



"What does the Lord require of you; to do justice, to love kindness, and walk humbly with your God" Micah 6.8



A Place for Hope

John Christie is one of the Church's most experienced Interim Ministers and as such he is no stranger to the kind of destructive conflict that can tear a congregation apart.

Now, he has been asked to serve the Church as Moderator of the General Assembly and it is a huge encouragement to the Ministries Council that he has decided to adopt "A Place for Hope" as a major theme



for his Moderatorial Year. In reflecting on the year that lies ahead, John says, "There are many noble causes that I could support, but few that are any more significant than promoting peace and reconciliation as a way of life."

Having been in the middle of some of the worst congregational conflicts John knows the power of mediation as a way of resolving differences. John recalls situations where congregations were so divided that different interest groups had raised opposing petitions, "it would be no exaggeration to say that members of the same congregation deeply distrusted one another and few people believed that the rifts could be healed, but when people are prepared to explore their different perceptions with the help of a mediator, something transformative can happen."

Mediation is in its infancy as a way of resolving human disputes but it lies at the heart of our dealing with every level of conflict.

"A Place for Hope" will help people discover the power of mediation in everyday life and then the circle of influence will widen.

John reminds us that, "the ministry of Jesus was that of mediating the love of God and in turn calling us to a ministry of mediating that love to others." So we are involved in nothing less than a share in the ministry of Jesus Christ.

It has left the Ministries Council feeling more positive than ever about this vital project and at a time when the peace and unity of the Church is at stake this project sends out a real message of hope.

John Chalmers is leaving the Ministries Council and moving "up" to the 4th floor of 121 succeeding the Rev Dr Finlay MacDonald as Principal Clerk and, although we are sorry to be losing him, we wish him well in his new post, to be ratified by the General Assembly in May.



The Ministries Council wishes to take this opportunity to pay tribute to John, whose vision for this project, *A Place for Hope*, together with the assistance of many colleagues and the generous funding of The Guild, has achieved so much already.

John's boots will be filled, albeit with difficulty, by a recognised and skilled mediator who will act as Consultant to the project, and his name will be revealed in our August newsletter.

A Place for Hope is off to an encouraging start. The **Aviemore Conference** was a huge success, with many people describing this as the most significant event they have ever attended. One of the participants said, "*this was a life-changing experience*"; another who "*left this conference satisfied, uplifted and hopeful*". Others were deeply moved by David Brubaker's contribution and his profound understanding of the process of mediation, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Following the Aviemore conference it was, with confidence, that the Ministries Council organised the first training event for those who would become mediators in church conflicts. 20 people attended an event at the beginning of March at Carberry Tower and they go forward to an assessment stage in early May; thereafter, the successful candidates will begin the work of practical training to be used in early intervention in congregational disputes or difficulties over parish appraisal or in personal disputes that arise in church life.

Training is a costly business and the first tranche of funding from The Guild will be used to offset the cost of training and supporting our team of mediators.

The most exciting development has been the news that **John Christie**, as Moderator, will promote this project and that the services of one of Scotland's recognised and skilled mediators is about to take over as Consultant to the project. He will help us to move the project on to the next level, interacting with others in Scotland who are working in this field, and contacting those who we hope will be able to provide funding to match all that comes from The Guild.

With many thanks to The Guild and to those who have already contributed; we would encourage you to invite our speakers (now in every part of the country) to come and share our news and tell you more about *A Place for Hope*.

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 reconciliation;
- 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.



A Place for Hope

We will be happy to arrange for a speaker to come to your Guild.
Contact:

Mrs Dorothy Davidson, ddavidson@cofscotland.org.uk or