Introduction

Moderator,

Today I present the report of the Guild, a movement that some 131 years ago was established as the Church of Scotland Woman’s Guild but has progressed and advanced to include women and men. I report on the very day we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women to the Church of Scotland. Earlier this afternoon we had the privilege of joining with hundreds of others in a procession to honour the pioneer women (and men who supported their call) who altered the path and took the church on a new stage in its journey. As a Guild, we are also on a journey. Today we reflect on how far we have travelled on that journey and how much more influence women and men working together can have in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Slide 1 – Be Bold, Be Strong image

We are coming to the successful end of the 3 year strategy, ‘Be Bold Be Strong’ with the separate themes of
'Go in Peace, Go in Joy and Go in Love’. During the 3 years the Guild nationally has embraced the theme with Roadshows, Regional Gatherings and Big Sings. The strategy for 2018-2021 will be ‘One Journey many Roads’ with the yearly themes ‘Seeking the Way’, ‘Companions on the Road’ and ‘The Extra Mile.’ The Big Sings have grown in popularity as they draw people together from all parts of the country in fellowship, worship and praise. This year we decided to try something new with a Christmas Big Sing. No one really knew how it would go at such a busy time of the year however it proved so popular that we had to have two sittings and the possibility of a third! It was a fabulous start to advent.

Regional Gatherings and Roadshows

Slide 2 – roadshow image

Whilst we are all aware of the fact that we belong to the one church, it can feel very lonely in some parts of the country, and there can be a tendency to feel that one has been, overlooked, cut off or even forgotten. Roadshows have been organised across Scotland to affirm and support these Guilds. However it also gave us a valuable insight into the challenges faced by Guilds who operate in
such remote settings but we were so encouraged by the enthusiasm, commitment and energy we saw where ever we went. Tarbert, Fort William, Kyle of Lochalsh, Stornoway, Unst, Kirkwall and Wick have all been venues for roadshows. We have always felt at home and amongst friends.

Malawi

Slide 3 – Malawi Guild Image

Moderator, one of the many highlights of my year as National Convener was my visit to Malawi along with our General Secretary, Iain and Associate Secretary, Karen. Over a number of years we have developed a close connection with the Guild in Malawi. The main purpose of the visit was to attend the Umanyano Conference (Women’s Guild) in Lilongwe and the Madodana Conference (Men’s Guild) in Mzimba, both amazing and inspiring celebrations showing how God is working through the Guild in that country. While there, we also met with Christian Aid to discuss how Bolivian solar oven technology could be used in Malawi. The Malawian Bible Society gave us a greater understanding of how the bible is being used to tackle illiteracy. In Mzuzu Hospital we met
with the staff of the Scottish charity 500 miles and saw for ourselves the tremendous work they do providing prosthetic limbs.

Slide 4 Jomo image

We also visited one of the projects run by Livingstonia Synod Aids Project, itself a Guild project in 1997-2000, in the village of Jomo where we met people, adults and children alike, who were affected in some way by HIV. It was a humbling visit but faith, hope and love shone through.

We left inspired and encouraged that even in these most difficult circumstances God is at work.

Slide 5 – Guild woman

Moderator, going forward a key part of our relationship will be with Malawian Guilds working with Scottish Guilds. We have so much to learn from our friends in Malawi that can only benefit us all. To that end we have begun discussions regarding possible twinnings of some of our Presbyterial Councils with Men’s and Women’s Guilds in Malawi.
Projects

As I said at the start, the Guild is just coming to the end of our 3 year strategy, Be Bold, Be Strong. During this period not only has a tremendous amount of money been raised, but Guild members, and through them the wider church, have learned a lot about each issue, in no small part because of the superb speakers that each project sent around the country.

‘Let’s Stick Together’, a project with Care for the Family, has supported new parents in their relationships with each other and their children.

Vulnerable young people on the streets of Scotland have been cared for by Street Pastors, an Ascension Trust Scotland project.

Prospects’, ‘All Friends Together’ has helped the church welcome adults with learning difficulties into the hearts of our congregations.
‘Caring for Mother Earth in Bolivia’, a Christian Aid project, has transformed the lives of women in Bolivia with the introduction of solar ovens.

In Haiti, Mission International’s project has developed a church, a school and community centre. The church is much bigger than originally planned as the congregation has grown so much.

Finally, Feed the Minds project, Breaking the Cycle of FGM in Kenya’, perhaps the most challenging of all the projects, brought the scourge of FGM right to the heart of the church and has enabled so many girls and young women to be spared the indignity of cutting but has also changed attitudes amongst men and boys.

Slide 7 – total slide

Moderator to date the total raised is ......................

I think you’ll agree this is an amazing amount and on behalf of the Guild and all the project partners I thank all involved in raising this magnificent total.

Slide 8 – Big sing
Tonight at 7pm, here in this hall, we will celebrate these projects together with our partners. You are most welcome to join us, and you can pick up a ticket from the Guild stall in the Martyn Hall, but be quick or they may be gone!

We now embark on a new journey with six new projects:

Four projects have been specifically chosen to recognise and celebrate the Year of Young People:

Slide 9 – BB Image

Working with Boys’ Brigade Scotland, we will engage in practical inter-generational work as together we develop, faith, leadership and community involvement amongst young people.

Slide 10 – FTL slide

Free to Live Trust’s ‘Seema’s Project, aims to work with children born to sex workers in the slums of Pune and will provide safety, support, education and freedom from modern day slavery

Slide 11 – boy in field
‘Growing the Future’ will see us working with Malawi Fruits, to train and support young farmers, as they move from subsistence farming to sustainable agriculture.

**Slide 12 – mother and child**

In Kanyama, Lusaka, we will work with the World Mission Council and the United Church of Zambia to help empower teenage mothers, offering health advice, training and development opportunities.

**Slide 13 – sailors photo**

It is said that to fully understand Scotland, you have to view it from the sea.

Indeed, it is estimated that 90% of all goods come to us by sea, delivered by an invisible workforce of 1.6 million people.

The Sailors’ Society project, ‘Port Chaplaincy in Scotland’ seeks to provide a chaplain in every port, who will offer support and a listening ear to many who find themselves far from home!
Slide 14 – loneliness

Our final project CrossReach’s ‘Join up the Dots’ will tackle head on the issues of isolation and loneliness faced by people of all ages across Scotland.

We hope the General Assembly agrees that these are six fabulous projects, which will again bring challenging issues to the heart of the Church.

Membership

There has been a lot of talk in recent years about the decline in Guild membership, something which challenges the Guild as it does the whole church.

However, it is not all doom and gloom!

Slide 15 – mad as hatters

Across the country, Guilds are finding new and innovative ways of ‘doing Guild’ differently. Some of these innovations are detailed in our report. This hard work is
bearing fruit and this year alone we are delighted to tell you that, over 600 new members have joined us.

Slide 16 – Scalloway

The formation of a new Guild in Scalloway in Shetland and enquiries from other congregations shows that there are shoots of new life within our great movement.

Slide 17 – GB

We were delighted that the 2nd Linlithgow Company of the Girls’ Brigade became our second honorary Guild Group. They have spent the year looking more closely at the Guild and at our projects and we hope they will join us at the Annual Gathering.

We hope that we can add more honorary groups in the years ahead.

Our first honorary group was the National Youth Assembly, with which we continue to have a positive and mutually beneficial relationship.

We look forward to welcoming Tamsin Dingwall, the
incoming Moderator of the Youth Assembly, as our guest speaker at the Annual Gathering in September.

**Slide 18 – Mod and Pope**

One practical way of engaging people in conversation about the Guild is through the use of Guild merchandise and the Guild tartan continues to be an effective way of doing that both here in Scotland and further afield. We were delighted that Rt Rev Derek Browning was able to gift a scarf to Pope Francis during a recent visit to the Vatican.

**Convener’s Challenge**

Whilst the primary purpose of the Guild is to invite both women and men to commit their lives to Jesus Christ, enabling all to express faith in worship, prayer and action, it is important to commit ourselves to each other in Christ’s service. Meeting for fellowship and fun need not be looked down upon even in a Presbyterian Church! This year I introduced the Convener’s Challenge, where the Convener of the time suggests an activity of their choice to compete for the Convener’s Challenge Shield. The competition is of secondary importance. The coming
together encouraging, exchanging stories, developing friendships, and strengthening bonds across the Guild is of much greater importance.

**Slide 19 – Bowling**

My activity for the first year was bowling, which is one of my passions. On 24th August last year we had a very successful day at Kelvingrove Bowling Greens in Glasgow.

The weather was on our side which made a big difference to the success of the day. The winning rink was Hamilton North and the runners up were Cadder. The Convener’s Challenge for this year is to design a front for a cushion based on the new three year strategy.

**Annual Gathering**

**Slide 20 – Margaret dancing**

The Annual Gathering in the Caird Hall in Dundee is the biggest celebration of the Guild and was certainly one of the highlights of my year with around 2,000 members and friends gathered for an uplifting day of fellowship and worship. We were privileged to hear from the Moderator, the Rt Rev Dr Derek Browning and Dr Pam Cairns.
The Heart and Soul Swing Band had us dancing in the aisles and even on the stage!

Slide 21 – general happy image
Moderator, it has been a great honour for me to serve the Guild as National Convener. I have met Guild folk up and down the country, north to south, east to west and have been warmly welcomed with true Guild hospitality wherever I have travelled. I would like to thank the staff in the Guild Office, Iain, Karen, Lesley, Alice and Mandy, for all the help they have given me over the past year. I would also like to thank my Leadership Team, Vice Convener Patricia, Group Conveners Marian, Jane, Mabel and Helen for all the support they too have given to me. I feel it has been a team effort!

Slide 22 – one journey, many roads

We’ve been Bold and Strong, now we’re about to Seek the Way as we go on One Journey with Many Roads together.

Moderator
I present the Report of the Church of Scotland Guild and move the deliverance.