

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND GUILD MAY 2023

Proposed Deliverance

The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.
2. Commend the Guild for ways in which they support the members and encourage and develop their spiritual growth (*Section 2.3*).
3. Encourage men across the church to consider joining the Guild (*Section 2.6*).
4. Celebrate the opening of a new Guild in Ellon (*Section 3.1*).
5. Congratulate the Guild and the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia on the development of the green canopy for Malawi (*Section 4.2.4.2*).
6. Encourage uniting congregations to ensure that the Guild is involved in discussions and enabled to explore ways in which Guilds merge or work in new ways (*Section 5.1.3*).
7. Commend Guilds in Forth Valley and Clydesdale for piloting a new way of working together and recommend to other Presbyteries and Guilds Together Groups that they explore new ways in which they can work together to support the greater involvement of Guilds in the mission of the Church (*Section 2.1*).
8. Welcome the establishment of the Young Adults Guild and encourage congregations and Presbyteries to promote this group to their young adults (*Section 6.1.4*).
9. Congratulate the Guild on the work of its Project Partnership Scheme 2021-24 and recognise the important issues tackled and vital monies raised.

Report

1. WEE SEEDS, BIG TREES

1.1 'I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.'

1.1.1 Another year has gone by, seeds have been planted and harvests taken in; and it has been another year in which Guilds across Scotland have been engaged in worship, prayer, action and fellowship.

1.1.2 The report is written acknowledging the role played by those who have gone before and those who serve today in planting and nurturing seeds, but recognising that it is God alone who has given the growth.

1.1.3 Similarly, as we plant now we have confidence that with God's help it will bear fruit in the future just as a farmer plants in the spring trusting that the harvest will come in the autumn. In the same way we need to plant seeds which will grow the Guild. We need to plant to provide for future generations just as in the past seeds were planted for us to reap the good fruits.

2. SEEDS OF GROWTH

2.1 Wee seeds, big trees explores the idea of growth, both physical and spiritual. We are where we are because of the people who nurtured us both physically and spiritually to make us the people we have become.

2.2 In the lives of Guild members, the support and encouragement they get from each other help them to explore their faith in new ways.

2.3 The Annual Theme and Discussion Guide, produced by Guild members, provides valuable material to support Bible study, prayer and action, individually and collectively, to enable spiritual growth to develop.

2.4 This year we have developed a new monthly resource that encourages members to explore issues such as trust, peace and celebration. These resources have been written by people across the Church and are a way of helping further develop spiritual growth.

2.5 The growth of summer Guilds has enabled a whole new group of people to be part of the Guild family. These groups challenge us to be open to new possibilities and new ways of working, and in doing so we see growth.

2.6 In 1997, our name changed from the Church of Scotland Woman's Guild to the Church of Scotland Guild. In the intervening years a number of men have joined the Guild and this has again been true this year but there is potential for further expansion and we continue to explore and encourage men to join the Guild.

2.7 The number of people in Scotland living with an eating disorder is significant. Through our ongoing work with our Project Partner, Beat, we have been able to increase the number of people receiving support and advice. In particular the impact of eating disorders on men has been a focus for work this year. We hope to see this work develop further in the coming year by building closer relationships with those involved in work in schools.

2.8 When the Guild was established over 135 years ago, one of the primary aims was to increase the influence and impact of women in the church. Over these years that has certainly happened and we celebrate the many and varied ways in which women are active in the work and witness of our church. In Brazil, our project with UNIDA – which means "together" in Portuguese – is at the forefront of pioneering education that transforms the lives of young Brazilian women and develops them for future leadership in faith communities and in wider society.

3. SEEDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

- 3.1** During the year a new Guild was established in Ellon, where the congregation recognised the ways in which having a Guild supported the mission of their congregation. They are meeting monthly and are encouraged by the number of people who have joined them.
- 3.2** Uptake of our Guild enews continues to grow, providing us with a monthly opportunity to share good news stories from across the globe and encourage Guilds to look at the different ways in which they can work in their local community.
- 3.2.1** Similarly, using social media enables us to reach people who are not always familiar with our work but who have engaged in our worship, come along to events and been encouraged to join local branches.
- 3.3** In Uganda, the Sunflower Sanctuary that is being built for children with additional support needs is almost completed and the roof has been put on the building. This sanctuary, which will provide daily education through the medium of the arts for children who are amongst the most marginalised, will be invaluable in challenging social stereotypes and will allow the children to realise their potential.
- 3.4** Closer to home, our work with Home for Good is encouraging Christians to think about ways in which they can support people who foster and adopt vulnerable children in communities across Scotland as well as considering if this might be an option for them. There are increasing numbers of children in Scotland who find themselves requiring support in this way and we are keen to encourage congregations and Presbyteries to explore what role they can play in supporting these children and young people.
- 3.5** One of the most encouraging events in the Guild calendar is our Annual Gathering where Guild members, together with representatives of sister organisations, come together to share, celebrate and look forward to the work God has for us in the year ahead. This year was no exception.
- 3.5.1** We returned to the Assembly Hall following the successful event in 2021 and despite changing the date following the sad death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the reconvened date coinciding with a national rail strike, more than 500 Guild members and friends were able to share in the day.
- 3.5.2** We were also joined online by Guilds across the country. In particular we were able to chat with Guild members from Ardoch Guild who shared their experiences of the day.
- 3.5.3** The day included an address by the Moderator, Rt Rev Dr Iain Greenshields, who provided encouragement and challenge to our members to focus on the importance and impact of prayer in our individual and collective Christian witness.
- 3.5.4** Our keynote speaker this year was Rev David Clark, who encouraged us to reimagine the Psalms through the landscape of Scotland. He also encouraged us to remind ourselves of the people and situations that have planted significant seeds in our lives and shaped us into the people we are today.
- 3.5.5** Clydeside Singers, a community-based singing group for over 50's from Inverclyde, had people laughing, singing and also emotional as they shared in our programme.
- 3.5.6** The day also was the judging of our annual Convener's Challenge with participants producing a traybake. The champion baker this year was from West Lothian Guilds Together.
- 3.5.7** The day culminated in the installation of our new National Convener, who challenged the members to continue to plant new seeds of hope, love and faith in the year ahead.

4. SEEDS OF LOVE

- 4.1** From the Guild's inception, serving others with love has been at the very heart of who we are. These seeds of love have grown and developed, be that in building homes for families in Rwanda, traumatised after years of conflict, or working with the Lodging House Mission to provide practical, social and emotional support to homeless, vulnerable and socially excluded people. This year the Guild has continued to plant seeds of love in the hearts of people in Scotland and further afield.
- 4.2 Malawi**
- 4.2.1** We continue to develop our partnerships with the Guilds of the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia. We have shared in prayer, in worship and in faith development.
- 4.2.2** As a Guild we welcome the many opportunities that come from our relationship with our brothers and sisters in Malawi. Our love for each other and mutual respect is enabling us to develop and sustain meaningful relationships.
- 4.2.3** Our twinnings between Guilds Together in Ayr and District, North Ayrshire, Shetland and Dunbartonshire with Presbyterial Guilds in Bandawe, Milala, Dwangwa and Mzuzu respectively have continued to develop during the past year. Changes in personnel on both sides have meant that new relationships are being built and friendships formed.
- 4.2.3.1** We are now beginning to plan to have an exchange, with representatives of each of our twinned areas coming to Scotland in 2024.
- 4.2.4** In 2022, in conjunction with people from across Scotland, the Guild decided to take part in planting a green canopy to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. However, the focus of Guild planting would be in Malawi, a Commonwealth country with which we have strong links.
- 4.2.4.1** The Guild believed that by planting trees in Malawi rather than Scotland we would have a greater immediate impact as Malawi is a country where deforestation is significant and climate change has a disproportionate impact on some of the poorest people.

4.2.4.2 With the death of the Queen it was agreed that this would also form our lasting tribute to her life and reign. Working alongside our Church of Scotland Mission partner, Gary Brough and the Synod, a plan has been developed to establish a tree nursery in Mzuzu and wood lots in each twinned area. These wood lots will provide ground cover trees, trees for commercial timbering and fruit trees that will generate income for the Guild locally to enable them to carry on their work in outreach and social care. Planting these trees will be the living embodiment of the wee seeds, big trees theme and to date xxxxxx has been raised

4.3 Love in action is something close to the hearts of Guild members. Sometimes that is a practical thing like picking up the phone to a bereaved member; sometimes it is supporting a local Boys' Brigade Company to teach boys to cook healthy meals on a budget.

4.3.1 In Kazunzu, Tanzania, that love in action is to build homes for orphaned children who are being supported by the Vine Trust. Already eight homes have been built providing a loving home to 25 children. These children have been fostered by a family and are being brought up as a loving, caring family. For these children they now have the support to help them be the very best that they can be. Work will now continue on the next block of homes so that a further group of children can be cared for.

4.3.2 Our project with Pioneers sees love in action lived out each day by people being paid a fair price for the cocoa beans they produce and women and men being treated equally in a culture where that is not always the case. We now are able to sell chocolate produced by those farmers, enabling them to increase their income and provide for their own family. The project is in a very practical way showing the love of God in action.

5. SEEDS OF CHANGE

5.1 Change is never easy but the changes to congregations and Presbyteries will without doubt impact on the Guild. The Guild has, over recent years sought to change how we work in a range of practical ways.

5.1.2 One of the most obvious changes has been to move in many places from an evening to an afternoon meeting. This change recognises that an important part of the Guild's ministry is to those who are older or who have recently retired. This move has seen a growth in membership for many of these Guilds.

5.1.3 There is little doubt that merging congregations will have a significant impact on the number of Guild branches we support but we have already seen evidence that these mergers can see a growth in actual Guild members, particularly where one of the uniting charges does not currently have a Guild. We want to encourage Guilds and congregations to use this time as an opportunity for growth and not a reason for decline.

5.1.4 Similarly, there have been Kirk Sessions who have encouraged their Guilds to consider meeting in community halls, hotels and individual homes when a physical church building will no longer be available, recognising the role of the Guild in the Christian witness of their congregation and we would encourage others to think about this as an option.

5.2 Presbytery reorganisation brings significant challenge for the operation of the Guild at this level. The size and geography of some Presbyteries are simply too large for Guilds Together Groups to come together as one. However, we are working with Guilds Together Groups and Presbyteries to consider how our relationships will develop and how the number of Guilds Together Groups can be consolidated to reduce the workload on Guild members. The solution will be one which meets the needs of the Guild but still enables us to engage effectively with Presbyteries.

5.2.1 The Guilds Together Groups in the Presbytery of Forth Valley and Clydesdale have come together in a pilot to work together as a joint committee drawn from the four Guilds Together groups. This pilot will help us to plan more effectively for the new structure.

5.2.2 To enable much of that change to take place, we have reorganised our staff team to now have two staff members who specifically support our work at a Guilds Together level.

- Joanne Brown has joined us as Regional Development Worker for the East of Scotland with responsibility for communications
- Christine Fulcher has joined us as Regional Development Worker for the West of Scotland with responsibility for resources

We are encouraged by the skills that they add to the staff team and the support they will be able to give to Guilds Together groups.

6. SEEDS OF HOPE

6.1 In 1996, a Guild Project Partnership with the Board of Parish Education entitled 'Bridging the Gap' raised £105,392 to establish the National Youth Assembly.

6.1.2 In the intervening years the Guild developed strong bonds with the young people who took part in the Youth Assembly and those who came as Commissioners to the General Assembly. The contributions of these young people to the future shape of the Church were important and the number who are now in full time ministry in various forms is significant.

6.1.3 With the folding of the National Youth Assembly and the subsequent reduction in participation with young people, the Guild was keen to help find a new way to give young people a voice and a hope for the future.

6.1.4 In June 2022, conversations took place with a group of young people and it was agreed to pursue the setting up of the Young Adults Guild. The Young Adults Guild is a vision for fellowship, service and representation for all young people 18-30 in the Church of Scotland and beyond.

6.1.5 The inaugural meeting online in January on the theme of empowerment saw 20 young people meet and share together. Subsequent meetings with Starchild and on the theme of justice and peace have seen those numbers increase and an in-person event is now being planned.

6.1.6 Having a place where young adults can meet, connect and encourage each other has given the young adults and the Guild a real sense of hope for the future.

6.2 Over the past year, the Guild has developed a positive working relationship with both the Faith Impact Forum and the Faith Nurture Forum. We are keen to see how this relationship can develop and help strengthen the work of the mission of the church in a strategic way.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 As the Guild, we recognise that nothing we do bears fruit without the nurturing of others and the growth given by God. The privilege to be God's fellow workers constantly reminds us of whose we are and whom we serve.

'For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.'

In the name of the Committee

HELEN ECKFORD, *National Convener*
KAREN GILLON, *General Secretary*

Appendix**Finance and Statistics**

Membership 9,270

Groups 451

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2022			
General Fund Income	£	General Fund Expenditure	£
Members' Contributions	133,197	Management and Admin	161,548
Donations and Grants	15,008	Objects Expenditure	26,055
Sale of Goods	11,149	Cost of Sales	6,693
Project Support	20,807		
Other	21,640		
Total	201,801	Total	194,296

DONATIONS TO THE WORK OF THE CHURCH			
Sums given by Guilds in 2022, based on returns received to 31 March 2023, were as follows:			
			£
To Ministry and Mission Funds via Congregations			22,751.00
To Congregational Funds			88,342.04
To work of the Church, including projects			133,309.56
To work outwith the Church			44,567.68
Total			288,970.28

PROJECT DONATIONS	
1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023	
	£
BEAT – There is Hope	32,556.57
PIONEERS – Chocolate Heaven	24,804.05
STARCHILD – Finding the Light	32,069.05
VINE TRUST – Kazuznu Village	40,038.00
HOME FOR GOOD – A Home for Good	44,236.54
UNIDA – Hear our Voice	17,962.54
Total	191,666.75