# Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office

# Briefing

# Ecumenical Groups whose work is relevant to politics in Scotland: who they are and what they do

# 24 June 2021

## Groups with a general advocacy focus:

**Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office (SCPO)**

SCPO is an ecumenical partnership between the Churches in Scotland and is organised by the Church of Scotland. It was set up in 1999 with a vision to build a fruitful relationship between Churches in Scotland and the new Scottish Parliament, and to help them to relate and respond effectively in the political process. SCPO also responds to Westminster issues of concern to Scottish Churches. SCPO does this by working with its 15 partner organisations to share information and views and to facilitate congregational engagement around elections and the democratic process by producing briefings on key manifesto topics and practical advice on running hustings etc.

Contact: [DBradwell@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:DBradwell@churchofscotland.org.uk)

[**Action of Churches Together in Scotland**](http://www.acts-scotland.org/) **(ACTS):**

ACTS seeks to “enable the Scottish churches in their common life”. ACTS, in partnership with the Scottish Church Leaders Forum, recently published “Adapt and be Flexible: The Mission continues”, about how churches have adapted to the lockdown. Previous areas of research and resources include: racial justice, rural life, human trafficking, community justice, education. ACTS is currently funding the role of COP 26 Ambassador for Churches Together Glasgow.

**The Scottish Christian Forum (SCF) will replace ACTS** at some point in 2021. The SCF will continue the charitable aims and objectives of ACTS.

**Scottish Church Leaders Forum (SCLF):** The SCLF was founded in March 2020 in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic, to speak with one voice on matters of mutual concern and issued a weekly Call to Prayer throughout the first year of the pandemic. 11 members include leaders from Church of Scotland, the Roman Catholic Church, the United Reformed Church, the Scottish Episcopalian Church, the Salvation Army, the Baptists, the Quakers, the Methodists, the United Free Church of Scotland, the Congregational Federation and the Free Church of Scotland. The SCLF initiated the Report: “Adapt and be Flexible: The Mission continues” (April 2021), in conjunction with Brendan Research, on the response of the churches in Scotland to the first Lockdown.

Contact: John McPake: [jmcpake@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:jmcpake@churchofscotland.org.uk)

[**Churches Together in Britain and Ireland**](https://ctbi.org.uk/) **(CTBI**):

A membership network of Churches together groups in England, Ireland, Wales and Scotland (ACTS), plus other agencies including Christian Aid, CAFOD, the Churches Media Council and others. CBTI facilitates networking between their members. The latest version of their regular email newsletter carries articles on climate change, migration and refugees, nuclear weapons, women’s voices from different faiths, churches responding to prejudice against Jews, and Easter resources.

[**Joint Public Issues Team**](http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/) **(JPIT):**

JPIT is made up of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church, working together for peace and justice and through advocacy. The priorities for 2021 are: Reset the Debt [that built up during the Covid crisis], Recovery to Flourishing, Staying Alert to Injustice, Climate Justice and Welcoming the Stranger. JPIT produces a monthly newsletter.

## Groups working on specific issues:

[**Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees**](https://www.sfar.org.uk/) **(SFAR):**

A multi-faith partnership project hosted by the Church of Scotland, seeking to co-ordinate and promote action by faith communities in Scotland to support asylum seekers and refugees. SFAR works with Christian, Jewish, Muslim and inter-faith groups. Resources include a newsletter, a New Scots Holidays Toolkit, a Christian Worship Resource on the theme of Refugees, Migration and Sanctuary; and Sanctuary in Scotland: a resource with facts, figures, current issues and practical ideas for action. Some partners are also involved in or have connections with international work on refugees.

[**Scottish Churches Housing Action**](https://www.churches-housing.org) **(SCHA):**

Bring together 12 churches in their work to eliminate homelessness in Scotland. SCHA develop volunteering at a local level to help homeless people, encourage use of church property for much-needed affordable homes and link local problems of homelessness with national means of tackling them. SCHA promotes churches’ practical responses to homelessness and prevention of homelessness, as well as speaking out on the churches’ behalf.

[**Eco-Congregation Scotland**](https://www.ecocongregationscotland.org):

Eco-Congregation Scotland is a movement of Scottish church congregations, of all denominations and none, committed to addressing environmental issues through their life and mission. Founded in 2001, eco-Congregation became a registered charity in 2010.  Eco-Congregation have over 450 members in local networks run by volunteers who enable congregations to support and advise one another. They run an eco award scheme, provide resources for worship and support congregations and families to think globally and act locally, making practical environmental improvements.

[**Operation Noah**](https://operationnoah.org/)**:**

Operation Noah was set up in 2004 to provide a Christian response to the climate crisis. They work with all Christian denominations and support interfaith work on climate change. The work is informed by the latest science on climate change, its causes, impacts and solutions. They provide resources for churches on how to divest from fossil fuel industries, as well as resources for bible study and Climate Sunday.

[**Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility**](https://www.eccr.org.uk/) **(ECCR):**

ECCR’s vision is to see money used in a way that creates a fairer and more sustainable world. They help faith communities and individuals to make financial choices which reflect these values and passions. Founded in 1989, the ECCR works with faith groups to look at how individual churches and church-goers can apply pressure on corporations and governments. They encourage and resource individuals and churches to invest their resources responsibly.

[**Faith in Older People**](https://www.faithinolderpeople.org.uk/)**:**

Faith in Older People seeks to enable” a better understanding of the importance of the spiritual dimension to the well-being of older people”, encompassing people of faith and those without faith. They offer an online course designed to promote, recognise, support and respect the spiritual well-being of older people, a listening service for care staff working in the pandemic, and resources focusing on the inclusion of older people with dementia in faith activities.

[**Student Christian Movement**](https://www.movement.org.uk/)**:**

Founded in 1889, this is a movement of students, past and present, responding to the call of Jesus to follow him and show the love of God on campus, in our communities and in the world. They are an ecumenical organisation, fostering unity in diversity and exploring faith through worship, discussion and action. Branches exist in most university towns in the UK, and benefit from resources and training from the Movement.

[**Fellowship of Reconciliation**](https://for.org.uk/who/)**:**

FoR is an international movement of people who commit themselves to active nonviolence as a way of life and as a means of personal, social, economic and political transformation. Based in the Christian tradition, it was founded in 1914, and has permanent representation at the UN. FoR campaigns on disarmament, particularly nuclear and drones, and equips members to promote non-violence in their own churches. They also support community conflict transformation projects overseas.

[**Iona Community**](https://iona.org.uk/):

A dispersed ecumenical Christian community working for peace and social justice, rebuilding community and the renewal of worship. The Wild Goose publishing arm of the Iona Community produces books, e-books, prayers, music, liturgy etc. The Iona Community is a membership organisation based on the island of Iona.

[**Faith in Europe: The Churches’ European Relations Network**](https://faithineurope.org.uk/):

Faith in Europe promotes visits, contacts and informed discussion and debate across European churches. Briefing papers are produced several times a year, covering a range of political and cultural issues relevant to a wide range of countries in Europe. Briefing events take place four times a year, with speakers on such topics as the Work of the Council of Europe (which still includes the UK). Faith in Europe works closely with CTBI. (see above)

## European and International networks:

[**Conference of European Churches**](https://www.ceceurope.org) **(CEC):**

CEC is a fellowship bringing together 114 churches from Orthodox, Protestant, and Anglican traditions from all over Europe for dialogue, advocacy, and joint action. A network of National Councils of Churches keeps them connected to national and regional concerns, and member organisations work on diaconia (practical help/ social care), migration and refugee issues, and women and youth in the churches. The Conference of European Churches emerged as a peacebuilding effort in 1959, building bridges between the East and the West during the Cold War. This original mission carries forward today as CEC continues to work for a humane, social and sustainable Europe at peace with itself and its neighbours. Based in Brussels and Strasbourg, the Conference deals with EU and Europe-wide policy issues.

[**Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe**](https://ccme.eu) **(CCME):**

CCME has 35 members from 19 countries, is based in Brussels has a mandate to: “promote the vision of an inclusive community through advocating for an adequate policy for migrants, refugees and minority groups at European and national level…”. Working ecumenically and with other partners, themes in the work programme for 2018-20 include: safe passage, refugee protection, migration, upholding the dignity of persons and addressing discrimination, unity in diversity.

[**Eurodiaconia**](https://www.eurodiaconia.org/):

Eurodiaconia is a European network of churches and Christian NGOs providing social and healthcare services and advocating social justice. The membership represents the experiences of 52 national and regional organisations in 32 countries. Formed in 1997, the network concerns itself with issues and policies of the European Union. Since 2008, it became a Belgian registered charity based in Brussels. Areas of work include poverty and exclusion including migration, social and healthcare services, social and economic policies.

[**World Council of Churches**](https://www.oikoumene.org) **(WCC):**

A fellowship of 350 churches in 110 countries representing 500 million Christians worldwide. The WCC works ecumenically to support member churches. Today the WCC focuses its work in the programme areas of [**Unity, Mission and Ecumenical Relations**](https://www.oikoumene.org/what-we-do?search_api_fulltext&field_wcc_tx_topic=All&field_wcc_tx_program_area=2380#views-exposed-form-program-search-block-1), [**Public Witness**](https://www.oikoumene.org/what-we-do?search_api_fulltext&field_wcc_tx_topic=All&field_wcc_tx_program_area=2381#views-exposed-form-program-search-block-1) and [**Diakonia**](https://test.oikoumene.org/what-we-do?search_api_fulltext=&field_wcc_tx_topic=All&field_wcc_tx_program_area=2382#views-exposed-form-program-search-block-1), (practical help / social care) and [**Ecumenical Formation**](https://www.oikoumene.org/what-we-do?search_api_fulltext&field_wcc_tx_topic=All&field_wcc_tx_program_area=2383#views-exposed-form-program-search-block-1). All programmes share a responsibility for [**Transversal issues**](https://www.oikoumene.org/what-we-do?search_api_fulltext&field_wcc_tx_topic=All&field_wcc_tx_program_area=2384#views-exposed-form-program-search-block-1), such as strengthening relationships with member churches and ecumenical partners, spiritual life, youth engagement, inter-religious dialogue and cooperation and building a just community of women and men. Set up in 1948 in response to the refugee crisis, the WCC is based in Switzerland and often works on a global, UN related agenda.