

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND GUILD MAY 2021

Proposed Deliverance

The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.
2. Welcome the Guild's Strategy for 2021-24, "Look Forward in Faith" and its annual themes, "Lights and Bushels", "Wee Seeds, Big trees" and "New Wine, New Wine Skins". (Section 1.2.1)
3. Commend the Guild on its efforts to maintain contact with and involvement of its membership during the Covid-19 pandemic. (Section 3)
4. Commend the Guild on its fund-raising and twinning.
5. Celebrate the success of the Guild's Partnership Projects from 2018-21 and the raising of over £516 000. (Section 3.9 and Appendix)
6. Note and welcome the Guild's new Partnership Projects for 2021-24. (Section 4.17)

Report

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Reflecting and projecting

1.1.1 There is a very real temptation to focus this report on the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the work of the Guild, as that has been the overpowering, defining matter since March 2020.

1.1.2 Whilst the report will indeed acknowledge the virus, its aim is to look ahead to better times, to times when we can learn from our experiences, take account of our losses (both operational and human) and seek to concentrate on the things we can control and the opportunities that lie before us.

1.1.3 The report is written with a sense of optimism and determination at its heart, but it should also be noted that the Guild has faced enormous challenges in terms of income from capitation fees, loss of income for the current Projects and the general, fundamental, loss of fellowship through the lack of meetings at every level and especially in local groups.

1.1.4 A number of groups have said they will not be re-starting and that is a loss to the Guild, but also to the congregations of which they are part.

1.2 "Look Forward in Faith"

1.2.1 The Guild's work is built on three year cycles, each named by an over-arching theme, known as the strategy. In 2021, we begin a new strategy and, given the uncertainties that we now face and the need for us to re-energise for the future, it now seems prescient that we chose "**Look Forward in Faith**" as our strategy for 2021-2024!

1.2.2 We intend to "Look Forward in Faith" with the Guild's usual enthusiasm and its willingness to embrace new ideas and new ways of working as times change.

This attitude is backed up by the three themes for 2021-2024:

- 2021-22 "Lights and Bushels"
- 2022-23 "Wee Seeds, Big trees"
- 2023-24 "New Wine, New Wine Skins"

1.3 Past, present, future

1.3.1 The report looks at three clear phases that we are living through....where we were before the Covid-19 pandemic, how we have been working through it and where we go from here.

2. THE GUILD PAST

2.1 Heading through the session 2019-20, the Guild was embarking on a range of exciting and innovative work.

2.2 Under our headings of communications, outreach, resources and events, we had so much to celebrate.

2.3. We were running Regional Gatherings to share thinking and practice and to offer mutual support; our "Big Sings" at Assembly and Christmas and the Annual Gathering in Dundee would be huge celebrations and would help support our work in Malawi and elsewhere; our Project Partnerships continued to touch the lives of thousands at home and abroad; we had planned a national conference to look at the future of the Guild in an ever-changing world.

2.4 The arrival of the pandemic immediately challenged the Guild at every level to re-assess its programmes and plans and to begin to find ways of reacting to it.

2.5 Never an organisation to avoid a challenge, the Guild immediately reacted positively and much has happened where maintenance and conservation could have been the reaction.

2.6 Plans were laid and methods of working adapted to meet the new environment and to keep the spirit of the movement alive.

3. THE GUILD PRESENT

3.1 During the course of 2020, a raft of work continued and new work was developed.

3.1.1 This despite the furloughing of staff and the retirement of one staff member and other pressures due to ill-health.

3.1.2 Thanks are particularly due to Karen Gillon, Associate Secretary, whose energy and commitment saw that communications and events in particular were continued over the year.

3.2 On-going work

3.2.1 Communications

3.2.1.1 The Guild's monthly E-news moved from a monthly to a weekly publication and is sent to over 1200 people and read by many more.

3.2.1.2 Our twice yearly magazine still went to every member and, along with the e-news, kept Guild people in touch with what the organisation was doing in groups, Guilds Together and nationally.

3.2.1.3 The Guild's Facebook page, with over 2300 "likes" continued to provide a great way to share information and news quickly.

3.2.2 Outreach

3.2.2.1 Much of what the Guild does to reach out beyond its own agendas is described elsewhere in this report.

3.2.2.3 That this is so, really emphasises how outward-looking and empathetic the Guild is.

3.2.2.4 There is no doubt that the efforts of the Guild's membership result in actions that touch the lives of many, many people, often in very dark times in their lives.

3.3 Resources

3.3.1 One of the most important functions of Guild Office is to provide resources that help Guild leaders run their activities.

3.3.2 Many Guild Conveners and others speak highly of the usefulness of the materials that are produced and great credit is due to those members of the National Council who are involved in writing these.

3.4 Events

3.4.1 The Guild is a fellowship and it is good to celebrate it.

3.4.2 This is done within the Guild by a series of events over the year, most of which are mentioned elsewhere in this report, including:

- Big Sings at the Assembly and at Christmas
- The Annual Gathering in Dundee
- Roadshows and Regional Gatherings

3.4.3 Clearly, we were unable to hold these events in person in 2020, but some still went ahead.

3.4.4 The Annual Gathering and the Big Sing at Christmas were taken on-line, with music enhanced by the voices of the Guild's "Virtual Choir", co-ordinated by Bea Nicholson from Guilds Together in North Ayrshire.

3.4.5 New Events

3.4.5.1 Given that few Guilds were able to meet in any conventional way and that fund-raising for the Guild's Project Partners was badly restricted, it was decided to meet the need for fellowship and financial support in new ways.

3.4.5.2 So, we had:

- A virtual soup lunch, which raised over £ 3000 for CrossReach
- A virtual afternoon tea for the projects
- A Lenten event to celebrate the 2018-21 Project Partnerships as they came to their end

We were also delighted (and very grateful) that, in January, the Moderator hosted an on-line quiz dedicated to the support of the Guild's Project Partnership Scheme.

3.4.5.3 These events can never replace the "real thing", but they have served to maintain a sense of fellowship and hope amongst many of our members and to provide a platform where the voice of the Guild was heard.

3.5 Meetings

3.5.1 Over the course of the year, meetings of the Guild's National Council and a number of conference events have been moved to an on-line basis.

3.5.2 Whilst this has been less than ideal, it has kept the work of the Guild going and has the benefit of allowing some people to attend meetings who could not do so in person and is a model which will continue to be used in appropriate circumstances.

3.6 Convener's Challenge

3.6.1 The challenge is, as the name suggests, chosen by the National Convener and reflects something of their own character and interests.

3.6.2 This year's challenge is to produce a photograph of a tree, a rainbow or both, the winner to be announced at the Annual Gathering in September.

3.6.3 Following as it does a bowling competition, a sewing one and a writing one, we see a pattern of diversity emerging that once again shows the breadth of the Guild and its membership.

3.7 External contacts

3.7.1 The Guild has continued to contribute greatly to the work of several groups, both within the Church of Scotland and beyond.

These include:

- Representation on the Faith Impact Forum's group on gender-based violence, Integrity
- Running a series of events in partnership with Faith in Older People
- Playing a full-part in events and resource development with the Inter-faith Group on Domestic Abuse
- Representation on the Scottish Churches' Anti-human Trafficking Group
- Reciprocal representation with CrossReach
- Close connections with the Scottish Committee of the World Day of Prayer

3.7.2 These partnerships continue the Guild's interest in work beyond its own and its desire to contribute to the broad work of the Church of Scotland and other bodies.

3.8 Malawi and other overseas work

3.8.1 The Guild's partnership with the Synod of Livingstonia in the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) dates back to the 1997-2000 Project Partnership with World Mission to develop the Livingstonia Synod Aids Project (LISAP).

3.8.2 Over the years visits have been made to the CCAP's Women's and Men's Guild Conferences and thousands of pounds have been raised at Big Sings to support work there.

3.8.3 Twinning with our friends in Malawi

3.8.3.1 In August 2019, a number of Guild folk visited Malawi and began conversations that are forming the basis of a series of twinings between Guilds Together in Ayr and

District, North Ayrshire, Shetland and Dunbartonshire with Presbyterian Guilds in Bandawe, Milala, Dwangwa and Mzuzu respectively.

3.8.3.2 Above all, these connections are founded on mutual, prayerful support, with each partner bringing different gifts, experiences and resources to the twinning table. That support will be encouraged and enhanced by sharing information and ideas and by continued dialogue between the Church of Scotland Guild and the Umanyano (Women's Guild) and Madodana (Men's Guild) in the Synod of Livingstonia.

3.8.3.3 As always, our visit confirmed that there is much we can learn from their deep, faithful and spiritually profound commitment and energy. Their community focus, including pastoral support for disadvantaged members of their communities and income generating projects such as maize mills, Guild houses and a tailoring project are practical areas from which we can learn and to which we can perhaps offer assistance and encouragement.

3.8.3.4 This exciting development has already seen bonds being formed and both Shetland and Dunbartonshire have put together projects to fund the provision of Bibles for their twinned areas, working with the Bible Society in Scotland and in Malawi to see this work carried out. This collaborative project which enables effective community-based evangelism is an example of the kind of partnerships we will be developing.

3.8.4 Raising the roof...Big Sings and Matope Church

Also as part of the 2019 visit, we were able to present a cheque for almost £ 8000 to fund the roofing of a new church for the Matope congregation in Mzuzu, a project that will allow space for the 3000 people who want to attend services every Sunday to do so and for the work of the congregation to continue to grow.

3.8.5 Malawi Fruits

A highlight of the visit to Malawi was to see the work of our project partner, Malawi Fruits, at first hand. The work of this project is truly transformational, seeing farmers increase yields by a factor of three, seeing them produce two or three crops instead of one, seeing them diversify into cash crops brought home the reality of what Malawi Fruits are achieving. The provision of solar irrigation pumps and poly-tunnels are simple things with complex results.

3.8.6 Solar light for Schools

3.8.6.1 A chance conversation with the leader of a project providing solar lights for schools has led to a new piece of work for the Guild.

3.8.6.2 The provision of a solar powered lighting unit for primary schools hugely extends the scope of those schools to provide evening tuition and homework clubs, as well as opening them to the possibility of providing a space in which adults can attend evening classes, something which benefits women in particular.

3.8.6.3 Funding from this session's Big Sings is likely to allow us to provide systems for twenty four schools in the areas where we are building our twinning arrangements.

3.8.6.4 Over the four year life of the unit, it is estimated that an additional 3200 hours of study time will be possible. Multiply that by twenty four and the number rises to 76,800 hours.

3.8.7 India

The Free to Live Trust works with the children of sex workers in the Indian city of Pune. These children are at huge risk and it is to the enormous credit of the Trust that they work in a dangerous and challenging environment to offer the children and women a place of safety. Not only of safety, but taking them to a location away from the city and offering them security, food and education.

3.8.8 Zambia

3.8.8.1 In Zambia, the Guild is partnering the World Mission Council in the "Journeying Together" project, supporting teenage mothers and their children as they look to develop skills and knowledge that will allow them to earn more money, eat healthily and gain educational qualifications. The project works with these young women who face enormous cultural and economic hurdles, but do so with determination and positivity.

3.8.8.2 In March 2020, a group of Guild members spent a week visiting and working with the "Journeying Together" project.

3.9 Guild Partnership Projects

3.9.1 The pandemic has had a major effect on the ability of the Guild to raise fund for its current Partnership Projects and to hear from the projects directly.

3.9.2 This is a major source of regret to us as we know the incredible value of the work that these projects undertake and the effect that work has on the lives of people in their care and who they support.

3.9.3 The six projects come to an end this year and we wish them all every success in the future as they continue to touch lives in so many ways.

3.9.4 The six projects that have run from 2018-21 are:

- **BB Scotland** on their project "Faith in Younger People", looking to support young leaders, encourage membership and develop Christian education within the BB.
- **The Free to Live Trust**, "Seema's Project", working to support sex workers and their children in Pune in India.
- **CrossReach's** project "Join up the dots", addressing loneliness, isolation and mental health issues.
- **Malawi Fruits** and a scheme to encourage, support and train young farmers, entitled "Growing the Future."
- **World Mission's** work with young mothers in Zambia, "Makeni Mother and Child Centre."
- "Port Chaplaincy in Scotland" with the **Sailors' Society**, aiming to provide a chaplaincy service in every port in Scotland.

3.10 Operational Changes

3.10.1 Over the past two years, the Guild has made a number of changes to its operations at National Level.

3.10.2 One of the most significant has been the pairing of its National Vice-Conveners with regions of the country to offer a network of support and personal contact to our Guilds Together groupings.

3.10.3 This has added a personal touch to these connections and has already proved very welcome from both the national and regional perspectives.

3.10.4 On a wider note, this system helps the Guild reflect on changes to Presbytery structures and how that might affect us.

3.10.5 Conversations are already underway around the emergence of the Presbyteries of Fife and Clyde, with the expectation of more to follow.

3.10.6 Having not reported to the Assembly of 2020, we include here a short summary of what has been happening in the four areas.

3.10.7 North:

- During the 2019-20 session, we held Roadshow events in, Inverness, Tain, Pitlochry and Scone.
- Our National Convener for this year was from Shetland.
- We had National Vice-Conveners from Lochaber and Abernethy.

3.10.8 South:

- We held Roadshows in Dumfries, Rhins, Ayrshire, Irvine and Kilmarnock.
- We had a National Vice-Convener from Dumfries.

3.10.9 East:

- There were Roadshows in Dundee, Dalgety Bay, Kirkcaldy, Wormit, and Dalkeith.
- We took part in the Ministries Council's Candidates' Conference in St Andrews.
- Our Annual Gathering took place in the Caird Hall in Dundee.
- At the General Assembly the Guild Big Sing and Heart and Soul saw us working in Edinburgh.

3.10.10 West:

- Here there were Roadshows in Dumbarton and in Motherwell
- In December 2019, we had our Christmas Big Sings in St George's Tron Church in Glasgow, with around 600 people attending the three services needed to satisfy the demand for tickets.

3.10.11 Whilst these lists relate to the 2019-20 session, they give a flavour of the national coverage that work emanating from the National Council has produced. They do not include the vast array of events, services and experiences that the regional and local Guilds produce. Neither do they include over 50 speaking engagements undertaken by the National Convener and others from the leadership team and occasions when the Guild has been represented at events run by other, similar organisations.

3.10.12 The various events listed above had a total of over 4000 people in attendance and we can only guess at the "knock-on" effect that the motivation these people found in these events has had within the Guild and within the wider Church of Scotland.

3.11 Term of Office of the National Convener

3.11.1 The emergence of the Covid-19 virus and the resultant lockdowns had a debilitating and profound effect on all of the work of the Church of Scotland Guild.

3.11.2 One of these effects was on the experience of the National Convener, with her year of office seemingly curtailed and her opportunity to report to the General Assembly lost.

3.11.3 However, from challenge comes opportunity and innovation.

3.11.4 By reflecting on the effects of the pandemic, we began also to reflect on the term of office of the National Convener, which ran from General Assembly to General Assembly, rather than in parallel with the traditional "academic year" session of most Guilds.

3.11.5 In terms of our own work, the Guild Convener was taking up office just as the Guild year was ending for the vast majority of our people.

3.11.6 Therefore, we made these changes:

- The term of office for the 2019-20 year was extended to September, ending at the Annual Gathering in 2020.
- The term of office now runs from the Annual Gathering in one year to the Annual Gathering in the next year.

3.11.7 This means that the National Convener will take up their post at a time of national focus and the beginning of Guild Week and will culminate in them addressing the Gathering again at the end of their term.

3.11.8 The terms of office for Vice-Conveners now reflect the same pattern.

4. THE GUILD FUTURE

4.1 As reported above, much of the work of the Guild has continued despite the limitations placed upon us by the pandemic.

4.2 Now, however, we begin to look ahead to a time when life returns to something approaching normality and when we can meet together in worship, prayer, action and fellowship.

4.3 At paragraph 1.2 above, we announced our new strategy for 2021-24, "Look Forward in Faith", with its themes:

- 2021-22 "Lights and Bushels"
- 2022-23 "Wee Seeds, Big trees"
- 2023-24 "New Wine, New Wine Skins"

4.4 In a very real sense, this is actually just a re-statement of what the Guild has always done. From its inception in 1887, when Archibald Charteris convinced the General Assembly (against some fierce and disdainful opposition!), through the next 134 years, there has always been a positive and often innovative spirit about the Church of Scotland Guild, grounded in its motto "Whose we are and whom we serve".

4.5 As we emerge from the time of lockdowns, it is the intention of the Guild to truly "Look forward in Faith" and to see this time as a new beginning, not just a return to old ways, but building on what we have learned from the dark days of 2020-21.

4.6 This will mean change and evolution, but change and evolution built on the thinking behind some words used in our Action Plan from 2015, which has already been the basis of much new thinking and practice.

4.7 Those words were:

"Change is about the acknowledgement of the present and the anticipation of the future.... It is not about criticism of the past!"

4.8 As we move forward, we do so building on our past rather than denying it.

4.9 Perhaps the most important thing that we have seen is the impact that losing fellowship and personal contact has.

4.10 Given that the Guild is so fundamentally about fellowship and service, we feel in a strong position to offer new hope and encouragement to our membership.

4.11 We will do that in many ways...in our events, our meetings, our resources, our conferences and our partnerships.

4.12 In our operations, we will aim to offer support where it is needed and sought.

4.13 That will include working to maintain the regional structure of Guilds Together, a crucial element in the maintenance of a national movement whose sum outweighs its parts.

4.14 It will mean finding new ways of planning and leading that overcome and alleviate the pressures that changing demographics and reducing numbers bring.

4.15 It will mean the Guild working nationally alongside the Forums, regionally alongside Presbyteries and locally within congregations and communities, taking a full part in the life of the church and playing an important role as the whole institution meets an uncertain future.

4.16 Not least in this will be, for us, our new Partnership Projects, which will have been announced by the time this report has been received by the General Assembly and which will once again see the Guild reaching out to people in times of adversity at home and around the world.

4.17 The new partners are:

BEAT

“Blether with Beat”, addressing issues around eating disorders

Home for Good

“A home for good... Finding homes for vulnerable children.” Working on awareness raising and promotion of foster care.

Pioneers

Chocolate Heaven - changing lives through chocolate, supporting farmers in the development of fair trade chocolate manufacturing in an island in South East Asia

Starchild

“Finding the light in every child”....supporting children with additional needs and their families in Uganda

UNIDA (A Higher Education Institution in Vitoria, capital of the State of Espírito Santo, Brazil).

“Hear our voice!”...Training women for ministry and service in Brazil

Vine Trust

“Kazunu: Village of Hope, Tanzania”. Building and supporting a village on the shores of Lake Tanzania.

5. IN CONCLUSION

5.1 This has been a difficult time, but this too will pass.

5.2 The Guild will re-emerge to face a future that we can see as full of opportunity. We can grasp nettles. We can cross bridges. We can dream dreams. We can see visions.

5.3 All of this we can do within our themes for the three years to come.

5.4 During that time, we will take our lights out from under bushels; plant wee seeds to grow big trees; find new ways of putting new wine into new wine skins.

5.5 All of this we will do with the words of our founder, Very Rev Professor Archibald Charteris, in mind:

‘It is they who dream bright dreams that in the end deliver....do not be afraid or ashamed to announce splendid hopes. It is enthusiasts the world needs, and I pray you to be enthusiastic. ‘

In the name of the Committee

MABEL WALLACE, *National Convener*
 IAIN WHYTE, *General Secretary*

Appendix

Guild Finances 2020

General Fund Income	£	General Fund Expenditure	£
Members’ Contributions	191,396	Management and admin	179,968
Donations and Grants	17,004	Objects Expenditure	10,593
Sales	2,484	Cost of sales	1,462
Project Support	22,262		
Other	21,088		
Total	254,234	Total	192,023

Project Donations 2018 to 28/2/2021

CrossReach Join up the Dots	£98,665.39
Sailors’ Society A chaplain in every port	£74,823.72
Boys’ Brigade Scotland Faith in Young People	£90,778.11
World Mission Council Journeying Together	£76,623.70
Malawi Fruits Growing the Future	£82,187.36
Free to Live Trust Seema’s Project	£92,941.05
Total	£516,019.33

Mabel Wallace, National Convener

Mabel Wallace, whose term as National Convener will conclude at the Guild’s Annual Gathering on 4 September, has led her own Guild in Duncansburgh MacIntosh Church in Fort William as well as Lochaber Guilds Together over many years. She has served on the Guild National Council as the representative of Lochaber, as a Committee Convener, as National Vice-Convener and now as National Convener. Mabel has served as Convener during one of the most unusual periods of the Guild’s existence and the whole movement thanks her for her enthusiastic, encouraging and above all faithful service in her role.

We wish her every blessing for the future.

IAIN WHYTE, *General Secretary*