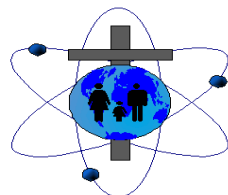


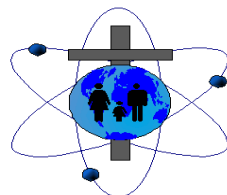
*SRT: The Society, Religion and
Technology project*
*Helping the church to engage with ethical
issues in science*

Dr Murdo Macdonald
**Society, Religion and Technology
Project**



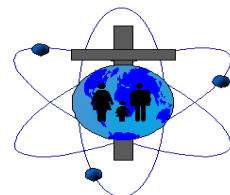
Society, Religion and Technology Project

- Set up in 1970 by the Church of Scotland
- Exploring ethical issues in current and future technology
- Engaging with:
 - research, industry, government/ EC, regulators
- Multi-disciplinary
 - seeking balanced and informed assessment
- Christian ethical reflection applied to technology
- Addressed to policy makers and public debate



Some Basic Ethical Issues of Technology

- Limits – lines we decide *not* to cross even though we *could*?
- Intervention / Conservation – where does the balance lie?
 - environment, waste, animal-medical, long & short term
- Innovation / Risk
 - Uncertainty and precaution – whose burden of proof is it?
- Particular issues raised by each area :
 - energy, food, medicine, IT, communications, transport, etc.
 - Nuclear power, GM food, cloning and stem cells, genetic information, animal research, mobile phone masts, food miles, climate change, personal mobility and lifestyle



Some guiding principles

- **You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world**

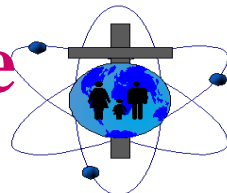
Matt. 5 v 13, 14

- **Wherever the church lacks a presence, that environment becomes impoverished of values and ethics**

Fr. Claudio Paganini

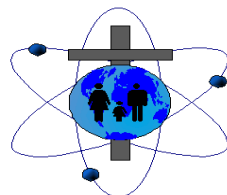
Four- Four- Two, Sept 2007

- **People generally don't care what you believe unless they believe that you care**

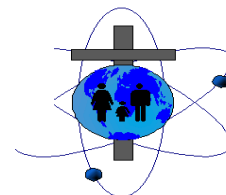
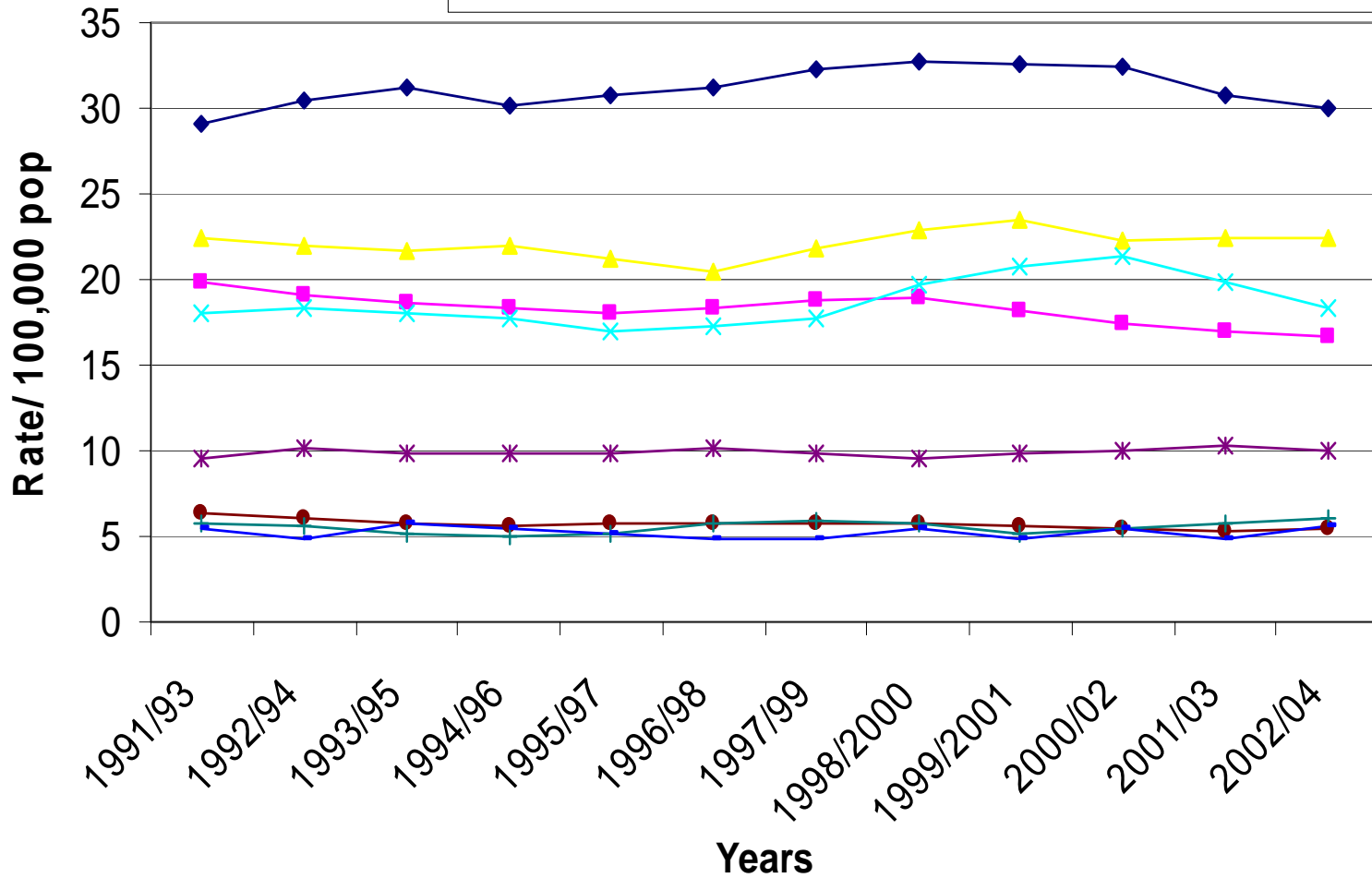
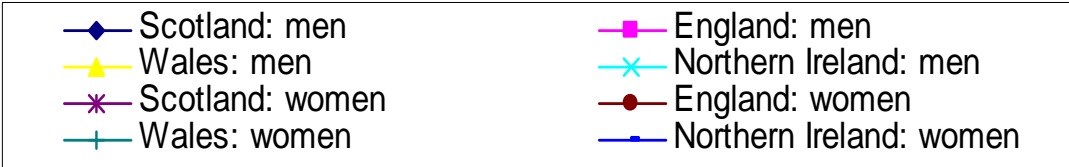


Suicide

- Suicide is a leading cause of death among young men in Scotland
 - Overall male to female ratio is about 3:1, but the excess of male deaths is more pronounced among younger adults
- Many struggle to know how to deal with issues around suicide.

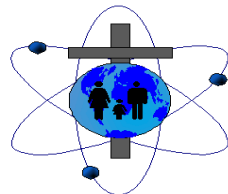


UK Suicide rates

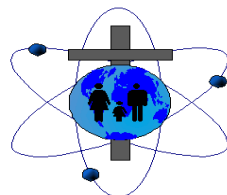


Many questions

- *Why did this happen?*
- *Why could we/ I not stop it?*
- *Why did we/ I not know this tragedy was going to happen?*

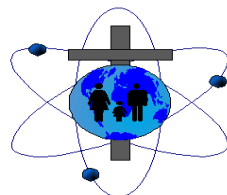


- Death from suicide rouses range of responses
 - Grief
 - Anger
 - Helplessness
 - Guilt
 - Confusion
 - Puzzlement
 - Shame
- Families, friends and professionals

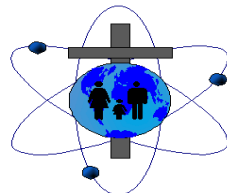


Risk groups

- Recognised risk factors include
 - mental ill-health
 - previous self-harm/ attempted suicide
 - Unemployment
 - Alcohol misuse/ dependency often a significant contributory factor in a variety of ways.
 - Social inequality: suicide rates approximately double in the most deprived areas are approximately four times higher than in the least deprived areas.

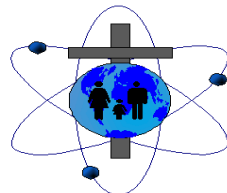


- At- risk groups include
 - Ex- prisoners
 - Young people leaving care
 - Those leaving the armed services



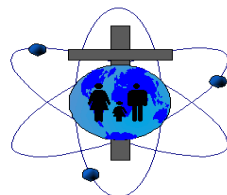
Suicide and self

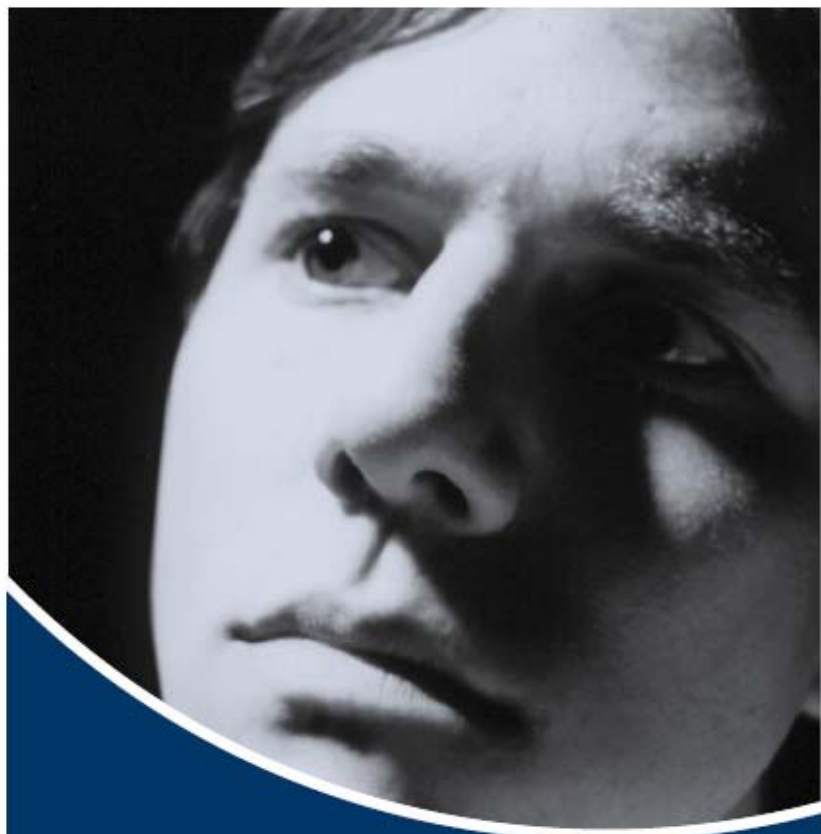
- **I thought that after swallowing all those pills, it would be simple - just a matter of time! I felt excited and exhilarated. For the first time in ages I felt happy and that I was at last in control of my own destiny**



Suicide and the church

- Suicide as a sin
- Can erect barriers(?)
 - Mowat *et al* (2006): *Religion and Suicide: An Exploratory Study of the Role of the Church in Deaths by Suicide in Highland, Scotland*
- Can be protective

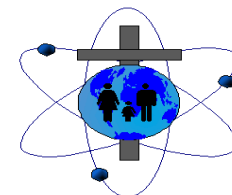




Suicide among young men:
The Church as a community of carers

 The Church of Scotland

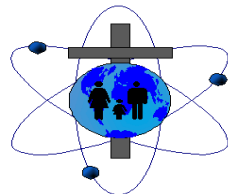
- Aimed at Kirk Sessions
 - 8 page booklet
 - Practical advice
- Available to download from *www.srtp.org.uk*



Society, Religion &
Technology Project

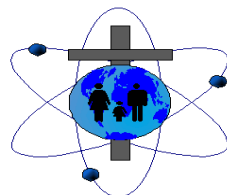
Suicide prevention

- Someone *being there* with them can, literally, mean the difference between life and death
- A caring presence can bring strength and hope through even the darkest of times:
 - *The presence of others*
 - *The presence of the church*
 - *The presence of God.*



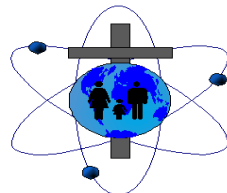
Resources

- Breathing Space
 - www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk
- Beating the Blues:
 - <http://www.beatingtheblues.co.uk/>
- Choose Life
 - <http://www.chooselife.net>
- Samaritans:
 - <http://www.samaritans.org/>



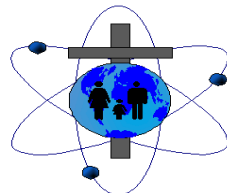
Specifically bereavement by suicide

- Petals Support:
 - <http://www.petalsupport.com/>
- Survivors of Bereavement by suicide:
 - <http://www.uk-sobs.org.uk/>
- Cruse
 - <http://www.crusescotland.org.uk/>
- Victim Support Scotland:
 - <http://www.victimsupportsco.org.uk/>



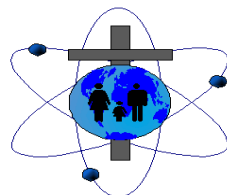
Training

- ASIST
 - Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training
- Choose Life
- Mental Health First Aid Scotland



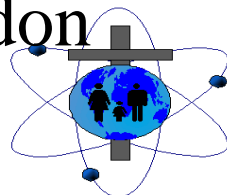
Privilege to care

- The Church proclaims that Jesus came to bring “*life in all its fullness*”, and seeks to encourage all concerned to seek to help those approaching the end of their lives to experience as fulfilled a life as possible.
- Despite the inevitable sadness involved in saying farewell to a loved one, the church has a responsibility - and in some ways the privilege - to ensure that all participants in the process experience as fulfilled and comfortable a final journey as possible.



- “I spend my professional life caring for babies who are entirely dependent on others for their survival. I was recently reflecting on the experience of spoon-feeding my aging mother. Not only was this a reversal of roles, where she had previously encouraged me as a baby to “open wide for the choo-choo”, but this very interdependency was fundamental to what it means to be human. To be a burden, and to bear one another’s burdens, are part of what we are as people.”

Prof John Wyatt, Professor of Neonatology,
University College London



- Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:2

