

Moderator's Reply to the Lord High Commissioner—General Assembly 2023

Your Grace,

Thank you - for the timely, uplifting, and challenging affirmation you have shared with this General Assembly, as we begin the work before us. Be assured of our welcome and friendship, as well as our gratitude - for the time, energy and insight you bring into our gathering. I also thank you for your generous words to me as I begin my year.

As you've said, Your Grace, there are hefty challenges facing the Church of Scotland. There are monumental challenges facing the world – and the church is not exempt. Across our global neighbourhood, we face a triple threat, ones that feed on each other – Climate Change, conflict and COVID – together, they add pressure on well-being, a sense of home and culture, on finances and resources – and sadly unsurprising, it is the most vulnerable who suffer most. That is why, your Grace, being a living, breathing, reforming and loving body of Christ in this place continues to be the mission and ministry of the Church of Scotland. These challenges will not stop us, they focus us as we remember who and who's we are. This General Assembly will discern and discuss together, seek strategies to maximise the incredible energy and resource of the Kirk.

Your Grace quite rightly referred to the importance of cooperation and collaboration – the value of cooperation with others who have shared values. You pointed to the St Andrews and St Margaret Declarations and to the strong collaborative energy engendered in interfaith work across Scotland. The etymology of the word 'ecumenical' centres around 'the whole inhabited earth.' We have so much more in common than ever divides us – we have the world in common.

As the Church of Scotland seeks reform, we do so embracing partnership. By speaking, acting and working together whenever and wherever we can, we amplify the voice calling for love, justice and equity – we embody the values Christ called us to. I so appreciated these words – 'the principled upholding of the truth in a so-called 'post-truth' age is a task in which Christian denominations, people of other faiths, and people of no religious faith can cooperate.' Your Grace, we must. Please convey the prayers and love of the General assembly to His Majesty and the royal family as they adjust to such an enormous change in their lives.

Your Grace, thank you and go well with us this week.

