

MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OF

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

CONVENED AT EDINBURGH, 19 MAY 2015

At Edinburgh, and within the Assembly Hall, the 19th day of May 2015 years, at 9.15 am, Session IV.

The General Assembly did again convene and was constituted with prayer.

The minutes of Sessions I and II being printed and in the hands of members, were submitted and approved.

CHURCH AND SOCIETY COUNCIL

The General Assembly called for the Report of the Church and Society Council which was given in by the Rev Sally Foster-Fulton, Convener.

It was moved and seconded-

The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.

Social Justice

2. Commend the report *Common Wealth? Sharing through tax and giving* to congregations and presbyteries for study and action, and instruct the Council to work with others, including the Stewardship Department, to facilitate engagement and discussion of these issues, with relevant resources, across the Church, and with ecumenical partners.

3. Instruct the Council to promote a national debate about tax, giving and wealth sharing in the context of economic and social inequalities and the transfer of fiscal and welfare responsibilities to the Scottish Parliament after May 2016.
4. Call upon Scottish and UK Governments to reform the tax system in order to promote the reduction of wealth and income inequality.
5. Instruct the Council to pursue the concerns in the report *Time to rethink benefit sanctions*.
6. Welcome the deepening relationship between the Council, the Priority Areas Committee of the Ministries Council and Faith in Community Scotland, and encourage the Council to continue to develop this in partnership.

Climate Justice

7. Welcome the announcement of a moratorium on applications to drill for onshore shale oil and gas (fracking) and call on the Scottish Government to ensure that a full and proper regulatory process is in place before any such application is agreed.
8. Call on the Scottish Government to consider how to reduce dependence on fossil fuels for domestic heating and provide low cost and low carbon alternatives.

9. Instruct the Council to bring a report on Energy and Fuel Poverty to the 2016 General Assembly.
10. Call upon the Scottish and UK Governments to work towards an outcome at the Paris Climate Conference in December 2015 that promotes climate justice.
11. Instruct the Council to prepare resources and signpost members of congregations to campaigns and activities promoting climate justice at the Paris Climate Conference in December 2015.

Criminal Justice

12. Instruct the Council to engage with the Scottish Government and others both on the concerns raised in the Report on corroboration and in taking forward a holistic approach to tackling violence against women.

International Justice

13. Reaffirm the Church's position that nuclear weapons are inherently evil and instruct the Council to continue to work for disarmament, including through support for an international Nuclear Ban Treaty.
14. Call on the UK Government to reverse its policy of refusal to support search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean, and to work with European partners to give more refugees (especially from the conflict in Syria) a safe way into Europe.

Education

15. Urge the Scottish Government, Education Scotland, Local Authority Directors of Education and Headteachers to make sure that Religious and Moral Education is provided for all pupils by specialist teachers, particularly those in 5th and 6th year.
16. Encourage school chaplains to take the opportunities provided by the Education Committee's training conferences for chaplains.

17. Encourage the Education Committee to examine the implications of Sir Ian Wood's Report *Education Working For All!* and consider what further action the Church might take to promote Modern Apprenticeships.

Health

18. Urge the Scottish Government to promote organ donation on the present system of consent and to monitor developments elsewhere.
19. Encourage congregations to consider promoting the *fleshandblood* campaign.
20. Urge members to join the Organ Donor Register, to advise their families and close friends of this decision, and to encourage them also to join.
21. Call on the Scottish Government to begin a wide review of the operation of current Mental Health and related legislation, especially with reference to the issues highlighted in the report *Human Rights and Mental Health*.
22. Encourage congregations to use the available resources to help overcome the stigma often associated with mental illness and to ensure that all are welcome in the life of their churches.

Politics and Government

23. Celebrate the wide public engagement and high turnout in the 2014 Referendum, and instruct the Council to continue to work for broad participation in the delivery of devolution of further powers to the Scottish Parliament and related matters.

Developments in the Council's Work

24. Invite all congregations to:-
 - a) appoint a Church and Society contact person, if they have not already done so;
 - b) let the Council know who they are;
 - c) encourage them in their role.

25. Thank all those who assisted the Council in the preparation of the Report and instruct the Council to write to Members of the Scottish Parliament, Members of Parliament representing Scottish constituencies, Members of the European Parliament representing Scotland, relevant Scottish and UK Government Ministers and others involved in the issues raised in the Report.

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the Deliverance:-

Add a new Section 12 and renumber:

Instruct the Council, and the other Councils, when organising training events and conferences to choose venues wherever possible that are easily accessible by public transport and to investigate how to make such events more widely available by the use of live web-streaming or video conferencing.

It was moved and seconded as an amendment of Section 12:-

After 'women' add 'and men'.

On a vote being taken For or Against the amendment it carried Against.

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of Section 12:-

Add at the end 'which includes strategies for improving the conviction rate for rape'.

It was moved and seconded as an amendment of Section 12:-

After 'women' add ', young people and gender-based offences'.

On a vote being taken For or Against the amendment it carried Against.

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the Deliverance:

Add a new Section 13 and renumber:-

Urge the Government not to proceed with the renewal of the Trident Nuclear Weapons system.

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of Section 13:-

After 'that' add 'the ownership of, use of and threat to use nuclear weapons'.

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the Deliverance:-

Delete Section 14 and substitute:

Call on the UK Government to provide unconditional humanitarian aid to refugees in the Mediterranean, including taking additional refugees from the region; to work with European partners to develop a long-term strategy to combat the criminal gangs who are smuggling people; and to actively build peace and safety throughout Africa and the Middle East.

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the Deliverance:-

Add a new Section 15 and renumber:

Note with concern the serious allegations that have been made about the safety of the Trident Nuclear Weapons system and urge the UK Government to reassure the public that Trident is safe.

The General Assembly moved to consideration of Sections 15-25 of the proposed Deliverance.

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the Deliverance:-

Add a new Section 16 and renumber:

Urge the Council of Assembly, in cooperation with the Church and Society Council, to assist and support school chaplains and others who minister in Gaelic Medium schools in all aspects of their ministry through the medium of Gaelic, including training in their fluency in that language, and the provision of suitable Gaelic resources.

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the Deliverance:-

Add a new Section 24 and renumber:

Call upon the United Kingdom Government, the Scottish Government, the Northern Ireland Executive and the Welsh Government to establish a constitutional convention, with respect to better governance and enhanced participation, in accordance with the will of the peoples of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the Deliverance:-

Add a new Section 24 and renumber:

Instruct the Council, in consultation with the Ecumenical Relations Committee, to engage with sister churches in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales with respect to the better governance and enhanced participation of the peoples of these nations.

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the Deliverance:-

Add a new Section 24 and renumber:

Note with concern the proposal of the UK Government to repeal the Human Rights Act 1998 and instruct the Council to make representations to the UK Government on the matter.

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the Deliverance:-

Add a new Section 24 and renumber:

Encourage the Scottish Government, in its negotiation with the UK Government on the devolution of further powers from Westminster to Holyrood, to press for the devolution of Human Rights issues and legislation to the Scottish Parliament and Government.

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the Deliverance:-

Add a new Section 24 and renumber:

Instruct the Council, in consultation with relevant bodies, to explore ways to continue and expand the respectful dialogue across Scotland.

The General Assembly suspended their sitting at 12.23 pm until 2 pm.

The Moderator presented the Stevenson Prize to Albyn School, Aberdeen and Middleton Park Primary School, Aberdeen.

The General Assembly resumed consideration of the Report of the Church and Society Council, dealing with Sections 13-15 of the proposed Deliverance.

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the Deliverance:-

Add a new Section 15 and renumber:

Note the resolution of the European Parliament of 17 December 2014 and the debates in the House of Commons on 13 October 2014, the House of Lords on 29 January 2015 and the Scottish Parliament on 21 April 2015, and urge the UK Government and European Union to recognise without delay the State of

Palestine alongside the State of Israel, as a contribution to securing lasting peace and justice for all.

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the Deliverance:-

Add a new Section 15 and renumber:

Instruct the Council to investigate the possible impacts of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) on vulnerable people in society, and express concern that such comprehensive free trade agreements can often lead to increased inequality and further stratification between communities of differing economic situations.

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the Deliverance:-

Add a new Section 15 and renumber:

Condemn all acts of violence in the region of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory.

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the Deliverance:-

Add a new Section 15 and renumber:

Urge the UK Government to appoint a global envoy for religious freedom, reporting directly to the Foreign Secretary.

The Deliverance as amended was then agreed.

JOINT REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TENURE COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Assembly called for the Joint Report of the Council of Assembly, Legal Questions Committee, Ministries Council,

Mission and Discipleship Council and the Panel on Review and Reform on the Implementation of the Tenure Commission Recommendations which was given in by the Rev Dr Grant Barclay, Convener, Council of Assembly.

It was moved, seconded and agreed-

The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.
2. Commend the Councils and Committees for their integrated approach to this important work and note progress.

IONA COMMUNITY BOARD

The General Assembly called for the Report of the Iona Community Board which was given in by Mr Allan Gordon, Convener.

It was moved, seconded and agreed-

The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.
2. Welcome the *Food, Fuel, Finance Report* of the Closing the Gap Project and encourage its use as a source of information in campaigning.
3. Commend the work of the centres on Mull and Iona and particularly that of the Camas Centre and its continuing commitment to groups from Priority Areas.
4. Thank Dr Allan Gordon for his convenership of the Board over the past four years and thank the Secretary, Fiona Cunningham, and Board members for their work.

Rev Peter McDonald, Leader of the Iona Community, was invited to address the General Assembly and was thanked by the Moderator.

Mr Gordon on his retirement as Convener was thanked by the Moderator for his noteworthy service to the Board and the General Assembly.

SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE

The General Assembly called for the Report of the Safeguarding Committee which was given in by the Rev Dr Karen Campbell, Convener.

It was moved, seconded and agreed-

The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.
2. Instruct Kirk Sessions to ensure that all volunteers and locally employed staff undertaking Regulated Work, as defined in the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act, 2007, join the PVG Scheme by 31 October 2015.
3. Instruct Kirk Sessions to ensure that all volunteers and paid staff who are members of the PVG Scheme attend safeguarding training.
4. Note that the Safeguarding Service will share appropriate recruitment information with Safeguarding Coordinators/Safeguarding Panels, acting on behalf of Kirk Sessions, in specific situations.

5. Instruct the Safeguarding Committee to work with other Councils to raise awareness about recognising domestic abuse and providing an appropriate response to support the person affected and their family.
6. Instruct Kirk Sessions and Presbyteries to use the Safeguarding Audit Checklist for Congregations and Presbyteries, 2015, revised Safeguarding Service form SG11, for Annual Inspection of Records and Local Church Review.

The General Assembly adjourned at 3.10 pm to meet again in this Hall tomorrow at 9.15 am for business, whereof public intimation having been made, the Sederunt was closed with prayer.

ASSEMBLY HALL
EDINBURGH, 19 May 2015, 3.10 pm

A special event to mark the 500th Anniversary of the birth of John Knox was held in the Assembly Hall following the close of business.