

CHURCH AND SOCIETY COUNCIL

May 2016

PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

The General Assembly

1. Receive the Report.

Speak Out 10,000 voices for change (see Section 4)

2. Celebrate and endorse the Speak Out: 10,000 voices for change participative process as an ongoing means of wider engagement for the work of the Church.
3. Approve the themes that emerged from Speak Out as strategic areas of work for the Church and Society Council over the next ten years, namely:
 - Building local communities where people flourish
 - Doing politics differently
 - Investing in our young people
 - Ensuring the health and wellbeing of all
 - Caring for creation
 - Building global friendships
 - Creating an economy driven by equality
4. Instruct the Church and Society Council to bring an implementation plan to the 2017 General Assembly.

Corporal punishment of children (see Section 5)

5. Recognise that corporal punishment of children is a violent act, and that violence is damaging to mental and physical health.
6. Call on the Scottish Government and Parliament to acknowledge the recommendations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and remove the defence of "justifiable assault" from the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003.
7. Instruct the Church and Society Council to join relevant campaigns, including Children are Unbeatable! Scotland, which seek to end the corporal punishment of children.
8. Instruct the Council to work with CrossReach and the Safeguarding Service to provide access to resources to support the development of non-violent parenting skills.

Climate Justice (see Section 6)

9. Welcome the outcome of the UN Climate Conference in Paris (CoP21) and call upon the UK Government to ratify and implement the agreement as a matter of urgency.

Divestment from fossil fuel companies (see Section 7)

10. Recognise that Scotland needs to play a leading part in the global drive to reduce carbon emissions through major changes in energy production and consumption and that the Church's ethical investment policies should be aligned with this objective.
11. Call on the Scottish and UK Governments, and businesses active in the North Sea oil and gas industry to help speed the transition to a low carbon economy and to ensure that the skills and experience of workers in the offshore industry are not lost as North Sea oil and gas fields run down.
12. Urge the Trustees of the Church of Scotland Investors Trust and the Church of Scotland Pension Fund not to invest in companies which derive more than 15% of their turnover from extraction and/or sale of thermal coal and/or oil extracted from tar sands.
13. Instruct the Church and Society Council, in partnership with Investors Trust and Pension Trustees to engage with oil and gas companies, in which the church has significant holdings, to establish their commitment to meeting the UN climate change targets and to report back to the General Assembly of 2018.
14. Instruct the Church and Society Council to explore with the Trustees of the Church of Scotland Investors Trust, the Church of Scotland Pension Fund and others how to alter existing investment policies to promote the transition to a low carbon global economy by 2050 and to report back to the General Assembly in 2018.

Energy issues and fuel poverty (see Section 8)

15. Recognise that the issues of climate change and fuel poverty must be tackled together and call on the Scottish and UK governments to do so.
16. Note with regret the UK Government's reduced commitment to renewable energy, and other measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; the withdrawal of funding for Carbon Capture and Storage trials, and the reduction in Energy Company Obligation funding, and call on the Government to commit to a programme of action which will lead to a reduction in our wasteful use of energy and the elimination of carbon from our energy sources.
17. Call on the Scottish and UK Governments to address unfairness in domestic energy pricing.
18. Regret that the Scottish Government will fail to fulfil its commitment to eliminate Fuel Poverty by November 2016, and call on it to address this issue as a matter of urgency pending the implementation of the National Infrastructure Priority on Energy Efficiency.
19. Commend congregations involved in local energy schemes and encourage others to consider how they might be involved.
20. Call on the Scottish and UK Governments to remove unnecessary barriers to Community Energy schemes.
21. Note with concern the problems caused by the current operation of the electricity supply, transmission and distribution networks in Scotland and call upon the Scottish and UK Governments to explore measures which address these.

Education (see Section 16)

22. Instruct the Church and Society Council, in collaboration with the Education Committee and other Councils of the Church, to review the work and position of the Education Committee within the Church of Scotland and report back to the General Assembly in 2017.
23. Affirm the role of school chaplains and encourage the Chaplains Group in their work.

24. Instruct the Council to continue to develop quality Religious Observance resource materials and modules for teachers and chaplains in schools, and to seek the accreditation of these modules from appropriate bodies.

REPORT

1. Introduction

1.1 If 2014 was 'a year like no other,' then the 2015 General Election results in Scotland (and the rest of the UK) were almost as dramatic, the fallout from which continues to permeate our society. No sooner were these results behind us than: campaigning seemed to be underway for elections to the Scottish Parliament; a date was announced for a Referendum on the UK's continued membership of the European Union; and Local Authority elections are due in 2017. Scotland is enjoying a very welcome upturn in voter turnout but there may be limits to our enthusiasm!

1.2 This was also the year when the Refugee Catastrophe, predicted by some for many years, finally consistently made (and stayed in) the headlines, tragically primarily for the worst of reasons. It was the year when we woke up to the barbaric threat of Daesh with its terror attacks on many cities and communities including Paris, Beirut, Port el-Kantaoui and Sharm el-Sheikh. It was the year that we joined forces with others to bomb Syria. It was the year that many of us came to recognise the impact of Benefit Sanctions and the apparently ever-rising number of people visiting foodbanks. More positively, it was the year of a historic agreement on climate change. Our reports, on corporal punishment, climate justice and fuel poverty, and divestment from fossil fuels reflect some of these issues.

1.3 One of the common factors linking each of these events is that there are no short-term or easy solutions. It is therefore appropriate that 2015 was also the year when the Church and Society Council decided to take a deep breath and slow down, although it did not seem like that to many of the people involved. Through Speak Out: 10,000 voices for change, we have stopped to listen: to congregations and communities across Scotland; to those

at the very margins of our society who are too often ignored (and we are all the poorer for that) and to the voice and Spirit of God, calling us in faith to a new time, encouraging us to believe in fresh possibilities.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 Speak Out: 10,000 voices for change (Section 4)

Over the last year, the Council has heard from almost 11,000 people from every part of Scotland as part of a broad-ranging consultation exercise. Our findings, contained in this section of our report, will guide the Council's work for the next decade and beyond as we seek to move to a deliberately more pro-active approach to our work.

2.2 Corporal punishment of children (Section 5)

Violence against children is wrong and runs counter to the example of Jesus and the principles of the Gospel. We advocate for a change in legislation as a result of which children in Scotland will be afforded the same level of protection from abuse as adults currently enjoy. We make the case for the Church of Scotland to join the Children are Unbeatable! Scotland campaign.

2.3 Climate justice (Section 6)

The United Nations Conference on Climate Change (CoP21) agreed, a series of measures to tackle climate change and its worst impacts. We celebrate what was achieved acknowledge the powerful voices of faith communities as a strong moral voice for change at the conference, note that the agreement will not limit global warming to two degrees Celsius of itself and call upon governments to take action to put the agreement into effect as a priority.

2.4 Divestment from fossil fuel companies (Section 7)

There is an urgent need to move away from energy production and consumption which is dependent on fossil fuels and a parallel need to invest in renewable, low carbon alternatives. We bring proposals that the Church of Scotland should not invest in the most harmful fossil fuel companies alongside proposals that we engage with other energy companies and bring a report to the 2018 General Assembly.

2.5 Energy issues and fuel poverty (Section 8)

Demanding targets for climate justice and the need to tackle fuel poverty are often seen as contradictory. We advocate an approach which deliberately strives to do both. We believe this is both necessary and possible.

2.6 Society Religion and Technology Project (Section 9)

After almost 50 years, the Society, Religion and Technology (SRT) project continues to be at the cutting edge of the inter-section between religion and science.

2.7 Politics and Government (Section 10)

Through the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office (SCPO) and over the last year, through the Joint Public Issues Team, we have engaged with politicians, governments and parliaments, seeking to ensure that the Church speaks out loudly and prophetically on the side of those struggling against injustice and poverty.

2.8 Joint Faiths Board on Community Justice (Section 11)

A brief summary of the work of the Joint Faiths Board on Community Justice is given including plans for a conference in 2017 on Just Community.

2.9 Scottish Churches Anti-Human Trafficking Group (Section 12)

During 2015, the Human Trafficking and Exploitation

(Scotland) Bill passed into law. In collaboration with partner churches, and other organisations, we played a key role in this process and remain committed to the Act's implementation.

2.10 Refugees (Section 13)

In response to the ongoing refugee catastrophe which came to a head in 2015, the Church of Scotland has supported the establishment of Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees. While a full update of this project is contained within the Council of Assembly's report, we provide a brief comment on this work.

2.11 Syria (Section 14)

During 2015 and 2016, the Council has responded to violence perpetrated by Daesh and the ongoing crisis in Syria, including its opposition to UK military intervention.

2.12 Violence Against Women (Section 15)

Over the past year, the Council has continued to provide a coordinating function to the Church's work to overcome violence against women. In early 2016, it appointed a Development Officer on a one-year fixed term contract.

2.13 Education (Section 16)

The broad and varied work of the Education Committee is highlighted. We bring proposals to carry out a review in 2016 of the Church's education work.

2.14 Campaigns (Section 17)

A list of all the campaigns that the Council is involved with on behalf of the Church of Scotland.

3. Action relating to the 2015 Deliverance

3.1 The following table summarises actions taken in relation to the Church and Society deliverances agreed at the 2015 General Assembly.

2015 Deliverance	Activity and Outcome
<p>2. Commend the report <i>Common Wealth? Sharing through tax and giving</i> to congregations and presbyteries for study and action, and instruct the Council to work with others, including the Stewardship Department, to facilitate engagement and discussion of these issues, with relevant resources, across the Church, and with ecumenical partners.</p>	<p>A discussion starter leaflet has been published and made available to presbyteries, kirk sessions, individuals and others. This has been included in the resources on the Church of Scotland website and has been promoted through our E-news. The Council has also participated in events at both the SNP and Labour Party conferences and raised the issue of tax and giving in regular discussions with policy makers and politicians as well as discussing the issue through the media.</p>
<p>3. Instruct the Council to promote a national debate about tax, giving and wealth sharing in the context of economic and social inequalities and the transfer of fiscal and welfare responsibilities to the Scottish Parliament after May 2016.</p>	
<p>4. Call upon Scottish and UK Governments to reform the tax system in order to promote the reduction of wealth and income inequality.</p>	
<p>5. Instruct the Council to pursue the concerns in the report <i>Time to rethink benefit sanctions</i>.</p>	<p>As part of the Joint Public Issues Team, an ecumenical partnership with the Methodist Church, the United Reformed Church, and the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Council has contacted MPs and Lords with the issues outlined in <i>Time to rethink benefit sanctions</i>. It also produced a statement following the Department for Work and Pensions response to the Select Committee report on sanctions.</p>
<p>6. Welcome the deepening relationship between the Council, the Priority Areas Committee of the Ministries Council and Faith in Community Scotland, and encourage the Council to continue to develop this in partnership.</p>	<p>The Council has been in regular discussion with the Ministries Council over the last year. Both Councils will increasingly seek to share work to ensure that the insights of congregations in Scotland's poorest communities informs and shapes the Church and Society Council's work.</p>
<p>7. Welcome the announcement of a moratorium on applications to drill for onshore shale oil and gas (fracking) and call on the Scottish Government to ensure that a full and proper regulatory process is in place before any such application is agreed.</p>	<p>We have contacted both the Scottish and UK Government. The UK Government remains committed to the development of fracking but the Scottish Government moratorium remains in place and has been widened to include coal bed gasification.</p>

<p>8. Call on the Scottish Government to consider how to reduce dependence on fossil fuels for domestic heating and provide low cost and low carbon alternatives.</p>	<p>The Convener has written to the Scottish Government and spoken on this theme at an event organised by the Existing Homes Alliance for the Scottish Government minister and MSPs at the Scottish Parliament in January 2016.</p>
<p>9. Instruct the Council to bring a report on Energy and Fuel Poverty to the General Assembly of 2016.</p>	<p>The report is presented below (Section 8).</p>
<p>10. Call upon the Scottish and UK Governments to work towards an outcome at the Paris Climate Conference in December 2015 that promotes climate justice.</p>	<p>We wrote to Scottish and UK Government ministers and worked closely with the Scottish Government in preparing for Paris, including taking the climate baton with Church leaders to meet the First Minister in November 2015.</p>
<p>11. Instruct the Council to prepare resources and signpost members of congregations to campaigns and activities promoting climate justice at the Paris Climate Conference in December 2015.</p>	<p>With Eco-Congregation Scotland we prepared and shared a range of resources and engaged with a large number of congregations to take the climate baton to 280 locations across Scotland; the biggest and most successful climate engagement exercise in which the Church has been involved.</p>
<p>12. Instruct the Council, and the other Councils, when organising training events and conferences to choose venues wherever possible that are easily accessible by public transport and to investigate how to make such events more widely available by the use of live web-streaming or video conferencing.</p>	<p>Heads of Departments, Secretaries and Conveners of other Councils were contacted regarding this matter. From those responses that were received it seems that there is a common practice of ensuring that conferences are accessible by public transport and are within walking distance of bus and rail links. Those wishing to be more conscientious informed us that they had arranged the timings of their conferences to coincide with bus and rail times. Our responses suggested that of those departments who responded, video conferencing is commonly used for meetings. However, for conferences web-streaming is underused as it is often felt unsuitable for a more interactive style of delivery.</p>
<p>13. Instruct the Council to engage with the Scottish Government and others both on the concerns raised in the Report on corroboration and in taking forward a holistic approach to tackling violence against women which includes strategies for improving the conviction rate for rape.</p>	<p>Following the publication of the Bonomy Review the Cabinet Secretary for Justice announced that proposals to remove corroboration would not be taken forward as part of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill and would not be looked at again before the Scottish Elections in 2016. The Council will continue to monitor developments on this matter. A report on the wider work of the Violence Against Women Task Group is below (Section 15).</p>

<p>14. Urge the Government not to proceed with the renewal of the Trident Nuclear Weapons system.</p>	<p>The Council has written regularly on this issue over the last year to politicians and in the media. At the time of writing, plans are in place to participate in a major Anti-Trident demonstration planned in London in late February 2016.</p>
<p>15. Reaffirm the Church's position that the ownership of, use of and threat to use nuclear weapons are inherently evil and instruct the Council to continue to work for disarmament, including through support for an international Nuclear Ban Treaty.</p>	<p>The Council has undertaken this work through its partnership with the Joint Public Issues Team.</p>
<p>16. Note with concern the serious allegations that have been made about the safety of the Trident Nuclear Weapons system and urge the UK Government to reassure the public that Trident is safe.</p>	<p>The Council wrote to Michael Fallon, the Secretary of State for defence and received a reply in which we were informed that the security and safety of nuclear weapons is given the highest priority.</p>
<p>17. Call on the UK Government to provide unconditional humanitarian aid to refugees in the Mediterranean, including taking additional refugees from the region; to work with European partners to develop a long-term strategy to combat the criminal gangs who are smuggling people; and to actively build peace and safety throughout Africa and the Middle East.</p>	<p>Over the last year, asylum and refugee issues have become an increasingly vital issue. A full report is included in the Council of Assembly's report.</p>
<p>18. Note the resolution of the European Parliament of 17 December 2014 and the debates in the House of Commons on 13 October 2014, the House of Lords on 29 January 2015 and the Scottish Parliament on 21 April 2015, and urge the UK Government and European Union to recognise without delay the State of Palestine alongside the State of Israel, as a contribution to securing lasting peace and justice for all.</p>	<p>The Council wrote to MSPs, MPs and MEPs and has continued to engage with Scottish, UK and international partners. At the time of writing, the Vice-Convenor and Secretary were scheduled to visit Israel and the Occupied Territories in March 2016.</p>
<p>19. Condemn all acts of violence in the region of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory.</p>	<p>The Council has continued to encourage prayer and action for peace during World Week (September) and 24th of the Month vigils.</p>
<p>20. Instruct the Council to investigate the possible impacts of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) on vulnerable people in society, and express concern that such comprehensive free trade agreements can often lead to increased inequality and</p>	<p>A briefing paper was published with partners in the Joint Public Issues Team in October. We are currently awaiting subsequent stages of the negotiations and process around TTIP which will provide further opportunity to campaign.</p>

<p>further stratification between communities of differing economic situations.</p>	
<p>21. Urge the UK Government to appoint a global envoy for religious freedom, reporting directly to the Foreign Secretary.</p>	<p>A letter to the Foreign Secretary was sent. We have worked with a Church of England-led Inter Religious Platform for Freedom of Religion or Belief to highlight specific issues around the world.</p>
<p>22. Urge the Scottish Government, Education Scotland, Local Authority Directors of Education and Head teachers to make sure that Religious and Moral Education is provided for all pupils by specialist teachers, particularly those in 5th and 6th year.</p>	<p>The Education Committee is working on this task in close collaboration with the Scottish Joint Consultative Committee on Religious and Moral Education. Returns from a Freedom of Information request to all Local Authorities are in the process of collation and interpretation; initial discussions have been held with Education Scotland, EIS, SQA, and GTCS and with MSPs. The Council plans to bring a more substantial report to the 2017 General Assembly.</p>
<p>23. Urge the Council of Assembly in co-operation with the Council to assist and support school chaplains and others who minister in Gaelic Medium schools in all aspects of their ministry through the medium of Gaelic, including training in their fluency in that language, and the provision of suitable Gaelic resources.</p>	<p>At the time of writing, the Ministries Council plans to run a three day conference from the 29 March in Inverness on ministering in Gaelic. The Church and Society Council was invited to deliver a workshop on School chaplaincy.</p>
<p>24. Encourage school chaplains to take the opportunities provided by the Education Committee's training conferences for chaplains.</p>	<p>A very successful conference for Chaplains in Further Education was held in October 2015 in partnership with ACTS. A working group on school chaplaincy has now been established and is exploring ways to engage, support and equip school chaplains more fully.</p>
<p>25. Encourage the Education Committee to examine the implications of Sir Ian Wood's Report <i>Education Working For All!</i> and consider what further action the Church might take to promote Modern Apprenticeships.</p>	<p>The Cabinet Secretary for Education and the Education Spokesperson from COSLA both spoke to the Education Committee's September Conference on the topic of Developing Young Workforce. The Education Committee, through Local Authority Representatives, is seeking examples of good practice and is encouraging congregations to consider modern apprenticeships and training opportunities for young people.</p>
<p>26. Urge the Scottish Government to promote organ donation on the present system of consent and to monitor developments elsewhere.</p>	<p>The Council has continued to be involved in the debate, including responding to relevant consultations on proposed legislation in the Scottish Parliament.</p>

27. Encourage congregations to consider promoting the <i>fleshandblood</i> campaign.	The Council continues to engage actively in this issue.
28. Urge members to join the Organ Donor Register, to advise their families and close friends of this decision, and to encourage them also to join.	The Council continues to encourage Church members to join the organ donor register.
29. Call on the Scottish Government to begin a wide review of the operation of current Mental Health and related legislation, especially with reference to the issues highlighted in the report <i>Human Rights and Mental Health</i> .	The Council and a representative of the National Youth Assembly met with the Minister for Sport, Health Improvement and Mental Health in September 2015 to discuss the issues raised in the report.
30. Encourage congregations to use the available resources to help overcome the stigma often associated with mental illness and to ensure that all are welcome in the life of their churches.	The Council has engaged with various opportunities to promote this issue in churches.
31. Celebrate the wide public engagement and high turnout in the 2014 Referendum, and instruct the Council to continue to work for broad participation in the delivery of devolution of further powers to the Scottish Parliament and related matters.	The Council has engaged regularly with the UK Parliament during the passage of the Scotland Bill. Through its Speak Out consultation the Council has sought to respond creatively to the ongoing increased levels of public participation. At the same time, the Council has been particularly mindful of those concerned that the current political climate has created divisions and made people less receptive to listening to, and respective of, different points of view.
32. Call upon the United Kingdom Government, the Scottish Government, the Northern Ireland Executive and the Welsh Government to establish a constitutional convention, with respect to better governance and enhanced participation, in accordance with the will of the peoples of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.	The Council plans to host a UK wide, ecumenical roundtable event after the Scottish Elections and EU Referendum to assess whether an ecumenical call for a Constitutional Convention with respect to better governance and enhanced participation is possible. Work to encourage enhanced participation will be part of the "doing politics differently" theme discussed in the report below
33. Instruct the Council, in consultation with the Ecumenical Relations Committee, to engage with sister churches in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales with respect to the better governance and enhanced participation of the peoples of these nations.	
34. Note with concern the proposal of the UK Government to repeal the Human Rights Act 1998 and	The Council has expressed and shared the Church's view with the Scottish and UK Governments as well as a range of

instruct the Council to make representations to the UK Government on the matter.	campaigners. To date (February 2015) there have been no concrete proposals published by the UK Government.
35. Encourage the Scottish Government, in its negotiation with the UK Government on the devolution of further powers from Westminster to Holyrood, to press for the devolution of Human Rights issues and legislation to the Scottish Parliament and Government.	The Council made representation to the UK Government on this matter but, at the time of writing, Human Rights issues and legislation remained a reserved matter.
36. Instruct the Council, in consultation with relevant bodies, to explore ways to continue and expand the respectful dialogue across Scotland.	This work has been carried out primarily through the Council's Speak Out consultation.
37. Invite all congregations to:- (a) appoint a Church and Society contact person, if they have not already done so; (b) let the Council know who they are; (c) encourage them in their role.	We've continued to work with Congregational and Presbytery Church and Society Representatives through providing resources, tools and advice on engaging with key issues in their local communities, nationally and globally. We have supported new Representatives through sending a welcome pack with guidance and advice in relation to their role, and share stories of success and good practice through social media and the Church and Society enews.

4. Speak Out: 10,000 voices for change

4.1 The reason

4.1.1 Within the Bible, listening (whether or not someone listens and who they listen to) is persistently used to indicate something of a person's character, their actions and the quality or type of the relationship they hold. In Isaiah 55:3, God says: 'Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live.' In Matthew 17:5, the disciples are told: 'This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!' Or further still in James 1:19 we are urged to be 'quick to listen and slow to speak.' To listen, then, shows a desire to understand, to be led and a desire to build relationships. By contrast, to not listen is a form of creating distance or discord between two or more parties. In Jeremiah 7:26, we read: 'yet they did not listen to me, or pay attention, but they stiffened their necks. They did worse than their ancestors did! Whether or not we listen, then, and who we listen to are important questions for the Council which has a heavy responsibility to speak

out prophetically on behalf of the Church and in the spirit of Christ's teaching and example.

4.1.2 In September 2015 the Church and Society Council launched 'Speak Out: 10,000 voices for change', a process with the aim of listening to individuals from churches and communities across Scotland and to hear their hopes and concerns for Scotland and the world. In undertaking this work, our desire was not only to listen but to enable the Church of Scotland to take a long-term approach to tackling inequality and injustice. We are consistently told that many of the problems we face will require a generational approach but remain caught within short-term electoral or funding cycles. The Church, even in the midst of the current challenges we are facing (or perhaps because of them), is one of the few institutions that can afford to think and act generationally. By responding effectively to people's deep-seated concerns, we aim to move to a much more proactive way of working, setting

the agenda around key issues over a long period of time rather than simply reacting to the latest issue and news.

4.1.3 For the Council, this way of working builds on previous work undertaken by the Church, including the Special Commission on the Purposes of Economic Activity (2012), *Imagining Scotland's Future* (2013), *Respectful Dialogue* (2014 [pre-Referendum] and *Scotland's Future Now* [2014 post-Referendum]). It is also, in part, a response to the desire for change that became evident during the 2014 Independence Referendum and the work of Scotland's Poverty Truth Commission with which the Church has been closely associated since its inception. Above all, however, this work is an act of humble faith: that the Church of Scotland, by the grace of God, will continue to play a positive role in shaping Scotland and the world.

4.1.4 Throughout the Bible, we read of God's passion for justice and desire for us to be a transforming presence in the struggle against poverty and injustice. Where the Church has sought to follow in God's footsteps, to listen and hear the cry of those in need, it has always been a transforming presence. In the 19th Century churches led the movement to abolish slavery. In the 20th Century, people of faith played their part in the Black Civil Rights movement, in the ending of apartheid in South Africa and in the struggle to overcome communism in Eastern Europe. In the 21st Century, Christians along with many others are listening to the impact of rising global temperatures on our sisters and brothers across the world and playing a critical role in tackling climate change. Of course, none of these movements have succeeded completely, and the struggle for justice continues on a daily basis. Nonetheless our ability to enact change is contingent with our ability to listen to God, and with God, to hear the cries of those who suffer injustice.

4.1.5 Today the Church of Scotland is still listening and acting in thousands of ways and in every part of Scotland and beyond. Through the sharing of food and shelter, the provision of counselling and care, running youth groups and care schemes, in environmental projects and social

justice campaigns, we are listening and responding. Through *Speak Out: 10,000 voices for change*, the Council wants to learn from, encourage and resource that compassion and thirst for justice and use this to bring about long-term change.

4.2 The process

4.2.1 Between September and December 2015 we asked people in local churches and from every part of society, to speak out so that we might listen. We asked the following question: 'Imagine it is 2035. Scotland is a fairer, more equal and more just society in a fairer, more equal and more just world. In a short statement, we want you to tell us what one key issue needs addressed, and how.'

4.2.2 We were committed to hearing from everyone and particularly, we wanted to hear from those whose experiences are often ignored and who currently experience inequality and injustice most directly. The aim was to hear people's hopes and concerns and, through this, to identify approximately six key areas for action which the Council would commit to working on every day, locally, nationally and internationally, for at least the next ten years.

4.2.3 During the four-month consultation period we took 'Speak Out: 10,000 voices for change' to over 260 different events, from church services to community conferences, from small local gatherings to large national events. We heard from young people and old people, from many faiths and none. We heard from people in the Highlands, the Borders, the islands and the cities, and even heard from interested voices in Sao Paulo and New York. MPs and MSPs took part, as did school children and young people from the National Youth Assembly and other national youth organisations. Materials were also translated into Gaelic and British Sign Language. People 'spoke out' in Church of Scotland Guild meetings, in Boys' Brigade companies, in Citizens Advice Bureaux and at interfaith events as well as in cafes, community groups and churches.

4.2.4 We heard from over 200 congregations. It was particularly wonderful to see and hear the stories of churches engaging with their communities to ensure that we heard from those whose voices and expertise are often missed. It was also fantastic to hear from young people passionate about the future and from children who expressed their hopes in pictures as well as words.

4.3 The responses

4.3.1 Almost 11,000 people took part in Speak Out so our target of 10,000 was not only met but surpassed. The Council is immensely grateful to every single person who filled in a postcard, drew a picture and took part on-line. For weeks, the Council's offices were filled with Speak Out responses.

4.3.2 As the responses came in, a great deal of time was spent reading, collating and categorising the responses. (For a breakdown of these responses, see Diagram 1 and online.) While the categorisation of responses is a process that contains an inherent level of subjectivity the Council has sought, with the aid of qualitative analysis software, focus groups, the peer reviewing of categories and the checking of our methodology with others (including analysts within the Scottish Government) to listen with integrity. Our aim throughout has been to be fair and objective in our understanding, interpretation and analysis. We have sought to listen and we hope that we have listened well.

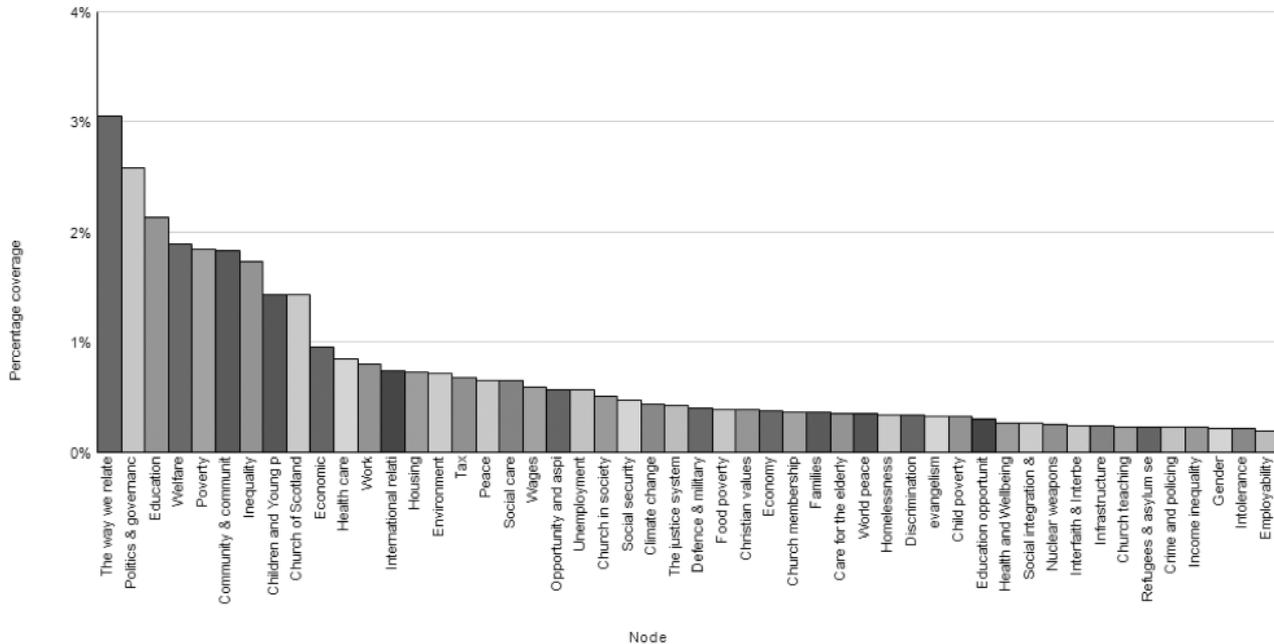


Diagram 1

4.3.3 As well as gathering information pertinent to the specific question that we asked, a number of responses also highlighted wider concerns about the life of the

Church, including declining membership and the lack of young people attending Sunday worship. We have shared these findings with other Councils and Committees.

4.3.4 From our initial analysis two things were immediately apparent. The first was that relationships, specifically the way individuals or groups of individuals relate to one another is a priority. An overwhelming number of responses emphasised that the way people relate to one another is a key cause of injustice, inequality and unfairness and, correspondingly changing the way we relate is a primary solution. The second prominent aspect was the very large number of responses focussed on the need to tackle poverty and systemic injustice, primarily within Scotland but also in other parts of the world. These two elements need to be at the core of our work moving forward: we need to work relationally to strive together for a world free from poverty and injustice.

4.3.5 In analysing all the information, we were faced with twin challenges. Firstly, we wanted to be as inclusive as possible. Simply to choose our themes on the basis of the sorts of things that respondents had said frequently (e.g. fairer work, welcoming refugees or welfare reform) would have meant excluding the great majority of responses. Secondly, we were conscious of the need to sharpen our focus: to do less but to do it with greater depth and over a longer period of time.

4.3.6 The range of issues raised by Speak Out: 10,000 voices for change was brought to a residential gathering in January 2016. Participants included Council staff, Council members and, critically, people with direct and ongoing experience of the struggle against poverty. It was hard work but wonderfully exciting, joyful and full of laughter. There were also deeply poignant moments such as the picture drawn by one participant of a broken swing as he described his neighbourhood as a harsh place to grow up in or another person who, in the midst of a discussion about how we preserve the wonderful resources we have, commented ruefully, 'Whit resources? They're no in ma community.'

4.3.7 This group was asked to undertake two main tasks: to identify the natural groupings of the issues or themes that had been raised; and to identify a structure that held

these themes together. They also began the process of defining these issues and identifying what success will look like.

4.4 The themes

4.4.1 With a room full of experience, flip charts, pens and post-it notes, the group spent much of the first day individually, in small groups and all together reflecting on the initial results of Speak Out. Together we identified seven key themes running throughout the responses we received. While naturally inter-related, these themes contain distinct issues and areas of work. These are presented in no particular order.

4.4.2 Theme One: Building local communities where people flourish

This theme had the greatest variety of issues and is, therefore, possibly the broadest of our themes. Nonetheless, at its centre is a very strong core of issues composed of a primary concern around community spirit and cohesion on the one hand, and the more practical aspects of community, such as housing, social security, gender justice, homelessness and the justice system on the other. Speak Out has identified loudly and clearly that local communities must be places where people flourish and at present this is not the case for far too many. This strong emphasis on local action and activity will help the Council in coming years to recalibrate our work to more intentionally learn from and support local congregations and communities.

4.4.3 Theme Two: Doing politics differently

By contrast, responses regarding politics tended to focus on fewer issues such as the need for more direct or local democracy, questions around constitutional reform, disillusionment with many politicians and a desire to move beyond party politics and tribalism. In general, this theme is shaped by a desire and a need to do politics differently, in Scotland, the United Kingdom and Europe. The current upturn in political engagement is to be welcomed but people are clearly interested in different ways of working, not just more of the same.

4.4.4 Theme Three: Investing in our young people

There was a clear theme arising out of the analysis around young people and the desire to invest in our children and young people. Issues such as child poverty, family support and child abuse were all raised. The greatest emphasis was on education, with particular emphases on the need to: instil a sense of values and morality; provide education opportunities for all; provide employment training and apprenticeships; and, tackle the attainment gap that exists between communities was expressed. In the group working on this theme, it was important to have people who have spent their working lives teaching and others who were clear that the current system has failed them and their families.

4.4.5 Theme Four: Ensuring the health and wellbeing of all

The issue of health and wellbeing included a great many concerns about the current funding and quality of the NHS and social care services, with the need to care for and respect the elderly also featuring strongly. Issues such as substance misuse, mental health, isolation and loneliness are also contained within this theme. Once again it was liberating, and challenging, to have people directly involved in this process who know directly about the scars of poor health and inadequate services.

4.4.6 Theme Five: Caring for creation

This theme contains a variety of different, and in some ways distinct issues ranging across climate change, land reform, agriculture, the cost of food, access to green spaces and litter. Nonetheless, they all relate to how we care for, and make appropriate use of, the natural resources of a finite planet. We have been challenged to think of ourselves not just as good stewards of creation but as servants of creation and the Creator.

4.4.7 Theme Six: Building global friendships

The responses from Speak Out were not just about Scotland, but about Scotland's place in the world. As the Church of Scotland, we have a primary territorial commitment to the people of Scotland but we also have a passion for global justice. This is reflected in our theme about building global friendships. At the heart of the issues raised within this theme is the need for improved international relations and active peace-making. Concerns around refugees, asylum seekers and immigration also made up significant aspects of this theme, alongside responses relating to nuclear weapons, the military, terrorism, the arms trade and global inequality.

4.4.8 Theme Seven: Creating an economy driven by equality

Economic inequality was highlighted regularly as a concern by many respondents. This included: wages, tax and unemployment mentioned. Within each of these areas the sense of the imbalance and inequality of the current economic structure was core. We heard profoundly challenging accounts from people of how they had been directed into low-paid work simply because of where they lived and of the regular pain of not being able to afford the basics which the great majority take for granted.

4.4.9 While the above snapshot of themes and their contents is by no means exhaustive, it tries to include the vast majority of what was heard through the Council's work on 'Speak Out: 10,000 voices for change.' and provide a useful way of segmenting the areas that people have told us need to be addressed. (An attempt to express diagrammatically these themes, and some of the key areas of work within them, is laid out in Diagram 2.)

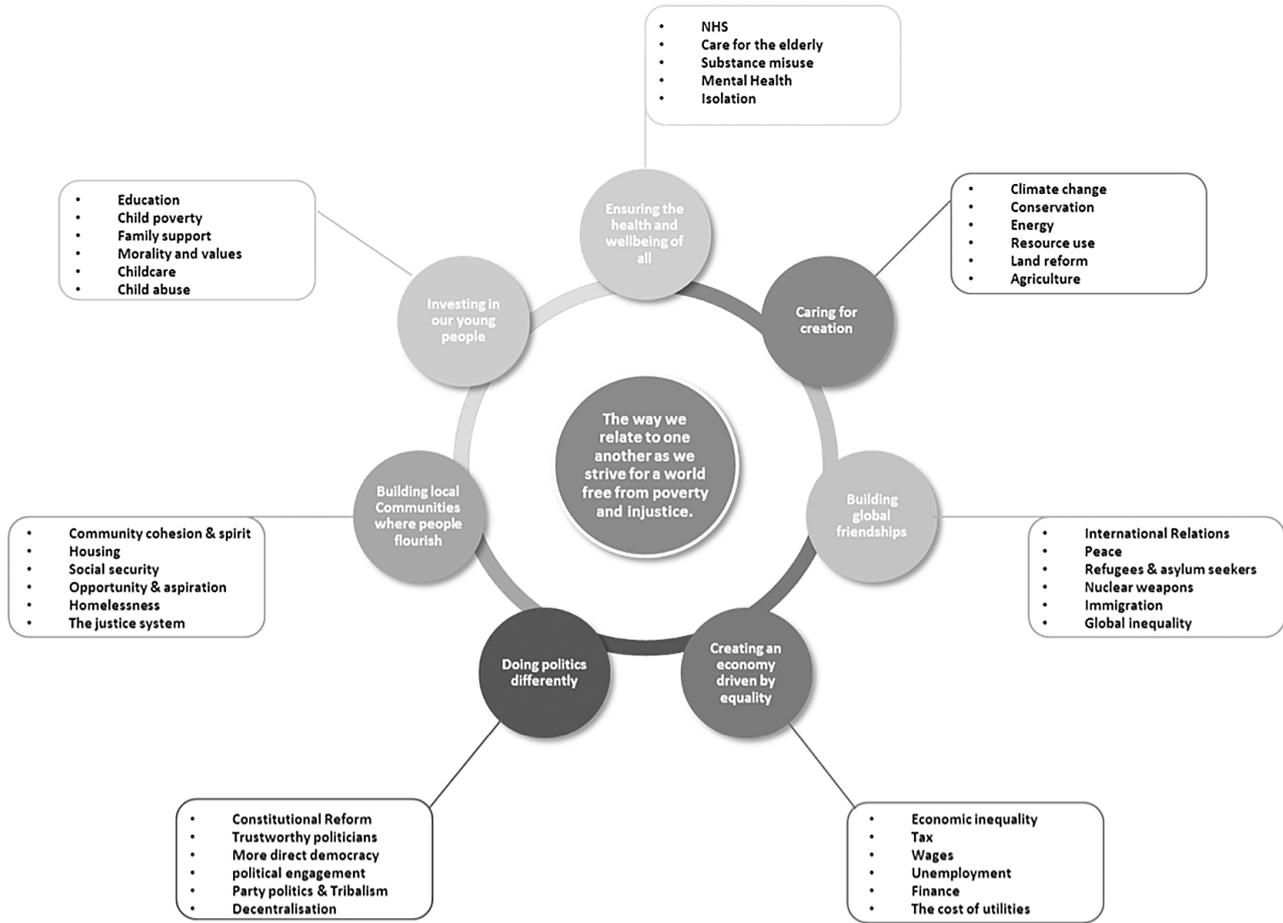


Diagram 2

4.4.10 A clear sense of the way in which these themes inter-relate is critical in planning future work. Focus on one theme should have an impact on others. So, for example, work around developing economic models focused on reducing inequality will impact on how we engage with environmental issues and how we invest in our young people. And whilst focusing on local issues, we will require being constantly mindful of global matters and, indeed,

the increasingly international nature of many of our neighbourhoods.

4.5 Underpinned by faith

4.5.1 The Church is called to follow Jesus and to be, by our very nature, a people of faith, hope and love. This is difficult, particularly when we face challenging and at times, apparently, intractable problems both as a denomination and as a society. We need to have the eyes

of faith to see things differently and then to imagine these different possibilities into reality. More than any other theme, Jesus spoke about the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom, for Jesus and for the Church, is both realised (already present) and unrealised (fulfilled at the end of time). So we strive, by the Spirit of God, for the breaking in of God's shalom (deep peace) into the here and now whilst recognising that our earthly efforts will always fall short of all that God intends and hopes for.

4.5.2 Speak Out: 10,000 voices for change encourages the Church to be prophetic in our response to many of the critical issues of our time, to stand alongside those who are being treated unjustly and to work fearlessly for signs of God's Kingdom to break out in our midst. In our attempts to be prophetic, the Church needs to not only outline the problems raised but also to present a positive vision, one which we hope more adequately reflects Gospel and Kingdom values.

4.5.3 At the core of our structure, and the seven key themes, is the notion of positive relationships characterised by justice and the eradication of poverty as a sign of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, whether the Church is focussing on the economy, politics, health and well-being, or investing in young people, the emphasis is on Kingdom-building to create a world free from poverty and injustice.

4.6 Next steps

4.6.1 2015 was the year that the Church and Society Council decided to take a step back and listen. In doing so we have learnt that being slow to speak and quick to listen provides space for others with lived experience wisdom and expertise to speak. Within our work moving forward there will be a vital place for the voices and wisdom of those with direct experience of the struggle against poverty and injustice.

4.6.2 The Council is clear that, through Speak Out, we are changing not only the timescale of our future work but also the way that we will go about it. We will be required to go far beyond the policy reports that have historically

formed the majority of our work, although these will remain critically important. Rather our ability to enable policy shift (a change of mind) will need to be matched with an ability to encourage cultural and attitudinal shift (a change of heart). It will also require us to support and encourage practical action (getting our hands dirty) and working out who we will partner with (walking alongside). (See Diagram 3.) The prospect of this is both scary and exciting, but we believe our work will be better for it, and that it will open the Council's work to include a greater diversity of people and their stories. Above all, we believe that it will make a difference and that it will be faithful to our calling.

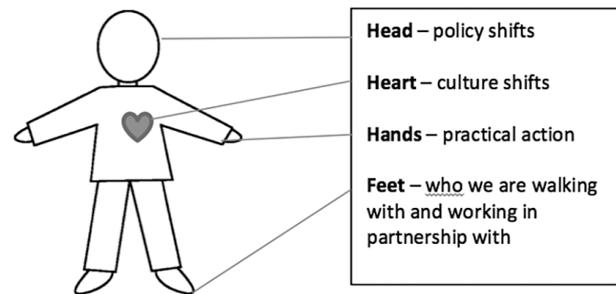


Diagram 3

4.6.3 The Council now seeks the approval of the General Assembly to frame the bulk of its future work around the seven key themes which have arisen through 'Speak Out: 10,000 voices for change.' It will bring Action Plans around each of these alongside an overall Strategic Plan to the 2017 General Assembly. Our prayer is that in ten years' time, were we to once again ask the question "what one key issue needs addressed and how?" that the issues identified in 2015 would no longer be raised because, in part, of the work the Church had undertaken. In the meantime, however, there is much work to be done in order that our country and our world looks a bit more like God hopes and intends.

5. Theological reflection on corporal punishment of children in the context of

the discourse on international human rights

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 In 2014 the General Assembly instructed the Church and Society Council to: *'reflect theologically on corporal punishment of children in the context of the discourse on international human rights, and to report on this subject to a future General Assembly.'* This report has been written in collaboration with CrossReach and the Safeguarding Committee and is presented by the Church and Society Council on behalf of the whole group. The Council is also grateful for input from the Theological Forum.

5.1.2 Until recently corporal (physical) punishment was considered a normal part of childhood, and was an acceptable means of disciplining a child both at home and at school. There have been huge cultural shifts in the last 20 years and in Scotland today corporal punishment is justifiable only as an exercise of parental responsibility and is no longer legal in schools. There has been an overall move in the norms in society over how children are treated along with development of the child protection agenda. However, the defence of "justifiable assault" remains in place for parents (and people exercising parental rights) as part of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003¹. This means that in the UK and Scotland today children under the age of 16 have less legal protection from assault than adults.

5.1.3 The Children are Unbeatable! Campaign is a UK Alliance of over 600 organisations with the aim of removing legal justifications for corporal punishment of children.² In its submission to the Joint Committee on Human Rights in February 2015, it was noted that: "The UK is now just one of five EU states which are not explicitly committed to prohibiting this form of assault and of these five, ministers in Belgium and France have indicated in

recent months that they will now consider explicit prohibition."³ With recent changes in the Republic of Ireland, the UK is now one of four EU states not explicitly committed to prohibiting the corporal punishment of children.

5.1.4 Removal of the defence of "justifiable assault" is within the jurisdiction of the Scottish Parliament. If this defence was to be removed it would not create a new criminal offence. It would simply mean that adults and children had the same legal protection against violence. Legal systems have usually restricted parents' rights over their children to some extent by banning extreme physical harm, and allowing state authorities to intervene in order to protect children. Yet the state generally accepts that parents have a right and responsibility to bring up children within their own, inherited value system, provided those values do not offend the norms of the wider community. Where the rights of parents and the needs of children conflict, the trend is increasingly to attach more weight to the right of the child to be protected from harm.

5.1.5 A report commissioned by the Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People, Children First, Barnardo's Scotland and NSPCC Scotland reviewed research on "physical punishment" of children which included a specific question about what evidence there is of changes in prevalence and attitudes in countries which have made physical punishment illegal.⁴ The review, *Equally Protected*, found that:

- In many countries, including the UK, the prevalence of physical punishment is declining and public attitudes have shifted, with the use of physical

³ http://www.parliament.uk/documents/joint-committees/human-rights/CAU!_submission_to_JCHR.pdf (accesses 20 August 2015)

⁴ Anja Heilmann, Yvonne Kelly and Richard G Watt, *Equally Protected: A review of the evidence on the physical punishment of children*. Commissioned by the NSPCC Scotland, Children 1st, Barnardo's Scotland, and the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland. <http://www.children1st.org.uk/media/343806/EquallyProtected.pdf> (Accessed 14 January 2016)

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2003/7/section/51>

² Further information and list supporters is available online: <http://www.childrenareunbeatable.org.uk>

punishment becoming less and less acceptable and a high proportion of parents doubting its usefulness.

- There is convincing evidence that declines in physical punishment are accelerated in countries that have prohibited its use, and that such laws have important symbolic value.
- Legal bans in many countries have been implemented without a majority of public support.
- There is evidence that the passage of legislation in combination with public awareness campaigns leads to a change in public attitudes.

5.1.6 Many European countries have already given children and adults equal protection from assault. A case study is provided for Sweden.

Case Study: Sweden

In Sweden, where all corporal punishment of children has been outlawed for over thirty years, the proportion of reported assaults that are prosecuted has seen no increase⁵. As in other countries such as Finland, the legislation in Swedish civil law has no sanctions attached. Rather, as with adult cases of assault, prosecution would need to take place under the criminal law where prosecutors can and have exercised restraint, not pursuing cases that might be considered petty⁶. Alongside such legal reform it is unanimously acknowledged that the large-scale public education campaign that accompanied it was vital in forming a culture of prevention rather than prosecution⁷. Six hundred thousand copies of the booklet '*Can you bring*

up children successfully without smacking and spanking?' were distributed resulting in 99% of the population being aware of the law by 1981.⁸

Rather than punishment, the primary response of the authorities is for supportive and preventive measures to be taken by social services. Indeed, in Sweden Social Services investigate all allegations of child maltreatment, assess the family's need for support and the child's need for protection and act accordingly. This has led to a small increase in the number of children receiving government care or support since the 1980s, a rise that corresponds with the increased reporting of assaults⁹. However, despite this, the total number of out-of-home placements (foster home, children's home, private care home or psychiatric clinic) fell by more than a quarter between 1982 and 1995, and out-of-home placements are increasingly short rather than long-term. The above mentioned report, *Equally Protected*, notes¹⁰:

"Rather than imposing coercive measures, the ban on physical punishment, alongside other changes in the welfare system (such as the Social Services Act 1982) appears to have encouraged the development of child protection practice that is based on earlier, less drastic and more consensual intervention."¹¹

5.1.7 The Church, and society at large, has a range of opinion what is appropriate in the discipline and punishment of children during their upbringing. Often our views are coloured by old beliefs we have inherited but whose influence we do not always recognise. With the trend to smaller families we have seen a 'privatisation' of children, who become the primary responsibility of

⁵ http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/sites/default/files/documents/never_violence_final_2014_eng.pdf p.18 (Accessed 14 January 2016)

⁶ http://www.respectworks.eu/fileadmin/website/downloads/equalprotectionforchildren_wdf48095.pdf P.20 (Accessed 14 January 2016)

⁷ http://www.respectworks.eu/fileadmin/website/downloads/equalprotectionforchildren_wdf48095.pdf p.17 (Accessed 14 January 2016)

⁸ as above

⁹ http://www.respectworks.eu/fileadmin/website/downloads/equalprotectionforchildren_wdf48095.pdf P.20 (Accessed 14 January 2016)

¹⁰ as above

¹¹ as above

parents, rather than the wider society. However, psychological insights have shown how the parent-child relationship can be fraught with difficulties which persist into adulthood.¹²

5.1.8 As a society and culture, we have learned from our mistakes and allowed the Holy Spirit to inform and move us on. Other behaviours, now seen as unacceptable, were endorsed or tacitly accepted in Scripture: capital punishment is now banned throughout Europe and slavery has long been condemned as inhumane. Different perspectives within Scripture reflect the different contexts in which it was written and the ongoing nature of divine revelation. As a Church, we continually engage with our sacred texts finding deeper understandings and new revelation within the Scripture which is our supreme rule for faith and life.

5.2 Biblical reflection¹³

5.2.1 The Working Group, with input from the Theological Forum, undertook a review of Biblical insights.¹⁴

5.2.2 How we treat, love, nurture and discipline our children undoubtedly has profound and far-reaching implications for how they will live, behave and relate to others in society as adults. Arguably, if children have learned from the significant adults in their lives that violence is an acceptable response, then that is how they will respond. Jesus said "blessed are the peace-makers." The task of making peace surely begins with the values we instil in our children and the examples we set.

5.2.3 Texts such as 'Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and

instruction of the Lord' (Ephesians 6:4) and 'Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged' (Colossians 3:21) counter the notion that violence is an appropriate form of discipline. Christ's affirmation that the Kingdom of God belongs to children claims an equality of status. His call to treat others as you would be treated (Matthew 7:12) challenges the use of violence as a means of control. Our understanding from Proverbs 22:6 that children will behave as adults in the same way they were treated as children is a stark reminder of our duty to them.

5.2.4 Christ's welcoming of children being brought for blessing (Mark 10:14), even when the adults objected, suggests an attitude of welcome and care, even a degree of judgement upon adults' attitudes towards them: we are told he was 'indignant' when the children were prevented from coming to him.

5.2.5 If we now believe that corporal punishment in any form constitutes cruelty to children, then we must not legitimise it. However, the Bible has been, and is still used by some, to justify the use of corporal punishment of children. This is on the basis that there is a divine mandate for the use of violence. The Wisdom literature¹⁵ of the Bible accepts that discipline is necessary in the upbringing of children and a number of texts in Proverbs (e.g. Proverbs 23:13-14 'Do not withhold discipline from your children; if you beat them with a rod, they will not die. If you beat them with the rod, you will save their lives from Sheol') suggest that physical means of punishment have a place.

5.2.6 All of this is to suggest that children will flourish and will make a positive contribution to society if they learn discipline. In other verses discussing discipline there are caveats to consider.¹⁶ One is the meaning of the word

¹² Hugh S. Pyper, 'Children' in *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought* (Oxford, 2000) p110

¹³ All Bible references use the New Revised Standard Version

¹⁴ Where Biblical texts are used we should interpret these passages in the light of a Reformed tradition, where the text says "father" we can interpret this to mean parents and where the text says "son" we understand that the meaning is applicable to all children.

¹⁵ Generally regarded as: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs.

¹⁶ Proverbs 13.1 'A wise child loves discipline, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.' Proverbs 22.15 'Folly is bound up in the heart of a boy, but the rod of discipline drives it far away.' Proverbs 29.15 'The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a mother is disgraced by a neglected child.' Proverbs 29.17 'Discipline your children, and they will give you rest; they

"rod." The rod is best known not as an instrument of punishment, but of guidance ("thy rod and staff comfort me" (Psalm 23))¹⁷.

5.2.7 Few would argue that learning a sense of right and wrong, growing up within and learning to internalize a framework of values, makes for a happy child who will grow into a contented adult. Some parents believe that this learning could include a violent element inflicting physical pain on children. On the other hand, the experience of many parents is that child-rearing is perfectly possible without physical punishment; and that, indeed, the use of corporal punishment is harmful to children and prevents them flourishing.

5.2.8 While the main purpose of this report is to reflect theologically in the context of a human rights discourse, there is a real question raised about what alternative approaches to discipline and upbringing of children there might be from a Christian perspective.

- Jesus said, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13: 34-35)
- Children will often thrive when they are nurtured within a family ethos of unconditional love. Jesus in very practical ways demonstrated his love and showed the greatest love of all, sacrificial love.

will give delight to your heart.' 'Spare the rod and spoil the child' is a misquotation of the Authorised Version translation of Proverbs 13:24: 'He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes'.

¹⁷ The rod was also used to guide, gently prodding the sheep in the right direction, protecting them and keeping them safe. It was a tool for directing a beast of burden, nudging the animal's head in the proper direction. It was the authority of a leader. Only in 23:13-14 is physical punishment obvious and even then, although the verse allows for physical punishment, it doesn't prescribe it. So, these texts offer more than one image of appropriate discipline and gentler, more constructive ways of guidance merit deeper consideration.

- Jesus showed us how to love: in a variety of ways including: giving, touch, words of encouragement, quality time, and service. It is in these ways that an alternative way of living faithfully, with discipline and without violence, can be clearly identified.
- Jesus gave his followers a new commandment, based on love: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another."¹⁸

Teaching our Children to love:

Giving

"When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" (John 6:5). Jesus was concerned for the people following him and gave them food on more than one occasion. It is important that we teach children to share and give to others. In this way children learn that giving without any expectation of return is a way of expressing love and should be encouraged.

Touch

Jesus showed us that expressing love through physical contact is important. In Matthew 8:3, we read: "He stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I do choose. Be made clean!" This is only one example of many when Jesus touched others to demonstrate his compassion and using the situation to heal.

Touch is a vital part of feeling love and valued. Teaching children the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch is important. Sometimes children need to be rebuked / reprimanded when they get involved in behaviour that is worrying or potentially dangerous. When this happens it is important to remember to 'reconnect' with them immediately. Jesus never rejected anyone. Jesus said we must 'let little

¹⁸ John 13:34

children come to me'.¹⁹ Parents must guard against the dangers and damage which can result as a consequence of children feeling rejected and not loved. The repeated use of smacking as a way 'of disciplining' children can result in long-term feelings of rejection and low self-worth. Children who experience smacking or any physical punishment as a method of discipline grow up seeing violence as a way of dealing with problems.

Words of encouragement

In our daily interactions with our children, there is clear evidence that praise works better than criticism. Children who are constantly criticised have a poor self-image, low confidence and tend to compare themselves to others in a negative way. Jesus in his interactions with others showed that it is important to separate behaviour from the individual.

Encouraging our children to be the 'best they can be' through affirmation is the most effective way to develop self-worth and confidence. Paul said "Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear." (Ephesians 4:29)

Quality time

Another way of loving people is to spend quality time with them. Jesus shared meals with tax collectors and sinners as well as his close friends. He took the disciples into the hills to spend time with them. After the resurrection, Jesus took Peter aside from the disciples and walked and talked with him. He also, critically, made time for children.

Giving children your full attention in a positive way, allows children to feel that they are listened to, valued and loved. Children, who experience regular and frequent quality time, develop into well-adjusted adults

who are able to enter into loving relationships with others.

Service

One of the last things that Jesus did was to wash the feet of the disciples at the last supper. He told them: "So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you." (John 13: 14-15)

Children who are encouraged to participate in the life of the family through small acts of service, by generally helping family members from an early age allows them to feel part of the family. This builds a sense of competency and belonging, which are essential for good self-esteem.

We have to develop a sense of self-worth, belonging and competency in our children. Family life is the perfect setting for this. If love in all its aspects is shown to our children consistently, they will develop these essential attributes.

5.3 Human rights

5.3.1 The Church has previously reflected on the significance of international human rights discourse and in 2013 the General Assembly considered a report entitled "Human rights: what does God require of us? Justice informed by Love". This report offered a Christian understanding of human rights and, flowing from this understanding, affirmed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and European Convention on Human Rights.

5.3.2 The human rights of children are specifically protected in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which the UK ratified in 1991. Any country which ratified UNCRC is required to make regular reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The UK will be examined by the Committee on the rights

¹⁹ Matthew 19:14

of the child in spring 2016. Reporting takes place around every 5-6 years and the UK was last examined by the Committee in 2008. After that report the Committee recommended that the UK "Prohibit as a matter of priority all corporal punishment in the family, including through the repeal of all legal defences, in England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, and in all Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies."²⁰

5.3.3 It remains a matter of concern to all four of the UK Children's Commissioners that the UK Government has not acted on this recommendation. They have highlighted their continued concern that corporal punishment breaches children's human rights and should not be acceptable under any circumstances.

5.4 What would be the implications of legal change for families?

5.4.1 The removal of the defence of "justifiable assault" from the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003 would mean that children and adults would have equal legal protection. It would not create a new criminal offence. It would also be in keeping with the policy of the Scottish Government in Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) which emphasises child-centred decision making, prevention and early intervention.

5.4.2 A significant consequence of legal change is to drive cultural change. Legislation is one way in which society expresses what it deems to be unacceptable. Our society no longer considers it normal for family relationships to include violence, therefore we should seek legal change to mark and extend this social change. This change is not intended to criminalise parents, as for most children and young people this would not be in their best interests even where corporal punishment is occasionally used. While this legal change would enable prosecution of any assault against a child, the legal system already has

prosecution guidelines and ways of working which prevent unhelpful prosecutions and can be extended to ensure that cases involving children are treated proportionally.

5.4.3 A ban on corporal punishment respects children as rights-holders and encourages them to use non-violent methods of conflict resolution in adult life. The Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children has undertaken a review of research of the effects of corporal punishment.²¹ The review, which includes 150 studies from all over the world, outlines the effects of corporal punishment as direct physical harm; increased aggression in children; poor moral internalisation and increased anti-social behaviour; perpetration and experience of violent, antisocial and criminal behaviour in adults; mental harm and indirect physical harm; impaired cognitive development; and damage to the parent-child relationship.

5.4.4 It would be an over-simplification to suggest that the act of banning corporal punishment would, by itself, improve outcomes in all of these areas. According to an IPSOS MORI survey of Scottish parents in 2008²² "The methods of discipline that parents regard as most effective are discussing issues calmly (55%) and either stopping children from going out or taking away something they value (47%). The methods that are least commonly thought of as effective are smacking (1%), threatening to smack (3%), shouting or yelling (7%) and using a 'naughty step' (8%)." These findings suggest that many parents who smack their children either do so in the heat of the moment or because they feel they have run out of alternatives. It would be essential that any legal change

²⁰ Committee on the Rights of the Child on the UK's third and fourth report, 2008, CRC/C/GBR/CO/4, paragraph 42 <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/AdvanceVersions/CRC.C.GBR.CO.4.pdf> (accessed 14 January 2016)

²¹ Review of research on the effects of corporal punishment: working paper, Global Initiative to End Corporal Punishment of Children, April 2013 <http://www.childrenareunbeatable.org.uk/the-case-for-reform/> (accessed 14 January 2016)

²² What Scottish Parents Tell Us, Summary of IPSOS MORI Poll for Parenting Across Scotland, 2008 <http://www.parentingacrossscotland.org/media/48728/pas-parents-poll-2008-summary.pdf> (accessed 14 January 2016)

was accompanied by the offer of information and support for parents to enable them to choose alternative, non-violent ways of disciplining their children.

5.5 Conclusion

5.5.1 The Church and Society Council invites the General Assembly to recognise that corporal punishment of children is a violent act and that violence is damaging to mental and physical health. The Council seeks the Assembly's affirmation that Jesus Christ called his followers to "love one another, as I have loved you". In the context of considering issues from a theological basis and in the context of a developing international human rights framework, it is right for the church to support measures to oppose corporal punishment of children. This should include a call on the Scottish Government and Parliament to remove the defence of "justifiable assault" from the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003 so that children have the same legal protection from assault as adults.

5.5.2 There is now an organised campaign seeking this legislative change, called Children Are Unbeatable! The Church and Society Council proposes that now is the time for the Church of Scotland to join this campaign and to support other initiatives designed to prompt both legislative and societal change on this issue.

5.5.3 The Churches Network for Non-Violence was established to work alongside Children Are Unbeatable! to provide resources to promote Christian arguments against corporal punishment and support a forum for multi-faith activity on the issue. This Network has produced "Ending Corporal Punishment – a handbook for worship and gatherings"²³ which provides Reflections and Prayers around this issue. The Church and Society Council, in collaboration with the Social Care Council and the Safeguarding Committee, will seek to publicise and provide access to this and other resources and help

congregations and members to consider the impact of this report in their life and work.

6. Climate justice

6.1 For those concerned with Climate Justice, the year was dominated by the United Nations Climate Change Conference (CoP21) held in Paris in December 2015. Churches and other faith groups played a prominent part in preparations for the conference and the Church of Scotland, in partnership with Eco-Congregation Scotland, made a significant contribution.

6.2 Pilgrims from Scotland joined others from around the world at the Basilica of St. Denis just north of Paris at the beginning of the CoP. The group from Scotland included two representatives from the National Youth Assembly and was led by Sally Foster Fulton in her role as climate ambassador for the ACT Alliance. Sally addressed a gathering that included Christiana Figueres, Secretary of the UN climate conference. She shared the journey of the eco-baton around Scotland in the preceding eight months, visiting over 280 churches (including Catholic, Methodist and United Reformed congregations as well as Church of Scotland) schools and other groups to draw attention to the importance of the UN climate conference. Over that time the baton was passed between tens of thousands of participants, all of whom have had chance to ponder its message and add to the hopes and aspirations for a positive deal in Paris.

6.3 CoP 21 concluded with a complex agreement that covers a number of areas:

- Mitigation, reducing emissions of greenhouse gases fast enough to limit global warming to two degrees Celsius.
- Open and transparent reporting of emissions by all participants
- Adaptation, strengthening ability of countries to deal with climate impacts
- Loss and damage, particularly helping poorer countries to recover from climate impacts

²³ http://churchesfornon-violence.org/wp/?attachment_id=1336 (accessed 21 August 2015)

- Support, including ratcheting up climate finance to USD 100 billion by 2020, for nations to build clean, resilient futures

6.4 Responses to the agreement in Paris were both enthusiastic and critical. Enthusiastic in that the conference succeeded in bringing together over 190 countries to sign an agreement to limit emissions and provide support to developing countries but critical in that the agreement fell significantly short of what is required to limit global warming to two degrees Celsius. Commitments currently made by national governments are likely to result in global warming of nearly three degrees Celsius so there remains a significant gap between ambition and reality. Nonetheless, there is much that happened at the summit which we should celebrate.

6.5 Around the world a priority is now to ensure that governments commit to implementing the agreement. In the UK there are concerns that the Westminster and Scottish Parliaments are not fully committed. While the Scottish Government has taken significant steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to promote a low carbon economy it has continued to miss its own emissions reduction targets. There are also worrying signs that the UK Government now considers renewable energy to be a lower priority and has withdrawn a range of incentives to promote solar power, fuel efficient vehicles and onshore wind power, while strongly supporting the continued development of fracking. The Council is concerned that, following a historic global agreement in Paris, the UK Government appears to be backtracking in its commitment to promoting a low carbon economy. We call upon the UK Government to take urgent steps to reconsider its policy on renewable energy and other steps to promote a low carbon economy and urge the Scottish Government not to be diverted from its ambitions for a low carbon Scotland.

6.6 Another very significant development for churches was the publication of the encyclical *Laudato si, On Care for our Common Home* by Pope Francis. This thoughtful

and moving plea for a change in our attitudes to nature was welcomed by many churches, including the Church of Scotland, and we commend it for discussion by congregations.

6.7 Eco-Congregation Scotland has continued to thrive, growing to over 350 registered congregations from a wide range of denominations and organisations. It now includes the Salvation Army whose Stornoway Corps registered in 2015. The climate baton inspired many activities across the country, including a beautiful book to record commitments made by pupils in schools in Dunblane. In the context of climate change and the continued decline of biodiversity, care for creation is not a fringe activity for the Church. In the words of Pope Francis we need: 'a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet ...', a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all! This is the challenge in which the Church of Scotland plays an increasingly confident and purposeful role. Over the coming year, we would continue to encourage other congregations to join Eco-Congregation Scotland.

7. Divestment from Fossil Fuel Companies

7.1 The General Assembly 2014 instructed the *Church and Society Council to investigate, with the Church of Scotland Investors Trust and Pension Trustees, the arguments for and against disinvestment from fossil fuel companies and to report to a future General Assembly.*

7.2 Since that time there have been discussions on this theme with congregations around Scotland, and with representatives from the financial and energy businesses and others. The Council has been particularly keen to hear from congregations and individuals in the north east of Scotland, where despite the downturn in oil prices, the oil industry continues to play a massive part in the regional economy.

7.3 Since 2014 divestment has become an important part of the debate on climate justice with churches, universities and institutional investors in Scotland and elsewhere debating whether to sell shares in fossil fuel companies. In Scotland, both Glasgow and Edinburgh Universities have debated divestment with different outcomes. The debate has led to deeper reflection on the ethics of investment and how it can help or hinder progress towards a low carbon economy. In this international debate there have been contributions from figures as diverse as Pope Francis, in his encyclical, *Laudato si* and Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England, in a speech to Lloyds of London in September 2015.²⁴

7.4 Arguments for and Against Divestment

7.4.1 Discussion held with congregations and others has been stimulating and creative, during which a number of themes have emerged, including the following:

- It was agreed that we need to move towards a low carbon economy as a matter of urgency; doing nothing is not an option and although we are a relatively small investor we can make a difference and demonstrate leadership.
- There are arguments for both divestment and closer engagement; there is a perception that there may be financial risks associated with ethical investment but it is also understood that there are growing risks associated with some fossil fuel investments.
- Reinvestment is as important as divestment and the Church should investigate how it can use its investments to support businesses that are consistent with its values and aspirations; in the words of one contributor: 'It should put its money where its mission is'!

²⁴ *Laudato si* available on line at: <https://laudatosi.com/watch> ; Mark Carney's speech *Breaking the tragedy of the horizon - climate change and financial stability* can be accessed at: <http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/publications/Pages/speeches/2015/844.aspx>

7.4.2 A particularly significant debate took place at the National Youth Assembly in August 2015 at which speakers argued the case for and against divestment. Delegates, including some from Aberdeen, were mindful of the importance of the oil industry but concluded that the global impact of climate change particularly on developing countries was so serious that it must take precedence. The debate was followed by a vote in which out of 72 votes 25 voted for divestment, 27 voted for partial divestment, 7 voted against divestment with 13 abstentions.

7.4.3 Partial divestment means selling shares in the most polluting fossil fuel companies, typically those involved in the thermal coal or tar sands industries.²⁵

7.5 Ethical and financial arguments

7.5.1 The arguments about divestment started out as an ethical debate; that the Church should not invest in companies whose main purpose is to extract and sell carbon fuels that are the principal source of greenhouse gas emissions. The Religious Society of Friends in the UK, the Scottish Synod of the URC and several churches in the USA, Canada and Australia have accepted this argument and have agreed to sell their shares in fossil fuel companies. In the past year, the financial issues have been given added prominence in the debate. The recognition that most fossil fuels must be left in the ground if we are to avoid temperature rises of above two degrees Celsius

²⁵ **Thermal coal**, also known as steam coal, is used for power and heat generation. In electricity generation, thermal coal is ground to a powder and fired into a boiler to produce heat, which in turn converts water into steam. The steam powers a turbine coupled to an alternator, which generates electricity for the power grid.

Tar sands (sometimes known as oil sands) are either loose sands or partially consolidated sandstone containing a naturally occurring mixture of sand, clay, and water, saturated with a dense and extremely viscous form of petroleum technically referred to as bitumen (or colloquially tar) due to its similar appearance, odour, and colour). Natural bitumen deposits are reported in many countries, but in particular are found in extremely large quantities in Canada. For more information see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oil_sands

has begun to impact on the financial world. Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England said in September 2015:

If that estimate is even approximately correct it would render the vast majority of reserves "stranded" – oil, gas and coal that will be literally unburnable without expensive carbon capture technology, which itself alters fossil fuel economics. The exposure of UK investors, including insurance companies, to these shifts is potentially huge.²⁶

7.5.2 The Governor's speech signals that a well-managed transition to a low carbon economy is becoming a higher priority for the Bank of England and other financial institutions.

7.6 Not all fossil fuels are the same

7.6.1 Some fossil fuels are more polluting than others and coal and tar sands are generally more polluting as energy sources than natural gas, both in the carbon emissions per kilowatt hour of electricity generated and from other environmental impacts associated with coal mining or tar sands extraction. The coal industry in Scotland has a long history with roots going back many centuries yet there are good reasons to suggest the age of coal burning is now coming to a close. Deep mining in Scotland ended in 2002, and in the UK as a whole in 2015 and the closure of the coal-fired power stations at Cockerzie and Longannet brings to an end the use of coal in generating electricity in Scotland. The UK Government has indicated that it will seek to close remaining coal fired power stations in the UK within a decade. Open cast coal mining, much reduced, remained in operation at only four sites in Scotland at the beginning of 2016²⁷. At an international level, government policies in China and the USA are also turning against coal fired electricity generation.

7.6.2 There are continuing uses of coal as a raw material for the manufacture of plastics, fertilisers and other products but without effective carbon capture and storage (still unproven at a commercial scale) coal is unlikely to have a future in generating electricity. In common with churches elsewhere the Council believes that the time has come to stop burning coal and to ensure the Church does not finance further exploitation of thermal coal. The Church does not currently invest in thermal coal companies and we recommend that this becomes our formal policy. Tar sands are another highly polluting source of energy that have attracted fierce criticism in Canada and the USA and as with coal we recommend that the Church does not invest in companies substantially involved in tar sands (companies which derive more than 15% of their turnover from extraction and/or sale of thermal coal and/or oil extracted from tar sands).

7.7 Transition to a low carbon economy

7.7.1 Straightforward divestment from oil and gas are more problematic. Both are exploited massively for energy but are also used as feedstocks to petro-chemical industries, pharmaceuticals and a wide range of products that we depend on in everyday life. Scotland is a centre of expertise for the offshore oil and gas industry and the skills and experience involved in getting oil and gas from under the North Sea remain a great economic asset. Looking to the future needs many of these skills require to be harnessed to the new low carbon marine technologies that will help power Scotland and other countries in the future. The major oil companies in which the Church of Scotland currently has shares also pay the Church of Scotland a significant amount of dividend income (£655,000 in 2014) although at current global oil prices such dividends may not necessarily continue in the future and other low carbon investment opportunities may emerge that could pay good dividends.

7.7.2 In meetings in Aberdeen with members of local congregations and with Oil and Gas UK (the trade body for the offshore industry) it was clear that the transition to a low carbon economy is essential but challenging. A

²⁶ <http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/publications/Pages/speeches/2015/844.aspx>

²⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open-pit_coal_mining_in_the_United_Kingdom

concern for the Church is how to help those dependent on the oil and gas industry to make this transition, both businesses and communities. Affected communities need to know that there is a future beyond the oil industry and the Church should help explore how this transition to a low carbon economy could be made.

7.7.3 The Church therefore calls upon the Scottish and UK Governments and businesses active in the North Sea oil and gas industry to help speed the transition to low carbon economy and to ensure that the skills and experience of workers in the offshore industry are not lost as North Sea oil and gas fields run down.

7.8 Engagement with fossil fuel companies

7.8.1 Engagement between churches and fossil fuel companies already takes place in the UK through the Church Investors Group (CIG) of which the Church of Scotland Investors Trust is a member. CIG represents institutional investors from many mainstream Church denominations and church related charities, and provides a forum to co-ordinate shareholder activities on a voluntary basis. It has 55 members, predominantly drawn from the UK and Ireland, with combined investment assets of over £15bn. CIG has promoted a carbon disclosure project and has been part of a successful campaign to challenge BP and Shell to commit to routine annual reporting from 2016 on issues relating to climate change. It has also promoted awareness through a number of events in preparation for the UN climate conference in Paris in December 2015.²⁸

7.8.2 This approach has been criticised by Bright Now, a UK church-led divestment project. It is their view that it is not realistic to expect engagement by churches to persuade fossil fuel companies to withdraw from the exploration and extraction of coal, oil and gas within the timeframe required to hold temperature rise to two degrees Celsius.²⁹ Bright Now argues that neither Shell nor

BP currently has a business strategy consistent with this target, or any evidenced plans to develop one.

7.8.3 Opinion is therefore sharply divided as to whether churches should engage with fossil fuel companies or should simply divest. The Investors Trust of the Church of Scotland is strongly committed to a process of continued engagement but views expressed in meetings with congregations around Scotland are varied. In view of the complexity of the arguments and the rapid pace of change since the climate change conference in Paris, the Church and Society Council is recommending continued engagement but that this should be time limited. It will be important to assess the performance of fossil fuel companies against the agreed outcome of the Paris conference that global warming should be limited to two degrees Celsius. The urgency of the situation is real and we would look for evidence that fossil fuel companies have responded effectively and convincingly to this challenge within two years.

7.8.4 To do this the Church should engage with oil and gas companies, in which the church has significant holdings, both via CIG and in other ways, including with Oil and Gas UK, to establish their commitment to meeting the UN climate change targets and to report back to the General Assembly of 2018.

7.9 Reinvestment

7.9.1 In the transition to a low carbon economy it is clear that new technologies and new business opportunities will emerge. There are good ethical reasons why the Church should support this transition and equally there are likely to be financial opportunities for investment in a rapidly developing sector of the economy. Companies, including Newton Asset Management, that manages the growth fund on behalf of the Investors Trust, offer low carbon investment opportunities. We recommend that the

²⁸ <http://www.churchinvestorsgroup.org.uk/>

²⁹ <http://brightnow.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Otherwise-engaged-is-church-engagement-with-fossil-fuel-companies-working-or-is-it-time-to-disinvest-for-web.pdf>

Investors Trust and Pension Trustees explore these new opportunities as an alternative to investments in traditional fossil fuel businesses.

8. Energy Issues and Fuel Poverty

8.1 Summary

A household is in Fuel Poverty if, in order to maintain a satisfactory heating regime, it would be required to spend more than 10% of its income (including Housing Benefit or Income Support for Mortgage Interest) on all household fuel use.³⁰

8.1.1 In recent years there has been a trend of rising domestic energy prices, leading to spiralling heating and lighting bills for householders. Over that same time it has become increasingly clear that urgent action is needed to avoid the catastrophic effects from carbon emissions on the earth's climate. The effect of both of these has been particularly severe on those struggling on limited incomes. Official figures show that levels of Fuel Poverty have risen, and behind the 'statistics' are individuals and families worried about the next bill and living in conditions that are bad for their physical and mental health as well as causing long-term damage to the fabric of their home.

8.1.2 In this report we challenge the suggestion that this situation is inevitable. We also challenge the perception that Fuel Poverty is an unavoidable consequence of our efforts to reduce carbon emissions. The adverse impacts of Climate Change fall almost exclusively on the poorest people on our planet. In the same way, the effects of Fuel Poverty are felt most acutely by some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in our communities. Climate Justice and Social Justice are inextricably linked and we must address both.

8.1.3 Addressing Fuel Poverty without adding to carbon emissions, raises complex issues and relationships between individuals, third sector organisations, energy companies, Local Authorities, the Scottish and UK Governments and Regulatory bodies, all set against the

backdrop of turbulent energy markets and constantly changing regulations.

8.1.4 We have been impressed by the work carried out by organisations such as Changeworks, Energy Action Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland and the Existing Homes Alliance. We believe that individual church congregations and members can play their part by joining Eco Congregation Scotland, supporting local initiatives on Energy Issues and Fuel Poverty, and improving the energy efficiency of their own homes and church buildings. Local Authorities and Housing Associations who have identified local needs and opportunities and put together sets of initiatives based on Community Energy are clearly helping to improve the energy efficiency of their housing stock and reduce Fuel Poverty.

8.1.5 We recognise the support available from Scottish Government funding for energy efficiency improvements, and welcome their announcement in June 2015 that improving the energy efficiency of Scotland's homes and non-domestic building stock will be designated a National Infrastructure Priority. Nonetheless the Scottish Government has a statutory target that so far as is reasonably practicable, people will not be living in Fuel Poverty in Scotland by November 2016. We are disappointed that it seems inevitable that this target will be missed.

8.1.6 It is disappointing that community energy initiatives, which promise so many opportunities to address Fuel Poverty locally, are being held back by multiple barriers which are unnecessarily placed in their way.

8.1.7 Finally, we have been convinced that taking action to address Climate Change need not lead to an increase in Fuel Poverty. On the contrary, an approach which is founded on climate justice and social justice is the most effective way to provide affordable warmth that doesn't cost the earth.

³⁰ <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2002/08/15258/9955>

8.2 Theological perspectives on Fuel Poverty

8.2.1 Our approach to Fuel Poverty is rooted in our faith. At its simplest God's desire for justice and care for our fellow human beings is emphasised throughout the Old and New Testaments. Meanwhile the whole basis of our environmental concern for God's creation highlights the need to take steps to reduce our impact upon the planet through measures such as energy efficient homes, for example. Therefore setting high standards in new house-building and supporting those most under pressure to improve the energy efficiency of existing homes is part of that concern.

8.2.2 The modern concept of Fuel Poverty goes back no further than the last quarter of the 20th century, but the underlying problem clearly goes back to biblical times. Leviticus 14 deals with the problem of damp housing (with a clear role for the faith community). In Exodus 22:26 - 7, provision is made for a debtor who has given his cloak as surety for a loan to ensure that he/she does not suffer from the cold as a consequence. When James is seeking an example of failing to translate faith into action, he pictures those who ask God's blessing on those who lack what is needed to keep themselves warm while doing nothing about it.

8.2.3 The apostle James writes: "What good is it for people to say that they have faith if their actions do not prove it? Can that faith save them? Suppose there are brothers or sisters who need clothes and don't have enough to eat. What good is there in your saying to them, "God bless you! Keep warm and eat well!" — if you don't give them the necessities of life? So it is with faith: if it is alone and includes no actions, then it is dead." (James 2.14-17)

8.2.4 "Electricity isn't a commodity like copper or coffee" writes James Meek³¹. Rather, we need energy for the full flourishing of human life that God desires. The belief that

³¹ Meek, James: How We Happened to Sell Off Our Electricity. London Review of Books Vol. 34 No. 17 · 13 September 2012

market forces can deliver the most "efficient" solutions has not been borne out by consumers who experience Fuel Poverty.

8.2.5 Rather than simply protesting about fuel companies' delays in passing on plummeting oil and gas prices, we should be asking the more fundamental question about why we leave such a staple of human life and flourishing (and such a gift of God) to be determined by a "market" which produces wide fluctuations in prices that are at best semi-detached from any reality beyond the calculations of speculators. The work of our own Economics Commission should prompt us to look for innovative forms of "fair energy" as well as fair finance³².

8.3 What is Fuel Poverty?

8.3.1 While Energy Policy is a reserved matter for the UK Government, the Scottish Government has a role to play in tackling Fuel Poverty, mainly through its responsibility for energy efficiency.

8.3.2 When compiling the official statistics on Fuel Poverty, the Scottish Government calculations are based on a definition which has been in use since 2002. *A household is in Fuel Poverty if, in order to maintain a satisfactory heating regime, it would be required to spend more than 10% of its income (including Housing Benefit or Income Support for Mortgage Interest) on all household fuel use.*³³

8.3.3 If 20% of income is needed, the household is said to be in Extreme Fuel Poverty. Some critics have identified anomalies, such as wealthy individuals living in hard-to-heat mansions being technically in Fuel Poverty, and indeed the definition in England has been changed to one based on Low Income, High Cost (LIHC).³⁴ However, the

³² http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/9765/Economics_Commission_email_and_web_version.pdf

³³ <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2002/08/15258/9955>

³⁴ Fuel poverty in England is measured by the Low Income High Costs definition, which considers a household to be in fuel poverty if they have required fuel costs that are above average (the national median level)

definition given above is generally accepted and widely used.

8.3.4 The first Fuel Poverty Statement was published by the Scottish Executive in 2002 and set a statutory target to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, that people are not living in Fuel Poverty in Scotland by November 2016. In spite of this ambition, Fuel Poverty currently affects approximately 845,000 households in Scotland – equivalent to 34.9%³⁵ of all households, with 9.5% of households experiencing Extreme Fuel Poverty.

8.3.5 Fuel Poverty is a complex issue with a number of interwoven strands:

- high prices in the domestic energy market
- weaknesses in the structure of that market
- poor energy efficiency in many of our houses and their heating systems
- weak economic circumstances (especially in rural areas)
- difficulties in improving the energy efficiency of existing homes
- adverse effects on the physical and mental wellbeing of those suffering Fuel Poverty

8.4 Domestic Energy Markets and High Energy Prices

8.4.1 Energy Supply

8.4.1.1 Competition in the UK domestic gas and electricity supply markets began in 1996 and 1998 respectively. This put the provision of household energy into the hands of commercial organisations (both as suppliers and distributors) whose primary responsibility is to generate profits for their shareholders. Despite 20 years of assurances that market forces would deliver great benefits to consumers, there is strong evidence that the

market is not working, particularly for those who struggle to pay for their energy.

8.4.1.2 In a joint State of the Market Assessment³⁶ report published in March 2014, the Office of Fair Trading, Ofgem and the Competition and Markets Authority found that:

- The six largest supply companies together account for almost 95% of both gas and electricity markets
- Over 60% of customers could not recall ever having switched supplier
- There was a very low level of trust in supply companies
- Customer satisfaction was low, and complaints had increased by 50% since 2011
- Customers belonging to vulnerable groups are likely to be paying more for energy

8.4.1.3 The summary states:

We have found weak competition between incumbent suppliers. This arises from market segmentation and possible tacit coordination. While we might expect competitive pressure from consumers or new suppliers, we have also found barriers to entry and expansion (including vertical integration) and weak customer pressure. These features combine and reinforce each other to deliver poor outcomes for domestic consumers.

8.4.1.4 The "barriers to entry" and "tacit coordination" imply particular challenges for small new entrants – most especially community initiatives. These concerns have manifested themselves repeatedly in press coverage of rapid price rises when wholesale prices rise but sluggish falls when the opposite happens. The Competition and Markets Authority is continuing its investigations, with a final report due in June 2016³⁷.

and, if they were to spend that amount they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line.

³⁵ <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00490947.pdf> Scottish House Condition Survey 2014, published December 2015

³⁶ https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/sites/default/files/docs/2014/03/assessment_document_published_1.pdf

³⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/cma-cases/energy-market-investigation>

8.4.1.5 Under the rules of the Energy Companies Obligation (ECO), energy supply companies are legally required to provide measures (such as insulation) to improve the energy efficiency of their customers' homes. Given the low level of trust in suppliers, it is not surprising that we heard evidence that customers, particularly those who were being pursued for debt, were very unlikely to take advantage of the help and advice being offered.

8.4.1.6 People who suffer from poverty are particularly badly affected by the defects in the domestic energy market, often paying significantly more for fuel than the better-off. For example, to get the best deals you need to pay by direct debit and have internet or phone access to price comparison websites. People struggling against poverty often have limited banking facilities or access to the Internet so end up paying significantly more for their energy.

8.4.1.7 While energy companies are not permitted to disconnect supply from vulnerable customers, they can install pre-payment meters which charge a higher rate and, in addition, are set to collect outstanding debts, meaning that the cost of energy for these households becomes significantly higher. Worse still, we heard of cases of debt from previous tenants, unknown to the new occupier, being recovered through a prepayment meter.

8.4.1.8 Analysis of tariffs carried out in July 2015³⁸ by Citizens Advice showed that customers using pre-payment meters paid an average of £226 per year more than customers who were able to take advantage of the cheapest online direct debit deals - an effective surcharge of 22%. To manage costs many of these households "self-disconnect" by not using any energy at all. This means that the family have no heating, hot water or energy to cook.

8.4.1.9 People struggling on limited incomes often prefer to use a prepayment meter as it helps in budget

management. The higher rates for prepayment tariffs are an example of the Poverty Premium, where people in poverty pay more than the better-off.³⁹ There is a UK national programme to replace 50 million existing gas and electricity meters with new generation Smart meters. This will avoid the need for separate prepayment meters by giving people up to date information on their spending and energy usage. We believe it is vital to seize this unique opportunity to eliminate the current injustices.

8.4.2 Electricity Generation

8.4.2.1 In the UK electricity is generated in a variety of ways, ranging from large-scale conventional power stations to small local renewable schemes. In recent years there has been a dramatic growth in wind farms and solar panels, supported by government-funded incentives.

8.4.2.2 The UK Government is now taking the line, supported by economists such as Dieter Helm,⁴⁰ that by removing these subsidies the market will function more efficiently, especially as renewable prices approach those of fossil fuels. The problem for the renewable energy market is that this removes the support which is necessary for young technologies to achieve full efficiency as they mature. It also overlooks the fact that much of the energy infrastructure in the UK has been funded from government and that the commercial viability of current generation methods is based on that previous investment. We believe that recent government announcements moving away from renewable sources and towards apparently cheaper gas-fired generation will make meeting our carbon reduction aims harder.

8.4.2.3 At the same time the UK Government has announced a move away from coal and towards nuclear

³⁸ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/SHCS/keyanalyses/LATables2013>

³⁹ Another example of the Poverty Premium is the up-front cost of energy-saving measures, even relatively low-cost items such as low energy lightbulbs. While running costs are significantly lower, the initial purchase cost puts them out of reach for people struggling to manage on limited incomes.

⁴⁰ <http://www.sccs.org.uk/events/67-prof-dieter-helm-what-s-wrong-with-british-energy-policy-and-how-to-fix-it>

for electricity generation. While the former is to be welcomed, the latter brings other problems. It also withdrew funding from Carbon Capture and Storage, a technology which, if proven at scale, would not only have permitted coal stocks to be exploited without releasing carbon into the atmosphere, but would also be capable of doing the same for gas-fired generation.

8.4.2.4 The combined consequence of these announcements is to move the UK towards reliance on a narrower group of technologies and to that extent, increase the risk to future energy security. If energy security becomes critical that will, in turn, put pressure on prices.

8.4.3 The Energy Efficiency of our Housing Stock

8.4.3.1 There are currently 2.5 million homes in Scotland, spanning a variety of styles, materials, sizes, locations, ages, and states of repair. These homes will also vary in terms of their heating source, wall types, levels of insulation, and states of repair.

8.4.3.2 The introduction of the "Right to Buy" legislation in the 1980s saw a great change in home ownership in Scotland as in many parts of the UK. Scotland went from a position where 70% of all homes were classed as "social rented housing" and 30% owned/ mortgaged, to an almost complete reversal today. The 2011 Census showed that 62% of Scotland's households were owned/ mortgaged, 24% were social rented and 14% private rented. Despite this, Scotland's social rented sector is larger than in any region of England & Wales, as is its rental sector overall apart from London which has a high level of private rentals.

8.4.3.3 The Scottish House Condition Survey⁴¹ was introduced in 1991 and uses sample surveys to track changes in the housing stock over time. This survey shows that the energy efficiency of social rented homes has risen significantly as a result of Scottish legislation such as the

Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing⁴² which came into force in 2014. In contrast, the homes in the owned/mortgaged and, in particular, the private rented sectors continually lag behind.

8.4.3.4 New-build housing is designed to be energy efficient, but with only 20,000 new homes being built in Scotland each year⁴³, it is clear that improvements in energy efficiency need to focus on the 2.5 million existing houses.

8.4.4 Rural Issues

8.4.4.1 A striking aspect of Fuel Poverty is its significantly higher incidence in rural areas which disproportionately affects Scotland. The Scottish House Condition Survey 2014 suggests that 50% of households in rural areas suffer Fuel Poverty, compared with 32% in urban areas.

8.4.4.2 A major factor is that towns and cities are typically in more sheltered locations. Together with the 'heat island'⁴⁴ effect, this means that urban houses tend to be in milder micro-climates. Rural communities are much less likely to be connected to the natural gas grid and depend on more expensive fuels such as heating oil and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG). Rural houses tend to be larger and there are fewer apartment blocks which are more energy-efficient as they have less external wall surface area. Rural houses are often in more exposed locations and construction methods are also a factor, with e.g. solid walls which are difficult to insulate. It is more difficult and expensive to access suitably-trained installers of energy efficient measures in remote areas.

8.4.4.3 Regional pricing for electricity network charges, based on a historical view of centralised generation and 'remote' use of electricity, costs householders in the North

⁴² <http://www.energysocialhousing.org/>

⁴³ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration>

⁴⁴ See, for example, the Met Office document on Urban Heat Islands: http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/media/pdf/8/m/MO_PUP_insert_HEALTH.web.pdf

⁴¹ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/SHCS>

of Scotland an extra 2p per unit compared with the cheapest regions. This is particularly unjust as areas with high levels of renewable generation are being charged higher prices, despite being surrounded by windfarms, and therefore not at all remote from the generation source.

8.5 The Effect of Fuel Poverty on Health

8.5.1 The detrimental effects of fuel poverty can be seen in the physical and mental health of those who cannot afford to heat their homes adequately.⁴⁵ According to the National Health Forum: "Cold, damp, thermally inefficient houses which people cannot afford to heat sufficiently to protect their health are a peculiarly British public health scandal and an affront to human rights."⁴⁶

8.5.2 In most north European countries the death rate from December to March is higher than in the rest of the year. This is referred to as Excess Winter Deaths (EWD). According to the National Records of Scotland (NRS),⁴⁷ the EWD figure for Scotland in 2013/14 was 1,600. In 2014/15, despite it being a milder winter, it rose steeply to 4,060.

8.5.3 Although there is no single cause of EWD most result from respiratory and circulatory diseases such as pneumonia, coronary heart disease and stroke, rather than hypothermia. Cold conditions in a home contribute to condensation, dampness and mould growth, causing problems for people with respiratory illnesses such as asthma.

8.5.4 The UK has much higher EWD rates than countries with more severe climates, reinforcing that outdoor

temperatures are not the key determinant. For example Finland has a significantly lower rate of EWD⁴⁸. However, Scandinavian buildings have historically had higher levels of insulation and whole house central heating has long been the norm. One Scottish study concluded: "*EWDs are relatively easy to measure and may be considered as the acute outcome of cold, damp housing. Mortality, however, is at the tip of an expensive morbidity 'iceberg'. House conditions play a decisive role, not only in determining at what age adults die, but, more importantly, they impact on occupant health and quality of life.*"⁴⁹

8.5.5 In March 2015 the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines⁵⁰ made direct reference to the importance of alleviating Fuel Poverty and improving energy efficiency of homes as part of a strategy to reduce the number of EWDs.

8.5.6 Worries about fuel bills and poor experiences of dealing with energy suppliers can lead to feelings of disempowerment, and as Sir Harry Burns,⁵¹ former Chief Medical Officer, argued in the tenth Kilbrandon Lecture; Scotland's notoriously poor life expectancy is strongly linked to people feeling that they are not in control of their lives.

8.5.7 Tackling Fuel Poverty will reduce the health inequalities that blight our communities and condemn people to live in conditions that cause significant harm to their physical and mental well-being.

8.6 Energy Issues and Fuel Poverty – what can be done?

8.6.1 In June 2015 the Scottish Government published its Heat Policy Statement, committing to firstly reducing

⁴⁵ "Living in a cold and damp home: frameworks for understanding impacts on mental well-being" C. Liddell & C. Guiney University of Ulster, UK

⁴⁶ Foreword to "Fuel Poverty and Health: a guide for primary care organisations, and public health and primary care professionals" National Heart Forum and others, 2003

⁴⁷ The most recent information and statistics can be found at <http://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/deaths/winter-mortality/winter-mortality-in-scotland-201415>

⁴⁸ Healy JD (2003) Excess winter mortality in Europe: a cross country analysis identifying key risk factors, Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health

⁴⁹ Howieson & Hogan: Multiple Deprivation and Excess Winter Deaths in Scotland, Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health, vol 125 (2005), pp18-23

⁵⁰ <http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng6>

⁵¹ <http://www.gov.scot/resource/0040/00403544.pdf>

the need for heat (e.g. through better insulation), secondly by ensuring an efficient heat supply, and lastly through the effective use of renewable or low carbon heat sources.⁵²

8.6.2 Improving Energy Efficiency of existing buildings

8.6.2.1 Improving energy efficiency is viewed as the most cost effective means of reducing fuel cost and carbon footprint. Much of the progress made so far has involved straightforward improvements to loft and cavity wall insulation. Future efforts will need to include harder-to-treat older property with solid walls and harder-to-manage situations such as multiple-ownership tenements.

8.6.2.2 The Scottish Government is planning new legislation⁵³ setting a minimum level of energy efficiency which houses must meet before they can be sold or rented privately, and also plans to make energy efficiency of existing buildings a National Infrastructure Priority. The Existing Homes Alliance estimates that⁵⁴ such a project aimed at improving the energy efficiency of all homes in Scotland to Energy Performance Certificate Band C level by 2025 would involve treating 127,000 houses per year at a total cost of £10.7 billion. This demonstrates the scale of the challenge, but the benefits include reduced fuel bills, lower carbon emissions, improved health and employment.

8.6.2.3 The work carried out by Historic Environment Scotland in developing energy efficiency techniques for traditional buildings is impressive. Training takes place at their Engine Shed facility in Stirling, and is based on an approach which recognises that basic measures aimed at modest fabric upgrade are the most achievable.

8.6.3 Alternative Energy Technologies

8.6.3.1 The renewable generation technologies which

have emerged as front runners in the past ten years are solar photovoltaic (PV) panels and onshore wind, whose costs are now approaching parity with fossil fuels.⁵⁵ Some analysts argue that these technologies are now reaching their limit, and that new large-scale renewable generation methods must be developed. Offshore wind, tidal and intelligent grids all remain promising but recent UK Government announcements suggest it will be difficult to get the investment support required to bring them to commercial viability.

8.6.3.2 But even within well-established heating technologies there are a number of ways of heating homes more efficiently. Combined Heat and Power (CHP) plants generate electricity (often from renewable sources such as wood pellets) and can provide hot water for District Heating, such as the scheme developed by Aberdeen City Council,⁵⁶ and the Cube Housing Association schemes at Broomhill and elsewhere in Glasgow.⁵⁷ However, at just 2% the UK has one of the lowest penetrations of District Heating in Europe, while most of Scandinavia exceeds 50%.⁵⁸

8.6.3.3 Heat Pumps offer a low-carbon way of generating heat. Air-source heat pumps act like a fridge in reverse, extracting heat from the outside atmosphere to increase the indoor temperature. Ground-source heat pumps extract heat from pipes buried in the ground, and water-source heat pumps can be used where there is a suitable loch or river. Heat pump technology is available for individual homes but is more promising as part of larger-scale District Heating systems because of the initial cost. An example of the technology is the ground-source heat pump system at Queen's Cross Housing Association's Westercommon flats,⁵⁹ and the water-source system at

⁵² <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Business-Industry/Energy/Energy-sources/19185/Heat>

⁵³ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/sustainable/Energy-efficiency-private-sector-homes>

⁵⁴ http://existinghomesalliancescotland.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/EXHAS_jointstatement_Oct15.pdf

⁵⁵ <http://about.bnef.com/press-releases/wind-solar-boost-cost-competitiveness-versus-fossil-fuels/>

⁵⁶ http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/CouncilNews/ci_cns/pr_cornhill_chp_140114.asp

⁵⁷ <http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/-10-6-million-heating-scheme-2118.aspx>

⁵⁸ <http://euroheat.org/Statistics-69.aspx> - Statistics overview 2013

Drammen, Norway⁶⁰ developed by a Scottish firm.⁶¹ Such schemes have the potential to offer relatively low cost heating in many locations in Scotland.

8.6.3.4 Micro-hydro power schemes are now being proposed with heads of water as little as one metre, flexible photovoltaic textiles can be woven but need to be commercially developed, hydrogen fuel cells offer standalone solutions for more remote locations where the cost of grid connection may be prohibitive or where intermittent renewable generation needs surplus energy to be stored, while bioenergy covers a vast range of possibilities mostly in the early stages of development.

8.6.3.5 At present these alternative technologies seem to be most attractive in new developments or as part of major renovation projects. One of the challenges is justifying the upfront investment, and individual ownership of houses makes the challenge greater. In Denmark developers are legally obliged to participate in community schemes, encouraging the use of CHP and District Heating. Without such incentives, the sheer scale of the existing infrastructure in Scotland suggests that there will be no dramatic changes to home heating systems in the short term.

8.6.4 Energy Advice

8.6.4.1 Understanding the energy market, the true use of energy within the home and the cost of that energy are complex topics which many consumers find confusing. However, well-focussed energy advice is effective in reducing Fuel Poverty, offering "substantial benefits in terms of comfort, health and well-being"⁶² as well as savings in energy costs.

8.6.4.2 Advice providers include the Scottish Government's Home Energy Scotland, Fuel Poverty charities such as Energy Action Scotland and Changeworks, Citizens Advice, and support organisations like Age Scotland. Alongside national organisations there are a number of local groups giving much-needed energy efficiency advice in their communities, a role that can be supported by church congregations. General information in the form of leaflets can be helpful, but direct personalised face-to-face advice is particularly valuable and we commend those who provide it.

8.6.5 Community Energy

8.6.5.1 One of the most exciting new opportunities has been the development of community energy schemes across Scotland, particularly in rural areas. Community hydro-electric, wind power and biomass schemes have been developed in rural communities taking advantage of government initiatives to encourage energy companies to support low carbon electricity and community energy projects. The development of such schemes is difficult for communities but the rewards can be considerable and they do offer the opportunity of addressing Fuel Poverty locally by improving local economic circumstances. The Scottish Government defines community energy as: "... projects led by constituted non-profit-distributing community groups established and operating across a geographically defined community."⁶³

8.6.5.2 The Energy Saving Trust reports that there were 361 megawatts of community and locally owned renewable energy operational in Scotland as at June 2014, from a total of more than 10,110 individual renewable energy installations.⁶⁴ The largest proportion of operational community and locally owned capacity is on Scottish farms and estates (146MW, or 41%). Community groups own only 13% of total operational capacity

⁵⁹ https://www.qcha.org.uk/about/news/775_investment_news

⁶⁰ <http://www.star-ref.co.uk/star/worlds-largest.html>

⁶¹ Star Refrigeration: see <http://www.star-ref.co.uk/star/star-leads-the-way-with-world-s-largest-natural-heating-system.html>

⁶² Boardman, B and Darby, S, 2000, 'Effective Advice: energy efficiency and the disadvantaged', Environmental Change Institute, University of Oxford.

⁶³ Community Energy Policy Statement (Draft for public consultation) Scottish Government, August 2014

⁶⁴ <http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/reports/community-and-locally-owned-renewable-energy-scotland-2014>

(46MW).⁶⁵ The amount of operational capacity in local authority ownership continues to grow: as of June 2014 Highland Council was leading the way with biomass installations amounting to over 14MW of operational capacity. Fife and Stirling Councils had the largest numbers of operational systems, at 520 and 4705 respectively, mainly domestic solar photovoltaic and solar thermal systems.

8.6.5.3 The report also identifies that a further 115MW of capacity is under construction with a further 312 MW granted planning permission but not yet under construction. Clearly Scotland's community and locally owned energy sector is growing fast, but is it really benefitting communities? In August 2014 the Scottish Government published a draft community energy policy statement. In the foreword the Minister, Fergus Ewing, set out the Scottish Government's ambitions: "We are already powering towards our target to see 500 MW of community and locally-owned renewables by 2020, with 285 MW in operation this time last year. But this is not enough. We need to bring community energy in from the margins of energy policy to make it the central tenet of our future energy systems, where it has the potential to transform local economies."⁶⁶

8.6.5.4 This ambitious statement was welcomed by the Church of Scotland in its response to the consultation paper, but as noted above, community owned renewables remain a relatively small percentage of the total and other locally owned schemes may have community benefit or may simply provide an income for the landowner.

8.6.5.5 The experience of those who have developed community energy schemes suggests that for many it is a long and arduous process. The consultation document does not recognise the challenges that many face in trying to develop community energy projects. If we are to

achieve the ambition of a much more widespread community energy economy then it will be essential to examine the barriers that lie in the way: what problems are experienced and how can we remove or reduce these barriers to make the process less arduous and traumatic for participants? Consideration of how this could be done will overlap with other Scottish Government initiatives, particularly in relation to community development and economic regeneration.

8.6.5.6 Representatives from a community energy project in Argyll explained in detail the complex and interlocking 'spaghetti' of problems that made the community energy scheme so difficult to progress, compounded by the often patronising or sceptical attitude of professionals in regulatory authorities. While the Scottish Government provides policy support to community energy it needs to address the multiple barriers and explore whether a simpler 'one stop shop' could help resolve this difficulty.

8.6.5.7 A further major constraint which has affected a number of community energy schemes is the lack of capacity in the electricity transmission system to receive exported energy. The prohibitive cost and long timescales associated with network upgrades can result in otherwise excellent schemes becoming unviable. Indeed, some observers such as the authors of a Policy Brief from Strathclyde University's International Public Policy Institute⁶⁷ point to concerns that National Grid, a commercial company, has a key role in the decision-making around community energy developments. They suggest that National Grid's role as system operator might be taken on by a not-for-profit public agency, as in Australia.

8.7 Addressing Fuel Poverty in the Western Isles – a Case Study

8.7.1 The issues associated with Fuel Poverty are

⁶⁵ The full breakdown of capacity is: Farms & estates (41%), Local Authorities (16%), Community (13%), Local business (11%), Housing associations (10%), Public sector & charity (9%)

⁶⁶ <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0045/00457876.pdf>

⁶⁷ http://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/53933/1/Turner_et_al_IPPI_2015_scotlands_energy_needs.pdf

particularly prevalent in the Western Isles (Eilean Siar), which has the highest levels of Fuel Poverty in Scotland. The Scottish House Condition Survey Local Authority Tables 2011-2013⁶⁸ show that 62% of households in the Western Isles are fuel poor, and 24% are in extreme Fuel Poverty.

8.7.2 In 2014 the Western Isles Council set up a Fuel Poverty Group which developed the Outer Hebrides Fuel Poverty Action Plan, with the aim of reducing Fuel Poverty levels in the Outer Hebrides to the Scottish average by 2025.

8.7.3 Part of the plan is to create an Energy Supply Company which will take advantage of energy generation opportunities and a proposed interconnector, due to be completed in 2020, which will allow the Community to maximise the benefits of their natural resources by exporting electricity to the National Grid.

8.7.4 The plan involves a number of different agencies working together, which highlights the importance of taking an integrated approach when dealing with Fuel Poverty. It can be extremely difficult for individuals to take the actions needed to improve the energy efficiency of their own home, and almost impossible for individuals to find ways of making fuel more affordable. Developments such as those in the Western Isles bring demonstrable environmental and financial benefits to their localities alongside very substantial social benefits.

8.7.5 We commend the work done in the Western Isles and would encourage the setting up of similar schemes, particularly in rural locations. However, taking forward such ambitious proposals is dependent on government policy and changes in UK Government policy appear to put such plans at risk.

8.8 Conclusion

8.8.1 Following the 2015 General Election the UK

Government moved to reduce or withdraw support from a range of measures to support renewables and at the same time reasserted its support for fracking and nuclear power. Critics of this decision suggested that it is incompatible with the UK Government's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as agreed at the COP21 climate change conference in Paris in December 2015.

8.8.4 The Church of Scotland shares these concerns and calls upon the UK Government to make renewable energy and, in particular, community renewables a far higher priority.

8.8.3 Some commentators talk about an energy 'trilemma', referring to the need to balance: Care for the Environment, National Energy Security, and Cost. Turning this on its head, the economic potential of an energy source can be used to generate local employment and a revenue stream for the community. There is an opportunity to create a virtuous circle where individuals and communities are more in control of their lives.

9. Society, Religion and Technology (SRT) Project

9.1 The work of the SRT Project continues to equip the Church to engage with ethical issues in a number of areas within the field of science. We have been closely involved in the development of the energy, fuel poverty and climate change report, and contributed to the ongoing debate around "presumed consent" in organ transplantation.

9.2 Events supported by the SRT have taken place at the Edinburgh and Glasgow Science Festivals, and we continue to encourage congregations to consider getting involved in their local science festival. (For more information please see www.srtp.org.uk/srtp/view_article/scottish_science_festivals.) Plans for involvement in book festivals are under development.

9.3 We have been invited to serve on the Bioethics group of the Conference of European Churches, and took part in the Conference of Protestant Churches in Europe consultation meeting on ethical issues in reproductive

⁶⁸ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/SHCS/keyanalyses/LATables2013>

medicine. The SRT is also scheduled to participate in the World Congress of Bioethics taking place in Edinburgh in June 2016.

9.4 Over the last year, SRT staff have been promoting involvement in credit unions through talks to presbyteries and the circulation of information and resources. In this, we have particularly highlighted the Churches Mutual Credit Union (CMCU), a still comparatively new initiative involving a number of denominations including the Church of Scotland. If commissioners are interested in opening an account, please see the CMCU website (www.cmcu.org.uk). We arranged a very successful free half-day conference in Edinburgh in early October to mark Good Money Week, and plans for the 2016 event are in hand. The annual SRT week of prayer (12-18 June 2016) continues to generate interest.

9.5 We have continued to be involved with the increasingly important issue of funeral poverty alongside a number of other organisations, including the Scottish Funeral Poverty Forum, the Church of Scotland Priority Areas Committee and Quaker Social Action.

9.6 The questions of palliative care and assisted dying have continued to be topics of public debate over the last year and we have contributed fully to these. In the past year, both the UK and Scottish Parliaments have rejected moves to introduce assisted dying legislation. In addition, the Scottish Government has emphasised the importance of consolidating and improving palliative care services. The Council continues to be involved in discussions around end of life issues, including engagement with the Theological Forum on this important area.

9.7 The SRT was established in 1970, so will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2020. Over the last 46 years, the Society, Religion and Technology Project has made a significant contribution to ethical and scientific debate and its reputation extends far beyond the Church of Scotland and Scotland. Over the next year, we will begin our consideration of how the Project's Golden Jubilee

might best be celebrated and will bring proposals to a future General Assembly.

10. Politics and Government

10.1 Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office

10.1.1 The Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office (SCPO) continues to serve a broad range of Scottish Churches on parliamentary and political affairs in the Scottish Parliament as well as at Westminster. A review of SCPO will take place during 2016, requested by the Council. The Parliamentary Office was established in 1999 as a ground breaking enterprise. Much has changed in Scotland over the last 16 years and it is intended that the review will identify fresh ways in which SCPO can continue to respond and engage creatively. For further information about the work of SCPO and specific activities over the last year please see the 2015 SCPO Annual Report available online at www.actsparl.org.

10.2 UK General Election 2015

10.2.1 The SCPO supported congregations ahead of the UK General Election by producing guidance on how to hold a hustings event and by publicising resources produced by participating denominations. Following the General Election in June 2015 representatives of the Church and Society Council spent 2 days in Westminster meeting newly elected MPs. A meeting was subsequently held with the Rt Hon David Mundell MP, Secretary of State for Scotland.

10.3 Scottish Election 2016

10.3.1 The Scottish Election on 5 May will have taken place before the General Assembly meets but after this report has been written. At the time of writing plans are in place for the Moderator, the Rt. Rev Dr Angus Morrison, to host a national event in the General Assembly Hall on 4 April in which three themes drawn from Speak Out: 10,000 voices for change report will feature. A person with experience of each issue will share their reflections and leaders from each party currently represented in Holyrood will be invited to respond. This approach, drawn from the work of the Poverty Truth Commission and the experience

of Citizens' Assemblies, that people with direct experience of the issues are placed at the heart of the debate.

10.3.2 Two ecumenical resources were developed for the election, firstly guidance on how to hold a hustings event and secondly a topical briefing providing background information and discussion questions. Topics covered in the briefing include: the economy; the constitution; crime and punishment; education; environment, energy and climate change; Europe and external affairs; food poverty; housing and homelessness; land reform; perinatal mental health; refugees and migration and valuing social care.

10.4 Joint Public Issues Team

10.4.1 In February 2015, the Council agreed a one year pilot membership of the Joint Public Issues Team, a joint initiative of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church. Over the last year, the Council has benefitted significantly from this collaboration including in the publication of two major reports, Time to Rethink Benefit Sanctions and Enough as well as effective campaigning on welfare reform legislation and highly professional advice around international peace issues. Work with the Joint Public Issues Team has also helped the Council to engage more effectively on a range of matters reserved to Westminster as well as giving our partner churches improved mechanisms for relating to Holyrood and politicians representing Scottish constituencies at Westminster. The Council's Associate Secretary has been part of the Joint Public Issues Team staff team and its Secretary and Convener have formed part of its Strategy and Planning Group.

10.4.2 The Council's involvement with the Joint Public Issues Team has not only been beneficial for the denominations directly involved but has also provided opportunities for broader ecumenical work. At its February meeting, the Council resolved to become a full member of the Joint Public Issues Team.

10.5 European Union Referendum

10.5.1 The European Union (EU) Referendum Act 2015 makes provision for the holding of a referendum in the United Kingdom and Gibraltar on whether the United Kingdom should remain a member of the European Union. The Referendum must take place before the end of 2017.

10.5.2 On 20 February, the Prime Minister announced a date for a Referendum on the UK's continued membership on the European Union. This will take place on the 23 June 2016, just a few weeks after the General Assembly. In recognition of the significance of the Referendum, the Council will bring a Supplementary Report to the General Assembly. The Supplementary Report will be consistent with the 2014 General Assembly which reiterated its long standing policy that it is better for Scotland, the UK and Europe if the UK remains a full part of the European Union.

10.6 Parliamentary Visits, Events and Meetings

10.6.1 Each February the Moderator of the General Assembly spends a week in the Scottish Parliament. The Rt Rev Angus Morrison met with party leaders, including the First Minister, and hosted an event showcasing the work of CrossReach. This event was sponsored by Jim Eadie MSP.

10.6.2 Representatives of the Church and Society Council and National Youth Assembly met with Jamie Hepburn MSP, Minister for Sport, Health Improvement & Mental Health to discuss the Council's Report on Human Rights and Mental Health to the 2015 General Assembly.

10.6.3 Through the Council's membership of the Joint Public Issues Team we have been represented at UK Party Conferences for all of the main political parties. In October 2015 the Parliamentary Office co-ordinated an ecumenical delegation from across the UK, ensuring their first time at the SNP Party Conference was a productive one. The Council, in partnership with the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, held fringe events on reform of taxation at the SNP Party Conference and the Scottish Labour Party Conference.

10.6.4 The Council was also involved in the Scottish Government's Fairer Scotland consultation, which has parallels to the Council's own work on Speak Out: 10,000 voices for change, and which fed in to the Scottish Government's Social Justice Action Plan. It was also involved, through its Secretary, in the Independent Food Poverty Working Group established by the Scottish Government. This involvement builds on the huge amount of work being undertaken by churches across Scotland to alleviate acute food poverty and the Council's previous work arising out of the Beyond Foodbanks Conference (February 2015).

10.7 Liaison, communication and relationships

10.7.1 The SCPO keeps in touch with congregations through regular Parliamentary newsletters. In 2015 the position of Research and Resource Development Officer was vacant from August – October; a number of information resources were not produced during this time period. Current resources can be read or subscribed to on the website (www.actsparl.org) or by contacting the office (e: info@actsparl.org; t: 0131 240 2276).

10.7.2 The office is always happy to receive requests to speak or lead workshops from churches, Presbyteries or other groups who would like to find out more about the work of SCPO or about a specific Parliamentary issue.

10.7.3 One of the primary functions of SCPO is to build and maintain positive and constructive relationships between churches and politicians. Over the past year SCPO has hosted ecumenical roundtables on Land Reform and the Scottish Government Review of Civil Partnerships. These meetings provided an opportunity for different denominations to explore the issue and plan formal consultation responses. SCPO has briefed MSPs on issues around assisted suicide and supported church representatives to give evidence to the Scottish Parliament Health and Sport Committee the proposed Assisted Suicide (Scotland) Bill. Briefings have also been provided to MPs on welfare reform and the Scotland Bill.

10.7.4 SCPO is a member of:

- The Scottish Churches Anti-Human Trafficking Group
- a monthly meeting of UK Churches Westminster Parliamentary Officers
- The Association of Scottish Public Affairs and subscribes to their voluntary Code of Conduct
- The newly formed Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on Religious Freedom

10.8 Index of consultation responses

10.8.1 The following official responses were made by the Church of Scotland to consultations or enquiries in the calendar year 2015. Copies of the consultations are available on the SCPO website www.actsparl.org.

All the responses listed are from the Church and Society Council, except where noted:

Scottish Government Consultations

- Consultation on the Future of Land Reform in Scotland (the Church of Scotland, February 2015)
- Consultation on proposals for a Lobbying Transparency Bill (submitted jointly with SCPO, July 2015)

10.8.2 Scottish Parliament Inquiries

- BSL (Scotland) Bill – Call for evidence from the Education and Culture Committee (Submitted jointly with Ministries Council, February 2015)
- Educational attainment gap – Role of the third and private sectors – Education and Culture Committee (March 2015)
- Education (Scotland) Bill – Education and Culture Committee (May 2015)
- Implementing the Smith Agreement – The UK Government's Scotland Bill: Have Your Say - Devolution (Further Powers) Committee (August 2015)

- "We need to talk about Palliative Care" – Health and Sport Committee (August 2015)
- Land Reform (Scotland) Bill – Stage One Call for Evidence - Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee (Church of Scotland, August 2015)
- Call for views: Transplantation (Authorisation of Removal of Organs etc) (Scotland) Bill, Health and Sport Committee (October 2015)
- The proposed repeal of the Human Rights Act and its replacement with a British Bill of Rights, European and External Relations Committee (November 2015)
- Call for evidence on the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Bill from the Justice Committee, submitted by the Scottish Churches Anti-Human Trafficking Group (February 2015)

10.8.3 UK Parliament Inquiries

- Work of the Scottish Affairs Committee, Scottish Affairs Committee (August 2015)
- Review of Third Party Campaigning – the Hodgson Review sponsored by the Cabinet Office. Response from the Joint Public Issues Team (July 2015)

10.8.4 Other organisations

- Reform of the legacy Credit Unions sourcebook, requested by Bank of England, Prudential Regulatory Authority (September 2015)

10.9 Regulation of Lobbying

10.9.1 The Scottish Parliament is considering a Lobbying (Scotland) Bill which intends to increase transparency in lobbying at the Scottish Parliament. The Council is supportive of the need to increase transparency, while seeking to ensure that any registration process is straightforward and proportionate. SCPO has been actively engaged in discussions about the scope of the Bill which will apply to the work of the Church.

10.10 Bills of interest

10.10.1 Westminster

10.10.1.1 The Council has been following developments in the Scotland Bill as these changes will have a bearing on the future of Scotland. We have been part of calls to devolve more of the welfare system to Scotland. We have also participated in discussion about the future of the Human Rights Act raising the concerns expressed by the 2015 General Assembly in meetings with the First Minister of Scotland and Secretary of State for Scotland. The Council has been represented at civil society meetings to consider strategies to defend the Act. At the time of writing the UK Government has not acted on the manifesto commitment to repeal the Human Rights Act and replace it with a UK Bill of Rights.

10.10.2 Holyrood

Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Bill

10.10.2.1 For a report of activities on this area of work see the following section on Human Trafficking at section 11 of the report.

11. Joint Faiths Board on Community Justice

11.1 Joint Faiths Board on Community Justice held a Round Table event with interested partners on "Creating a Just Community" with a view to holding a full conference later this year. The conference would explore the concept of a just community and how faith groups are making and can make a contribution to current policy and practice in community justice. In addition to this and attending a number of events on restorative justice, reducing reoffending etc, the Board also welcomed the Scottish Government's decision to replace the women's prison at Cornton Vale and to look for community based interventions for offending women. Similarly, the Board has also responded to Scottish Government's Consultations on Electronic Monitoring, the Community Justice Bill and the Presumption against Short Sentences of Imprisonment.

12. Scottish Churches Anti-Human Trafficking Group

12.1 The Council has been involved in discussions over several years about the need to introduce legislation to address human trafficking in Scotland. As such, we were pleased that the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Bill has progressed through the Scottish Parliament and received Royal Assent in November 2015. This new Act considerably strengthens previous legislation and increases penalties for perpetrators to a maximum of life imprisonment. There will also be increased provision of support services for victims so that those who survive their ordeal can have the opportunity to recover and regain a sense of self-worth. It should send a strong message to those who cruelly demean others by treating them as mere commodities for profit and their own selfish purposes. As a result of our involvement in the Bill, Professor Hazel Watson, a member of the Council, has been invited to become a member of the group which will oversee the development of the Strategy. This will enable the Council to continue to contribute to our aim of eradicating the evil of human trafficking.

12.2 The passing of the Act, however, does not diminish the need to continue to raise awareness of the trade in human beings and the plight of those who are sold into prostitution or forced labour in our agriculture, fishing or construction industries. The Scottish Churches Anti-Human Trafficking Group, on which the Church and Society Council is represented, held a series of events during the 2015 Edinburgh Festival. Working with the Salvation Army, the issue of human trafficking was brought into sharp focus in a dramatic piece of street theatre performed on George Street and at the Pleasance Theatre where we also placed two large eye-catching **UN GIFT Boxes**. The boxes provided information about the global scale of trafficking and an opportunity to sign the Stop the Traffik's petition against the use of forced labour in the fashion industry. A video of the Moderator's visit to one of the boxes can be seen at:

http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news_and_events/news/recent/church_backs_action_against_human_trafficking_campaign.

12.3 The Council also collaborated with the Scottish Churches Anti-Human Trafficking Group, the World Mission Council and the Guild in organising a two-day symposium for representatives from partner churches in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Europe. The aim was to exchange ideas and form a global network to help us all combat this crime against humanity. The symposium was followed by a one-day conference for members of congregations and civil society from across Scotland. Fruitful relationships have also been established with the World Council of Reformed Churches (WCRC) Europe, the Reformed Alliance in Germany, the Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), the Church of England and the Anglican Alliance.

12.4 Resources for use in worship have been developed and will be made available to be downloaded from the ACTS website: <http://www.acts-scotland.org/>

13. Refugees

13.1 The Report of the Council of Assembly covers some of the issues relating to the refugee crisis and the Church of Scotland's response in some detail. The Church and Society Council is hosting the refugee co-ordination project which commenced in November 2015. As the Council of Assembly Report notes, a key element of the response in Scotland has been to develop links and partnership with ecumenical, faith and charitable groups as well as statutory agencies, at a local, Scottish, UK and European level. The project which the Church of Scotland is leading is called Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees. The emphasis is on demonstrating interfaith and intercultural collaboration as a lived example of what can be offered in the face of terror and xenophobia. For further details about Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees, including resources, sources of information and practical ways your congregation can help, visit the website (www.sfar.org.uk) or contact the Refugee Co-ordinator, David Bradwell

(dbradwell@churchofscotland.org.uk; 07341 478 174; Twitter: @WithRefugees).

13.2 The Church and Society Council has worked in the past on issues relating to asylum seekers, refugees and racial justice. Through the work of Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees the Council hopes to bring a renewed focus and understanding of the Church to some of the policy concerns which have been expressed by the General Assembly over several years (some of these are listed in the Council of Assembly Report). Foreign policy, immigration policy and international development are all policy areas reserved to the UK Government and Westminster Parliament; the Church and Society Council will seek to continue to strengthen working relationships with key UK partners including the Church of England, the Joint Public Issues Team (Church of Scotland, Methodist, Baptist and United Reformed Churches) and the Churches Refugee Network (an informal network of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland). Engaging in societal and policy debate and creating opportunities for church members to participate in advocacy campaigns will be part of this developing strand of the Council's work.

14. Syria

14.1 At its November meeting, the Council discussed in depth what its response should be ahead of a vote within the UK Parliament in favour of air strikes by UK forces in Syria in the aftermath of the appalling terror attacks in Paris. The Council spoke out against military intervention and called, instead, for active peace-making. Speaking on behalf of the Council, the convener stated: 'In the midst of such horror, there is a natural temptation to resort to military action. Our firm belief is that air strikes will not make things better, only worse – with the loss of more lives, more people displaced, more people living in great fear. We remain deeply concerned at the lack of a coherent long-term strategy.' The Council also issued a detailed statement on the conflict on 2 December, as part of the Joint Public Issues Team.

14.2 In collaboration with Church Leaders in the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church, the Moderator of the General Assembly spoke out in favour of increased aid for Syria and the surrounding region ahead of the conference on Syria co-hosted by the UK Government, the United Nations and others in February. With almost 5 million refugees in the countries neighbouring Syria and a further 13 million displaced within the country itself, this is an appalling catastrophe which military intervention cannot ever adequately address. Throughout the year, the Council was grateful for the strong moral leadership provided by the Rt Rev Angus Morrison and his consistent calls for prayer and active peace-making.

15. Violence Against Women

15.1 Violence against women (VAW) is endemic in both Scottish society and the world, affecting millions of women, yet still it is an issue we find hard to acknowledge let alone speak about. Breaking the silence remains a major challenge. The VAW Task Group exists to encourage the church to do that.

15.2 Given the breadth and depth of the Task Group's remit, the highest priority over this past year was developing a job description and applying for funding for a part-time VAW Development Officer. This post was approved and the Development Officer began work in February 2016 on a one-year appointment. This is a hugely positive and exciting appointment providing a much needed impetus in developing greater awareness and action on gender justice within the church and giving us a greater voice in public discussion.

15.3 Violence against women is not just a women's issue. It is detrimental to the health and well-being of everyone (men, women and children) and stunts fullness of life (John 10:10). It is vital that men as well as women are speaking out about this issue. In light of this, initial steps have been taken in partnering with White Ribbon Scotland (WRS) to train 6-12 men from the Church of Scotland. These men will form a network of WRS speakers to act as

ambassadors for WRS and to speak to church groups about violence against women.

15.4 The Task Group ran a Cafe Conversation event to which representatives from most Councils and committees were invited. This enabled the Task Group to hear the voices and concerns from the wider church, as well as the encouraging work they are already engaged in. A second awareness and information-raising online campaign was held in November, facilitated by the World Mission Council, to highlight the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. The Task Group also engaged in discussion and meetings on anti-trafficking, prostitution and an initial ecumenical gathering to discuss how we might work together to bring the message about gender justice to 'people in the pews.'

16. Education

16.1 The Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) report, A Christian Vision for Scottish Schools describes education as: "The transmission of knowledge and skills; a love of learning; the arousing of a sense of wonder; a desire to explore, question, imagine and create; and developing a sense of justice: these are all at the heart of the learning enterprise, helping both teacher and learner to become fully human and fully alive" (ACTS 2008). The 1982 General Assembly stated the supreme aim of education to be: "the fostering of right relationships," something that was seen as "much more important than the commonly stated objective of the fullest possible development of individual capacity. What is needed is to give young people the chance to develop their talents for the good of all." (General Assembly, 1982)

16.2 The Scottish Government's desire to provide a world class education for every pupil has resulted in a number of initiatives which are now bearing fruit. Four years on from its implementation the Curriculum For Excellence has bedded in and the broad general education it offers to Scotland's young people has been highly praised. The recent OECD report "Improving Scotland's Schools" highlights above average levels of academic

achievement in science and reading in Scottish Schools, and their inclusive nature with the smallest proportions of low performers among immigrant students . A current initiative is the National Improvement Framework which aims to close the "Attainment Gap" for disadvantaged children and young people. While this aim enjoys wide support, the framework's emphasis on gathering robust evidence to evaluate performance has concerned some, as have reports of falling teacher numbers. With all that is currently happening in Scottish Education, fresh thinking by Head Teachers and others about new forms of school leadership could be encouraged.

16.3 Within this ever changing context, ensuring the spiritual wellbeing of all Scotland's children and young people through the delivery of high quality Chaplaincy, Religious Observance (RO) and Religious and Moral Education (RME) should remain a priority for education policy across the Councils of the Church of Scotland. However the Church should not lose sight of its wider educational role to encourage quality and inclusive learning across the whole curriculum through which Scotland's diversity can be expressed, explored and embraced.

16.4 Improving Religious Observance in Schools

16.4.1 Religious Observance (RO) within schools remains an important contribution that the Church plays in the spiritual development and wellbeing of Scotland's young people. In a recently published document, "Education Principles and Priorities", which outlines the principles and priorities that underpin the Education Committee's work, the Committee emphasise the role of spiritual development as a key factor in a child's life and the need to work with other churches, as well as other faith and belief groups, to help young people to explore the spiritual dimension of life.

16.4.2 Discussions are to take place with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) on training opportunities in RO that will count towards Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) for teaching staff. We have

also identified the potential for a training programme: for chaplains and teachers, to be delivered in partnership with local authorities and presbyteries and as two university modules reflecting work undertaken previously with the University of Glasgow.

16.5 Increasing Resources for the Teaching of Religious and Moral Education

16.5.1 We are currently reviewing our existing resources for the teaching of RME and their availability through the Church of Scotland website. In a similar vein, alongside Christian Values in Education, we are contributing to the collation and signposting of resources for teachers of RME. The Moderator's Medal and Stevenson Prize are under review as we explore ways in which they might contribute more effectively to Religious Observance and spirituality in schools across Scotland.

16.5.2 The educational resources developed around the significance and place of Edinburgh's Greyfriars Church in Scottish society have proved to be very popular and have been well received (For more information, please see www.greyfriarslearning.uk). We have begun conversations with interested parties to identify another suitable venue around which a similar project can be developed.

16.6 Supporting the work of Church representatives on Local Authority Committees

16.6.1 Following the success of its annual conference for Local Authority Church Representatives (September 2015), the Committee decided to re-designate it as The Church of Scotland's Annual Education Conference. The first in this new format will be held 1 – 3 September 2016 and will cover three inter-related strands: Local Authority Representatives, School Chaplains, and representatives from Education.

16.6.2 The Committee wrote to every representative to advise them: of an informal support service which now links each member of the Education Committee with a local authority representative; what will be expected from representatives over the next two years; and to identify

what support the Education Committee could best offer them.

16.6.3 In addition, the Committee is introducing a personal support network where Local Authority Representatives are linked with individual members of the Education Committee, and the leaflet on the 'Appointment and Role of the Church Representative' is being re-drafted.

16.7 Developing the work of Chaplaincy in Schools and the Further Education sector

16.7.1 The Committee's Working Group on School Chaplaincy is examining and evaluating different aspects of chaplaincy. The Group has identified specific aspects of the role of the School Chaplain with a view to developing continuous professional development.

16.7.2 Practical guidance on issues such as succession planning for School Chaplaincy Teams; engaging with the Curriculum for Excellence; and how Chaplains might contribute to School Inspections by Education Scotland are under consideration. The findings are to be reported to next year's General Assembly.

16.8 Contributing to Public Debate and Policy Making on Education Issues

16.8.1 A document outlining our principles and priorities for education in the run-up to the 2016 Scottish Parliamentary elections was published in December 2015. The document can be found at:

http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/speak_out/education/articles/priorities_for_education.

A similar document customised for the Local Authority elections in 2017 will be published later this year.

16.8.2 With so many potential areas of work, but with very limited resources, the Committee has needed to prioritise within its agreed Work Plan. With support and advice of the Rev Jack Laidlaw, a past Convener, the Committee has decided to focus on early intervention with a view to how it can contribute to narrowing, and ultimately eliminating, the attainment gap. The

Committee acknowledges Jack Laidlaw's help and wisdom in identifying this piece of work.

16.9 The Education Committee and terms of reference

16.9.1 The word 'education' has a variety of meanings including information, training, learning and teaching. Education, in that wider sense, permeates learning and teaching across the work and interests of the Church. It is worth highlighting that there are thirteen different references to forms of 'education' on the Church of Scotland website!

16.9.2 Many parts of the Church regard the history, legacy and importance of education as a source of inspiration and pride, yet few realise how much is done by the Church in this area, with so little resource. The role of the Church of Scotland in education – within the classroom and outside it – has always been important. We need to ask the question: how in the 21st Century does both nurturing faith and offering an education service to society continue to be accommodated within the Church?

16.9.3 Over a number of years, the Church & Society Council has highlighted the limited resources at its disposal to resource and support the Church's work in education. During 2016, the Church & Society Council will be engaging with other Councils and Committees to identify how education and learning can be most effectively resourced. It will aim to bring this report to the 2017 General Assembly.

17. Campaigns

17.1 The following provides a list of the campaigns that the Council is involved with on behalf of the Church of Scotland.

17.2 In sympathy with (The Church broadly shares the campaign's objectives and ways of working.)

17.2.1 Campaign for a Fair Society

'We believe everyone is equal, no matter their differences or disabilities. A fair society sees each of its

members as a full citizen – a unique person with a life of their own. A fair society is organised to support everyone to live a full life, with meaning and respect.'
www.campaignforafairsociety.com

17.2.2 Churches Together in Britain and Ireland's Good Society Vision 2020

The '2020 Vision' is drawn from a common desire to see a society that works for all – in which each of us are valued and which respects the Earth. In short - a society for the common good.

www.ctbi.org.uk/pdf_view.php?id=978

17.2.3 Kairos Britain

Kairos Britain is a network of individuals, organisations and faith communities formed in response to the Kairos Palestine document, 'A Moment of Truth'. The network continues the work of a group of Christians who met on Iona in May 2012 and issued the Iona call to the Christian communities in Britain and Ireland.

www.kairosbritain.org.uk

17.2.4 Scottish Campaign on Welfare Reform

SCoWR was set up in 2006 to highlight the concerns of a diverse coalition of organisations in Scotland about the UK government's Welfare Reform proposals.

www.cpag.org.uk/scotland/SCoWR

17.3 In Association with (The Church shares the campaign's objectives and agrees that its name and logo can be used in publicity.)

17.3.1 The Living Rent Campaign

The Living Rent Campaign is a coalition of groups and individuals determined to improve the lot of private renters within Scotland. <http://www.livingrent.org/about-us/>

17.3.2 Flesh and Blood

Encouraging Christians to be blood donors and join the organ donor register. www.fleshandblood.org

17.3.3 Justice for Bangladeshi Garment Workers

Led by the World Mission Council and several other UK Churches in partnership with the Church of Bangladesh, the aim is to improve conditions for garment workers. www.churchofscotland.org.uk/serve/mission_worldwide/get_involved/justice_for_bangladeshi_garment_workers

17.3.4 Scotland's For Peace

A group of Scottish based organisations working to raise awareness of peace issues. www.scotland4peace.org

17.3.5 Stop Destitution Now

Organised by the Scottish Refugee Council and Refugee Survival Trust, this campaign is calling for a change in policy to stop destitution among asylum seekers. www.stopdestitution.org.uk

17.3.6 Trace the Tax

Christian Aid's campaign for tax transparency calls for country-by-country financial reporting by multinational businesses. This would ensure that tax is paid in each jurisdiction.

www.christianaid.org.uk/actnow/trace-the-tax

17.3.7 White Ribbon Scotland

Part of an international campaign for men in Scotland who want to end violence against women www.whiteribbonScotland.org.uk

17.4 Members of (The Church is in full membership of the campaign and is active in promoting its aims, involved in developing its strategy and in implementing activities. This may have financial or resource implications for the Council.)

17.4.1 ACT Palestine Prayer Vigil

A global prayer movement praying for peace in Israel, the occupied Palestinian territories and the wider Middle East on the 24th of each month. In Scotland Church and Society works with World Mission, Christian Aid and the

Scottish Episcopal Church to promote prayer and understanding. www.actpalestineforum.org/vigil

17.4.2 End Child Poverty Scotland

Working to highlight the issue of child poverty and calling on society and the government to take action to tackle it. www.endchildpoverty.org.uk

17.4.3 National Ethical Investment Week (formerly Good Money Week)

Held every October, this week raises awareness to let people know about sustainable and ethical options in their financial decisions. www.neiw.org

17.4.4 Robin Hood Tax

In a nutshell, the big idea behind the Robin Hood Tax is to generate billions of pounds to fight poverty in the UK and overseas and to tackle climate change. It will come from fairer taxation of the financial sector; a tiny tax on the financial sector can generate £20 billion annually in the UK alone. www.robinhoodtax.org.uk

17.4.5 Scottish Leaders Group on Welfare

The overall aim of this group (which includes leaders from Scotland's churches, trade unions, local authorities and voluntary sector) is to work collaboratively to highlight and respond to the impact of recent changes to the welfare and benefits system on the people, services, and communities of Scotland, especially vulnerable people or groups. www.cas.org.uk/news/new-group-aims-investigate-scotlands-broken-welfare-system

17.4.6 Scottish Living Wage Campaign

A campaign organised by the Poverty Alliance seeking to introduce and implement a living wage for all workers in Scotland. slw.povertyalliance.org/

17.4.7 Scottish Pilgrim Routes Forum

A network of organisations and individuals committed to

developing routes for off-road pilgrimage travel across Scotland. www.sprf.org.uk/

17.4.8 Stop Climate Chaos Scotland

This coalition of organisations continues to campaign vigorously for the Scottish Government to put into effect its commitments under the Climate Change Scotland Act to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

www.stopclimatechaos.org/scotland

17.4.9 Jubilee Scotland

Jubilee Scotland wants to see millions of people lift themselves out of poverty as more governments in developing countries stop paying back unjust and unpayable debts and invest more in citizen-determined needs, such as health, education and livelihoods.

<http://www.jubileescotland.org.uk/about-us/our-vision-values/>

17.4.10 Poverty Alliance

The Poverty Alliance was formally established in 1992, growing out of an informal network of groups and individuals active since the mid 1980s. Its vision is of a sustainable Scotland based on social and economic justice, with dignity for all, where poverty and

inequalities are not tolerated and are challenged.
<http://povertyalliance.org/index.php>

In the name and by the authority of the Council,

SALLY FOSTER-FULTON, *Convener*

RICHARD FRAZER, *Vice Convener*

MARTIN JOHNSTONE, *Secretary*

ADDENDUM

Rev Sally Foster-Fulton

Sally Foster-Fulton completes her term as Convener at this year's General Assembly. Over the past four years, she has been an outstanding advocate both for the Church and for those often pushed to the margins of groups and societies. Her conduct of worship has been inspiring; her convening of the Council inclusive and focused. The task of convening the Church & Society Council is a demanding one in which one is rarely out of the spotlight. Sally has carried her role with humour and grace. As she moves to take up leadership of Christian Aid in Scotland, it is unlikely life will slow down. But that's just Sally and we thank her for it.

RICHARD FRAZER, *Vice Convener*

MARTIN JOHNSTONE, *Secretary*