

## Moderator Acceptance Speech—General Assembly 2023

### Rev Sally Foster-Fulton

Look at you wonderful people. I am beyond humbled, inexpressibly honoured and more than a wee bit excited to be your Moderator. Thank you for your trust, your prayers and the commitment you share to be (part of) the body of Christ in this place.

I went a bit rogue with the gear, but there's a reason. It has felt like an extraordinary time in the life of the planet, the life of the country and the life of the Church of Scotland. Green is the liturgical colour for 'ordinary time' and it reminds us – throughout history, the world, the country, the Church have experienced extraordinary challenges – and it has been the grit, the determination and the hopeful imagination of individuals and communities who have risen to those challenges.

Ordinary time is extraordinary, and we know what is at stake – all we need to do is look around us. There is a South African phrase, 'Ubuntu' – best translated: 'I am because you are.' The body of Christ has work to do, love to share, justice and equity to seek. When I look at you wonderful people, I see an audacious hope. Let's roll up our sleeves and bring it.

Moderator, Iain. One of the things we are told early on in preparations for this day is that Right Reverend is not just an honorary title, but a solemn duty – one to be considered when you take on the role of Moderator. Because it means Represented/Right Reverend is a reference indicating that you are representing the Church of Scotland. You enter a space and embody the Kirk.

This year, Iain, you have done that with grace, humour and respect. You have also approached and inhabited every single space with the same sense of love, presence and importance, and for that the General Assembly thanks you.

This year, you were asked to represent us in ways you couldn't have expected – you participated in the funeral of our Queen, the Coronation of our King. You signed the historic St Margaret Declaration, a declaration of friendship between the Catholic Church and the Church of Scotland. You travelled to South Sudan with Pope Frances and the Archbishop of Canterbury, standing in solidarity with those who crave peace. Your love of people and deep understanding of 'Right Reverend' meant you embodied the love, deep listening and openness to learning from others that marks the church.

Across Scotland, you tirelessly (and I mean that, because although you must be exhausted, you always had a smile for folk and time to stop and hear their stories.) – you tirelessly

visited small towns and vast cathedrals, Guild gatherings, dedication services, thanked volunteers who share their time to make life better for their neighbours and questioned and challenged decision makers. All this, you did with the same sense of import – that is a gift, and we thank you for sharing.

You had the incredible support and wisdom of your wonderful wife, Linda – who organised you behind the scenes and made sure the work done was shared on Facebook and Twitter. Your lovely family shared you with us – enjoy being back home full-time. Right Reverend, we are very grateful for the very reverent way you lived out this year.