



*"What does the Lord require of you; to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" Micah 6.8*



## A Place for Hope

You may recall from our last newsletter that, with the departure of John Chalmers, the Ministries Council was seeking to appoint a new project leader. His name is Hugh Donald. Here Hugh tells us a little about himself.

I was delighted to be invited to become involved in ***A Place for Hope***. My role will be to build on the work already done by John Chalmers and others and to act as a catalyst and facilitator in advancing the project.



As a lawyer specialising in litigation over the last 35 years, I have been involved in the world of conflict and disputes. In early days this embraced family and divorce work where I witnessed the trauma and hurt of family breakdown. Recognising the inadequacies of the judicial system, I was prompted along with a number of others in the early 1980s to look to establishing the first family mediation service which was based in Edinburgh. This quickly spread through other parts of Scotland leading to the formation of Family Mediation Scotland as a national organisation to which local services affiliated. It was exciting to be involved in those early pioneering days and then to continue my involvement becoming a family mediator myself as well as chairing the national organisation over a number of years until it merged with Couple Counselling/Relate in 2009 to become Relationships Scotland.

My own professional career extended into the medico-legal field representing doctors in the context of claims and complaints. Post Shipman, this involved a lot of work in representing doctors before the General Medical Council. My practice has also embraced professional indemnity, representing other solicitors and professional

practices, also litigation and inquiries in the aviation sector, most notably acting for insurers of Pan Am in the Lockerbie disaster and a number of north sea helicopter accidents.

As a Partner in the firm of Shepherd and Wedderburn, one of the leading law firms in Scotland, I have been privileged to participate in the leadership of that business for a number of years both as Chief Executive and more recently Chairman. Through this I have a strong interest in the changing demands of leadership in the 21st century and the necessity of supporting and enabling younger people in leadership.

Though several years away from formal retirement age, I had a growing sense of God calling me to move on in a different direction. In addition to having trained as a family mediator, I also trained as a commercial mediator several years ago and through this have become increasingly involved in the world of conflict resolution. As I reflected on this over a year ago on where God might be leading me and how the gifts he has given me should be used, I perceived some role in the work of reconciliation and peace and the equipping of leaders. It is all the more remarkable that a year later I have been asked to associate myself with this hugely important project for the Church to equip and develop leaders in mediation and to enable the Church to be seen as a centre for peace and reconciliation within our Scottish community.

I am not a member of the Church of Scotland, but am a member of the Scottish Episcopal Church and played an active part in the leadership of our local Church over a number of years. The intention is that the project should be ecumenical in its basis. My family roots are in the Church of Scotland, my grandfather having served as an elder of the Church for many years and my wife comes from a Baptist tradition, so I suppose I am relatively well placed to embody an ecumenical spirit!

Though I have had the opportunity of meeting some folk already and being involved in one or two conversations, I do not formally take on the part-time consultancy role until the beginning of August. I perceive the strong commitment and support from the Moderator of the General Assembly as critical in advancing the work of the project both at an ecumenical level as well as raising its profile in the Scottish community.

Though designed a Project, it is in reality a means of transforming lives. Conflict is part of our lives and not surprisingly the Church comprising people with our different beliefs, values, traditions, desires and personalities is in no different position. The difference we can demonstrate is the healthy management and resolution of our conflicts so that we can truly be seen as a place of hope within the Church, in our society and for future generations.

***A Place for Hope*** now boasts ten new accredited mediators who successfully passed the training and assessment process in May. These individuals are now available to assist in helping congregations resolve conflict. A further training course will take place in the autumn when the numbers will increase – this is a most encouraging start.

All this takes money, of course, and we are **most grateful** to you all for your generous contributions, totalling **£19,243.77**.

Having “presented” at some 45 Guilds last year, we now have over 60 forthcoming speaking engagements this year and look forward to sharing our news and telling you more about *A Place for Hope*.

While we continue our partnership with you over the next two years, we also continue in our endeavour to resolve conflicts that arise in congregations. By doing so, we hope to save not only the hurt and upset experienced by those in conflict situations but the expense incurred by going down the road to Appeals and Commissions of Assembly. For each commission avoided by a successful mediation, we save the Church around £6,000.

In our last newsletter, we told you that the **Right Rev John Christie**, as Moderator, is promoting *A Place for Hope* throughout his moderatorial year, and he is working with Hugh and others to publicise the project beyond the Church of Scotland, informing our ecumenical neighbours and other agencies and people throughout Scotland. We will keep you updated as the year progresses.

We will be happy to arrange for a speaker to come to your Guild.  
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*“Whoever has a thousand friends has not a friend to spare, and whoever has one enemy will meet that enemy everywhere”*

## A Place for Hope



Please pray for this project as we seek to:

- Establish a live network of people throughout Scotland committed to the work of peacemaking and re-conciliation;
- Found a place recognised as a Centre where resources in mediation and reconciliation can be accessed; and
- Initiate a church-wide realisation of the importance of building communities of peace and reconciliation.



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