as our determination to use its fossil fuels.

7.5 The Role of Finance

7.5.1 In the transition to a low carbon economy, figures as diverse as Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England and Christiana Figueres, formerly UN Secretary to the Paris Climate Conference, have identified finance as a critical agent of change. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), “*Limiting climate change to well below 2°C requires a major shift in investment patterns towards low-carbon, climate resilient options. Achieving this goal will require policies that involve unprecedented economic, social and technological transformation, as economies shift towards low-carbon and climate-resilient (LCR) infrastructure investments.*”^[5]

7.5.2 The World Bank is helping to put this transformation into action. It announced in December 2017 that, in order to help support countries meet their Paris Agreement goals, it will no longer finance upstream oil and gas after 2019. Rather it will increase its lending to climate action projects to support the Paris and associated national plans.^[6] Closer to home the University of Edinburgh announced in February 2018 that it will complete its transition out of fossil fuel investments within three years by selling its remaining shares in oil and gas companies.^[7] The decision is part of its commitment, made in 2016, to become carbon neutral by 2040. The Senior Vice Principal of the University, Professor Charlie Jeffery, said, “*Over the past few years, we have thought hard about how to respond to that challenge. This change in our investment strategy is a vital step on that journey.*”

7.5.3 The Church of Scotland, through its pension funds and its investments, can make a difference, both directly by choosing where to invest; by showing leadership nationally; and in encouraging members of congregations, whose collective savings, pensions and investments are far larger than the Church’s to consider how they can get involved. In partnership with Eco-Congregation Scotland the Church has supported Good Money Week, an annual opportunity to remind people that there are now a range of ethical options when it comes to banks, pensions, savings and investments to help protect the environment and promote social justice. We

commend participation in Good Money Week to all congregations.^[8]

7.6 Engagement, Divestment and Reinvestment

7.6.1 Engagement is an important means of bringing about change in the companies in which the Church of Scotland is invested. Newton Asset Management is responsible for managing the Church of Scotland Investors Trust Growth Fund and has on-going engagement with companies in which the Growth Fund holds shares. Similarly, the Church Investors Group promotes engagement on a wide range of ethical issues.

7.6.2 A new initiative is the Transition Pathway Initiative, a tool designed to assess how companies are preparing for the transition to a low-carbon economy. Developed by the Church of England's National Investing Bodies and the Environment Agency Pension Fund, in partnership with the Grantham Research Institute at the London School of Economics, it aims to improve the quality of information available and to serve as a platform for improved engagement between investors and companies.^[9] To take this work forward the Investors Trust has proposed that the Church allocates a resource to develop an in-house capability in Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG). Such a resource would be able to support the Church in responding to a wide range of investment issues, not only fossil fuel investments but also other controversial issues such as modern slavery and executive remuneration. It would also assist the Council of Assembly in its plans to develop and maintain a statement of investment principles.

7.6.3 Engagement through all these channels can be effective and lead to change in many businesses but it is important to be clear about what it can and cannot achieve. Fossil fuel companies, that is, oil, gas and coal companies such as BP, Shell or Exxon, who own reserves of fossil fuels in the ground, are a case in point.^[10] Engagement with oil and gas companies may encourage them to change some aspects of their business, but is unlikely to lead to a change in their core business of exploration and production. The huge scale of finance and operation, the time-lag between investment and returns in developing oil fields, which can be 10 years or more, and its historic profitability, all make it very difficult for fossil fuel companies to diversify from their core business and contribute positively to a low carbon economy.^[11] To come to an impartial view, Carbon Tracker has scrutinised the business plans of oil companies and found that most are not

compatible with the Paris climate agreement or the transition to a low carbon economy.^[12]

BP's strategy update *Getting Back to Growth* (February 2017)

BP plans to increase oil production from 2016 to 2021 by an average of 5% a year. According to BP: *Seven projects are expected online during 2017 –making it one of the largest years for commissioning new projects in BP's history. A further nine projects that are expected to start up through 2018-2021 are already under construction. The projects coming on line in 2016 and 2017 are on track to deliver 500,000 barrels of oil equivalent a day (boe/d) new production capacity by the end of this year. This strong pipeline means that BP is now confident that Upstream production will grow from 2016 by an average of 5% a year out to 2021. BP Group production, including BP's share of production from Rosneft, is expected to be around 4 million boe/d by 2021.*

7.6.4 An example of the difficulty in making oil companies' business plans align with the requirements of the Paris Agreement is given by Royal Dutch Shell. The company was challenged at its AGM in 2017 "to set and publish targets for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that are aligned with the goal of the Paris climate agreement to limit global warming to well below 2°C." The company argued that it could not make such a commitment and rejected the challenge.^[13] Another example is Statoil, a leader in offshore wind power, but a company that still remains committed to Arctic oil exploration. Throughout 2017 Statoil has, despite ongoing criticism, maintained drilling operations searching for new sources of oil and gas in the Barents Sea within the Arctic Circle to the north of Norway.^[14] These examples illustrate the data that Carbon Tracker have published and point to the inconsistency between the business plans of oil and gas companies and the need to make a rapid transition to a low carbon economy as required by the Paris Agreement.

7.7 Governance and the Legal Duties of Charity Trustees

7.7.1 The Church of Scotland is a charity registered with and regulated by OSCR, the Scottish Charity Regulator. As such, charity law and regulation are relevant considerations. Guidance from OSCR states that a charity must operate in a manner consistent with the charity's purpose.^[15] This duty applies to the way charity trustees manage the charity's resources, including investments. It means that investments

must be managed in a way which is consistent with the charity's purposes and mission. A charity should not invest in a sector that is inconsistent with its purposes, even if that has a possible impact on the investment performance in the charity's portfolio. The Church's concern about tobacco companies is an example of this. Tobacco companies have remained highly profitable and the Church has lost income over the years because of its refusal to invest in tobacco companies. Similarly the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland decided in 2016 that it was inconsistent with its mission and purpose to invest in tar sands and thermal coal production.

7.7.2 Given the impact of climate change around the world, the Church of Scotland's commitment to climate justice and its support for the transition to a low carbon economy, can the Church continue to invest in oil and gas companies? It is deeply uncomfortable for the Church, as a caring organisation concerned about climate justice, to continue to invest in something which causes the very harm it seeks to alleviate. While we have profited from oil and gas exploration in the past, we now understand that financing future exploration and production (as the examples quoted above demonstrate) will take us away from fulfilling the Paris Agreement and delay the transition to a low carbon economy. For these reasons the Council now calls upon the Church of Scotland to accept that it is no longer appropriate for the Church to invest in companies involved in future oil and gas exploration, unless those companies can demonstrate that their business plans are aligned with the requirements of the Paris climate agreement within two years.

7.8 What Are The Risks?

7.8.1 There are financial risks associated with any decision to sell or continue to hold shareholdings in fossil fuel companies. Fossil fuel companies have generated large profits over many years but their future viability has also been called into question. Coal companies in the USA have filed for bankruptcy as demand for coal has fallen, driven in part by the development of fracking but equally by increasing concern about environmental issues. In the USA, banks have remained reluctant to invest in new coal mining projects despite the political support for the coal industry by President Donald Trump.^[16] Carbon Tracker has suggested that the rapid development of renewable technologies will similarly reduce demand for oil in the future and put investments in fossil fuel companies at risk.^[17] The evidence is therefore unclear. A study published by Newton Asset Management in February

2016 examined past performance and concluded that removing fossil fuels from a share portfolio would have had no long-term impact for the period 2004-2015.^[18] However, past performance is not necessarily a guide to the future. A survey of asset managers in 2017 reported that most thought that the value of oil shares would decline in value in the next five years for a number of reasons including tighter regulatory pressures.^[19] What is clear is that the transition to a low carbon economy will create new investment possibilities. To allow time to make an orderly transition to a portfolio without oil and gas and to offer the opportunity for oil and gas companies to clarify if they are able to move to business plans that are aligned with the Paris Agreement it is recommended that the exclusion comes into effect in two years.

7.9 Developing a Church of Scotland 'Statement of Investment Principles'

7.9.1 During meetings of the working group it became apparent that there are a number of issues of importance that went beyond the remit of the working group. The General Assembly has at various times decided on certain exclusions (including armaments, alcohol and tobacco) but has never set out its investment policy as a whole or how investments help take forward the mission of the Church. While not required by law in Scotland, it is considered good practice and Charity Commission guidance exists in England.^[20] The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator is now examining the subject and is expected to publish a consultation paper later this year. For these reasons it is recommended that the Council of Assembly considers the need for a statement of investment principles for the Church of Scotland to inform the policies and decisions of the Investors Trust and other investing bodies.

7.10 Conclusion

7.10.1 The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland agreed in 2016 to urge the Investors Trust and Pension Trustees to add thermal coal and tar sands companies to the list of exclusions and it now must decide whether to continue to hold shares in oil and gas companies. Engagement clearly has a vital role in helping many companies to make the transition to a low carbon business model and the Council strongly supports the proposals from the Investors Trust that the Church allocates a resource to promote, analyse and report on Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance; and to ask the Council of Assembly to develop a statement of

investment principles. Having reviewed the evidence on oil and gas companies it remains very uncertain that they could become low carbon businesses aligned with the Paris climate agreement. The Council will continue to monitor progress towards alignment with the Investors Trust and Pension Trustees but, if after two years, there is no reasonable chance of alignment then the Investors Trust and Pension Trustees will be urged to divest from oil and gas companies.

8. DOING POLITICS DIFFERENTLY

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 The Council aspires to do politics differently by enabling people, particularly those who feel most disenfranchised, to feel more engaged with politics and with those that represent them; this includes identifying ways to build trust between politicians and the communities they serve. As with projects like Meet Your MSP, the principle behind the Council's work in this area is that trust can be created in relationships, and that as relationships develop they can also be a place in which there can be accountability between politicians and the communities they represent. Beginning with an emphasis on relationship enables the introduction of political engagement into the community in new ways. One such example of this is the *People's Politics* model of events, which focus on the lived experiences of members of the community as the basis for exploring political issues. In this way conversation about important issues ahead of elections can escape the domination of party politics as the focus is on the lived experience of local communities.

8.1.2 In its work the Council is actively seeking to explore new models of democracy including models for participatory democracy. In 2017-18 this work has focused on Participatory Budgeting and supporting churches to design and deliver participatory processes; this project comes with funding for community projects so there are real benefits to the communities involved.

8.1.3 Alongside these relatively new areas of work the Council continues to engage in formal Parliamentary processes and to facilitate meetings between representatives of the Church and Government Ministers. In this work a conscious effort is made to ensure that the voices of marginalised groups are heard, both in the evidence that is presented and the topics that the Council prioritises.

8.2 Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office

8.2.1 The Council's work in this area is done in conjunction with the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office (SCPO). SCPO is always happy to receive requests to speak or lead workshops from churches, Presbyteries or other groups who would like to find out more about the work of SCPO or about a specific Parliamentary issue. SCPO produces a monthly newsletter highlighting current Parliamentary business and how churches are engaging with the Parliament. To subscribe go to www.scpo.scot.

8.3 Parliamentary Visits, Events and Meetings

8.3.1 Each February the Moderator of the General Assembly spends a week in the Scottish Parliament. The Very Rev Dr Derek Browning met with party leaders and, as part of the Year of Young People, hosted an event, *Faith and Young People – Building Bridges, Making a Difference*, in February 2018.

8.3.2 In October 2017 members of the Church and Society Council spent three days meeting with Scottish MPs in Westminster. The group met with 10 MPs one-to-one, as well as one member of the House of Lords and hosted a further 12 MPs and the Bishop of Chelmsford at an event in Portcullis House. The focus of the meetings and the event was to highlight the Speak Out themes and to build relationships with MPs.

8.3.3 The Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office held a week-long exhibition in the Scottish Parliament to raise the profile of the work of Scottish Churches with MSPs in June 2017.

8.4 Engagement in Formal Parliamentary Processes

8.4.1 Representatives of the Council gave oral evidence to the Scottish Parliament: Equalities and Human Rights Committee inquiry into bullying and harassment of children and young people in school; and Justice Committee on the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act (Repeal) Bill.

8.4.2 Briefings to MSPs were provided regarding the roll out of Universal Credit, and the Stage 1 debate on the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act (Repeal) Bill.

8.4.3 The SCPO is a member of the Cross Party Group on Freedom of Religion and Belief.

8.5 Index of Consultation Responses

8.5.1 The following official responses were made by the Church of Scotland to enquiries or consultations in 2017. Copies of the responses are available on the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office website at www.scpo.scot.

Scottish Government consultations:

- Religious Observance – Scottish Government consultation on guidance (February 2017).
- Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation (March 2017).
- Draft Scottish Energy Strategy (May 2017).
- Talking “Fracking”: A Scottish Government Consultation on Unconventional Oil and Gas (May 2017).
- Air Departure Tax (ADT) consultation on an overall 50% reduction policy plan (September 2017).
- Climate Change Bill (September 2017).
- Scottish National Investment Bank (November 2017).
- Education (Scotland) Bill (January 2018).

Scottish Parliament Inquiries:

- Destitution and Asylum in Scotland (Equalities and Human Rights Committee, March 2017).
- Bullying and Harassment of Children and Young People in School (Equalities and Human Rights Committee, June 2017).
- Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Repeal) (Scotland) Bill: Stage 1 Call for Evidence (Justice Committee, August 2017).
- Article 50 Withdrawal Negotiations (Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee, August 2017).
- Consultation on Social Security in Scotland (Social Security Committee, August 2017).

Other consultations:

- Your Parliament – Your Voice (Commission on Parliamentary Reform, March 2017).
- Children (Equal Protection from Assault) (Scotland) Bill (John Finnie MSP, July 2017).
- My Scottish Affairs (UK Parliament Scottish Affairs Committee, November 2017).

8.6 Electoral Reform

8.6.1 In the Scotland Act 2016 the Scottish Parliament received new powers over the conduct of Scottish Parliamentary Elections. It has been proposed by the Scottish Government to extend the franchise to include anyone legally resident in Scotland. The Council supports this proposal as it extends the possibility of democratic participation to all legal migrants, including refugees. The Church has previously supported an extension of the franchise to 16 and 17 year olds in 2013.

8.6.2 More recently, in 2017 the General Assembly called on the Scottish Government to extend its strategic framework for refugee integration. Churches’ support of integration as a policy and our practical work through Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees acknowledges that it is positive and important for people who come to Scotland to become part of Scottish society. The ability to vote enables people to be part of making decisions about the society in which they live. This is an important marker that we are serious about the hospitality that we offer –we do not just ask people to live with our decisions, we make decisions together.

8.6.3 In 2017 the General Assembly agreed to “*Call on the Scottish and UK Governments to ensure that the rights and contributions of nationals from other EU countries resident in Scotland and UK citizens resident in EU member states are recognised and protected.*” The right of EU Nationals to vote in local government elections is part of an EU-wide arrangement; therefore it may be affected by Brexit. The proposal to allow all people who are ‘legally resident’ to vote would ensure that EU citizens currently resident in Scotland do not lose rights they already have to vote in local government and Scottish Parliament elections.

8.6.4 The consequence of what is proposed by the Scottish Government Consultation on Electoral Reform is that rather than downgrading the voting rights of EU Nationals to the

status of third country nationals like Japan or USA, it raises the rights of citizens of other countries.

8.7 Relationships and Communication

8.7.1 As a way to highlight Challenge Poverty Week (15-21 October 2017) SCPO produced a resource, *Prayers to Confront Poverty in Scotland*, with a prayer for each day of the week from different Christian denominations and groups. This resource is available to download at [http://www.scpo.scot/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/](http://www.scpo.scot/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Challenge-Poverty-Week-2017-Prayer-resource.pdf)

Challenge-Poverty-Week-2017-Prayer-resource.pdf.

During Challenge Poverty Week the staff team hosted an event in the church offices which enabled staff working nationally for the Church to hear directly from a number of people who are struggling against injustice and poverty. This event was organised in collaboration with the Poverty Truth Commission.

8.7.2 The SCPO is part of the RADAR Network of UK Churches Parliamentary Officers (which meets monthly); Scottish Churches Committee; Association of Scottish Public Affairs; and Scottish Human Rights Consortium.

8.8 Meet Your MSP

8.8.1 Over 90 Meet Your MSP meetings have taken place so far across Scotland as part of the *Meet Your MSP* project. Feedback from some of the congregations who have participated suggests that the project encouraged them to invite an MSP to talk about their work where otherwise they would not have done so. It is hoped that some of these meetings form the basis of developing relationships.

8.8.2 Meetings have included visits to foodbanks, care homes, chats in the church, afternoon teas, coffee mornings, as well as more targeted meetings such as a church's local eco group discussing the Scottish Climate Change Plan with a number of their local MSPs.

8.8.3 Motions have been submitted in the Scottish Parliament by MSPs praising the Meet Your MSP project. The project is ecumenical in focus with a number of denominations taking part, including the Church of Scotland, the Scottish Episcopal Church, the United Reformed Church, the United Free Church and the Salvation Army.

8.8.4 Meet Your MSP has also been supported by Scottish Churches Housing Action, Eco-Congregation Scotland, Go For It (Church of Scotland), Priority Areas, Faith in Community

Scotland, Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees and Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS).

8.8.5 The Meet Your MSP project is ongoing –if local churches have not made contact with their MSPs, the SCPO would encourage them to do so, and if they have, SCPO would like to hear from them for feedback on the process. For ideas on how to go about this, please go to www.scpo.scot/meet-your-msp for ideas, resources and information on which churches have taken part across Scotland.

8.8.6 To find out more about the progress of the project and its geographical spread across Scotland, go to www.scpo.scot/meet-your-msp. Please continue to promote the Meet Your MSP project, within your churches, groups and online via #meetyourmsp, SCPO would like as many churches and as many MSPs involved as possible.

8.9 Meet Your MP

8.9.1 Following the success of Meet Your MSP, the Parliamentary Office launched the Meet Your MP project in March 2018.

8.10 Participatory Budgeting

8.10.1 The Council has received funding from the Scottish Government and the Go For It Committee to provide support for local congregations to develop Participatory Budgeting (PB) initiatives for a second year. PB is a way for communities to make financial decisions locally. PB has been used all over the world; it empowers communities and strengthens democracy.

8.10.2 In the first year of the project four congregations in Arbroath, Edinburgh and Glasgow received training and support to deliver a small PB process, and disbursed £20,000 of grants to 28 community projects. As part of the project the Council commissioned a short film: the first half is an animation explaining what PB is, the second half features interviews with the ministers from two churches taking part in the project. The film is available to watch online at http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/speak_out/doing_politics_differently/making_decisions_locally

8.10.3 In this second year the project has supported eight congregations around Scotland to carry out a PB process in their local community.

8.11 People's Politics

8.11.1 *People's Politics* is a model for hosting a conversation with politicians during election campaigns. The model focuses on a series of individuals, each speaking about their lived experience of an issue. Representatives of political parties are invited to respond to the stories that have been shared. This is an opportunity to do politics differently and to move to a more conversational politics, where people rather than parties are at the centre of the decision-making process. The Council continues to explore how this model can be used in a variety of contexts in order to make conversations about Parliamentary policy more accessible.

8.12 Local Elections in May 2017

8.12.1 Ahead of the Local Elections in May 2017, SCPO and the Joint Public Issues Team published a toolkit to organise a *People's Politics* event at council ward level.

8.3 General Election in June 2017

8.13.1 A *People's Politics* event was planned to take place during the 2017 General Assembly, during the campaign period for the snap General Election. The event was cancelled by the Council as a mark of respect to those who had lost their lives in the Manchester terrorist attack. For this planned event three individuals had agreed to share their experiences on the environment, Brexit and welfare, and their responses were filmed in advance. Following the cancellation of the event, party leaders were asked to respond in writing to the films, and both the films and party leaders' responses were subsequently released on the Church of Scotland and SCPO websites.

9. BUILDING GLOBAL FRIENDSHIPS

9.1 Refugees – Humanitarian

9.1.1 The global humanitarian catastrophes related to forced migration and refugee emergencies have continued into 2018 with very little sign of amelioration.

9.1.2 The growing scale and human need represented by these stories needs to be an urgent reminder to all those who live in places of peace to do what they can to assist in order to break the cycle of violence. The global population of displaced persons exceeds 65 million. Over half are believed to be children.

9.1.3 The escalation of the crisis in Myanmar facing the persecuted Rohingya minority is added to a growing list of conflicts. The war in Yemen, where one of the main protagonists is Saudi Arabia, an ally of the West and a customer of UK-made weapons, is in danger of 'slipping into the abyss', according to the UNHCR representative to the country. In Libya the buying and selling of black Africans as slaves was revealed by undercover journalists in November. A practice many thought consigned to the history of the 19th century with abolition is seeing a revival in the 21st century. Libya, it should not be forgotten, is also a state with which the UK has recently been involved in military operations. The Syrian war, which began with the so-called Arab Spring uprising in 2011, is now in its seventh year. At the time of writing, a ceasefire that began on Christmas Eve in South Sudan appears to have been broken by violence on both sides. Emergencies in Burundi, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria have been declared by the UNHCR.

9.2 Resettlement and Dispersal

9.2.1 In the UK, a response to the Syrian emergency was announced in 2015 when David Cameron committed the UK to resettle up to 20,000 Syrians over a five year period, and an additional 3,000 children and their family members from the wider Middle East and North Africa region. Individuals would be resettled here on the basis of need, after an independent assessment by the UNHCR. The General Assembly last year offered support for this programme but also noted that the numbers involved are far smaller than might be hoped, given the scale of the crisis and the relative size and prosperity of the UK. Since 2015 the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement programme has seen family groups arriving and being found new homes in local authorities across the UK. Scottish local authorities have been particularly serious about engaging with the programme; with the exception of Shetland Islands Council, every local authority area has taken Syrian refugees and by the end of 2017, Scotland had taken around 2,000 people – around 20% of the total coming to the whole of the UK so far. Many local authorities have indicated they want to continue with resettlement over the next three years.

9.2.2 In addition to Syrian refugees directly resettled from the region of conflict, asylum seekers are also present in Scotland, as part of the UK Government's dispersal programme; for the duration of a person's asylum claim and they are offered accommodation, but have no choice about

which town or city they are sent to. Glasgow has been a major dispersal centre for nearly 20 years, and churches in the city will have a great deal of experience and knowledge of working with people of different nationalities and cultures which may be of benefit to churches in other places who are now just beginning to work with refugees.

9.3 Asylum: Conversion cases

9.3.1 One particular issue that arises from time to time is the question of an asylum seeker's conversion to Christianity or another religion or belief tradition, either as part of the reason for his or her fleeing their country, or a conversion which takes place during their journey or once they are in the UK, and which becomes an additional reason for them to fear returning to their country of origin. The challenge for UK Home Office immigration officers is to know when a person claims to hold a particular religion or belief, if this is 'genuine' or if it is a sham in order to get refugee status. The culture of the Home Office has long been publically stated (often proudly) to establish a 'hostile environment' for illegal immigration, and so there are considerable pressures placed on officials to demand high levels of proof, or to naturally disbelieve a claimant unless there is clear evidence to the contrary. Work has been developing in the UK with the Westminster All Party Parliamentary Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief to work with the Home Office to try to improve the system and processes for training and for decision-making to better respond to asylum cases which involve a freedom of religion element. In March 2018 the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe is due to hold a seminar on this issue, bringing together practitioners from several different jurisdictions to share their experiences.

9.4 New Scots Integration Strategy

9.4.1 In January 2018 the Scottish Government published an updated framework to support refugee integration. The *New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022* builds on the previous strategy and was developed with close consultation and widespread engagement with refugees and asylum seekers as well as voluntary and community groups that are working to offer support, in addition to statutory agencies and government bodies.^[21] The New Scots strategy is supported by COSLA and the Scottish Refugee Council and has been commended by the UNHCR Representative to the United Kingdom. The Council has been part of the development of the strategy through Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees being represented on the Scottish Government's

Refugee Integration Forum and a working group looking at communities and social connections.

9.4.2 The strategy continues to promote the idea of partnership and co-ordination, based on the definition of integration as a "*long term, two-way process*", which enables everyone to be included in society and have a role in decisions. The New Scots strategy will be important for people working with refugees at a local as well as a national level over the next five years.

9.5 Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe

9.5.1 The Church of Scotland is a member of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME). CCME is an ecumenical organisation that serves the churches in their commitment to promote the vision of an inclusive community through advocating for an adequate policy for migrants, refugees and minority groups at European and national level. In the fulfilment of this mandate it is responding to the message of the Bible, which insists on the dignity of every human being, and to the understanding of unity as devoid of any distinction between strangers and natives. The Church of Scotland's membership application was approved at the CCME General Assembly which met in Prague in June 2017. At the same meeting the Church of Scotland's delegate (David Bradwell, refugee co-ordinator) was elected to the CCME Executive Committee for the next three years.

9.5.2 Over the past year the Church of Scotland has engaged with a number of CCME-supported issues, including:

- Highlighting the issue of statelessness, following previous work with the World Council of Churches.^[22] During Interfaith Week with our partners in the Joint Public Issues Team and the European Network on Statelessness we launched a faith leaders' statement calling for greater awareness on statelessness and action to work to eliminate it, as part of the #LockedinLimbo campaign.^[23]

- Joining with ecumenical partners around Europe in the commemoration of those who have died on the journey trying to reach safety and peace. The International Organisation for Migration's Missing Migrants project estimates at least 3,119 people died in the Mediterranean in 2017. In October the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy (FCEI) invited partners to join in an ecumenical ceremony on the island of Lampedusa, to mark the anniversary of a disaster on 3 October 2013, when over 360 people drowned following a ship capsizing just offshore. The Church of Scotland was represented at this service.
- In Italy the FCEI's refugee and migrants project called Mediterranean Hope, together with the Roman Catholic St Egidio Community, have spearheaded a programme of direct refugee resettlement in partnership and agreement with the Italian Government. The programme, called Humanitarian Corridors, sees refugees supported and welcomed by church communities and is additional to the Italian Government's own work to care for people who have arrived on their shores. The St Egidio Community in France is also working to develop a similar scheme there. In January 2018 the Church of Scotland and Methodist Church in Britain appointed Fiona Kendall as a new mission partner based in Rome to work with Mediterranean Hope.
- CCME and the World Association for Christian Communication co-ordinated a research project looking into media coverage of refugees and migrant issues during the summer of 2017. The Refugee Reporting project looked at how stories portrayed refugees in different European countries. The Church of Scotland, through Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees, was able to co-ordinate the data gathering and analysis from UK media. The report was published in November, highlighting some of the challenges with media reporting of refugee issues as well as providing evidence for some of the different contexts in various European societies.^[24] A major conclusion was the need for more refugee voices to be included in shaping and reported in media coverage of refugee issues.

- A United Nations process looking at two new global agreements, known as Compacts, on the issues of refugee protection and on migration are now in development.^[25] The proposal for new international understanding of how to respond to growing levels of forced displacement as well as voluntary migration came from a summit held in September 2016 organised by then President Barack Obama and then Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon. CCME has worked with a range of other international NGOs to support a civil society call for action for progress to be made for meaningful agreements to be reached by the international community. The Compacts are expected to be agreed in the autumn of 2018 and further campaigning and advocacy opportunities are anticipated.

9.6 Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees

9.6.1 The Church of Scotland initiated the multi-faith refugee co-ordination project Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees (SFAR) in 2015. SFAR brings together Scotland's main Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Interfaith organisations in a partnership to work together on a common agenda to help, work with and learn from one another as well as refugee groups and individuals. A single national faith-based refugee project has also facilitated good working relationships with the Scottish Government, Scottish Refugee Council, ecumenical partners across the UK and others. SFAR has also been a source of comment and advice for the media looking to cover refugee stories.

9.6.2 In July 2017, SFAR initiated a new programme to support refugee integration in the City of Edinburgh, with financial support coming from project partners and Police Scotland, who had a fund available for work to tackle Islamophobia. SFAR's Weekend Club takes place one Saturday per month and brings together refugees and local faith groups for fun, social and intercultural activities.

9.6.3 During Refugee Festival Scotland (June-July 2017) SFAR was present at a rally in Glasgow's George Square on International Refugee Day (20 June) to make the point that Scotland welcomes refugees. In early July, SFAR and Christian Aid Scotland organised an interfaith pilgrimage up Ben Ledi, near Callander.^[26]

9.6.4 At the time of writing, plans are in place for a *Scotland Welcomes Refugees* gathering of voluntary and community groups working with refugees, to take place on 28 April 2018.

9.6.5 SFAR continues to be able and willing to offer advice and support to congregations and individuals wishing to learn more about the issues and engage in practical action. As well as the website, SFAR is on Facebook and Twitter, issues a monthly newsletter and invitations to visit congregations, Kirk Sessions and other groups are always welcome. All the links and contact details are available on the website www.sfar.org.uk.

9.7 Migration

9.7.1 The Council has worked with the Mission Forum as they undertook some research into the question of migrant Christians and migrant and multicultural churches in Scotland. A report from the Mission Forum can be found as part of the Mission and Discipleship Council Report.

9.7.2 The Council believes that the presence and contribution of migrants to Scottish Church life and society has enriched our common life and encourages Church members to consider opportunities for intercultural and interfaith dialogue as a means both to offer welcome to the stranger and to hear directly from those with experience of what life for Scottish migrants is like.

9.7.3 The Church and Society Council has supported an annual Anti-Racism event organised by Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees in partnership with Stand Up To Racism. These events have taken place in Glasgow's George Square and the Convener of the Council has addressed the gathering.

9.8 Modern Day Slavery and Human Trafficking

9.8.1 There were an estimated 45.8 million slaves in 2016 (*Global Slavery Index*); more than any other time in history. In Scotland 150 cases were reported in the same year. The reality is so many more are lost, trapped or afraid of social stigma and discrimination. The presence of victims in Scotland indicates our place in a global crisis.

9.8.2 Church initiatives in Scotland around trafficking and modern slavery are led by an ecumenical Anti-Human Trafficking Group, part of Action of Churches Together in Scotland. Over the last year, the group facilitated a postgraduate research seminar at the University of Edinburgh that focused on exchanging knowledge to end human trafficking. The group continues to work with the spiritual befriending project, which offers support to women who have been trafficked by accompanying them to a church service. The group continues to engage with national policies that are

relevant to human trafficking through its strong presence on the Cross Party Group on Human Trafficking, and the Scottish Government's Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Strategic Oversight Group, which enforces tougher sentences for traffickers and proposes a policy of care and rehabilitation for victims of trafficking. The group has heard from and been engaged with outside organisations such as Aberlour Scotland and Migrant Help and look forward to continuing work and connections here.

9.8.3 The group has published resources on its website and is able to provide speakers for groups or congregations wishing to explore the issues further <http://www.acts-scotland.org/activities/anti-human-trafficking>. A new leaflet will be produced containing practical information for churches on how to identify human trafficking victims, and will continue to develop and produce theological resources that can be used by churches and church groups to examine and respond to human trafficking. A conference focusing on the stories of World Mission's Partner Churches combined with a local drama production is being discussed for 2018/2019 to continue to raise awareness. The group aims to be present at this year's Heart and Soul, and continues to look for new ways to engage ecumenically with anti-human trafficking activities.

9.9 Nuclear Disarmament

9.9.1 The 2017 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to ICAN – the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. The World Council of Churches is a member of ICAN, and the ICAN Secretariat is based in the WCC offices in Geneva. The award is due to the campaigning and diplomatic work by ICAN, which has seen the establishment of a new international Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), a measure which the General Assembly supported in 2015 when it agreed the Deliverance to *“Reaffirm the Church's position that the ownership of, use of and threat to use nuclear weapons are inherently evil and instruct the Council to continue to work for disarmament, including through support for an international Nuclear Ban Treaty.”* The Treaty was concluded in July 2017 with the support of 122 of the UN's 193 member states. Unfortunately, the nine nuclear-armed states, including the UK, and their allies refused to participate in the negotiations and remain strongly opposed to the Treaty's implementation. Among NATO countries, only the Netherlands participated, although it did not support the Treaty on its conclusion. Accession to the Treaty has been slow. Opened for signature in September 2017, it had

attracted 56 signatures and five ratifications by February 2018.

9.9.2 It is profoundly troubling that, despite the TPNW's negotiation, movement is today in the opposite direction to nuclear disarmament. The risks of nuclear war have increased in East and South Asia and in Europe, nuclear arsenals are being modernised and expanded, new types and uses of nuclear weapons are being considered, and nuclear arms control is in abeyance. We note the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists'* recent decision to advance its Doomsday Clock to two minutes before midnight, reflecting grave concern about these dangerous trends. It is essential that all states and agencies involved with nuclear weapons take urgent steps to reverse them. Nuclear weapon states that are party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty have a special obligation to reinvigorate arms control processes and honour their agreed "unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament".

9.9.3 In Scotland the work of SCANA (Scottish Christians Against Nuclear Arms) in raising awareness and organising vigils and prayers at Faslane remains an important witness against the evil and destructive power of the UK's own weapons of mass destruction. The Council continues to publicise and share events and initiatives and encourages Commissioners and church members to find out more and offer their support. SCANA are on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ScottishCANA/. Our campaigning and advocacy work at a UK level includes engagement with the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT). JPIT produced a short video explaining the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons which can be shown in services or at meetings (www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/nuclearbansigned), as well as a written briefing paper available at www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Nuclear-Ban-Treaty-final-briefing.pdf

9.10 Fairtrade

9.10.1 In June it was reported that Sainsbury's supermarket were seeking to move away from Fairtrade accreditation for their own-branded tea. They said that this would be a pilot to see how different models of ethical labelling might improve the situation for consumers and producers. There were concerns that a move away from Fairtrade might be accompanied by a watering down of standards for producers and confusion for consumers.

9.10.2 The General Assembly has long offered its support to the FAIRTRADE Mark and encouraged Church members to buy Fairtrade wherever possible. The FAIRTRADE Mark is now over 25 years old and is widely recognised by consumers in the UK. As it is run by an independent foundation, there is widespread recognition that their work with farmers in developing countries has provided the strongest integrity for consumers who want to make a choice which sees producers get a fair deal for their work.

9.10.3 Christian Aid and other development and anti-poverty agencies have been meeting with Sainsbury's executives to alert them to these concerns.

9.10.4 The Council, together with the World Mission Council, recommends that everyone who supports Fairtrade should: continue to look for the Fairtrade logo and buy Fairtrade wherever possible; find out the range of products which now have Fairtrade certification (see www.fairtrade.org.uk/Buying-Fairtrade); write to their supermarket or grocer to urge them to continue to stock Fairtrade-accredited products; write to their MP and MSPs to raise the matter at Westminster and Holyrood, and ask them to continue to offer political support for the Fairtrade movement.

9.11 Peace and Nonviolence

9.11.1 In July 2017 the Council supported a residential conference *Reclaiming Gospel Nonviolence*. The meeting, held at Kinnoul Monastery in Perth, was arranged in partnership with Justice and Peace Scotland, Pax Christi UK, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship. The two keynote presentations, by Lucas Johnson (International Fellowship of Reconciliation) and Father John Dear (a leading figure in the Catholic peace movement) were recorded and are available to watch on the Church of Scotland website www.churchofscotland.org.uk/speak_out/building_global_friendships/peacebuilding.

9.11.2 The Catholic Church has helped to promote a renewed interest in peace and nonviolence. In February a new Pax Christi Scotland group was established, and the Conforti Institute intends to offer a course on peace and nonviolence in 2018. Both organisations are committed to working ecumenically, which has been of benefit to all partners. We also anticipate a new Encyclical from Pope Francis on peace later in the year, with the potential to have a similar impact

that *Laudato Si* had on debates around climate change, environmental protection and theology.

10. BUILDING GLOBAL FRIENDSHIPS – CHANGING CONSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN SCOTLAND, THE UK AND EUROPE

10.1 Introduction

10.1.1 At the General Assembly 2017 the Church and Society Council presented a Supplementary Report on the role of the Church in the context of constitutional change and uncertainty. That report went to print on the day that the Prime Minister called a snap General Election to be held on 8 June 2017. Since that election was called there has been a great deal of debate and reflection. In practical terms, however, very little has formally changed and the momentous questions about what could happen next remain unanswered.

10.2 General Election

10.2.1 The decision to call a General Election was intended to reinforce the Conservative majority in Parliament and strengthen the Government's hand in negotiating the terms under which the UK will leave EU. The result of the election was a hung Parliament. In Scotland, the SNP lost seats to all 3 of the other parties while retaining over a third of the vote and 35 seats; and remaining the biggest Scottish group of MPs. As a consequence of these results the Conservative Party reached a Confidence and Supply Agreement with the Democratic Unionist Party in order to remain in government. This agreement allows a tiny voting majority and leaves the Government vulnerable to members of their own party threatening to vote against the Government; on several occasions compromises have been reached to avoid this happening. This situation sets a very challenging scene for the ongoing negotiations between the UK and EU.

10.3 Implications of Withdrawing from the EU

10.3.1 The defining political conversation of the year has been around the terms of the UK departure from the EU. A formal date for withdrawing from the EU has been identified as 11pm (UK time) on 29 March 2019. It is anticipated that a transitional agreement will be requested to enable new arrangements to be agreed and put in place.

10.3.2 Within this wide ranging discussion the Church has several areas of specific interest:

- **Implications for the devolution settlement.** Alongside negotiations with the EU the Westminster Parliament is considering an extensive piece of legislation to manage the powers that will return to the UK after withdrawal from the EU. The European Union (Withdrawal) Bill 2017-19 has raised significant questions about the relationship between powers returning from the EU and the devolution settlement in particular around agriculture and fisheries. There are high levels of public support in Scotland for policy in these areas to be set at Scottish rather than UK level.^[27] There are further concerns that the proposed new legislation centralises power around Government Ministers rather than ensuring proper public and Parliamentary scrutiny. In response to some of these questions the Scottish Government announced that the EU Continuity Bill will be introduced to the Scottish Parliament in February 2018.
- **Ensuring that the rights and contributions of nationals from other EU countries resident in Scotland and the UK nationals resident elsewhere in the EU are recognised and protected.** Last year the General Assembly called on the Scottish and UK Governments to ensure that the rights and contributions of nationals from other EU countries resident in Scotland and UK citizens resident in EU member states are recognised and protected. Anxiety for individuals and families remains acute. Despite negotiators claiming some progress in talks about citizens' rights, every time a politician repeats the phrases "*nothing is agreed until everything is agreed*" and "*no deal is better than a bad deal*", people are reminded of the insecurity of their life in the UK. The Council has contributed to Scottish Government research on the consequences of Brexit for individuals and families in Scotland by carrying out interviews with people who may be affected by Brexit. The report is available from the publications section of the Scottish Government website.

- **Creating space for informed public conversation about our future relationship with the EU and ensuring formal public consultation where appropriate.** In the spring of 2017 JPIT published *Conversation Welcome – Exploring the future of the UK after the EU referendum*.

In 2017 the Church and Society Council met with the Scottish Government Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe to consider the implications for leaving the EU for communities across Scotland. Following this meeting it was agreed that the Council would collaborate with Marine Scotland to facilitate a public engagement process to explore the impact of Brexit on coastal communities.

As important decisions are taken about the future of the economy, the terms of international trade agreements and delivery of public services, it is imperative that the voices of people who are struggling with poverty are heard. If withdrawing from the EU has a negative effect on the UK economy, it must be ensured that this burden is not disproportionately carried by people already struggling with poverty.

- **Maintaining strong environmental protection standards.** EU Directives around air quality, water quality, waste management and nature protection have set high standards and driven improvements in the UK for over 30 years. There are concerns that the high standards demanded by the EU may be diluted after Brexit and that the UK and Scottish Governments may follow different approaches to environmental protection. It is important that whatever the terms on which the UK exits the EU there remain appropriate mechanisms to set and maintain environmental standards.
- **Maintaining high standards of political, social, economic and cultural rights.** The Council has signed a Scotland Declaration of Human Rights calling for human rights and equalities to remain at the heart of Scottish society as Scotland, as part of the UK, exists from the EU.

The Scotland Declaration on Human Rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights – which celebrates its 70th anniversary this year – states:
"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."

Human rights belong to everyone; rich or poor, old or young, whether born in this country or another. We all have rights regardless of sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion, age, gender or belief. We together declare that human rights and equalities must remain at the heart of Scottish society.

We, the undersigned, share profound concerns about the potential loss of equality and rights protections as a consequence of the UK leaving the European Union and about the persistent negative rhetoric around the protection and promotion of rights in the UK.

We want Scotland to be a leader and not a laggard in human rights terms.

We therefore call on law and policy makers to take all possible steps to protect our rights and to make Scotland a world leader in both rights protection and implementation. We believe that the following principles must apply in all decisions that affect human rights:

No going back

Human rights and equalities protections in law, policy and practice must not be reduced or regressed for any individual, group, community or sector of the population.

Progression

Human rights standards should be continually strengthened over time. Scotland must help to shape and adopt the highest international human rights and equalities standards.

Transparency

Any changes to existing rights protections should be undertaken only with a fully transparent consultation process and the appropriate degree of parliamentary scrutiny at all levels.

Participation

The people of Scotland must be engaged in a process of understanding what their rights are, how they are protected and what more can be done to protect their rights. Any significant change in the protection of rights must be based on this meaningful engagement.

10.4 Referendum on Scottish Independence

10.4.1 In Scotland the 8 June 2017 General Election was notable for the recovery of votes for unionist parties. Later in June 2017, the First Minister acknowledged that there was not widespread support for a second referendum on Scottish independence before the UK leaves the EU and plans to introduce a new Bill with provisions for such a referendum were put on hold. However, as uncertainty remains over the terms of the UK's departure from the EU the possibility of a second referendum on Scottish Independence remains on the agenda. The Church remains impartial on the question of Scottish independence for the reasons presented to previous General Assemblies and reiterated in the supplementary report of the Church and Society Council on the role of the Church in the context of constitutional change and uncertainty in 2017.

10.5 What Now for Constitutional Relationships Across the UK and Europe?

10.5.1 For Scotland, the intersection of constitutional decisions taken in two separate referendums leaves us with a particular challenge. In the referendum on leaving the EU the Scottish public voted to remain in the EU, and Scottish opinion is clearly different from UK opinion on this issue. However, in 2014 the majority of Scottish voters chose to stay in the UK. A great deal of current political discourse is about the terms of the UK's future relationship with the EU. Many politicians as well as charities, business groups, and many European organisations (including churches) would like to see the UK retaining the strongest possible links with the EU. In order to maintain good relationships across Europe, build global friendships and recognise that we are part of an interdependent world, it is suggested that the Church joins voices and campaigns urging the continuation of the strongest possible social, cultural and economic ties with Europe. In this suggestion we recognise that the referendum vote was to end formal political ties, not to distance ourselves from our nearest neighbours.

10.5.2 Church policy has been consistent for over 20 years on the value of strong European relationships with reports to the General Assembly in 1996, 2002, 2005, 2014 and 2016 affirming the moral argument for promoting social cohesion and solidarity in Europe. Our Christian commitment to our neighbours remains strong whatever the political changes taking places around us. As was stated in 2016, *"The Church of Scotland is part of an international community of churches*

where our voice can be added to those of our neighbours and our effectiveness can be magnified." The continuation of close relationships with other European countries enables us to participate more fully internationally.

10.5.3 There is one final aspect of the UK relationship with the EU to consider: the principle of solidarity. Over a long period time the investment of EU structural funds has been a demonstrable act of loving our neighbour from richer nations and regions to poorer ones. It is disappointing that when British politicians talk of getting money back from the EU it is not recognised that it will be some of Europe's poorest regions and neighbourhoods, including those in the UK that will suffer. For this reason too the UK should remain in close cooperation with our European neighbours.

10.6 Conclusion

10.6.1 In the midst of these difficult and uncertain times we must continue to recognise that we are part of an interdependent world in which human relationships are paramount. For this reason we continue to focus on creating space for dialogue which is hopeful, aspirational and inclusive. As the Council said in 2017, *"The Church is in a strong position to bring people together across political and social divides to explore Scotland's future in a mature, measured way, a way that inspires but does not mislead, and a way that reflects God's desires for each of us and the world around us."*

11. ENSURING THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF ALL

11.1 Mental Health

11.1.1 It is clear that issues around mental health are of increasing importance, and many churches are already responding with a variety of initiatives, including involvement in work to combat loneliness and supporting those who are experiencing dementia. Issues around mental health in the digital age, especially for young people, are also receiving attention.

11.1.2 Social isolation and loneliness are issues which can affect anyone, at any stage of their lives. A sense of loneliness has been shown to have wide-ranging consequences for those affected, and can contribute to issues such as depression or cognitive decline. There is also the potential for serious physical health implications.

11.1.3 Many churches and congregations are actively engaged in initiatives aimed at tackling social isolation and loneliness, and at facilitating communities which are more connected, where everyone is valued and has the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships. Some of these may involve working with other organisations, while others may be initiatives of the local church. There are many excellent examples of innovative and exciting work taking place in churches throughout the country. To highlight a few:

- **Caithness Befrienders.** Thurso St Peters and St Andrews church works closely with Caithness Befrienders. A number of the congregation work as volunteers to befriend over-60s in their community who are liable to be isolated. The church has taken up an offering to support the running costs of Caithness Befrienders, and volunteers have spoken in church about the work on more than one occasion. Rev David Malcolm said, *"We as a church are in full support of their work as there is much need to reach and minister to the lonely. We recognise that there are many within our community who are lonely and perhaps only get out of their home once or twice a week. We looked at various ways as a church to minister to the lonely, however we felt that to partner with Caithness Befrienders was the best way forward and this has worked very well."*
- **Linking Lives (www.linkinglives.uk).** This is an organisation which is working hard to address the issues around loneliness and isolation by supporting churches to set up befriending schemes in their local communities. These schemes enable volunteers to visit those affected by loneliness in their own homes, normally once a week for around one hour. These visits can be a real lifeline and are an opportunity to provide good quality time for someone else, which is often mutually beneficial. Jeremy Sharpe, national co-coordinator for Linking Lives, said, *"Many volunteers find that they discover a huge amount of interesting information about life in previous generations, and the time together is one which both parties look forward to every week. Where physically possible, volunteers are also encouraged to go out with their friend to visit local places of interest."*

Linking Lives is working with a number of churches and Christian charities nationally, and is one of the Cinnamon Network 'recognised projects'. There are currently grants of £2,000 available through them for churches setting up projects in Scotland.

- **Messy Vintage (<https://www.messychurch.org.uk/messyvintage>).** Now an established part of the Messy Church family, Messy Vintage is a movement which takes Messy Church values and good practice to older people. It aspires to be multi-generational and open to all. Like Messy Church, it is Christ-centred, creative, full of celebration, hospitality and aspires to be for all ages together, whilst acknowledging that in some cases, having all ages together is impractical.

Georgia Meikle from St Columba's Church of Scotland in Jersey, which has been using Messy Vintage for a number of years, said, *"Messy Vintage invites men and women to follow the general pattern set by Messy Church which reaches out to children and their parents. The aim is to bring entertainment with a Christian message to senior citizens, keeping in mind that our audience may be limited in mobility, memory, alertness and even resistance to the combination of entertainment with a Christian edge to it. Our group has certainly witnessed the latter, as at our first session one lady got up and walked out half way through! Be undaunted –for we have also had people popping back, curious to see what we were up to and stayed for the session."*

- 11.1.4** Dementias. It is encouraging to see that many congregations are responding to the needs around dementia; for those who develop the condition, and those caring for loved ones.

- 11.1.5** CrossReach is one part of the church which has long been involved in working with those affected by dementias – including the innovative Heart for Art project (<http://crossreach.org.uk/heart-art-0>). In addition, many congregations have also been involved in seeking to be 'dementia-friendly' churches, and to provide opportunities for support for people within their parish who may be caring for loved ones with dementias.

- 11.1.6** Stirling Presbytery has employed a Dementia Development Worker, appointed a full-time worker to promote, support and develop dementia-friendly communities across Stirlingshire and Clackmannanshire. This has been invaluable in raising the profile of the issues with congregations, and also has facilitated linking churches into other networks. Ms Bonnie McDowell, Dementia Support Development Co-ordinator, said, *"Compassion and learning are key to making this happen, learning about dementia and*

learning about the little things that can make a big difference in supporting people living with dementia. The presbytery project involves a programme of learning and sharing events and partnership working with people from community groups, congregations and organisations, working together to create dementia friendly communities."

11.1.7 Many congregations have been in contact with organisations such as Playlist for Life (<https://www.playlistforlife.org.uk/>). Sally Magnusson, founder of Playlist for Life, took part in an event at Dunblane Cathedral in November, which celebrated the good practice which is already taking place in communities in relation to supporting people living with dementia.

11.2 Alcohol Abuse

11.2.1 Alcohol is the third leading risk factor for death and disability in Scotland, after smoking and obesity. This legal, and socially acceptable drug is seen as an integral part of Scottish life, but it is a toxic substance that can create dependence and causes serious health and social problems. Drinking too much, too often, increases the risk of cancer and liver disease, being involved in an accident, being a victim or perpetrator of crime, experiencing family breakdown, and losing employment.

11.2.2 Often it is people other than the drinker who feel the effects the most: children, family, friends, colleagues and those working in front line services like the NHS and police.

11.2.3 In Scotland, we drink more than people in England and Wales; we also suffer more alcohol-related harm than these countries. The cost of this is immense. As highlighted by the recent report by Public Health Information for Scotland, alcohol consumption accounted for almost 8% of the burden of disease in Scotland. More than 1300 deaths in Scotland last year had alcohol as a contributory cause, and over 41,000 people had at least one admission to hospital with an alcohol-related condition. In just over half of violent crime, the victim said the offender was under the influence of alcohol. Life expectancy in some parts of Scotland falls well short of life expectancy elsewhere and alcohol plays a part in these inequalities.

11.2.4 The fact is that too many people in Scotland drink too much alcohol, too often, and this is often socially acceptable. One in four people in Scotland are drinking at a potentially harmful level. The implementation by the Scottish

Government of a minimum unit pricing policy for alcohol is welcomed by the Church, recognising the need to work to reduce the harm caused by alcohol, and to support those whose lives are adversely affected by substance misuse and addiction.

11.3 Future of the NHS

11.3.1 July 2018 will mark the 70th anniversary of the founding of the National Health Service (NHS). While there is little argument that the provision of healthcare for all has been an integral part of the improvement in life expectancy, and that the NHS remains a valued part of our social fabric, it is also clear that the long-term future of health care provision in Scotland is under serious pressure and needs to be very seriously examined.

11.3.2 The scenario in 2018 is very different to that which pertained in 1948; the vision which led to the establishing of the NHS is frequently mired in issues of political expediency, market forces, and the realisation that resources (on all levels) are not limitless. The NHS system is not without its faults, and improvements must regularly be sought; lessons from other styles of healthcare systems can and should be learned.

11.3.3 The Speak Out implementation plan proposed the scoping out of the viability of the Church of Scotland hosting a Commission on the Future of the Health Service in Scotland.

11.3.4 Caring and compassion are at the heart of the mission of the Church; the work of the Church is founded on relationship. Health and wellbeing is more than simply the absence of disease, and parish churches are integral to building healthy communities throughout Scotland. The Church recognises the need to re-envision the NHS for the 21st century, to ensure the health and wellbeing of all our citizens.

11.3.5 Almost every week brings fresh claims that the NHS, while well intentioned, is stretched almost to breaking point, and warnings that it is in imminent danger of collapse. Front line staff as well as managers and politicians are keenly aware that the long-term planning needed to anticipate future issues is severely limited. Patients and families, while being thankful for the benefits of the 'shared risk' approach of National Insurance funding the NHS, and applauding the care and dedication of staff, often bemoan the inefficiencies and shortcomings of the system.

11.3.6 The devolved nature of the NHS means that the NHS in Scotland is, in many respects, different to other parts of the United Kingdom. The Scottish Government's initiative to integrate health with social care is now being followed in other parts of the UK. Average health spending per person is higher in Scotland, but this is mitigated by the lower density of the population north of the border.

11.3.7 The House of Lords has recently undertaken a study on the long-term future of the NHS, but the devolution of health means that the NHS in Scotland was largely excluded from this examination. We believe that the Church occupies a unique and valuable position within Scottish society, and that a special commission has the potential to make a timely contribution to shaping the long-term future of the NHS in Scotland.

12. INVESTING IN YOUNG PEOPLE

12.1 The Year of Young People

12.1.1 2018 is the Year of Young People and for the Church this is an opportunity to celebrate the role of young people and to enable them to better engage, shape and participate in the life of the Church. In August 2017 the Very Rev Dr Derek Browning, and Robin Downie, Moderator of the National Youth Assembly, commended the commitments to children published by the World Council (WCC) of Churches in February 2017. These commitments are:

1. *Promote child protection through church communities*
2. *Promote meaningful participation in the churches and the communities by children and adolescents*
3. *Address particularly critical issues for children in our time, e.g. to raise church voices for intergenerational climate justice, supporting initiatives for and with children and adolescents*

*Churches Commitment to Children,
World Council of Churches, 2017*

12.1.2 For more information from the WCC on how churches can use their influence to improve children's lives go to www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/wcc-child-rights-engagement. What follows in this section of the report are some ways in which the Council has been trying to use the Church of Scotland's influence to improve the lives of young people.

12.2 Child Poverty Act

12.2.1 The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 was granted royal assent in December 2017, setting targets that by 2030, less than 10% of children living in Scotland will be in relative poverty, and less than 5% will be in persistent poverty. The Act also sets interim targets, reporting requirements and specific key areas that are to be considered, such as financial support for children and parents. In January 2018 the Council contributed to a Scottish Government exercise, hosted by the Big Lottery Fund, exploring the implementation of the Act, the role of other agencies in meeting the child poverty reduction targets, and exploring what the Scottish Government should prioritise when seeking to eliminate child poverty.

12.3 Give Me Five Campaign

12.3.1 The Give Me Five campaign is calling on MSPs to ensure the 2018/19 budget and Scottish Government spending plans include a top-up to Child Benefit of £5 per week. Increasing Child Benefit by just £5 a week for every child could lift 30,000 children out of poverty. Poverty is fundamentally about a lack of income, and this move, which is within the Scottish Government's powers, would significantly improve family income. As Douglas Hirsch highlighted in the report, *The Cost of a Child in 2017* "...the cost of a child is once again starting to rise. For the first time in post-war history, these cost increases are not being matched by increases in support given to families from the state. While this policy persists, the struggle that low-income families face to make ends meet will become steadily harder."^[28]

12.3.2 The Give Me Five campaign was launched on August 30 with faith leaders the Very Rev Dr Derek Browning, Moderator of the Church of Scotland, and Bishop William Nolan, President of Justice and Peace Scotland. It has also received support from the Scottish Episcopal Church, and the Scottish Unitarian Association. In December 2017 the Council Convener wrote to Derek Mackay MSP, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution, encouraging him to consider this proposal within the 2018/19 budget. For more information on how to get involved in the campaign by informing others about what it is trying to achieve, writing to MSPs and signing a petition, please go to www.scpo.scot/scottish-and-uk-government/givemefive/.

12.4 Supporting Church Representatives on Local Authority Committees Responsible for Education

12.4.1 The Education Committee provides two training conferences each year for Church of Scotland representatives on local authority committees responsible for education. These conferences are also open to the other religious representatives on those same committees (the Roman Catholic representatives, appointed by the Roman Catholic Church, and the 'Third Faith Representatives', who are appointed by the authority).

12.4.2 The training days ensure the representatives feel that they are able to contribute to their local authority and are effective in this role. Through this training the Education Committee gives a flavour of what the role should be, what Church of Scotland representatives should expect from the Director of Education, or equivalent, within their local authority, and provide examples of how different Church of Scotland representatives around the country have undertaken their role. We usually ask a Director of Education from a nearby local authority to come and give their opinion of the role of the Representative on a Local Authority Education Committee.

12.4.3 At the September 2017 conference the Education Committee asked a newly appointed representative to talk about their experience of their first Council meeting. The Scottish Government conference was also addressed by a civil servant working on the Scottish Government's review of the governance structures within Scottish education. More than anything such conferences provide an opportunity for representatives to network –to talk and share experiences, and to hear what the Education Committee is doing.

12.5 Supporting School Chaplains

12.5.1 *The School Chaplains Handbook* was launched at the 2017 General Assembly and has been well received. The Education Committee has sent a copy of this handbook to every Director of Education and asked that they pass it on to every school in their local authority. The Committee has also made efforts to distribute the handbook to school chaplains, Presbyteries and anyone who asked for a hard copy, which can also be downloaded at www.churchofscotland.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0006/40479/Chaplains_handbook_web_version.pdf.

12.5.2 At the invitation of a local authority, the Education Committee offers training for school chaplains and head teachers so that there is a mutual training and understanding of each other's aspirations and needs. Through these conferences we have seen great examples of chaplaincy around the country. At the time of writing the Committee is in conversation with three local authorities about such conferences.

12.6 Serve Your Local School

Serve Your Local School (SYLS) is an initiative established in 2011 to help churches engage with their local schools. In November 2016 the Council, along with Scripture Union and Care, commissioned some research into the uptake of the Serve Your Local School Initiative. The research was conducted using a quantitative survey which had 332 responses, combined with 25 qualitative structured phone interviews. The quantitative survey found that

- 45% of respondents had heard of SYLS initiative before they completed the survey.
- Of those who had heard of the SYLS initiative before the survey, 49% had visited the website.
- 95% of people who had visited the website had a positive opinion of it.
- 79% of respondents said that their clergy provides chaplaincy to a primary school, and 55% of respondents said that their clergy provides chaplaincy to a secondary school.
- The level of 'activities of service' was similar, whether the church was located in a city, town, village or rural location.
- Overwhelmingly, given by 67% of respondents, the biggest barrier to their church serving their local school more is a "lack of people and everyone is busy".
- 39% of respondents belonging to the Church of Scotland said their church employs a Children's, Youth or Families Worker, and 52% of respondents belong to the other denominations.
- The analysis shows that there is a significant increase in 'activities of service' when there is a paid worker with a remit for schools.

These structured interviews suggested that there was an opportunity to update the website with new stories to further enable congregations to see the opportunities to connect with their local school. For more information on SYLS go to <http://syls.org.uk/>.

12.7 The Governance of Scottish Education

12.7.1 The proposed restructuring of the governance structures within Scottish education is something that the Education Committee has engaged with in depth over the course of this year. The Council, with the support of the Committee, has responded to the Scottish Government consultation on the Education (Scotland) Bill 2018. The Bill broadly lays out plans to set up Regional Collaboratives of local authorities and to devolve more responsibility to head teachers. While the Council is supportive of the principle of subsidiarity, it is of the opinion that the principal challenges that Scottish education currently faces, namely the poverty related gap in attainment and critical teacher shortages, will primarily be resolved through additional resources rather than through a change of governance.

13. INVESTING IN YOUNG PEOPLE – A REVIEW OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND’S WORK IN EDUCATION

13.1 Introduction

13.1.1 The nurture and care of young people is amongst our most urgent duties as a society and as a Church. That young people flourish and find their true potential, as people made in the image of God is one of our most satisfying responsibilities. We recognise we live in a society in which many young people struggle to thrive. In light of the changed culture in which we live, and the challenges that many young people face, there is a need to take into account the home environment, school and college and the wider community, the Education Review Group has worked over the last 18 months to develop a vision that seeks to renew and strengthen the Church of Scotland’s work among young people.

13.1.2 Across the church, through its councils, agencies and congregations, a great deal of inspiring work goes on. The Education Review Group’s vision is to re-imagine the remarkable work the Church has done in the sphere of education over the years and to create a task-oriented group in which the range of work that the Church of Scotland

contributes towards the flourishing of Scotland’s young people can be undertaken cooperatively and with a greater degree of efficiency and coherence. Jesus himself cherished young people and put them at the centre. The Church must do the same.

13.1.3 The role of the Church of Scotland within Scottish education is well documented.^[29] In 2006, as a result of the restructuring of the national councils and committees of the Church, the work of the former Committee on Education was incorporated into the remit and work of the newly formed Church and Society Council. Within this current arrangement five members of the Church and Society Council are appointed because of their expertise in the field of education; these individuals sit on the Education Committee alongside co-opted members with expertise in Scottish education.

13.1.4 In 2016 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland instructed the Church and Society Council, in collaboration with the Education Committee and other Councils of the Church, to review the work and position of the Education Committee within the Church of Scotland. This request came with the support of the Education Committee which sought a formal conversation about the future strategic direction of its work, as it was becoming increasingly clear that questions of future strategy, resources and structure required broader engagement than just that of the Committee and the Church and Society Council.

13.1.5 The remit of the current Education Committee includes:

- Contributing to public debate and policy-making on education issues.
- Improving Time for Reflection/Religious Observance in schools.
- Increasing resources for the teaching of Religious and Moral Education.
- Developing the work of chaplaincy in schools and the further education sector.
- Supporting the work of Church representatives on local authority education committees.

Delivery of such an ambitious remit is challenging in the face of the limited staff resources available to support the work since the 2006 restructuring, but more critically, the

challenge is to deliver excellent support to the Church in its work with children and young people in the face of huge change in the Church and in society.

13.1.6 Since the Church sought to establish a school in every parish, Scotland has become more multicultural and diverse than ever before, and current polls suggest that 74% of young people in Scotland profess no religion.^[30] The Church is continually called to rediscover Christ's way of showing people their worth, and enabling them to flourish and find their true identity. As individuals made in the image of God, each one is worthy of respect, freedom and opportunity. By helping young people to thrive and flourish; to discover their spirituality and identity, the Church of Scotland can continue the legacy that it started with the vision of a school in every parish. At the heart of this review remains a commitment to help the Church at national and local level to understand the changing social landscape and to explore the Church's continuing but changing capacity for influence. To do this best will mean a focusing of priorities and a new way of partnership working.

13.2 Medium and Long-Term Priorities

13.2.1 The Review Group was tasked with the development of identifying medium and long-term priorities. The starting point is that the Church's involvement in education, and its purpose within this area, comes from a care for the wellbeing of young people. As Christians, our faith is rooted in the concept of the Incarnation. Just as God walks alongside humanity in Christ, we are called to journey with Christ beyond our churches; to be salt of the earth and lights in the world. This is about being a 'servant church' which walks with Christ on the path of discipleship, to build relationships with others in our community – relationships which signpost fresh hope and a new vision for those who may be struggling.

13.2.2 The priority then is to use the means that the Church has at its disposal to further invest in Scotland's young people so that they might thrive and flourish: growing up happy, healthy, with meaning and purpose: given the opportunities to develop their character, to build close social relationships, to explore faith and to have opportunities to achieve.^[31] Whatever the primary barriers to this flourishing are, they should be of concern to the Church.

13.2.3 Today, one of the greatest impediments facing Scotland's young people is the significant disparity of achievement between those who 'have' and those who 'have

not'. The gap between children from low-income and high-income households starts early: by the age of five it is 10-13 months.^[32] Lower attainment in literacy and numeracy is linked to deprivation throughout primary school.^[33] By age 12-14 (S2), pupils from more affluent areas are more than twice as likely to do well in numeracy as those from the most deprived areas.^[34]

13.2.4 That a child's economic background should have such a significant bearing on their opportunities is a significant blemish on the Scottish Government's stated ambition to make Scotland the best place in the world to grow up.^[35] In 2007 an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report indicated that parents' socio-economic background mattered more for children's attainment than their school.^[36] The 2009 PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) report showed a stronger association between parental background and poor reading in Scotland than the OECD, English or Welsh averages.^[37]

13.2.5 In 2016 a report by researchers from Duke University suggested that the life chances of individuals can be predicted with some accuracy from the age of three years^[38]. The importance of additional support being provided in early years and in supporting parents/carers cannot be overstated. The Scottish Government recognises the importance of this age group of children and is striving to double the hours of nursery education by 2020. This has enormous resource and staffing implications for national and local government. Currently many nursery units are stretched to their limit and have neither time nor the personnel to allow them to work with individual parents or groups of parents. In the 0-3 age band, especially in our economically poorest communities, parents are asking for non-judgemental flexible provision for their children where they can also receive support in developing their parenting skills.

13.2.6 The Church of Scotland, with others, can contribute to supporting enrichment in early years. In congregations there are people with a wide range of practical expertise. There are resources and facilities which could enable new partnerships to emerge and which could enhance the quantity and quality of statutory provision. Examples include projects assisting parents/carers in their knowledge and understanding of positive parenting skills, parent and toddler groups, storytelling groups, play schemes or parent support initiatives.^[39] Helpful suggestions for possible early years

interventions, their cost and impact, can be found at <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/resources/early-years-toolkit/>.

13.2.7 Within local contexts there will be different opportunities for congregations to invest in young people of different ages and those with a range of support needs and abilities, as many individual churches have done to great effect in recent times. There is a recognition that the greatest impact is likely to come from intervention in early years, and that there is a great deal of excellent work already happening and potential to do more. Sometimes, the greatest single contribution which a local congregation can make to the wellbeing of children in its parish is a high-quality parents and toddlers group or offering support to families with small children.

13.2.8 The review group considers that school chaplaincy will remain a vitally important part of most parish ministry. Beyond early years, school chaplaincy has a vital and ongoing role to play in contributing to the health, wellbeing and spiritual development of children as they learn and grow.^[40] Spiritual development is recognised as a pupil entitlement, not only in the RME guidelines, but also as part of a pupil's health and wellbeing. The new *Chaplains' Handbook* (published in 2017) offers imaginative and innovative models of chaplaincy, which provide congregations with the opportunity to consider how they might establish positive relationships with their local school. Through *Serve Your Local School* initiatives, and through projects supported by the Go For It Fund, local churches are already forging new links with parents, children, and their local schools.^[41] Within primary schools, for example, paired reading schemes, playground and lunchtime supervision, and after school clubs all require dedicated time where children can be listened to.

13.2.9 In every part of Scotland there are many examples of congregations engaging with young people both within and beyond formal education structures and Church settings. Such examples provide illustrations of the Church at its best, as congregations play their part in helping Scotland's young people fulfil their potential.

13.3 Partnership: Links with local authorities and other bodies

13.3.1 As a Church we should be involved with other agencies in linking up resources and examples of good practice to enable practical action at a local level. Other

agencies are already developing models and partnerships to resource local congregations and communities, including national institutions such as Young Scot and Scripture Union.

13.3.2 In its current formation, the Education Committee has formal representation on a number of bodies, including the General Teaching Council of Scotland, the Scottish Joint Committee on Religious and Moral Education, the Scottish Churches Education Group, and on each local authority committee responsible for education. In addition, the Convener of the Education Committee has annual meetings with a range of bodies including the education spokespersons for each of the main political parties; representatives from EIS, SQA, and Education Scotland; Christian Values in Education; and the Scottish Parent Teachers Council. It will be important for the Church to remain aware of how it might best connect with such organisations in order to contribute positively and appropriately. It will also be vital that new relationships are developed with other agencies and parts of government that are concerned with the wider support and nurture of young people.

13.3.3 Such connections with external bodies provide useful insight into the world of Scottish education, and provide an opportunity to raise any relevant issues around schooling and build relationships. Such engagement has a valuable place in the life and work of the Church. To be as effective as possible this work needs to build upon the strong connections and engagement happening locally.

13.3.4 Giving priority to partnerships and work that supports congregations to invest in young people, not only increases the impact of the Church's work locally, but also testifies to the relevance of the Church through its actions. Where this is done well, it further unlocks opportunities for the Church at a national level to engage with Government. By supporting and learning from local initiatives, a lasting contribution is made to the shared desire to support communities in their efforts to narrow the attainment gap and ensure the flourishing of Scotland's young people.

13.3.5 This emphasis on local initiatives relates to the Church of Scotland representatives on local authority committees responsible for education. The responsibility for appointing these representatives has been delegated to the Education Committee by the General Assembly, although in practice, candidates are discussed and agreed in consultation with local Presbyteries. In support of these representatives,

the Education Committee hosts two conferences and maintains contact throughout the year. During the course of their work the Review Group sent out a questionnaire to all Church of Scotland representatives on local authority committees responsible for education. Of those that responded, the suggestion was that while there was a great deal of variety between local authorities, most representatives felt:

- welcomed and included by their authority;
- that they were able to offer input that was valued;
- that the opportunity to contribute to the discussion was more important than the right to vote (upon which there were mixed opinions);
- a strong desire to share the concerns of the local community in a manner free from the constraints of party politics.

13.3.6 Such responses are encouraging to hear and suggest there is a part to play for church representatives in advocating for the community of which they are a part. The Church of Scotland should use these positions to ensure that decisions are made that promote the flourishing of young people, and that the voices of young people and young families are highlighted. There remains a role for the national bodies of the Church to maintain contact with representatives; however, this should be to enable those representatives to connect with their communities and to better understand the needs and voices of young people within their localities. However, on issues on which there is diversity of opinion the Review Group believes Presbyteries are much better placed to engage with, and seek the views of the community than any national body possibly could.

13.3.7 The primary partnership should be between the national and the local Church. In this context, such a relationship should be characterised by the national Church supporting local congregations to enable young people to flourish, and by the local church sharing more widely the expertise from their direct experience and practice. This would enable the whole Church to have a practical, incarnational and life-giving presence locally, with the capacity to speak out nationally.

13.4 Structures, Location and Resource

13.4.1 The flourishing of Scotland's young people does not sit within a single part of the Church's national structures. Through the Go For It Fund, the Ministries Council supports numerous congregations to deliver innovative projects with and for young people and young families. Many of its Ministries Development Staff (MDS) work with children, young people and families and training for school chaplaincy is part of ministerial training provided by the Ministries Council. Within the Mission and Discipleship Council there is a great deal of staff expertise supporting congregations actively to engage young people at both local and national levels. CrossReach currently delivers a range of services relating to children and families, and employs staff with a dedicated focus on *Getting It Right For Every Child*. The Church and Society Council works with schools, engages with education authorities and supports chaplains. Were these collective efforts to be more intentionally connected across councils and committees there would be much greater potential to increase the Church's contribution to young people in Scotland. There is a clear opportunity for more collaboration, networking, and maximisation of resources.

13.4.2 The Review Group is of the opinion that we require a structure that will foster a more collegiate way of working between church councils; will have a greater focus on resourcing local congregations; and will reflect the fresh opportunities expressed within this report. To enable this to happen it is envisaged that the Education Committee would evolve and form a core element of a new *Young People and Education Action Group*, with membership drawn from across the councils. This group, with a strong emphasis on action, will facilitate, coordinate and encourage the Church of Scotland's work to nurture and support young people.

13.4.3 In the first instance, the *Young People and Education Action Group* will be a cross-council body of no more than 11 individuals, with each of the Church and Society, Ministries and Mission and Discipleship Councils responsible for appointing two representatives from their council membership, alongside five co-opted members. These co-opted members, appointed by the group, should consist of young people, educationalists and those actively involved in the development of young people, including CrossReach. The group would be accountable to the Councils that compose it and ultimately to the General Assembly, with its work reported to the General Assembly annually by one of those councils on a rolling basis. The group will be convened for a

term of three years by one of the appointed members from the relevant councils, whose name will be brought to the General Assembly.

13.4.4 The Group will be supported by the individual staff members from those councils who have a remit relating to children, families and young people. The Church and Society Council will contribute the resources, including the staffing and budget that it currently allocates to its work concerning *Investing in Young People* to the work of the Group. (In 2018 this amounted to £50,908.) Of the relevant members of staff, one individual will act as the Group secretary, with responsibility for supporting the Convener, Group and coordinating staff efforts in this area of work. All staff members will remain within their current departments and be accountable to their current councils, but would be collectively tasked with enabling the coordination of the work across the Church councils. This would ensure shared responsibility, accountability, coordination of staff time and effort, and greater opportunity to work collaboratively on specific projects. The Review Group believes that this is exactly the sort of collaborative working which will be essential if the Church, as well as young people, is to have the chance to flourish in the future. It recognises that this structure may change in the light of the Council of Assembly's strategic planning process but believes that the work needs to start now.

13.4.5 The Group's work must focus on enabling local congregations to make the biggest possible difference to young people and use this local work to inform what the Church says and does nationally. It is important that the new Young People and Education Action Group has the flexibility to develop its own priorities as its work develops. Nonetheless, the Review Group would highlight several core areas of work that it considers critical moving forward. These are a focus on early years and disadvantaged young people where they exist in every community; an increased commitment to school chaplaincy, including Time for Reflection and Religious and Moral Education (RME); and resourcing local congregations to support their school and wider work with young people and families. In undertaking these tasks, it will be critical that the Church engages effectively with those concerned with the welfare and education of young people, including young work agencies as well as with local authorities and the Scottish Government.

13.4.6 Within the Group's first year there would be a transitional period in which the Group and the current Education Committee would run concurrently. During this time the Group would put together an implementation plan for its work. This plan should consider how the Group would maximise internal and external resources for its work as well as outlining clear strategic objectives and developing a theologically coherent approach to the Church of Scotland's engagement with young people. Meanwhile the Education Committee would pass on its existing work, as agreed by the Church and Society Council, to the Young People and Education Action Group.

13.4.7 It is timely that the Church of Scotland should set out this direction of travel in 2018, the Year of Young People. Through it, the Review Group hopes and prays that the Church will continue to contribute to the flourishing of Scotland's young people.

14. THE SOCIETY RELIGION AND TECHNOLOGY (SRT) PROJECT

14.1 This year the SRT Committee welcomed Caroline Cowan as our new Chair, and also welcomed a number of new members. The committee remains grateful to all those who serve the Church in this way. The SRT Project is leading on the Health and Wellbeing strand of Speak Out, and has been engaged in many aspects of seeking to encourage improvements in the health of all in our society. In addition, the work of the committee continues to help to equip the Church to engage with ethical issues in science.

14.2 SRT@50

14.2.1 Under the chairmanship of the Very Rev Dr Angus Morrison, the group continues to develop plans to mark the 50th anniversary of the SRT in 2020. A number of possible themes have been identified, and resources are being sought.

14.3 Bioethics

14.3.1 Through the SRT Committee the Council has been privileged to serve on the Bioethics group of the Conference of European Churches, leading a working group on human gene editing, and helping to organise a successful conference on this topic in Paris in February.

14.4 Science Festivals and Public Engagement

14.4.1 Events supported by the Committee have taken place at a number of science festivals around the country, and we continue to encourage congregations to consider getting involved in their local science festival. See www.srtp.org.uk/srtp/view_article/scottish_science_festivals.

14.4.2 The Committee has also visited a number of Guilds, men's groups, schools, churches and Presbyteries. The annual SRT week of prayer (10-16 June 2018) continues to generate interest and be a vital aspect of our work.

15. CAMPAIGNS

15.1 The following provides a list of the campaigns that the Council is involved with on behalf of the Church of Scotland.

In sympathy with (The Church broadly shares the campaign's objectives and ways of working)

Campaign for a Fair Society
(www.campaignforafairsociety.com)

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland's Good Society Vision 2020
(www.ctbi.org.uk)

Kairos Britain
(www.kairosbritain.org.uk)

Scottish Campaign on Welfare Reform
(www.cpag.org.uk/scotland/SCoWR)

Stop Funding Hate
(<http://www.stopfundinghate.org.uk/>)

In association with (The Church shares the campaign's objectives and agrees that its name and logo can be used in publicity)

End the Freeze on Benefits
(http://www.povertyalliance.org/policy_campaigns/end_the_benefits_freeze)

Big Shift Campaign
(www.christianaid.org.uk/climate)

The Living Rent Campaign
(www.livingrent.org)

Flesh and Blood
(www.fleshandblood.org)

Justice for Bangladeshi Garment Workers
(http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news_and_events/news/archive/articles/2013/former_moderator_in_justice_campaign_for_bangladeshi_garment_workers)

Trace the Tax
(www.christianaid.org.uk/tax)

White Ribbon Scotland
(www.whiteribbonScotland.org.uk)

Members of (The Church is in full membership of the campaign and is active in promoting its aims, involved in developing its strategy and in implementing activities)

ACT Palestine Prayer Vigil
(<http://actpalestineforum.org/>)

Children are Unbeatable
(http://cos.churchofscotland.org.uk/blogs/church_and_society/2016/11/07/children-are-unbeatable/)

End Child Poverty Scotland
(www.endchildpoverty.org.uk)

Existing Homes Alliance
(<http://existinghomesalliancescotland.co.uk/>)

Give Me Five Campaign
(<http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/give-me-five-child-benefit-top-campaign>)

Good Money Week
(formerly National Ethical Investment Week) www.goodmoneyweek.com

Robin Hood Tax
(www.robinhoodtax.org.uk)

Scottish Leaders Group on Welfare
(www.cas.org.uk/news/new-group-aims-investigate-scotlands-broken-welfare-system)

Scottish Living Wage Campaign
(<http://slw.povertyalliance.org/>)

Scottish Pilgrim Routes Forum
(www.sprf.org.uk)

Side by Side
(www.sidebysidegender.org)

Stop Climate Chaos Scotland
(www.stopclimatechaos.org/scotland)

Jubilee Scotland
(www.jubileeescotland.org.uk)

Poverty Alliance
(www.povertyalliance.org)

In the name and by the authority of the Council,

RICHARD FRAZER, *Convener*
PAULINE EDMISTON, *Vice-Convener*
WENDY YOUNG, *Vice-Convener*
MARTIN JOHNSTONE, *Secretary*

Appendix 1

EXPERTS CONSULTED FOR A REVIEW OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND'S WORK IN EDUCATION

Georgina Shields

Georgina is a university student, a member of the Poverty Truth Commission and the Iona Community. Georgina shared her experience of the education system, and the ways in which groups like the GK experience helped her in her education.

Craig Ross

Craig is a parent, a carpenter and a member of the Grassmarket Community Project. Craig shared something of his difficult experience of school, his experience of leaving school at 16, and his hopes for his daughter's education.

Agnes Mullen

Agnes is a member of the Church and Society staff team where she serves the Education Committee. Agnes has been involved with the Education Committee of the Church of Scotland for 24 years and shared her experience of how the committee, its structure and work have changed over that time.

Rev Dr Steve Younger

Steve is a Minister at High Blantyre Baptist Church who has recently completed a PhD on Religious Observance Within the Curriculum for Excellence. Steve delivers training for education authorities in Religious Observance in schools, he delivers training for the Church of Scotland on school chaplaincy and is a co-opted member of the Church of Scotland's Education Committee.

Ross Greer MSP

Ross is education spokesperson for the Scottish Green Party, a Church of Scotland Elder and a member of the National Youth Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

Jen Robertson

At the time of her contribution Jen worked for Hamilton Presbytery and Scripture Union as their Children's Youth Development Worker. A significant part of Jen's role involved training and equipping school chaplains.

Rachel Sunderland

Rachel is the head of the Scottish Government's Empowering Schools Unit and is working on current proposals to reform the governance of Scottish education.

Patricia Watson

Patricia Watson works for Education Scotland, is an HM Inspector of Education and was one of the key authors of *How Good is Our School* (4th Edition).

Hillary Kidd

Hillary works for Young Scot as the Development Manager for Tackling Inequality and Attainment. Young Scot is the national youth information and citizenship charity.

Rhona Armitage

Rhona is a retired head teacher who has significant experience of setting up early years projects in areas of deprivation within Dundee. Rhona currently runs Play Family Support Group at St Ninian's Church in Dundee.

Beatrice Roy and Margaret Cowie

Beatrice is the National Worker for Christian Values in Education (CVE) and Margaret is the assistant secretary for CVE and a former head teacher. CVE give advice, networking opportunities and resources for teachers, chaplains and parents so that all pupils can make informed choices about their beliefs and values.

Church Representatives on Local Authority Committees Responsible for Education

A questionnaire was sent to Church of Scotland representatives on local authority education committees asking them about their experiences and perspectives of the role.

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