

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND GUILD

May 2015

PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

The General Assembly:

1. Wish the Guild well as it enters a new three year strategy entitled "Be Bold, Be Strong!" (*Section 1.1*)
2. Congratulate the Guild on the success of the Project Partnership Scheme over the 2012-15 period. (*Section 5 and Appendix IV*)
3. Offer prayerful support to the Guild and its new Partnership Projects in the three years 2015-18. (*Section 5.4*)
4. Welcome the on-going work of the Guild in many areas of the Church's work. (*Section 7*)

REPORT

"Be Bold, be strong, for the Lord your God is with you!"

1. Introduction

1.1 The Guild's strategy for the period 2015-18 is "Be Bold, be strong!" We have chosen this to make a statement about how we should approach the short, medium and long-term future of our organisation. The themes within the strategy have been inspired, like the strategy itself, by the words of a well-known worship song. These are "Go in peace" (2015-16); "Go in Joy" (2016-17); "Go in Love" (2017-18).

1.2 It would be all too easy for the Guild, indeed for the Church, to become defensive and introverted when faced with reducing numbers and changing demographics, especially when they are set in the context of a society and a culture where membership and community can be seen as less popular than in the past.

1.3 Over the next three years, the Guild will set out to confound the predictions of doom and seek to restore confidence in our great organisation.

1.4 This is no easy challenge to set ourselves, but we know that it is our calling to serve and to live out the Guild's vocation in terms of "Worship, Prayer and Action".

1.5 What is more, we intend to "Be bold" and to "Be strong", sure in the knowledge that the Lord our God is with us!

2. The Past Year

2.1 During the 2014-15 session, the Guild has once again seen a huge range of activity at local, regional and national level.

2.2 Across the country, thousands of members have given of their time to support the work of their groups, their congregations and their communities and gone beyond that to support the work of the Guild at regional, national and international level.

For that, the whole Church gives thanks.

2.3 Highlights have been many and have been balanced by challenges and difficulties within the office due to staff changes and illness. Throughout, however, we have been

reminded of the way in which the Guild pulls together and supports people in good times and in bad.

2.4 Whilst the work of the Guild has gone on over the year as described later in this report, there has been the backdrop of the instruction from the General Assembly of 2014:

Instruct the Church of Scotland Guild to create a strategy, underpinned by an action plan, using the insights of the Focus Group recommendations, to provide a positive future for the Church of Scotland Guild and report to the General Assembly of 2015.

2.5 We have seen this instruction as a very positive outcome from the work of the Focus Group that was reported to the 2014 Assembly.

2.6 The instruction gave the Guild a context within which it could address the future in a positive and enthusiastic way.

2.7 It is never easy to stand back and be analytical and, perhaps critical, of what we know and love so well. But the response to the Assembly's instruction has been both bold and strong and we look forward to sharing the outcome of our discussions with the Assembly, both this year and into the future.

2.8 That said, we also feel strongly that the whole Church should respond to the instruction by contributing to the conversation and by asking itself how it sees the Guild in the local, Presbyterial and national situations. What can the wider church offer? What can it learn from the process on which we are embarked?

2.9 As the Guild, we need to constantly remind ourselves that we are an organisation *within* the Church of Scotland.

2.10 As a church, we have to recognise the same.

3. The Action Plan

3.1 The process of putting together an Action Plan for the future of such a large and widespread entity as the Guild is a complicated one.

3.2 We are faced with the need to balance action and momentum with tradition and security.

3.3 We need to offer leadership and innovation whilst maintaining democratic governance.

3.4 We must look to change practice and operations whilst retaining the underpinning ethos, mentioned earlier, of worship, prayer and action.

3.5 Consequently, the Action Plan that will be presented to this Assembly is not an end-point, but rather a marker on a journey that has already lasted 128 years and which will extend into the future for many more.

3.6 There are many steps along that journey and the need to consult with Presbyterial Councils and, through them, with local Guilds is at the heart of this. That is something which takes time and that is why the content of the Action plan is contained in a supplementary report and why there will always be change and evolution way beyond its adoption.

4. Events over the last year

4.1 The Guild session, as always, was marked by the Annual Meeting in the Caird Hall in Dundee on 6 September 2014.

4.2 The meeting was addressed by the Moderator, Rt Rev John Chalmers, reflecting on the theme for the year "Go, Serve". He began by saying that he welcomed the Guild's 'Brand Loyalty' and hoped that it could be emulated throughout the church.

We were asked to balance service with the need to prepare and to take care of our well-being, particularly in a world where there were what he called two "epidemics"...stress and loneliness.

4.3 Our first guest speaker was Rev Dr Margaret Fowler, a Scot ministering in Jamaica and whose lively and inspiring address spoke of witnessing to those on the margins. Her challenge was to look around our own areas and realise

where people were marginalised by their circumstances and to think how we could minister to them.

4.4 In the afternoon, we heard from John Lowrie Morrison, a Reader in Argyll Presbytery, but best known as JoLoMo, one of Scotland's leading artists, with his vibrant oil paintings of the Western Highlands and other places.

4.5 John spoke about the place of visual art in the church, both in historical and contemporary times and encouraged us to find a place for visual art that perhaps went against some of the traditions of our church.

4.6 Alongside the traditionally wonderful singing of hymns throughout the day, music was led by the Brightons Praise Group, a group which includes both the 2014-15 National Convener, Kay Keith and her sister, Moira Alexander, National Convener in 2003-4.

4.7 All of these added so much to the day, but there is no doubt that the main characteristic was (again, as always!) the sheer joy and feeling of celebration that pervaded the hall from start to finish and beyond.

4.8 In November, the Guild organised its annual Guild Week, a promotional idea that allows local Guilds to tell their own congregations and communities about the work they do and the activities they hold.

4.9 This time, though, we added a National element by organising a "Big Sing" in Perth North Church on 23 November. Around 250 people came from all over Scotland to meet the challenge to "Fill the place and raise the roof!"

4.10 The praise list was chosen by the leadership team, with each explaining their choice before it was sung. An offering of over £800 was taken for the DEC Ebola appeal.

4.11 As well as these occasions, the Guild also held a Project Co-ordinators' Conference, Theme and Topic days, an Educational Representatives Conference and a conference day for Presbyterial Council Conveners.

4.12 In keeping with our desire to work with others in the Church of Scotland, a number of Guild members shared in a planning day for the 2015 National Youth Assembly...something which foreshadows a report to the 2016 General Assembly which the Guild and the Youth Assembly will jointly present on Inter-Generational work in the Church of Scotland.

5. Project Partnership Scheme

5.1 Session 2014-15 sees the end of the present cycle of partnership Projects and the results of the fund-raising aspect of these can be seen at Appendix IV.

5.2 There is no doubt that the scheme plays a hugely important part in the life of the Guild at every level. Being able to raise awareness of issues, to reflect theologically upon them and to be able to support them financially results in so many blessings for everyone.

5.3 We wish our partners well as they continue their work into the future and thank them for the support and friendship that we have experience over these past three years.

5.4 Looking ahead, we are excited to see new relationships grow and develop over the next three years as we work on these projects:

5.4.1 *Ascension Trust, Street Pastors*

This is a project working to extend the challenging and extremely valuable work of Street Pastors, getting alongside people in their difficult times.

5.4.2 *Care for the Family, Let's Stick Together*

Over 50% of parents who separate do so within three years of having a baby. This project aims to help people work on their relationships to strengthen family life.

5.4.3 *Christian Aid, Caring for Mother Earth in Bolivia*

This project will be working on the parallel lines of addressing third world poverty and climate change through the provision of solar ovens in Bolivia.

5.4.4 *Feed the Minds, FGM in Kenya*

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a difficult and horrific subject that touches the lives of girls in many places and this project aims to support work being done in Kenya, particularly through education for girls.

5.4.5 *Mission International, Haiti Project*

Mission International aims to build a Primary School in Ouanaminthe in Haiti as part of a longer term plan to develop educational centres and services across the country.

5.4.6 *Prospects, All Friends Together*

The Church should, of course, be a place of inclusion and this project works closely with congregations who seek to offer support to people with additional support needs as they attend worship and take part in congregational life.

6. **Mary Slessor**

6.1 One important aspect of the work of the Guild is its international connections. In our partnership projects and in our relationships with other Churches, we remind ourselves that we can offer service to and learn from people in other places.

6.2 That places is very firmly in the tradition of such partnership that the Church of Scotland has enjoyed over the centuries.

6.3 As an organisation in its infancy in the late 19th century, there must have been great interest in the work of Mary Slessor, a Scottish woman from a humble background who shook the foundations of the culture of Calabar as she worked with the indigenous people.

6.4 So it was a great privilege for us to be invited to share in the ceremonies to commemorate her life one hundred years after her passing. In January, the National Convener attended celebrations in Nigeria whilst the Vice Convener and the General Secretary represented the Guild at the unveiling of a memorial stone outside the Steeple Church in Dundee.

7. **On-going Work**

7.1 Year on year, we are able to report on the work that is done by and for the Guild in so many areas that remain with us and which the whole Church is called to react to and to comment upon.

7.2 These include:

- Inter-faith Group on Domestic Abuse
- ACTS Anti-Human Trafficking Group
- Prison Visitors' Centres Group
- Scottish Women's Convention
- Jubilee Scotland
- World Day of Prayer

7.3 We are glad to continue our involvement with all of these.

8. **Church of Scotland Partnerships**

8.1 As well as the areas listed above, we continue to work closely with our colleagues within the Councils and Committees of the Church of Scotland,

8.2 **Social Care**

As we reported last year, we are working closely with the Social Care Council to find ways in which the Guild can be more directly and actively involved in the work of the Council, with opportunities for Guild groups, Presbyterial Councils, the Guild nationally and individuals.

8.3 **World Mission**

We have worked very closely with the World Mission Council, particularly in connection with activity in Africa. Guild involvement has connected us with Ghana, Nigeria and Malawi and we look forward to extending and developing the various connections we have made to the benefit of all parties.

8.4 **Church and Society**

The main connection we have with the Church and Society Council at the moment is through the Working Group on violence against women, with the National Convener becoming a member of the group.

8.5 Ministries

The Guild has regular representation at the priority Areas Forum and this area of work is one that offers further potential for co-operation, which we look forward to exploring in time to come.

8.6 Mission and Discipleship

In the past year, the Guild has been represented at the Mission Forum and has run a workshop at the Elders and Session Clerks' Conference. Conversations have also taken place as the Council seeks to develop its work with older people, building on the Guild's "Golden Age" project.

8.7 National Youth Assembly

One of the most fruitful and encouraging areas of co-operation we have is with the National Youth Assembly. The Guild has taken part in planning days for the 2015 event and will be participating in it in August. We also have begun to look at our joint response to an instruction from the 2014 General Assembly to bring a report on Inter-generational learning to the Assembly of 2016.

8.8 Other Church of Scotland partnerships

We are also grateful for the support and advice which we receive from the Human Resources Department, the Law Department, Stewardship and Finance, the Department of the General Assembly and the Facilities Management folk at "121". To the last of these, we offer thanks for the re-decoration of Guild Office, which has made it a more comfortable and welcoming place over the past few months.

8.9 We look forward to building on all of these relationships in the times to come.

9. Guild Leadership

9.1 The Guild Leadership team has been ably led this year by Kay Keith (Dumfries) as National Convener and Linda Young (Kirkcaldy) as National Vice-Convener. They have been supported by Committee Conveners: Marge Paterson, *Marketing and Publicity (Ayr)*, Rosemary Johnston, *Finance and General Purposes, (Perth)*, Judith Park, *Projects and Topics (Dunkeld and Meigle West)* and

Patricia Robertson, *Programmes and Resources (Greenock)*.

9.2 The Guild records its congratulations and best wishes to Linda Young and Rosemary Johnston on their election as National Convener and Vice-Convener respectively for the session 2015-16.

10. Guild Office

10.1 The Guild records its thanks to the staff in Guild Office, whose hard work and commitment do so much to ensure the smooth operation of the Guild at all levels.

11. In Conclusion

11.1 The next few years may well be pivotal in the development of the Guild as we seek to implement the changes and innovations suggested in our Action Plan.

11.2 We ask for the prayerful support of the whole Church of Scotland as we seek to take the organisation forward in the spirit of transforming energy that has epitomised the Guild throughout its existence.

11.3 This is an organisation built on new ideas and we fully intend to continue that tradition into a brave future.
Be bold, be strong!

In the name of the Church of Scotland Guild

KAY KEITH, *National Convener*
IAIN WHYTE, *General Secretary*

ADDENDUM

Kay Keith, National Convener

The Guild wishes to record its thanks to Kay for her year in office as National Convener. Having represented the Dumfries Presbyterial Council on the National Executive for a number of years, she was Convener of our Finance and General Purposes Committee in 2012-13. Kay has led the organisation with a clear sense of purpose and leadership, bringing her energy and enthusiasm to every aspect of the role. She has encouraged and guided us as we have begun to face up to the very real challenges and

opportunities that lie before us. Kay has travelled all over Scotland and beyond, visiting Nigeria as part of the Church of Scotland's representation at the celebrations of the life of Mary Slessor.

We wish her every blessing for the future.

LINDA YOUNG, *National Vice-Convener*
IAIN WHYTE, *General Secretary*

APPENDIX I MEMBERSHIP

The membership numbers for the Guild at the time of writing were:

Members 22,665, of whom 422 are men

Groups 890

APPENDIX II FINANCE

General Fund Income	£	General Fund Expenditure	£
Members' Contributions	181,496	Management and Admin	201,023
Sales of goods	6,028	Objects expenditure	71,662
Donations and Grants	9,111	Cost of sales	9,622
Project support	17,482		
Other			
Total	214,117	Total	282,307

APPENDIX III
DONATIONS TO THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

Sums given by Guilds in 2013 were as follows:

To Ministry and Mission funds via congregations	£ 92,321.78
To Congregational funds	£ 345,423.21
To work of the church, including projects	£ 267,643.89
To work outwith the church	£ 96,676.56
Total	£ 802,065.44

APPENDIX IV
PROJECT DONATIONS TO 27 FEBRUARY 2015

Comfort Rwanda: Building a Better Rwanda	£ 87,836.65
Crossreach: Heart for Art	£ 132,252.22
Mary's Meals: Making a difference in Liberia	£ 108,228.99
Ministries Council (Priority Areas): Passage from India	£ 82,405.60
Scottish Churches Housing Action: Julius Project	£ 100,611.57
World Mission Council: Out of Africa into Malta	£ 102,050.77
Total	£ 613,385.80