

# Ecumenical Audit: Questionnaire Findings

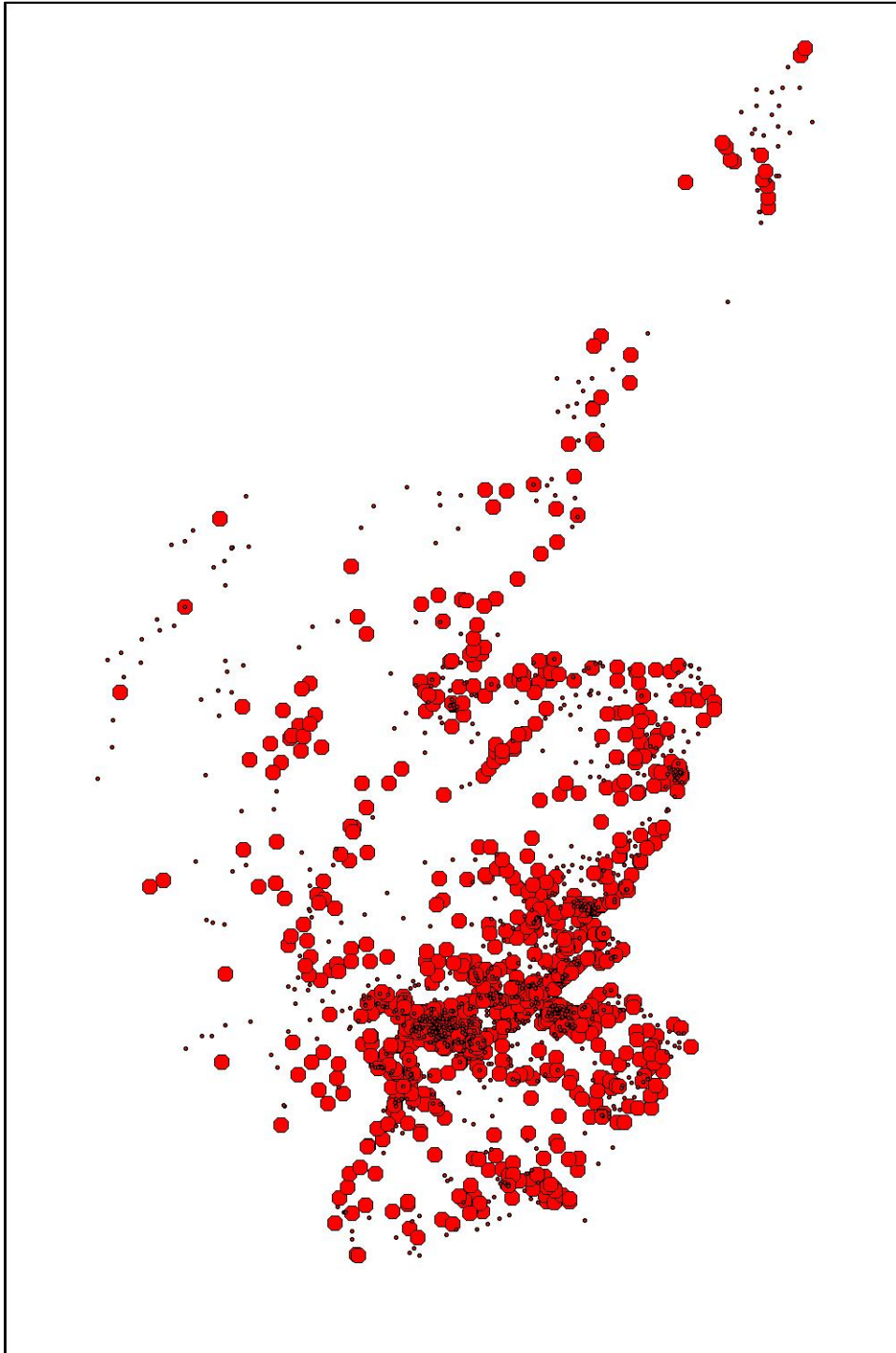
---

## Summary:

- The appended questionnaire was sent to all congregations of the Church of Scotland, with over 800 replies received from congregations representing every Presbytery in Scotland.
- Half of the replies came in through the online *SurveyMonkey* questionnaire, the rest by post or email.
- The Roman Catholic, Scottish Episcopal and Baptist churches are found in more parishes than other denominations.
- By denomination, congregations of the United Reformed Church are most likely to work with Church of Scotland congregations, followed by the Scottish Episcopal Church.
- Just over 40% of the congregations belonged to a “Churches Together” or local “Council of Churches”.
- Under 6% of congregations shared their building with a congregation of another denomination, and very few were engaged in formal ecumenical partnerships (less than 3%).
- Less than ten congregations had been involved in the appointment of a minister in a neighbouring ecumenical partner, or involved them in their search process.
- The World Day of Prayer and Holy week services were the most popular activities to engage in, but Joint Bible Studies and Sunday School were thought to be the most effective at strengthening links.
- In other activities, Christian Aid week and social gatherings were the most frequent, and social gatherings were deemed to be the second best way of strengthening fellowship after sharing a church building.
- Just under half of the ministers who responded were members of an ecumenical ministers’ meeting.
- Over a third of those responding described “awareness of other traditions – mutual learning”, and “fellowship and friendship” to be benefits of working ecumenically.
- A third of those responding said that a hindrance to working ecumenically was the lack of other denominations in their parish. 12% commented on being too busy in their own parish.

## Reponses

By 2 March, 2013, 823 responses had been returned, representing every Presbytery, and over half of the parishes of the Church of Scotland. The congregations who responded are shown on the following map, where a large dot indicates a response and a small dot where a parish has not responded.



## A: Ecumenical Relationships

### 1.1 Which denominations are present in your parish?

Congregations answered as shown in the table below:

Denomination	#	Denomination	#
Associated Presbyterian Churches	15	Pentecostal Church	62
Baptist Church	193	Religious Society of Friends	4
Congregational Federation	29	Roman Catholic Church	371
Free Church of Scotland	82	Salvation Army	83
Independent Fellowship	160	Scottish Episcopal Church	253
Methodist Church	68	United Free Church of Scotland	53
Minority Ethnic Congregation	24	United Reformed Church	46
Orthodox Church	11	Other	138

The most common denomination to be found in a parish is that of the Roman Catholic Church, with 371 parishes, followed by the Scottish Episcopal Church with 253 and the Baptist Church with 193 respectively.

### 1.2 Which denominations do you work with?

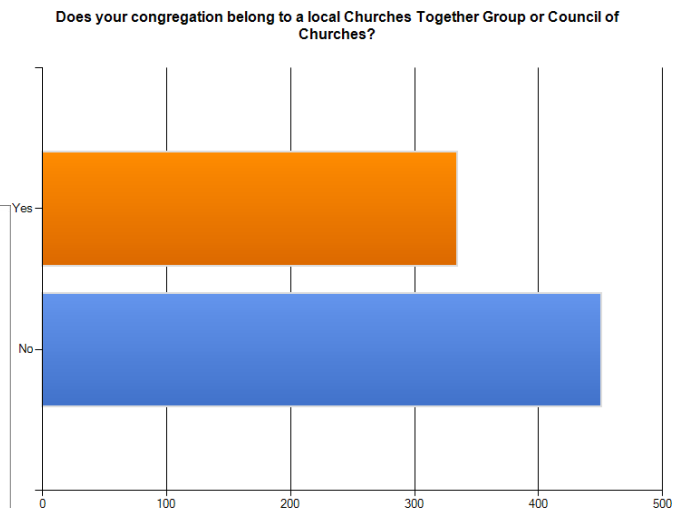
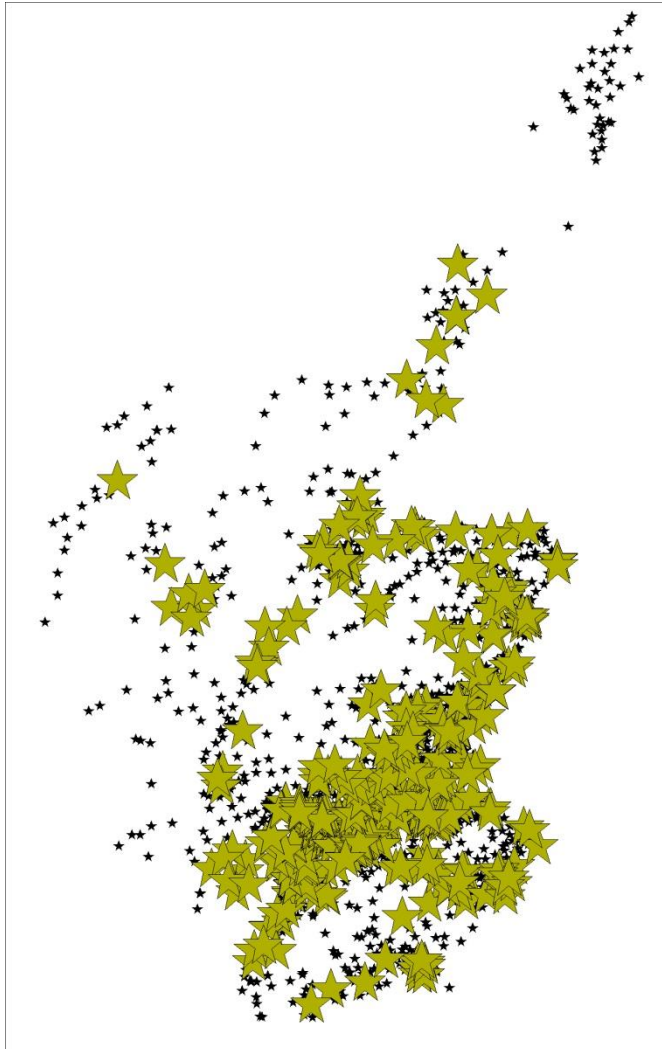
The denomination which worked most closely with Churches of Scotland is that of the United Reformed Church, where 76% of congregations with an URC congregation in its parish work “frequently” or “always” with that congregation. This is followed by the Scottish Episcopal Church (54%) and the Congregational Federation and Salvation Army (50% and 47% respectively).

The full data, giving percentages of the congregations who worked at least “frequently” with the Church of Scotland congregation is as follows:

Denomination	%	Denomination	%
Associated Presbyterian Churches	21	Pentecostal Church	19
Baptist Church	39	Religious Society of Friends	24
Congregational Federation	50	Roman Catholic Church	36
Free Church of Scotland	27	Salvation Army	47
Independent Fellowship	25	Scottish Episcopal Church	54
Methodist Church	37	United Free Church of Scotland	41
Minority Ethnic Congregation	27	United Reformed Church	76
Orthodox Church	30	Other	12

### 1.3 Churches Together Groups

In response to the question “Does your congregation belong to a local Churches Together Group or Council of Churches?”, 43% said that they did, while 57% did not.



The map shown on the left indicates where the churches that are members of such a group (large yellow star) are located. The Borders and the Central Belt are well-represented, as is Grampian, Inverness and Orkney, but there are few in the north west and Shetland, as well as the south west of the country.

The impact of belonging to such a group is varied, while for seven churches the Churches Together group shapes congregational life, and for 43% of the responses, some impact is made, there are still over a hundred for whom the group involves a small number of enthusiasts, or there is difficulty in finding people to be involved.

## 1.5 Sharing Buildings

Only 44 (5.6%) responses noted that they shared their church building with another denomination. They are most frequently minority ethnic (10), Roman Catholic (8) and Scottish Episcopal (7) congregations. Thirteen of these had a written agreement with the other congregation.

Denomination	#	Denomination	#
Associated Presbyterian Churches	0	Pentecostal Church	3
Baptist Church	4	Religious Society of Friends	1
Congregational Federation	0	Roman Catholic Church	8
Free Church of Scotland	5	Salvation Army	1
Independent Fellowship	5	Scottish Episcopal Church	7
Methodist Church	1	United Free Church of Scotland	0
Minority Ethnic Congregation	10	United Reformed Church	4
Orthodox Church	1	Other	10

## 1.8 Covenanted Partnerships

Of the responses received, twenty-one congregations (2.7%) said that they were in a Covenanted Partnership with a congregation or congregations of other denominations. However there seems to have been some confusion over the definition as two congregations spoke of “twinned” congregations, one in the Church of Scotland, another in East Africa.

The following table indicates the denominations involved in Covenanted Partnerships:

Denomination	#	Denomination	#
Methodist Church	2	United Free Church of Scotland	4
Roman Catholic Church	4	United Reformed Church	6
Scottish Episcopal Church	8	Other	3

## 1.10 Appointment of ministers

Only nine of the responses stated that they had involved their ecumenical partners in their appointment process, with an observer as part of the nominating committee. Thirteen congregations responded that they had been involved in appointing a minister with a neighbouring ecumenical partner. However, five of these appear to concern linked charges with other Churches of Scotland. Four responses spoke of serving on other nominating committees, acting as locum in the Free Church and acting as Interim Moderator in a Scottish Episcopal Church.

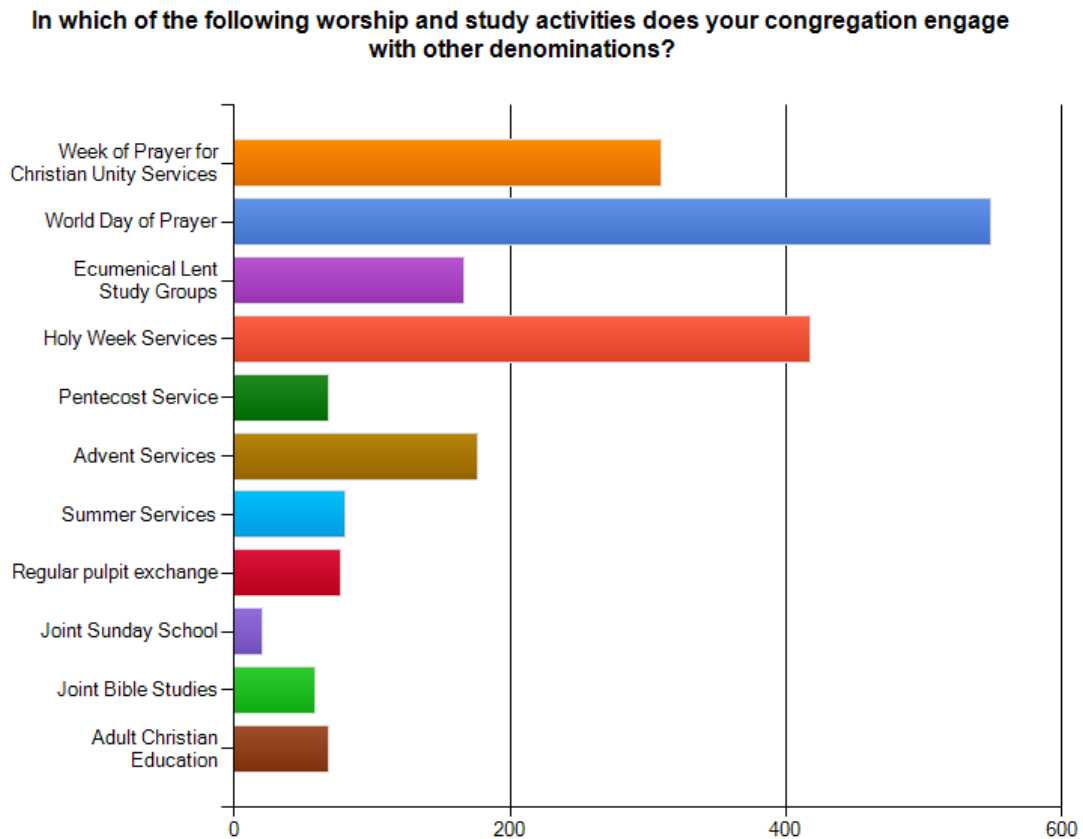
## 1.13 Local Ecumenical Parishes

Thirty responses claimed to be single congregation Local Ecumenical Parishes, but only two of these were actually LEPs. There may have been confusion as to the definition of the term in the printed questionnaire; the web version had the definition in the title. Of the two who replied, Aberdeen: Kirk of St Nicholas’ Uniting, and Paisley: Oakshaw Trinity, both were joint parishes with the United Reformed Church.

## B: Congregational Activities

### 2.1 Worship and Study

Many responses described the worship and study activities that they took part in with other denominations, as illustrated in the following chart:

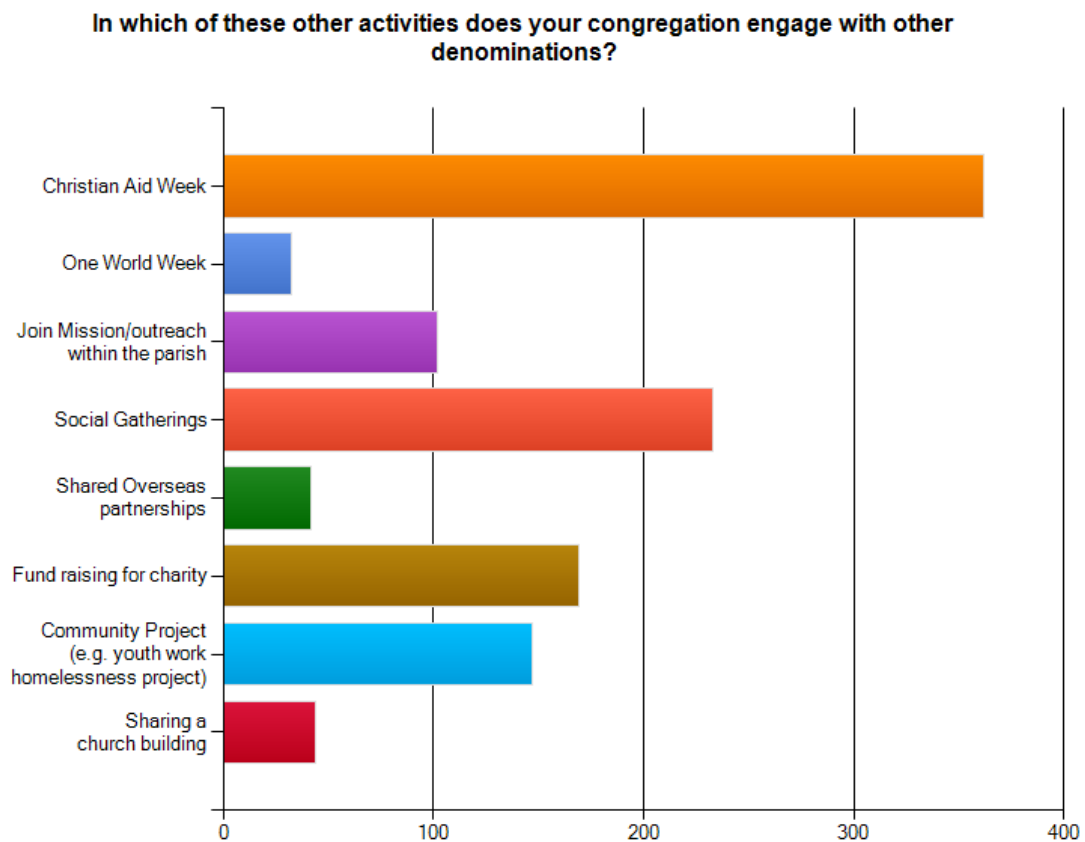


The most popular events were the World Day of Prayer, with 548 congregations taking part in this, followed by Holy Week services with 418 responses. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has 310 responses and Advent services 176. The other activity with more than 150 responses is Ecumenical Lent Study Groups, all others had 80 or fewer responses.

When the impact of these events is considered, most are believed to be at least “Quite effective” at strengthening cooperation. The Joint Bible Studies were thought to be most effective overall with 97% of those who replied to this question describing the impact as “Quite effective” or higher. Joint Sunday school was next, with 85% considering it at least “Quite effective”, followed by Pentecost, Advent and Holy Week services (79%, 74%, 72% respectively).

### 3.1 Other Joint Activities

The following graph shows the responses to the question regarding other congregational activities:



Seventy percent of those who responded to this question, 362 congregations, noted that their congregation engaged with other denominations in Christian Aid Week. 233 took part in social gatherings, and 169 in fund-raising for charity. A joint community project was engaged with by 147 congregations and 102 did joint mission and outreach work within the parish.

Sharing a church building is judged the most effective opportunity for strengthening relationships – 86% of those who replied to this question marked it at least “Quite effective”. Social gatherings (83%), Joint mission/outreach (82%) and Fund-raising for charity (79%) also scored highly.

## C: Ministerial Activity

Of those who replied to this question, 48.4%, 339 congregations, said that their ministers were members of an Ecumenical Ministers' meeting.

One hundred congregations said that neighbouring ecumenical congregations provided holiday cover, while 113 spoke of funerals. Around fifty mentioned routine pastoral care and wedding cover. Routine pastoral care had the highest level of strengthening pastoral care in the area, with 84% of those who responded saying that it strengthened pastoral care to at least some extent. Weddings, Holiday cover and Funerals all had 61-63% of the view that pastoral care is strengthened.

For those congregations who did not have any ecumenical cover, 75% spoke of neighbouring Church of Scotland ministers covering, and 17% of using the resources of their own congregation. In comments, congregations spoke of Presbytery support and retired ministers.

## D: Reflections

This section comprised two questions, "What are the three best things that ecumenical partnership/working has brought to your congregation?" and "What prevents or hinders you from working with other denominations?" designed to allow for a fuller description of the benefits and hindrances to ecumenical engagement.

Around 60% (465) of responses described benefits and 70% (571) detailed hindrances to working ecumenically. I would suggest that the responses can be clustered as described below. Percentages shown in this section are of the responses given.

### 6.1 The benefits of working ecumenically

Two issues were clearly highlighted by many respondents:

- Awareness of other traditions/denominations – mutual learning (170; 37%)
- Fellowship and friendship (166; 36%)

The next issues were:

- Working together on a project (128; 28%) – being able to attempt things together that are too big to do alone, confidence, etc.
- Christian unity (125; 27%) – that "church was bigger than our corner", Gospel imperative

Worshipping together was mentioned in 108 (23%) responses. Joint worship in Holy Week and Advent were the most common while others spoke of summer services or times of vacancy.

65 (14%) responses mentioned the benefit of showing the wider community that the churches were working together; confronting sectarianism was explicitly mentioned by a few.

Sharing resources and clergy support were mentioned by 45 (10%) and 36 (8%) responses respectively.



## 6.2 Hindrances to working together

By far the biggest issue here is parish churches where there is no other denomination in their parish (186; 33% of responses).

Beyond this, “time”, busy-ness in one’s own congregation was the most commented on, with 66 (12%) responses, while

- lack of interest from other congregations (54; 9%),
- clergy leadership (50; 9%),
- theological differences (51; 9%; either women in leadership, SSRM or access to sacraments),
- apathy (47; 8%),

were also main issues.

Other issues that were mentioned by less than 20 (4%) responses were:

- lack of people to be involved
- tradition or history
- legal issues
- “fear” or survival mentality (“if we work together we’ll be shut”)
- Size differences (“we’re too big”, “we’re too small”)

## Note on Priority Area Responses

Thirty of the responses were from Priority Area parishes, representing 52% of all such parishes. While some spoke of excellent initiatives, others reported apathy or other issues. I do not feel that the responses from Priority Area parishes are particularly distinctive from those received from other parishes.

## Note on data sources

The raw data is still held on SurveyMonkey in the Ministries Council account, while the version used for this report, with duplicates removed is included in this .ZIP file. The NVivo project file is also in this archive.

*Fiona J Tweedie  
Sheilagh Kesting  
Angus Mathieson  
6 June 2013*

## The Church of Scotland Ecumenical Relations Committee and Ministries Council Ecumenical Audit

NAME OF CONGREGATION

PRESBYTERY

CONTACT NUMBER

EMAIL ADDRESS

### A. ECUMENICAL RELATIONSHIPS

#### 1.1 Which of the following denominations are present in your parish?

	Yes	No		Yes	No
Associated Free Church			Pentecostal Church		
Baptist Church			Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)		
Congregational Federation			Roman Catholic Church		
Free Church of Scotland			Salvation Army		
Independent Fellowship			Scottish Episcopal Church		
Methodist Church			United Free Church of Scotland		
Minority Ethnic			United Reformed Church		
Orthodox			Other (please specify)		

#### 1.2 Which of these do you work with?

	Always	Frequently	Occasionally	Never
Associated Free Church				
Baptist Church				
Congregational Federation				
Free Church				
Independent Fellowship				
Methodist Church				
Minority Ethnic				
Orthodox				
Pentecostal Church				
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)				
Roman Catholic Church				
Salvation Army				
Scottish Episcopal Church				
United Free Church				
United Reformed Church				
Other (Please specify)				

YES

NO

**1.3 Does your congregation belong to a local Churches Together group or Council of Churches?**

**1.4 If 'yes', which of the following statements most closely reflects your experience?**

The Churches Together group shapes the life of our congregation	
The Churches Together group has some impact on the routine life of our congregation	
We hear regular news of Churches Together activities	
The Churches Together group involves a small number of enthusiasts	
We have difficulty getting people to serve on the Churches Together group	
We are unaware of the Churches Together group	

**1.5 Does your congregation share its building with a congregation of another denomination?**

YES	NO
-----	----

**1.6 If 'Yes', which denominations are involved?**

Associated Free Church		Pentecostal Church	
Baptist Church		Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)	
Congregational Federation		Roman Catholic Church	
Free Church of Scotland		Salvation Army	
Independent Fellowship		Scottish Episcopal Church	
Methodist Church		United Free Church of Scotland	
Minority Ethnic Congregation (please specify)		United Reformed Church	
Orthodox Church		Other (please specify)	

**1.7 If 'Yes' to question 1.5, do you have a written agreement?**

YES	NO
-----	----

**1.8 Is your Congregation in a Covenanted Partnership with a congregation or congregations of other denominations?**

YES	NO
-----	----

**1.9 If 'Yes, which denomination(s) are involved?**

Associated Free Church		Pentecostal Church	
Baptist Church		Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)	
Congregational Federation		Roman Catholic Church	
Free Church of Scotland		Salvation Army	
Independent Fellowship		Scottish Episcopal Church	
Methodist Church		United Free Church of Scotland	
Minority Ethnic Congregation (please specify)		United Reformed Church	
Orthodox Church		Other (please specify)	

**1.10 Have the Ecumenical Partners ever been involved in the process of appointing a minister to your charge?**

YES	NO
-----	----

**1.11 Has your congregation ever been involved in the process of appointing a minister with a neighbouring ecumenical partner?**

YES	NO
-----	----

**1.12 If 'Yes' to 1.10 and/or 1.11, please give details**

--

**1.13 Is your Congregation a Single Congregation LEP?**

YES	NO
-----	----

**1.14 If 'Yes', which denominations are involved?**

Methodist Church	
Scottish Episcopal Church	
United Free Church of Scotland	
United Reformed Church	
Other (please specify)	

## **B. CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

**In which of the following activities does your congregation engage with other denominations?**

### **2.1 Worship and Study**

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Services	
World Day of Prayer	
Ecumenical Lent Study Groups	
Holy Week Services	
Pentecost service	
Advent Services	
Summer services	
Regular pulpit exchange	
Joint Sunday School	
Joint Bible Studies	
Adult Christian Education	
Other (please specify)	

**2.2 How effective are these opportunities for strengthening co-operation between churches of different denominations? (1 = Very effective, 2=quite effective, 3= little effect, 4 = no effect)**

	1	2	3	4
Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Services				
World Day of Prayer				
Ecumenical Lent Study Groups				
Holy Week Services				
Pentecost service				
Advent Services				
Summer services				
Regular pulpit exchange				
Joint Sunday School				
Joint Bible Studies				
Adult Christian Education				
Other (please specify)				

**3.1 Other Joint Activities**

Christian Aid Week		Shared Overseas partnerships	
One World Week		Fund raising for charity	
Joint Mission /outreach within the Parish		Community project (e.g. youth work homelessness project)	
Social Gatherings		Sharing a church building	
Other (please specify)			

**3.2 How effective is your participation in these activities for strengthening relations with neighbouring congregations of other denominations?**

**(1 = Very effective, 2=quite effective, 3= little effect, 4 = no effect)**

	1	2	3	4
Christian Aid Week				
One World Week				
Joint Mission /outreach within the Parish				
Shared Overseas partnerships				
Funding raising for charity				
Community project (e.g. youth work homelessness project)				
Social Gatherings				
Sharing a church building				
Other (please specify)				

**3.3 If you would like to, please expand on any of your responses, using a separate sheet if necessary:**

--

### C. MINISTERIAL ACTIVITY

4.1 Does your minister belong to an ecumenical Ministers' Meeting?

YES	NO
-----	----

5.1 Do ministers from neighbouring congregations of other denominations supply cover for:

	Yes	No
Routine Pastoral Care		
Funerals		
Weddings		
Holiday cover		
Other (please specify)		

5.2 If 'Yes' to any of the above, to what extent does this strengthen pastoral care in your area?  
(1 = great extent, 2 = some extent, 3 = little extent, 4 = no extent)

	1	2	3	4
Routine Pastoral Care				
Funerals				
Weddings				
Holiday cover				
Other (please specify)				

5.3 If 'No' to any of the above (qu. 5.1), what best describes your situation?

There are neighbouring Church of Scotland congregations to cover	
There are no close neighbours of other denominations	
We have resources within our own congregation	
Other (please specify)	

5.4 If you would like to, please expand on any of your responses, using a separate sheet if necessary:

## D. REFLECTIONS

6.1 What are the three best things that ecumenical partnership/working has brought to your congregation?

6.2 What prevents or hinders you from working with other denominations?

Please send your completed form by 1st<sup>h</sup> February, 2013 to

Very Rev Dr Sheilagh M Kesting  
Secretary, Ecumenical Relations  
121 George Street  
Edinburgh  
EH2 4YN

Email: [skesting@cofscotland.org.uk](mailto:skesting@cofscotland.org.uk)