

## **Introduction to the Faith Action Plan and Programme— General Assembly 2022**

### **Very Rev John Chalmers**

The first task that was given to the Assembly Trustees was to appoint a Chief Officer and Dave Kendall is one of the miracles of the last three years.

Under his management and with his ability to see the big picture the Faith Action Plan began to emerge. The Faith Action Plan is a way of joining the dots across all of the work that we as a church are trying to do. Something, that for years we have been singularly unsuccessful at achieving.

There is a huge amount of work to get through today but to begin the day I want to ask Dave Kendall to describe the early development of the Faith Action Plan. That will lead to a short video clip introducing some of the people behind a sample of the work which is being covered within the Faith Action Programme.

Then, before we embark on the substance of the work of the Faith Impact Forum and the Faith Nurture Forum, Dave and Scott Shackleton and I will be happy to take questions and listen to your thoughts on what more we should be doing if we are to support your Presbytery or your congregation in the work that you are doing.

### **Dave Kendall**

I am Dave Kendall 576. I have been invited to explain the origins of the Faith Action Plan which is really focused on trying to keep it simple – part of the big picture that the moderator and John Chalmers have been speaking about.

If I go back to my initial period with the Church, what struck me very early on was that we didn't have an overall plan or anything to prioritise our work against. We had four large councils independently identifying our work programmes, we had emergent proposals to the General Assembly which were not costed or prioritised, we had many other Committees creating work that had nothing tangible to align behind and then we had the very talented staff of the national office who were often left to find their own way in defining their work.

In my first few months, working with the structures that we had in place in late 2019, it became clear that there were common themes running across the various independent

work programmes. There was also repetition, duplication, omissions, major silos and uncertainty about what really mattered. The first draft of the Faith Action Plan only sought to align all of this work onto one page to help us rationalise and prioritise what was required of us - which we did alongside setting budget constraints for each area. In parallel with this we progressed the plan to rationalise the number of Councils from 4 at the time to the 2 smaller forums we have now both of which have done a power of excellent work that you will hear about today. As I looked at the areas where we were having success in transforming our situation and leading the reformation for the new age it was apparent that the single most influential factor was Inspirational Leadership grounded in practical theology – this had to be a key goal for us to build on alongside sustainability for our ministry to Scotland and beyond. This was incorporated into the plan. The next step was to check the validity of our existing vision for the Church and how well this fitted with what we needed to do going forward.

The big test was could we align the identified priorities to the areas referenced in the vision statement? As it happens this worked well and gave us the basis of the plans structure - linking the work to the Vision. Working with the Forums and others this was all developed into a statement that we could agree as the basis for the national programme. The development continued by cross checking against the goals of the Radical Action Plan and actions from the 2019 Special Commission on Structural Reform. We had all sorts of Groups chasing all these separate action plans – the best chance of success was to coordinate, track and deliver them from one place.

The alignment was very strong between the various inputs to the plan and as a result we just had to incorporate a few additional points so that we could run everything from just the one high level plan. In parallel with this work the second page was developed – expanding on what the plan meant in terms of our leadership, actions and behaviours.

Our culture, values and standards are a key factor in all this – we need to set clear expectations and know what we stand for as we strive to inspire people towards faith and the good news through our actions.

This was all finalised with further input from the Forums – in particular Faith Impact on this occasion. The final check was against the 5 Marks of Mission which was relatively easy to achieve but in itself poses a challenge given the large scope of work justifiable under this banner. While they are helpful in setting our path we need to be more specific in our intent.

Progress since establishing the plan includes a significant reduction of the national spending and transforming towards having a flexible staff team in the Faith Action area working

across all parts of the plan. Removing the silos was vital and we have been on a journey to do so ever since having progressed to the single staff team we now have in place to deliver the plan. The D10 proposals take this another step forward.

Is the Faith Action Plan the answer to all our ills? Certainly not – for a start off it needs detailed, constrained work programmes to be agreed that will hit the major goals that are agreed by the General Assembly, Assembly Trustees and the Forums. This is where we move from the high level goals of the Faith Action Plan to the detailed proposals which deliver it through the Faith Action Programme being guided and facilitated by Scott Shackleton in the new single leadership role, where before there were several, that we introduced in 2021.

Finally, what we have to do goes way beyond this. We are a £100 million pound plus a year charity that needs to have the right safety culture, values, behaviours, financial controls, accountability, governance processes and very important support services working **only** on the things that will help us at national, regional and particularly local levels. This is the journey we are on with a sharp focus on meeting our Presbytery and local congregational needs.

To put it simply – we are here to support all of you.

The video we are now going to see highlights examples of the work of the Faith Action Programme in the words of a few of the fantastic staff and conveners, who I personally cannot thank enough for all their help and support, who are engaged in the delivery of the Faith Action Plan.