

### **The Queen's opening speech to the General Assembly in May 1969:**

RIGHT REVEREND AND RIGHT HONOURABLE: Right Reverend Moderator, I congratulate you on your election to the Chair of this Venerable Assembly. Fathers and Brethren, since the General Assembly last met, many ministers and office-bearers have died. We remember them with gratitude and affection; their influence, devotion and example will be with you as you address yourselves to your duties. Before this Assembly closes we shall have an opportunity to pay tribute to their memory.

Fathers and Brethren pray be seated.

This occasion brings back many happy memories of the special meeting of the General Assembly held in October 1960 to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the Scottish Reformation. It was my experience of that time and the warmth of the Assembly's welcome which made me resolve to be in Edinburgh at a suitable opportunity for the period of the normal annual General Assembly and to be present at the opening and at some of your regular deliberations.

Over the years I have had ample opportunity to witness the work of the Church of Scotland among my people in different parts of this country as well as among people in many parts of the world. I am particularly glad to have here with us representatives of the Church from the developing nations of Asia and Africa. Today I have a chance to express my appreciation and admiration direct to the Supreme Court of the whole of the Church of Scotland.

I join you all personally in offering congratulations to the Principal Clerk of Assembly on a successful year in the highest office of the Church and instead of sending a letter for him to read out on this occasion I can tell you myself that I remember and renew my promise to preserve and uphold the rights and privileges of the Church of Scotland.

Christians everywhere are sustained and inspired by the ideal of the brotherhood of man and the commandment to love one another. In this imperfect world the struggle to achieve this ideal is long and hard but we all look to the leadership of the Church and we are most conscious of its unceasing efforts. There may be an inclination to look back at the apparent lack of progress but it is far better to look forward with hope, with faith and with expectation.

The world may often seem gloomy and discouraging but we should remember that we are only able to witness a very small part of its continuing development; we should remember that with courage and perseverance we can do God's will in the certain knowledge that he expects us to fulfil his grand design.

In this there is work for the most humble. Injustice, suffering and ignorance cry out for remedy all around us. Church people have every opportunity to set an example of service and self-sacrifice so as to make this world a better place for all people. The qualities of compassion and tolerance, love and forgiveness, are the most precious gifts of God and I know that these qualities are to be found in your Assembly and in the Presbyteries and congregations represented here. Add to these courage and perseverance, and the Church can continue to exert a decisive influence on the life of the nation.

Right Reverend Moderator, as you know, I am pursued by many other duties so that I shall not be able to attend the Assembly as often as I should like. I shall however follow your debates with the closest interest and I expect to receive reports on them both from my husband and from the Duke of Hamilton who will be present on other occasions.

I pray most heartily that God's blessing may attend your deliberations.

**The Queen's closing speech:**

RIGHT REVEREND AND RIGHT HONOURABLE:

Right Reverend Moderator, I thank you most sincerely for your kind words and I congratulate you on the admirable beginning which you have made to your term of office. I offer you my best wishes for the rest of it.

Fathers and Brethren, will you please be seated.

I am quite certain that each and every one of us who has been present at this General Assembly will leave this hail fortified and encouraged in our faith. This, and many other events in Edinburgh during the last ten days, have made an indelible impression on me. In these days this ancient City has brought alive the proud tide of Capital of Scotland as in ceremony or debate people from every part of the land were gathered here.

Always at the centre has been the Assembly, and its reports and debates have thoroughly explored every subject of moment and concern.

To me these sessions mean much more than a review of the work of the Church of Scotland at home and abroad and a discussion of policies for the future. You have conducted an examination of the conscience of the nation and you have displayed the work and the state of Christ's Church in Scotland.

The great issues of nationalism and racial discrimination, of physical and moral health, of education and poverty, of the quality of community life, all these are the concern of Christians everywhere. These are the urgent issues of our time and they require the most careful and enlightened scrutiny. I think it would be true to say that it has been given to our generation to meet some of the most serious challenges ever faced by any human civilisation. Modern man has acquired a power over his environment quite undreamed of by any previous generation and we have got to find a means to develop the capacity to control this power for good.

We are like a city under siege. The walls have withstood countless previous attacks but they need strengthening and rebuilding to withstand the new weapons ranged against them. The defenders are just as capable as their predecessors but, as always, they must be of one mind and with one objective if they are to succeed. Distrust and jealousies between groups, between races, between religions, between ages, or between occupations, is a certain way to defeat and disaster.

But if the tensions of our time can be resolved constructively, we have greater opportunity for progress and happiness than man has ever known.

Good leadership in Church and State together with good sense in all people has allowed our nation to remain free and prosperous, humane and tolerant. This is worth defending and these qualities are worth keeping as ideals for a better future for ourselves and for all mankind. For this endeavour we shall need all the strength and support of our Christian faith.

The Lord High Commissioner usually reports to me the day fixed for your next Assembly. Today I note that the Assembly will meet on Tuesday, 19th May, 1970.

My husband and I have been greatly encouraged and stimulated by this stay in Edinburgh during the Assembly and we leave with renewed affection for the Church of Scotland.

Good-bye, and God bless you.