

COMMITTEE ON ECUMENICAL RELATIONS

May 2015

PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

The General Assembly:

1. Receive the report.
2. Encourage Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions to take up the invitation of the World Council of Churches to join in a pilgrimage of justice and peace and to do so ecumenically, wherever possible. (*Section 1.4*)
3. Commend the action taken to explore continued relationships with the United Free Church following their steps taken to stand back from the Covenant. (*Section 4.1*)
4. Approve the process used to respond to *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* and note the brief summary given in the report. (*Section 6*)
5. Approve the delegates to Assemblies, Synods and Conferences of the other churches, as detailed in Appendix I.
6. Note the appointment of representatives to ecumenical bodies as detailed in Appendix II.

REPORT

1. An Invitation to Pilgrimage

1.1 The image of pilgrimage conjures a picture of people on the move; people, alone or in groups, heading in the same direction towards a common goal, sharing experiences with other people and groups along the way. The configuration of those who travel continually changes as they move on or stop for a rest, walk for a time with this one before moving on to another. The motives for being a pilgrim will differ. Some will go for the good of their health. Others will be interested in the landscape and its history and others will be seeking some spiritual benefit, while for still more, it will be an act of devotion; none of these is mutually exclusive. Whatever the reason, what binds all pilgrims together is their common humanity and their desire to move towards a common destination. Traditionally, Christians would make their way to Jerusalem or Antioch or Alexandria. Since the Middle Ages many have travelled the Camino de Santiago de Compostela in Spain and today there is a growing network

of renewed medieval pilgrim routes that crisscross Scotland, some in memory of particular saints: St Columba, St Ninian, St Cuthbert, St Margaret, St Mungo and St Andrew (www.scotlandspilgrimjourneys.com). Pilgrims with a background of faith draw on the heritage of faithful people of an earlier age while contemplating the needs of today's world and the contribution that each traveller can make towards shaping our world into a better place for all its inhabitants, one that builds on the glimpses of God's life-affirming kingdom of love, justice and peace we catch in the daily lives of so many people in vastly differing circumstances.

1.2 Pilgrimage provides us with a rich picture of movement. It evokes biblical scenes of the nations of the world moving together towards Jerusalem where Israel's God will judge among the nations (Isa 2:2-4) and of worshippers ascending the hill to Jerusalem for the festivals (Ps 122, John 12:12). From the beginning of the

Ecumenical Movement, the image of pilgrimage has been a constant reference. Christian people do not stand still. They are on the move and they are on the move with a purpose. Their motivation begins in worship and the sending out into the world which returns again to worship. It is in worship that we are called afresh to live our lives according to the Gospel, forgiven and reconciled to one another because we are reconciled to God in Christ, part of a larger body of believers, the church as the body of Christ, and called to share in the ministry of Christ to the world. It is in worship that the Holy Spirit creates us anew, strengthening us in faith, reminding us that we are not alone and sending us out in the love, mercy and peace of God as an important part of God's mission to the world. Sharing the humanity of Christ, we are able to recognise the imprint of God in the humanity of all those whom we encounter. With the gift of a gospel that is fundamentally good news for the most marginalised in our society and our world, we are propelled to go out to shine a light into the places where unjust regimes and structures violate the lives of countless millions, leaving them trapped in poverty and disease. With the gift of a gospel that is good news to the poor, we are sent out from worship knowing that we are not alone, that what we do, we do with others and that, together, we can make a larger impact in addressing the root causes of injustice in our society and in our world.

1.3 In all this, the metaphor of pilgrimage is particularly powerful. To begin with, it involves us all as individuals who are made in the image of God and are called to the ministry of the whole church through baptism. But, most importantly, we are not alone. Can you imagine what it would look like if all the Christian people of the world were to move together, travelling with others who are travelling in the same direction but who come from different communities? Can you imagine the shifting patterns as companions travel in different configurations, some faster, some slower, but all travelling with purpose toward a common goal?

1.4 The image of pilgrimage has provided one of the lenses that have driven the Ecumenical Movement. The first General Secretary of the World Council of Churches

(WCC) spoke of the churches in the fellowship of the WCC coming together "as pilgrims with the same goal and the same marching orders". In the 1980s, the Inter-Church Process, *Not Strangers but Pilgrims*, introduced a whole generation of church people in Britain and Ireland to the ecumenical movement and led to the setting up of the ecumenical bodies we know today. The process grew out of a conference in Swanwick at which the delegates declared to the churches: *This is a new beginning. We set out on our pilgrimage ready to take risks and determined not to be put off by "dismal stories". We resolve that no discouragement will make us once relent our avowed intent to be pilgrims together. Leaving behind painful memories and reaching out for what lies ahead, we press on towards the full reconciliation in Christ of all things in heaven and on earth, that God promised in his Kingdom.* Many more official reports from the wider ecumenical movement reference pilgrimage as a helpful metaphor. Following the message from the World Council of Churches' Assembly in Busan, South Korea, in 2013, with its declaration not just to stay together but to "move together" in a pilgrimage of justice and peace, an official invitation to join the pilgrimage was sent to the member churches by the Central Committee last year. In 2016, when the Central Committee next meets, it is anticipated that the WCC member churches will be asked to account for what they are doing. Let us be clear. It is not that nothing is happening already. The reports from each of the Councils to the General Assembly give account of many of the things we do as a denomination to address issues of injustice and violence, both in this country and beyond, and how congregations and members can be better resourced in their faith journey. The key to this invitation is about joining up the stories, learning from one another and, wherever possible, pooling resources in order to make our contribution as Christian people more effective. It is to this that the Ecumenical Relations Committee draws the Church's attention.

2. Travelling together in local communities

2.1 The connection between worship and the mission of the Church is fundamental. The consequence of this is that it makes sense where congregations are working together

on joint projects that they also take the opportunity to worship together. It is not enough just to do things together. It is our relationship to God and the way in which worship encapsulates all aspects of our faith that feeds our activities in mission and service: the praise, confession, reconciliation, listening for the Word of God and responding to it in thanksgiving and intercession that lead to the sending out into our communities with eyes ready to see where Christ is waiting for us to join him as bearers of good news. Up and down the land congregations experience something of this movement in joint worship and joint service. We rejoice wherever Christians are energised to worship alongside one another and to make an impact in their communities.

2.2 In some places, that cycle of worship and service will lead to a desire for two or more congregations to move closer together, perhaps even to share a building or a minister and so release more resources for their mission and ministry in the community. Working through Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) there are procedures which assist with the legal side of such moves. In the past year, **Livingston Ecumenical Parish**, now known as Livingston United Parish Church, adopted the agreed Constitution for Single Congregation Local Ecumenical Partnerships. The Ecumenical Relations Committee gave its approval to the Constitution at its April 2014 meeting. As a result of the adoption of the new Constitution, the Livingston Sponsors' Council met for the last time in September 2014. The Sponsors' Council brought together representatives from national and regional levels in the participating denominations. Its purpose was to provide a space where the denominations could agree on procedures where denominational expectations might differ and to support the congregation as it developed its life as an ecumenical parish. The Committee wishes to place on record the thanks of the Church to all those who served on the Sponsors' Council over the years as the denominations explored the new territory of ecumenical experiment up to the current position where Livingston United Parish is one among a number of Local Ecumenical Partnerships. With the new constitution now in place, the participating

denominations will continue to offer joint oversight. This will now be done by an accompanying group which locates responsibility for oversight in the body appropriate for such a task in each denomination. In the case of the Church of Scotland, that is with the Presbytery. The accompanying group will run under the auspices of the ACTS Ecumenical Development Group, which met for the first time last October, and will be tied into a regular process of review.

2.3 St Nicholas Uniting Parish Church in Aberdeen has also adopted the new constitution. The Ecumenical Relations Committee gave approval to the adoption of the constitution at its meeting in September 2014. An accompanying group is to be set up.

3. Companions on the Way

If pilgrimage is a journey of faith, part of our calling is to live in the footsteps of Christ. We know we are not alone, either as individuals or as a denomination. We travel with others and are both inspired and held to account by them. It is for this purpose that we belong to a number of ecumenical bodies at national and international level.

3.1 Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) <http://acts-scotland.org>

(a) ACTS completed a process of revisioning in 2012. It identified three core issues: faith and order, church and society, and local development. A new Programme Committee has been formed to plan for Members' Meetings and to bring forward preliminary thinking on ideas for future focus by the churches together. Rev Matthew Ross has settled in as General Secretary. In the autumn, Ms Miriam Weibye, an elder in the Church of Scotland, was appointed as a new Programme Officer. She has a particular responsibility for local development. Ms Weibye has spent her initial months creating an up-to-date national database of churches together groups. She has also been asked to speak at churches together meetings across the country. It is hoped that through this new appointment and the identification of local ecumenism as one of the core activities of ACTS, that

local groups can be better resourced and new ways can be found to build connections between them for mutual inspiration and sharing of information. The opportunity will be offered for people in local groups to journey together and see how what they do relates to what others do in a much larger, connected movement of the Spirit engaged not least in addressing issues of justice and peace.

- (b) One significant difference in the Members' Meeting following the revisioning process is that each meeting begins with a substantial period of listening to one another as members speak of the opportunities and challenges facing their church. During this time, member churches share something of the burning issues that are affecting the life of their church – both exciting and troubling issues. The decision to do this arose out of the recognition that despite over 100 years in the modern ecumenical movement, and 25 years of ACTS (September 2015), we still hold misconceptions of one another. This sharing time allows us the opportunity to deepen our relationships and to accompany each other in prayerful support at what is proving a fairly turbulent period in the life of many churches. It is also a way in which we can engage in topics that it is sometimes easier to ignore and to do so in a space that is not threatening and where deeper listening can be encouraged.
- (c) ACTS organised a highly successful four nations' conference in March 2014, ahead of the Scottish Referendum, in recognition of the fact that, whatever the outcome was going to be, the churches in these islands would need to continue engaging with one another in a constructive way. There was good representation from all the nations and many valued the opportunity to learn more about what was going on in Scotland. There was continuing work up to the Referendum including an inter faith meeting in July which was an initiative of the Moderator and which was co-hosted by ACTS.

3.2 Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) **<http://www.ctbi.org.uk>**

- (a) CTBI completed the Good Society project - **<http://agoodsociety.org>**. The project looked at seven places, including the Gorbals in Glasgow, and listened to what the churches were doing in these places to build a good society. All the places were where people live "on the margins" and where church buildings are used as places of sanctuary. A toolkit is available from the website for use by any congregation that wishes to look at what being a good society might mean in their context.
- (b) CTBI continues to provide worship material for Racial Justice Sunday, Remembrance Sunday and the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. It also provides Lent Study material. In 2015, the focus was on Christians in the Middle East. Material for churches to use in the run up to the General Election was made available.
- (c) The CTBI Annual Conference (formerly the Networking Conference) is to be held towards the end of 2015. It is planned that this will look at issues of identity (Christian and national) in the wake of the political changes taking place in these islands.
- (d) Rev Graham McGeoch, minister of Broughton St Mary's Church, Edinburgh, was appointed Deputy Moderator of the Board of Trustees in May 2014. The Very Rev Dr Sheilagh Kesting comes to the end of her term as a Trustee in May 2015.

3.3 Conference of European Churches (CEC) **<http://www.ceceurope.org>**

- (a) The new Governing Board has met at six-monthly intervals since the CEC Assembly in Budapest last year. Rev Alison McDonald, Convener of the Ecumenical Relations Committee, is a member of the Board. The first task was to ensure that the new Constitution adopted at the Assembly was shaped appropriately for Belgian law, following the move of the CEC offices from Geneva to Brussels. Standing Orders had also to be drawn up. The final change envisaged by the new Constitution, the integration

of the Church and Society Commission, which had a separate legal identity under Belgian law, was completed in December 2014. This marked the end of a long process of negotiation. CEC is committed to providing spaces for its broad spectrum of member churches to engage with one another on theological issues and to engage with the European institutions on matters of church and society under one governing body. CEC works closely with the **Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe** (CCME) on issues related to migration, asylum and human trafficking, addressing particularly the burden that is being placed on Malta, Italy and Greece as the first place of entry for many. (<http://www.ccme.be>)

- (b) The work of CEC also assists the churches in Europe to travel together on a pathway of justice and peace. Concerns of member churches on issues related to church and society become the focus of engagement with the European institutions in Brussels and Strasbourg. Through CCME, the work being done on human trafficking and migration also plays a part. And the **European Churches Environmental Network** (ECEN), of which the Church of Scotland's Climate Change Officer is a member, promotes co-operation in the caring of creation. These areas of work require working in solidarity with others beyond the borders of Europe and so make a connection to the picture of a global movement in which we as Europeans have a particular part to play.
- (c) The **Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women** (EFECW) <http://www.efecw.net/> works in partnership with CEC and brings together women of all ages from across the Continent. It aims to strengthen the ecumenical network of women, to help women find a common European identity and to challenge women to action. This happens through educational workshops, meetings and publications on issues like Ecumenical Learning, Political Learning, Management, Ethic-Ecological Training and projects of Reconciliation. Things that most women in Scotland take for granted in terms of equality are still

aspirations for many women across the Continent. For August 2015, the young women's group of the Forum has organised a "pop-up monastery" in Germany which will gather many women from across the Continent and across the Christian traditions for a time of sharing, reflection and recreation. <http://popupmonastery.com>. Ms Fiona Buchanan, Local Involvement Officer in the Church and Society Council, is a member of the young women's group and one of the organisers of the project.

3.4 The World Council of Churches (WCC) <http://www.oikoumene.org/en>

- (a) Following on from the WCC Assembly in Busan in 2013, member churches were asked to submit names for the membership of WCC Commissions. The Church of Scotland submitted names for a variety of Commissions and advisory bodies. The Committee regrets that, this time, we have not been successful in our applications. With places at a premium, priority was given to churches that had no-one else involved. The Church of Scotland is in the fortunate position of having Ms Miriam Weibye on the Central Committee. Ms Weibye was appointed Moderator of the Communications Committee at the Central Committee meeting in July 2014.
- (b) The WCC website provides access to the weekly ecumenical prayer cycle and daily press releases. Through these web pages, congregations can feel part of the wider pilgrimage of justice and peace that is the framework for WCC activities in the period up to the next Assembly in 2021.

3.5 Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) <http://www.leuenberg.net>

- CPCE has held a number of consultations in the past year.
- (a) Mrs Pauline Weibye, Council of Assembly Secretary, attended the Second Conference of Protestant Synods in Europe in February 2015. The conference is designed for lay people who are involved in synods and governing bodies of the member churches.

- (b) Ms Anikó Schuetz Bradwell attended a consultation on Church Fellowship, also in February. This consultation explored the meaning of fellowship and, therefore, the nature of the Community of Protestant Churches to which we belong as a signatory of the Leuenberg Concordant. The Concordat commits us to pulpit and table fellowship with all the other signatories, something that is now recognised as a model of church unity, namely, “reconciled diversity”.
- (c) The major focus of CPCE remains the Reformation Jubilee in which the Luther Quincentenary is the focus for a celebration of the various reforming movements across Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries. As part of this, it is identifying a number of Reformation Cities and working with the Evangelical Church in Germany on a roadshow that would travel to each of the cities. The Committee remains concerned about the tone of the project which does not seem to us to translate well into our Scottish context. Despite references to marking the occasion ecumenically, the emphasis and the extravagance of the plans appear to us to be inappropriate for this stage of our ecumenical journey. Instead, the Committee has encouraged the following up of a decision of the Joint Commission on Doctrine (Church of Scotland/Roman Catholic Church) to explore with the clergy of St Andrews the possibility of running a series of events in 2017 in partnership with the University. These would look at the reforming movement in Scotland prior to 1560 within the wider context of the healing of memories and as an opportunity to celebrate the ways in which all churches continue to face the need for reformation as they seek to meet the needs of the 21st century. This revisiting of the past is an attempt to mark journeying of a different kind without which the capacity of the churches to address the needs to today’s world is greatly weakened. We are not in the same place as we were then but yet we can still carry with us perceptions that were shaped in our past. It is also the case that St Andrews lies at one end of a pilgrim

route, the other end of which is Iona and so it very literally engages with the theme of pilgrimage.

3.6 World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) <http://wrcr.ch>

- (a) In October, Rev Christopher Ferguson of the United Church of Canada became the new General Secretary of the WCRC. Good wishes were sent to him as he took up his position. Thanks were also sent to Rev Dr Setri Nyomi for the work he had done during his time as General Secretary.
- (b) A consultation on the meaning of communion last July led to the setting up of a theological working group to reflect more deeply of the implications of being “a communion of churches” in a Reformed setting. The Very Rev Prof Iain Torrance has been invited to be part of this group.
- (c) The Europe Council held its annual meeting in Belfast in February. The theme this year was *National Identity, European Identity and the role of the Reformed Churches*. Rev Dr Doug Gay was invited to be the keynote speaker.

4. Ecumenical conversations on the way

While the ecumenical bodies encourage us on our journey and hold us accountable to our commitment to work together with others as “pilgrims together” and while they offer us opportunities to feel part of a much wider pilgrimage, inviting us to feed our experience into the wider movement and to be inspired by others from very different contexts to ours, our journey also affords us companionship with particular churches with whom we choose to travel for a spell.

4.1 United Free Church of Scotland

Membership of the WCRC has proved particularly useful in our relationship with the United Free Church. Since 2006, the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church have been travelling together in an intentional way within the context of a Covenant that was signed in Dunblane Cathedral by the Moderators of the two General Assemblies. As the time came for the Covenant to be

reviewed, it was clear that the United Free Church was having difficulties with the Church of Scotland process of discernment around the issue of same sex relations and ministry. They asked for the review to be postponed. Then, as the Church of Scotland continued its careful process of reflection and before it had reached its final decision, the United Free Church General Assembly of 2013 requested its Ecumenical Relations Committee to take steps to move away from the Covenant. The Church of Scotland Ecumenical Relations Committee, in responding to correspondence, suggested a face-to-face meeting, an offer which was accepted. The outcome was that a request was made to the World Communion of Reformed Churches to help the two churches to explore what it means to move away from the Covenant, both in terms of our understanding of covenant but also in terms of our membership of the *Communion* of Reformed Churches. A preliminary meeting took place in December. Both churches committed themselves to a process of engagement over the next year to 18 months which will be facilitated by a small team from the WCRC, beginning in February 2015.

4.2 Church of England

2014 saw the most recent in a series of **biennial meetings** which bring together a range of participants from different aspects of church life to discuss with a similar spread of people from the Church of England. The context is the particular responsibility of the two Churches as national churches. These exchanges offer not only insight into each other's ways of doing things; they can also lead to follow up exchanges as ideas shared by one church are taken up and developed by the other. This last year's encounter was no exception. The annual, bilateral **Faith and Order talks** have been working hard on the follow up to *Our Fellowship in the Gospel*. It had been hoped to bring it to this year's Assembly but more work was required. It is now hoped that a final text will be ready for next year. In July last year, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York signed a certificate which formally added the Church of Scotland to the list of churches recognised by the Church of England under the **Ecumenical Relations Measure**. <https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/>

churchlawlegis/canons/section-b.aspx#Head1-57. The effect of this amendment to Canon Law is to allow Church of Scotland ministers to conduct worship and preach, including funerals, and to assist at baptisms and marriages, and in the celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Communion in all Church of England parishes when invited to do so. It will also enable Local Ecumenical Partnerships to be established with the Church of England, in which Church of Scotland ministers will also be able to conduct baptism, share in joint confirmations and preside at services of Holy Communion. It is a significant step in that it is a formal recognition of the Church of Scotland ministry, though not, of course, reconciliation of ministry as that would require episcopal ordination.

The Presbytery Clerks of Glasgow and Edinburgh now routinely attend the **annual meeting of Archdeacons and Deans** whose responsibilities most closely match the work they do as Clerks in the two largest Presbyteries in Scotland. Once again, these opportunities for mutual sharing prove to be beneficial.

4.3 Church of Norway

In August, a delegation from the Church of Norway visited Scotland, the follow up to a visit to Norway in 2012. The Church of Norway is a member of CPCE. The decision was taken that the Scottish visit should be three-way and include the Scottish Episcopal Church as the Church of Norway and the Scottish Episcopal Church are part of the Porvoo Communion of Churches. The visit included a brief visit to Aberdeen, a city which is linked to Stavanger through the ties of the oil industry. This tripartite meeting proved very successful. Not only did it strengthen our ties with the Church of Norway it also revealed areas where the Church of Scotland and the Scottish Episcopal Church could work more closely together.

4.4 Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bavaria

Rev Rhona Dunphy's placement with the Lutheran Church of Bavaria is due to come to an end next year. The Committee is working with the Ministries Council to seek a way of ensuring that the supply of Bavarian ministers to Scotland is matched by our ability to send people from

here to Bavaria. To spend a significant period at the beginning of one's ministry in a context other than one's own is a life-changing and enriching experience and we would hope that some candidates could be encouraged to learn German with a view to spending three years in the Bavarian church.

Once again, we were able to send a representative to the Lutheran Church's annual seminar in Josefstal. The topic last year looked at how to be church in the face of secularism and atheism. Mr Liam Fraser attended.

4.5 Evangelical Church of Westphalia

A delegation is expected to visit the Church of Scotland in August. They are particularly interested in the work we do in Priority Areas and also places where new styles of worship and congregational life are being tried.

5. Attending to each other on the way

5.1 To be effective, a pilgrimage of justice and peace needs to be seen as an ecumenical exercise. That means that what we do as a Church needs to be shaped in a way that enables us readily to walk with others. Sometimes that will mean sharing what we do with others for the benefit of mutual enrichment and sometimes it will mean jointly planning what we do with others from the outset of a piece of work. A pilgrimage of justice and peace will always have an eye to the marginalised and, throughout the year, the Committee on Ecumenical Relations has worked with other parts of the church. The Committee continues to encourage and commend the work of the **Priority Areas Committee** in its ecumenical engagement in addressing the needs of the poorest people in Scotland. It commends the work of Faith in Community Scotland. The Committee Secretary has been part of an advisory group for project work undertaken by **Faith in Community Scotland** in tackling sectarianism. The Committee is also a member of the **Mission Forum** and commends the focus on mission and older people which lends itself to ecumenical reflection and development. The Committee is encouraged by the collaboration with other churches in relation to the development of 'fresh expressions' of

church and in relation to economic hardship in the launch of the Churches Mutual Credit Union.

5.2 **Training for ministry** is one very specific aspect of providing the leadership that can help congregations to become ecumenically engaged in ways that make visible the unity of the Church in mission and service to the world. And so the Committee is engaged with the Ministries Council in taking forward a recommendation of the Joint Commission on Doctrine that ways be found to develop contact between Church of Scotland candidates and Roman Catholic seminarians during the summer period when the seminarians are in placements in Scotland.

6. Travelling together in faith

6.1 As churches move together, nourished by worship and renewed for mission and service, the Spirit of Christ that accompanies and inspires us on our journey also confronts us with uncomfortable questions about what we believe and how we believe it. Where divisions come to the fore, rather than our unity, where uniformity is insisted on and diversity is neglected, the integrity of the church is weakened. The Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches has continued to build on the consensus that was reached in *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* and subsequent work on baptism and on ethics. In recent years, member churches have offered comments on two documents: *The nature and purpose of the Church* and *The nature and mission of the Church*. This consultation process resulted in the publication of a convergence document in 2012: *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*. This has been sent to all member churches and to the Roman Catholic Church, which is a full member of the Commission, with a request for responses to a set of specific questions by the end of 2015.

6.2 While *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* dealt with issues that are frequently the focus of debate in our Church and refer directly to church practice, the current document focuses on the doctrine of the Church, something that lies behind our practice and some of the contentious areas that create tension within and between churches. The result is a document that can appear abstract and remote

and less relevant to the day to day life of congregations. This being the case, it was felt inappropriate to pursue a long process of study involving lengthy reports to the General Assembly. Instead, the Committee drew together a small group of representatives from each of the Councils of the Church who had the appropriate theological expertise. Out of this process, a response was crafted which addressed the five questions that were posed:

1. To what extent does this text reflect the ecclesiological understanding of your church?
2. To what extent does this text offer a basis for growth in unity among the churches?
3. What adaptations or renewal in the life of your church does this statement challenge your church to work for?
4. How far is your church able to form closer relationships in life and mission with those churches which can acknowledge in a positive way the account of the Church described in this statement?
5. What aspects of the life of the Church could call for further discussion and what advice could your church offer for the ongoing work by Faith and Order in the areas of ecclesiology?

6.3 The Committee, in its response, broadly welcomes the document, commends its Trinitarian flow, in particular the way in which the Spirit is referred to whenever Christ is mentioned. The document fits well with the Church of Scotland's understanding of itself as set out in Article I of the Declaratory Articles and in the Preamble to the Service of Ordination. From a Reformed perspective, it is pleasing to note that non-Episcopally ordered churches are recognised as churches and that the Church is understood as requiring a continual process of reform.

6.4 The response also highlights a number of concerns. These include regret that there were no vignettes given to ground the doctrine in the lived reality of the world church. Moreover, the first question does not encourage the churches to look beyond themselves by asking for a

comparison with "the faith of the Church through the ages" (BEM) rather than with our own understanding. Also regrettably, there is no reference to the role of the whole people of God in the mission of the Church nor is there any reference to the place of women in the Church. Because the text is more descriptive, it is tentative and is therefore of limited value in taking forward the growth in unity among churches.

6.5 Nevertheless, a number of challenges are identified, including our understanding of legitimate diversity and who has authority to determine it; our understanding of "local" church in relation to, in our case, the role of presbytery; whether our understanding of the Church of Scotland as "part of" the Holy Catholic or Universal Church should not rather be "participates in..."; and discussion around sacraments and ordinances.

6.6 The full text of The Church: Towards a Common Vision, together with the submitted response, can be found on the Church of Scotland website. <http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/subjects/ecumenical-resources>.

6.7 At the same time as work has been done on a denominational response, the Joint Commission on Doctrine has been working on a joint response, believing that an ecumenical document should also receive an ecumenical response. It is hoped to have a text agreed by the end of the year. The document will provide the basis for a conference to be held in December.

6.8 The Members' Meeting of ACTS also had an extended discussion on the document led by Fr William McFadden who had chaired the Faith Studies Network of ACTS which had also taken a close look at the document.

6.9 CTBI is planning a four nations' conference on the report later in the year which will give member churches the opportunity to share their responses and to reflect on how the document can be used in our particular context. A study guide has been commissioned and will be available to download from the CTBI website later in the year.

6.10 The document itself may not be for the faint-hearted. Many will find it challenging in its style and language and it is disappointing in the hesitancy of steps it has taken towards clearing some of the doctrinal logjams around our understanding of the nature and mission of the Church. In some ways, it is a more timid document than either of its two predecessors, *The Nature and Purpose of the Church* and *The Nature and Mission of the Church*. Nevertheless, it could be used to open up helpful ecumenical discussion on how we understand the church and so help to deepen our understanding of one another, helping us to identify things in the other that we lack. In this way, it can be a catalyst for mutual enrichment at all levels of church life.

6.11 Through study of this convergence text and through working and worshipping together, churches come to discern a common vision that makes possible the healing of painful memories from the past. 2015 brings the 400th anniversary of the death of John Ogilvie, canonised as a saint in 1976. It is a mark of how far the churches have travelled in their common journey of faith, that the Roman Catholic Church ensured that the service on 9 March to remember this Scottish martyr was one of ecumenical sensitivity.

7. Conclusion

The Committee wishes to encourage all members and congregations of the Church of Scotland to think about what it means to be on a pilgrimage of justice and peace. The Council of Assembly agreed to give consideration to how the concept can be given content in the work of the Councils. However, if the concept is to have any purchase, then it means that Christians as individuals, and together as members of congregations and presbyteries, need to be engaged in the process. It is no more than a lens through which to look at how we live our lives as Christians and as a church among churches. It is closely related to what we believe and it flows from worship as we are sent out

“to love and serve the Lord” in the company of many who share our aspirations, if not our faith. “The unity of the Church, the unity of the human community and the unity of the whole creation are interconnected. Christ who makes us one calls us to live in justice and peace and impels us to work together for justice and peace in God’s world.”¹ For us as people of faith, we have no choice – it is what God demands: that we do justice, and love kindness and walk humbly with God. (Micah 6:8)

In the name of the Committee

ALISON P MCDONALD, *Convener*
 PETER H DONALD, *Vice-Convener*
 SHEILAGH M KESTING, *Secretary*

APPENDIX I DELEGATES TO OTHER CHURCHES

The following have been appointed as delegates to the Assemblies, Synods and Conferences of other Churches:-

Presbyterian Church in Ireland – The Moderator, Chaplain and Elder
Presbyterian Church of Wales – The Moderator
United Reformed Church – The Moderator
Church of England – Very Rev D K Arnott
United Reformed Church Scotland Synod – Ms M Weibye
Scottish Episcopal Church – Rev Dr L Schluter
Methodist Synod – Rev A P McDonald
United Free Church of Scotland – Rev Dr J L McPake
Baptist Union of Scotland – Rev D H N Pope
Congregational Federation in Scotland – Rev I D Cunningham

¹ *God’s Gift and Call to Unity – and Our Commitment* WCC 2013 Unity Statement para 13 <http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/subjects/ecumenical-resources>

APPENDIX II ECUMENICAL BODIES

The following serve on Assemblies and Committees of the ecumenical bodies of which the Church is a member:-

World Council of Churches

10th Assembly (November 2013) Very Rev Dr S M Kesting,
Mr I McLarty,
Ms M Weibye
Central Committee Ms M Weibye

World Communion of Reformed Churches

Uniting General Council (2010) Rev Dr A Falconer
Rev A G Horsburgh
Very Rev Dr S M Kesting
Mr I McLarty
Rev Dr L Schluter
Europe Committee Rev A G Horsburgh

Conference of European Churches

14th Assembly (July 2013) Very Rev Dr S M Kesting

Governing Board

Mr A Kimmitt
Rev A P McDonald
Rev A Stevens
Rev A P McDonald

Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (Leuenberg Church Fellowship)

7th General Assembly Rev Dr J L McPake

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

Board of Trustees Rev G G McGeoch

Action of Churches Together in Scotland

Members' Meeting

Voting member: Convener of the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (alternate voting member: Convener of the Council of Assembly), non-voting members: Secretaries of the Mission and Discipleship Council, Church and Society Council and the Ecumenical Officer (alternate non-voting members: Secretary of the Ministries Council, General Secretary of the Guild and the Moderator of the Youth Assembly)

Joint Liturgical Group

Rev D Carmichael,
Mr G Fender-Allison