

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
CHURCH AND SOCIETY COUNCIL

At the Conforti Institute, Calder Avenue, Coatbridge, the 24th and 25th June 2015, on which date the Church and Society Council met and was constituted with prayer, led by the Vice-Convener Richard Frazer.

1. SETTING THE SCENE:

Martin Johnstone introduced Jennifer Wallace, Head of Policy at Carnegie UK Trust. Jennifer gave a presentation about societal change and community engagement, and led the Council in a process of conversation and discernment.

2. LIVING WITH DIFFERENCE WORKING GROUP:

Sigrd Marten, Convener of the Living with Difference Working Group, reported on recent discussions by the group about the future direction of the work. She highlighted a number of groups and individuals who have been spoken to, and the range of issues which have been explored. The group has no General Assembly remit, and so Sigrd said that there was no obligation to produce a major report for 2016. Instead, the group would like to focus their efforts on developing a resource for local church, school or community groups with an outcome being learning about how not just to be tolerant of difference but to be comfortable in the company of those who are 'not like us'.

Alongside this resource a concise report could be prepared and presented to the General Assembly to set some of the context.

Council members then made a number of comments. These were supportive of the idea to focus the work on a resource, rather than a report. It would be good to produce something action-orientated. There was a suggestion that involving the National Youth Assembly could help if the resource could be aimed at young people. Fiona Buchanan said that she would be able to assist with the process for design and publication. Charlie Smith was identified as a good link person between the group and the Education Committee, and that they might be interested in developing this work for children and young people. Muriel Pearson suggested a website of a relevant group and promised to send this on to Sigrd.

Sigrd concluded by saying that she hoped that the resource / report would be available for examination and scrutiny in November. The Council agreed with the fresh approach taken by the working group.

3. BIG CONVERSATION:

Martin Johnstone updated the Council on plans for a 'Big Conversation' – a six to nine month period of consultation and listening with a variety of groups and individuals across the church and wider society. Martin led the Council in an example of the engagement and collected ideas.

4. EVENING ENTERTAINMENT AND NIGHT PRAYER:

David Bradwell and Martin Johnstone hosted a quiz, and Sally Foster-Fulton led evening devotions.

5. MORNING PRAYER, SEDERUNT, APOLOGIES AND WELCOME:

On Thursday morning Shuna Dicks led prayers, then Sally Foster-Fulton extended a welcome to new members who had been appointed at the General Assembly. The sederunt book was circulated and apologies for absence were noted.

6. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1 MAY 2015:

The minutes were taken as an accurate record of that meeting.

7. FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS:

The Management Accounts to the end of May and the forecast for the year end were noted which showed a small projected deficit. Martin Johnstone said that he hoped to make additional savings over the year, and increased expenditure was due to some changes to staffing hours and regrading which took place after the budget was approved.

8. PROJECT UPDATES, NEWS AND INFORMATION:

a) Local Involvement:

Fiona Buchanan reported that new resources were in development since the General Assembly. The Church and Society presence on social media is growing, and she encouraged Council Members to follow/like Church and Society on Facebook and twitter.

b) Joint Public Issues Team:

Sally Foster-Fulton said that she had attended a positive meeting the previous week, which was a good opportunity to meet people and for her and Martin Johnstone to decide on strategic plans for the future. Sally also briefly mentioned what JPIT is for new members, including the reports on *Lying to ourselves* and *Rethink Sanctions*.

c) Credit Unions:

Martin Johnstone updated the Council that Karen Hunter's role has changed as discussed at the last meeting (an additional eight hours per week to co-ordinated credit unions work and other aspects of affordable credit).

At this moment, as credit unions work has grown out of work undertaken by the Society Religion and Technology Project, Sally informed the Council that Murdo Macdonald is currently unwell. Prayers and good wishes were sent by the Council. Martin requested that any questions or messages for Murdo be sent to him and Karen in the interim.

Sally also then mentioned that Agnes Mullen was not able to be present at the meeting because of the unexpected death of her brother the previous Friday. The whole Council expressed its sympathy and condolence to Agnes and her family.

On happier news, Sally then announced that Finlay Buchanan had recently become a grandfather for the first time, and Fiona was now an auntie. The Council passed on their congratulations for the birth of baby Esme.

d) Prison Visitor Centres:

There were no major developments since the last meeting.

e) Islamic Finance Council:

The Council was informed that the £10,000 grant is in the process of being paid to allow for a scoping study to create a new financial service, with a particularly market focus aimed at those who find it hard to access conventional sources of credit.

f) Christian-Jewish-Muslim Dialogue:

Sally Foster-Fulton reported that a three-way event between Church and Society, the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities and the Al-Waleed Centre will take place on 26 November at the University of Edinburgh. Further details and an invitation would be sent to Council members nearer the time.

g) Freedom of Religion or Belief:

The paper which had been submitted relating to the Church of England led initiative for a Platform for Freedom of Religion or Belief was noted. Chloe Clemmons added that at a Scottish level, follow-up work to a recent Holyrood event is continuing, and it is hoped that a conversation with the new Moderator, Christian Solidarity Worldwide and others could focus on delivering an outcome for Scotland, not related to foreign policy but about education and inter cultural dialogue.

h) European Union Referendum:

Sally Foster-Fulton reported that this was discussed at the recent JPIT strategy group meeting. It was also noted that a paper had been circulated about the Reimagining Europe blog. Sally outlined that unlike the Scottish Independence Referendum, the Church of Scotland has clear policy to seek Scotland and the UK's continued membership of the EU. She invited comments about what engagement the Council should seek on this issue.

Comments included:

- What is key this time is we have a stance; but people might not realise we have a position, and so being 'honest brokers' or a 'neutral space' is not straightforward.
- A lot of the campaign is likely to be about doom and gloom if we leave – but not what are the positives for being members, e.g. peace, unity, solidarity and human rights. It was generally agreed that keeping the positive arguments would be a very useful way to contribute.
- There are some parallels with the 1997 Referendum. It is worth thinking about what the reaction will be if the Church tells people how to vote. People might complain about there even being a position. We must be sensitive on how this is presented: it should be about arguments and ideas, not 'you must vote this way'.
- JPIT will be looking to work collaboratively on this.
- The likelihood is that the vote will be after next year's GA – perhaps we should anticipate an open debate – keep the profile clearly there.
- It is not true that we have always been impartial – in elections we are party neutral, but in the Independence Referendum there was a lot of questions about the church not taking a position, i.e. where is the moral leadership? People may not be surprised by us taking a position, as long as we are clear it is not an instruction, and the decision making is transparent.
- Need to be clear about helping people have an ethical compass to steer people through the issues, in spite of negative campaigning.
- Remaining in the EU will be the 'Yes' campaign. If there is one party in the UK campaigning positively it might well be the SNP – especially on the basis of what they have learned over the Independence Referendum campaign. The morning prayers were a reminder that the Church is radically internationalist. One of the real challenges is that today's EU was to promote inclusion within Europe, but now it is increasingly a unit which excludes people beyond its borders. We need to feed into that debate as people to think about Europe as an inclusive home rather than an exclusive home.
- The Council needs to be aware of differences of opinion within the Church membership and anticipate difficult and critical questions.
- The Reimagining Europe blog could be a place where the history of the Church's involvement and policy has been. A deal of learning and understanding would be welcome.

i) Beyond Food Banks:

Since the successful conference in February, some of the follow up has been slower than had been hoped. Some work is being explored with Nourish Scotland and Community Good Food. Meetings will be held soon with Glasgow City Council and the Scottish Government about how we develop a model of food work which moves from food banks towards sustainability.

j) Israel and occupied Palestinian territory:

Sally Foster-Fulton reported that the General Assembly agreed a Deliverance about the recognition without delay of a Palestinian state. It was noted that the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities has not commented or responded to this decision.

Kate Aspinwall spoke about the group Kairos Britain, and a booklet that has been published. The idea now is to develop grassroots support through Kairos Communities who can explore and endorse the document and commit to advocacy, awareness-raising and prayer. Kate suggested that some formal Church of Scotland support / endorsement at a national level could help stimulate local interest. The Scottish Palestinian Forum and some Iona and Quaker groups are interested. Sally asked that the Council be sent a web link and a copy of the document and it was agreed that an informed discussion and decision would be taken at the next meeting in September.

k) Mediterranean Refugee Crisis:

Following reports in the *Guardian* (24 June) about a downgrading of the UK Government's support for search and rescue, the Council requested that the facts be checked and an appropriate letter be sent to relevant politicians to express concern. This would include the UK Government (Foreign Office and Home Office) and the Scottish Government – to keep pressure up on the UK taking their appropriate proportion of refugees as agreed by the EU quota. The story of a Church of Scotland elder in Malta who gave her home to two refugee families was mentioned. The Guild's support for the Out of Africa project has raised over £130k. It was suggested that glebes and other church property could be used to house and support refugees and homeless people. The Council agreed to prepare a letter in partnership with the World Mission Council and Ecumenical Relations Committee and to invite ecumenical partners and inter faith organisations to sign too.

l) Human Rights:

It was noted that a Human Rights Act repeal Bill was not included in the recent Queen's Speech. Joanna Cherry MP raised the Church of Scotland's position agreed at the General Assembly in the House of Commons on Tuesday. The future of human rights is not off the agenda, with the UK Government obliged by its manifesto to seek to replace the Human Rights Act with a British Bill of Rights. Political and technical opposition to this plan will be great. The relation between this issue and the EU Referendum was made. Muriel Pearson attended a campaign meeting recently, and emphasised the need to do more to value the Human Rights Act, to strengthen the arguments for keeping it.

m) Big Conversation:

Further to the discussions about this issue held on the previous day, Charlie Smith asked if there had been any thoughts for media exposure. Martin Johnstone replied by saying some tentative conversations had taken place with the press office, but more strategic conversations should take place soon. Everything needs to be ready to go at the moment the process is really ready to kick off.

n) Climate Change:

Adrian Shaw spoke to the paper he had prepared on divestment. As this is a controversial issue, saying or doing nothing for the long term is not an option, but the Church's response is complicated. Adrian said he thought the Church of England and Methodist Church response was helpful, and said that he hoped further conversations with the Church of Scotland Investors Trust would take place in due course. It was also suggested that congregations in Aberdeen and the North East be approached with regard to any local views and pastoral issues. An early conversation to gather views and build up mutual respect (even if there is a difference of opinion) would be useful. A further suggestion was that the Church should emphasise positive investment, such as the Green Investment Bank, rather than just avoiding negative activities. There was also a question about using investments to further charitable objectives, not just make the most money.

It was agreed that these conversations must continue. There is a wider question of the whole of Scotland's interest in energy. It was also reported that the new National Youth Assembly Moderator-Designate works for Statoil.

Adrian then updated the Council on the baton relay, one is currently in Aberlour and the other was being cycled from Perth to Edinburgh. There has been some good awareness raising at a local level about the approach to the Paris Conference.

Adrian said he thought the recently published Papal Encyclical on the environment was very good and it was asked that a link be circulated to the Council. A statement by the Church of England and co-signed by several faith leaders has also been published.

o) Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office:

Chloe Clemmons presented the two papers which she had prepared. The first was the report on the recent work of the office. On the issue of human trafficking a question has arisen about policy positions around prostitution. There is a realisation following work around the recent Bill that the Church of Scotland does not have a clear policy position. The question about criminalising the purchase of sex may need also to be seen in the context of decriminalising the sale of sex. The Council agreed to request further research and discussion to be undertaken by the Violence Against Women Task Group and for them to report back with recommendations to facilitate an informed discussion at a future meeting.

Chloe also mentioned the Church and Society visit to Westminster which had taken place the previous week. It was interesting to meet SNP MPs, old and new, and Ian Murray MP for Labour. The group also met Lord Wallace of Tankerness, leader of the Liberal Democrats in the Lords.

The Council then considered the paper relating to work around the 2016 Holyrood elections. Chloe outlined that she was seeking the authority of the Council to proceed with plans and to take decisions about where the work should go.

A number of points were made:

- How to engage with parties that have a range of policies, compared to single issue parties.
- What the approach should be to election 'pledge' campaigns
- There is a need to support local congregations, though resources, hustings advice and support for events.
- There is also a need to create space for public debate nationally.

This led on to a conversation about the merits of organising a national event, perhaps using a community organising or citizens engagement model to raise with party leaders / spokespeople. The recommendations from *Imagining Scotland's Future* and the Big Conversation could be a useful starting point. The event could be large scale, and possibly live-streamed on the Internet. Questions should come from people who have stories / real experiences, and are church related. It would be held in April.

The Council then discussed if this kind of national event should be developed ecumenically. It was understood that it would be good to have a focus on *Imagining Scotland's Future* and the Big Conversation, and so it would more naturally be a Church of Scotland event, although ecumenical partners could be involved in both the Conversation and invited to participate in the event. It was also agreed that the resources for local churches would be written for a diverse church audience, not solely for Church of Scotland congregations.

A further point was made about the Non Party Campaigning requirements, and the potential need to register if necessary. There may also be a parallel consideration about this regulation with regard to the EU Referendum,

The Education Committee's Conference in September will include a conversation about looking at future manifestos – this might also be a useful contribution to the wider debate.

Sally Foster-Fulton summed up the conversation by saying that she felt the Church of Scotland should proceed with the event and be prepared to facilitate and lead it, with a focus related to the Big Conversation. There remains a clear desire to keep the conversation as inclusive as possible, including conversations with all of our partner churches and other faiths, who will contribute to the things which we use for the event. If the conversation is inclusive then the event's content will reflect that.

The Council agreed for the work to proceed along the terms set out in the paper and taking note of the points raised in the discussion.

p) *Digital Divide Charter:*

Due to Murdo Macdonald's absence it was agreed to defer this item to a future meeting.

q) *Palliative Care Coalition:*

Following media work around the Assisted Suicide (Scotland) Bill in which the Church of Scotland emphasised the need to promote good palliative care, the Palliative Care Coalition contacted the Church Office to ask if the Council would like to sign up as a member. There would be no cost involved, and we would be asked to promote their message and encourage local congregations to engage. The Council agreed that the Church of Scotland should become a member of the Palliative Care Coalition

r) *Stick Your Labels campaign:*

Martin Johnstone reported that a recent event in Holyrood had seen the start of this campaign, which is about use of language around those experiencing poverty. Sally Foster-Fulton and Martin signed up at the event, the purpose of which follows on from the Truth and Lies report. Shuna Dicks said she was annoyed when people referred to 'the poor' and 'the wealthy' as it puts people in boxes. Martin said he preferred to talk about 'people struggling against poverty', so the people are not defined by their financial assets, and the emphasis is on the struggle they face. It was suggested that the Council could undertake some theological reflection around radical hospitality and walking alongside the most vulnerable. There is a blessing and richness which comes out of this work which is transformative. This might connect with wider issues of diversity and integration, and so could be of interest to the Living with Difference working group.

s) *Human Trafficking:*

Janine Mckenna provide an update on the Scottish Churches Anti Human Trafficking Group's recent work, including the Re:Value project. At Heart and Soul a street drama helped to highlight the situation of trafficking victims, which will be run again during the Edinburgh Just Festival. UN Gift Boxes – hubs for information which were used at the Commonwealth Games – will also be on the streets. Volunteers are needed to staff these info-boxes. Janine said training would be available and that any Council Member interested should get in touch with her or Jonathan Roberts.

t) *Centralisation:*

A report of a recent conference was circulated and comments were invited. Members of the Council said there was a great deal about the conversations which took place yesterday which dovetailed with the outcomes of the conference. As plans develop for the Big Conversation, it was agreed to keep the ideas and opinions about centralisation in mind.

9. UPDATE FROM GROUPS:

a) Energy and Fuel Poverty Working Group:

Finlay Buchanan presented the written report which had been circulated. He highlighted the fast-moving context related to energy prices, onshore wind tariff changes and so on. The group intends to present a draft report at the meeting in September and to finalise it for the meeting in November. Finlay invited further comments, especially on issues missed or key conclusions, to be sent to him over the next few weeks.

b) Education Committee:

Graeme Donald was asked to speak as the new Convener of the Education Committee.

He began by saying that the Committee had two clear remits – from the General Assembly Deliverance and from the strategic work plan agreed by the last Council meeting. He said wanted to build on Sandy Fraser's work of establishing good relationships, with a goal of delivering real impact.

One of the key areas is gathering and presenting hard evidence in support of the claims and statements that we make.

There will be a conference in September for local authority representatives, where the Cabinet Secretary for Education will speak. Events for school and FE college chaplains are also being planned.

A series of meetings with national organisations involved in education, children and young people will also take place over the autumn. Graeme said he hoped in future the September conference could be a broad Education conference, rather than one just targeted at LA Reps.

Graeme said that one of the biggest challenges for the Committee is that it has no field workers, and although it is served by support staff in the Church Offices the direct contact with key education stakeholders is limited. He also expressed an interest in possible greater connections with other Church of Scotland Councils, specifically Mission and Discipleship. There may be a case for rethinking the role of education and learning across the church – in schools and families, as well as with congregations, ministers, communities, with LA reps, teachers, chaplains and at a national political level. How can each part of the church contribute in a strategic way?

Some of the key and immediate features of the workplan include: developing a clear statement on the role of chaplaincy and RO / Time for Reflection; provide resources (or examples where there are lack of resources) on Christianity in RME, and that the subject is taught by specialists; comment on policy, including engaging on wider issues such as numeracy, literacy, the attainment gap, gender issues etc.

The new Committee will seek to work by delegating to appropriate people the responsibility for a particular work area, so champions will push, cajole and support wider efforts.

Sally thanked Graeme for providing such a good overview.

c) Violence Against Women Task Group:

Fiona Buchanan gave a brief update about the recent Café Consultation that took place at the beginning of June. This reflected the three year strategy which has been adopted, and it was a good opportunity to engage with a range of Councils and departments. The Task Group is now looking at ways to implement the strategy. A recent joint meeting with the Scottish Churches Anti Human Trafficking Group was very encouraging.

d) Society, Religion and Technology Committee:

Glenn Walker reported that Murdo Macdonald had been very active meeting other groups, networking and sharing the work of the SRT to Presbyteries and schools. The proposal on digital surveillance was discussed. It was mentioned that it was helpful that the work would hinge on the question of whether the technology could be a useful tool or to target people who are already vulnerable.

Glenn said that a number of options were also considered out of around six ideas by the Committee and this was their recommendation. There is an expert on SRT who is co-opted who would help drive this forward. Martin Johnstone said that with Murdo unwell we need to be sensible about how best to take this work forward, and not to expect SRT to produce immediate results, but allow things to take their proper time. Kate Aspinwall pointed out that one of the biggest world exporters of surveillance equipment is Israel, and she asked if the group could think about this too.

The Council agreed that the SRT Committee should proceed with the project on digital surveillance as set out in the paper.

10. GOVERNANCE:

Sally Foster-Fulton told the Council that she and Martin would be engaging with the Council of Assembly on co-options for the SRT and Education Committee. Work planning and objective setting for staff would take place over the summer. The Church of Scotland was establishing a business continuity plan, which Martin Johnstone and David Bradwell had contributed to.

11. CONSULTATIONS AND RESPONSES:

The Council noted that one response has been submitted – on the Education (Scotland) Bill.

12. STAFFING, APPOINTMENTS AND NOMINATIONS:

Martin Johnstone noted that Karen Hunter had now increased her part time hours by an additional 8 hours per week to develop work on Credit Unions.

The Council noted the Record Apart from the last meeting. Martin said that he was continuing to pursue avenues about resourcing work around the Big Conversation, and was discussing with the Council of Assembly's Finance and Staffing groups about resourcing future staffing requirements.

The Council approved the annual appointments to its Committees and representatives to other bodies as follows (new appointment: underlined, Convener: *, Vice-Convener: ◇)

Business Committee

Valerie Allen
Finlay Buchanan
Graeme Donald
Sally Foster-Fulton *
Richard Frazer ◇
Sigrid Marten
Glenn Walker

SRT Advisory Committee

<i>Council Members:</i>	<i>Co-opted Members:</i>
Finlay Buchanan	Laura Buist
<u>John Wilson</u>	John Deighan
Rona Mackie-Black	John Francis

Iain Mitchell	Eric Stoddart
Catriona Ross	Calum McKellar
Glenn Walker *	Michael Phillipo
Sheena Wurthmann	Jacqueline Primrose
	Andrew Torrance

Education Committee

<i>Council Members:</i>	<i>Co-opted Members:</i>
Shuna Dicks ◊	Steve Younger
Graeme Donald *	Robert McQuistan
<u>David Johnson</u>	David McTaggart
Marjorie Paton	
Charles Smith	
Valerie Thomson	

Violence Against Women Task Group – Church and Society Council Representatives

Valerie Allen *
Dan Gunn
Alan Hamilton Messer

Energy and Fuel Poverty

<i>Council Members:</i>	<i>Co-opted Members:</i>
Finlay Buchanan *	Graham Blount
Sheena Wurthmann	Norman Kerr
	Donald Macdonald
	Allan Ramsay
	Bill Rodger

Living with Difference

<i>Council Members:</i>	<i>Co-opted Members:</i>
Adrian Bark	
Sigrid Marten *	
Iain Mitchell	
Bruce Sinclair	
Charlie Smith	
Hazel Watson	
Rhoda Wright	
<u>John Wilson</u>	

Corporal Punishment

<i>Council Members:</i>	<i>Co-opted Members:</i>
Shuna Dicks	John Fletcher
Sally Foster-Fulton	Euan Morrison
John McConnachie	
Marjorie Paton	
Catriona Ross *	
Charlie Smith	

Digital Surveillance

To be determined

Representatives to other bodies:

ACTS Anti-Human Trafficking Group	Hazel Watson
CTBI Environmental Issues Network	Adrian Shaw
Eco Congregation Scotland Board	Sheena Wurthmann
End Child Poverty Campaign - Scotland	Chloe Clemmons
European Christian Environmental Network	Adrian Shaw
Go For It Fund link person (C of S)	Sheena Wurthmann
HM Forces Chaplains Committee (C of S)	<i>vacancy</i>
Joint Faiths Board on Community Justice	Kate Aspinwall, Dan Gunn
Jubilee Scotland – Campaign Steering Group	<i>vacancy</i>
Justice and Peace Commission (RC Church)	<i>vacancy</i>
Kairos Britain	Kate Aspinwall
Safeguarding Committee (C of S)	John McConnachie
Scottish Churches Housing Action	Rhoda Wright
Scottish Churches Racial Justice Group	Sigrid Marten
Scottish Churches Rural Group	Adrian Shaw
SCPO Advisory Group	<u>Peter Nimmo</u>
Senior Management Team (C of S)	Martin Johnstone
Stop Climate Chaos Scotland	Adrian Shaw
Scottish Social Care Council	Valerie Thomson
Scottish Pilgrimage	Marjorie Paton
Scottish Prisons Service – Chaplaincy Steering Group	<u>Dan Gunn</u>

13. AOCB:

a) Joint Faiths Board on Criminal Justice:

A paper was tabled and Kate Aspinwall drew attention was drawn to the interesting snap shot of female offender statistics. The recent decision by the Scottish Government for the future of Cornton Vale was highlighted. The Joint Faiths Board is organising a conference in the autumn. A related concern is the proposed new Bill to abolish the eight regional boards and replace them with a national authority and a new duty for local authorities to establish partnerships. There is a concern that voluntary sector organisations would be side-lined. Local community engagement on rehabilitation could feed into the Big Conversation and this could be part of the conference in the autumn. Sally Foster-Fulton thanked Kate for her report and said that the Council would look forward to hearing more about the Conference in due course.

b) Go For It:

Sheena Wurthmann spoke to her report which was circulated. As the Fund continued to expand, she spoke to the challenges of ensuring that each application was carefully considered.

c) Eco Congregation Scotland:

The report about the Paris Climate Change summit and baton relay was noted.

d) The Guild:

Valerie Thomson presented the written report from the Guild.

e) Social Care Council:

Adrian Bark updated the Council on news from CrossReach. He highlighted progress which had been made following the 2012 General Assembly Deliverance on the Living Wage. As more than 90% of CrossReach income comes from local authorities who have not offered more money it has been a challenge for them to achieve. This year, following negotiations with COSLA on the National Care

Contract, some positive steps have been achieved. The Council of Assembly have also increased its funding to CrossReach. This has helped to increase the pay for the lowest paid staff to at least £7 per hour – which is getting towards the Scottish Living Wage (currently £7.85 per hour). There is a growing recognition that local authorities and service commissioners need to increase contracts to allow employers to pay the Living Wage.

Adrian was also pleased to note that the Social Care annual deficit (which had been as much as £3million in recent years) had been substantially reduced and its overdraft (up to £8million) had been repaid. The Council aims to break even next year. This is a huge turnaround, but has come at a great deal of commitment and with some difficult decisions and with some cost. Finally, Adrian mentioned the recruitment of a Social Care Mission Officer and the establishment of a Social Care Forum, which is designed to help inform, connect and inspire congregations.

f) Corporal Punishment Working Group:

The Working Group had no update for the Council at this meeting.

g) Ecumenical Relations:

Marjorie Paton reported that the Committee met last week, alongside the Scottish Episcopal Church Inter Church Relations Committee. She noted that the Covenant between the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church of Scotland had come to an end, following a decision by the UFCOS. The World Council of Churches are considering holding a future Assembly in Glasgow. The question of the WCC Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace is currently with the Senior Management Team.

Marjorie reported that Sheilagh Kesting would be conducting the wedding ceremony of Alison McDonald (Convener of ER) to Sandy Horsburgh (former C&S Vice-Convener) on Saturday.

Sally thanked Marjorie for her report and emphasised the continued welcome offered to Donald Macdonald of the United Free Church to Church and Society meetings despite changes to the relationship between the two Churches.

h) Priority Areas and Faith in Community Scotland:

Martin Johnstone spoke to the paper which had been circulated about working more together. A request from Priority Areas has come about welfare reform including how we raise awareness about the impact of current and proposed cuts, within the Church and wider society.

The Council agreed to the two recommendations, that it:

1. Works with the *Priority Areas Committee & Faith in Community Scotland* around the areas of Welfare Reform & Cuts and its own 'Deep Listening' exercise.
2. Pursues more effective ways of working together with the *Priority Areas Committee* and *Faith in Community Scotland*, reporting to a future Council meeting.

14. CORRESPONDENCE:

The invitation to the Convener to become an ACT Alliance Climate Justice Ambassador was circulated with the papers and noted by the Council. Sally Foster-Fulton met with Jan Witt of Christian Aid recently.

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting will be held on 9 September from 10.30am in St Andrews and St George's West, George Street, Edinburgh. Thereafter the meetings will take place on 26 November at 121, 2 and 3 February 2016 in Conforti, 20 April in Dunblane Cathedral and 22 and 23 June at Conforti.

16. CONVENER'S REPORT:

Sally Foster-Fulton mentioned that the Report to the General Assembly was focussed and well considered. She regretted that the Tax report had not received any discussion on the floor, but she stressed that this was a valuable piece of work. She said she was excited about looking forward and the year head, to know where the Council is going. The Big Conversation process is timely, and seems to be resonating across Scotland.

Sally thanked everyone for their support and contribution to work over the past year and closed the meeting with prayer.