

MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS  
OF  
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF  
THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

CONVENED AT EDINBURGH, 23 MAY 2017

*At Edinburgh, and within the Assembly Hall, the 23rd day of May 2017 years, at 9.15 am, Session III.*

The General Assembly did again convene and was constituted with prayer.

The minutes of Session I, being printed and in the hands of members, were submitted and approved.

### CHURCH AND SOCIETY COUNCIL

The General Assembly called for the Report and Supplementary Report of the Church and Society Council which were given in by the Rev Dr Richard Frazer, Convener.

*It was moved and seconded-*

#### The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report and Supplementary Report.

#### Speak Out

2. Approve the Speak Out Implementation Plan and encourage the Council in its long-term planning process.
3. Celebrate the outstanding work which local churches are already undertaking to make Scotland fairer, more equal and more just – more like God intends.

4. Instruct the Council to work in partnership with other Councils and Committees in the implementation of the Plan.
5. Instruct the Council to develop resources to enable congregations to engage fully in the work of Speak Out.
6. Instruct the Council to establish a robust monitoring and evaluation framework which will enable the Church to scrutinise, measure and learn from the work of Speak Out.

#### Surveillance

7. Instruct the Council to develop appropriate resources to ensure the wider discussion of the issues raised in the Surveillance and Social Justice report.
8. Instruct the Council to continue to challenge organisations, including governments, in their inappropriate use of surveillance especially with regards to the poorest and most marginalised in society.

#### European Union

9. Regret the reported rise in xenophobic and racist attacks on people following the result of the EU Referendum and affirm the valuable role of citizens from other parts of Europe living in Scotland.
10. Encourage congregations to discuss our future in Europe respectfully, using the "Conversation Welcome"

resource produced by the Joint Public Issues Team, and to raise their concerns and aspirations with their elected representatives.

11. Call on the Scottish and UK Governments to ensure that the rights and contributions of nationals from other EU countries resident in Scotland are recognised and protected.
12. Instruct the Council to ensure the voice of the Church is heard in the public debate around the Article 50 negotiations.

### **Asylum and Refugees**

13. Call on the UK Government to increase the target number of individuals to be resettled under refugee humanitarian programmes in proportion to the scale of global need and the relative size of the UK population and economy.
14. Call on the UK Government to allow individuals resettled through community sponsorship to be counted in addition to, rather than as part of, its target number for refugee resettlement.
15. Encourage congregations that may be considering applying for community sponsorship to be aware of the wider implications outlined in the Report at paragraph 7.4.5.
16. Call on the UK Government to implement the recommendations of the 2015 UK Parliamentary Inquiry into Detention and to make provision for child refugees to have access to a right to family reunion.
17. Call on the Scottish Government to extend its strategic framework for refugee integration and ensure the participation of the church at a local and national level, both as an organisation committed to working with refugees as well as a body which includes asylum seekers and refugees as members.
18. Encourage congregations and church members to take part in opportunities for encounter and learning with

asylum seekers and refugees, through appropriate groups or the programmes from the Scottish Refugee Council including Cup of Tea with a Refugee and Refugee Festival Scotland.

19. Acknowledge the generosity of many congregations in donating aid and money to support refugees and encourage giving money rather than purchasing new goods for donation, and where donated goods are offered that these are given in response to a specific list of requested items and to a registered charity.

### **Pilgrimage**

20. Affirm the place of pilgrimage within the life of the church and encourage congregations to explore opportunities for pilgrimage locally and how to provide practical and spiritual support for pilgrims passing through the parish.
21. Instruct the Council, in partnership with the Mission and Discipleship Council and others to develop resources to support pilgrimage in Scotland.

### **An Economy Driven by Equality**

22. Welcome the growth of interest in ethical finance initiatives in Scotland and urge congregations to support the Christian Aid Big Shift campaign on banking and investigate what it means to become an Ethical Money Church.

### **Doing Politics Differently**

23. Welcome the impact of 'Meet Your MSP' and encourage congregations to build positive relationships with their local politicians.
24. Welcome the work on participatory budgeting initiatives being undertaken by local congregations supported by the Council.

### **Gender Justice**

25. Commend the work that the Council of Assembly is doing to explore the best way to take forward broader gender justice work in the Church.

26. Welcome the work being undertaken by the Violence against Women Task Group and Development Officer and urge the Church to continue to work to end violence against women.
27. Commend the new resources created by the Violence against Women Task Group for study and action by local churches and Kirk Sessions.
28. Instruct the Council to reflect on the issue of prostitution and the Church's response to it and to report on this subject to a future General Assembly.
29. Call on political decision-makers and influence shapers to refrain from personal attacks but instead seek to discuss, debate and engage in conversation with respect, grace and always seeking the common good.
30. Instruct the Council to continue to monitor the ongoing debate about Scotland's Constitutional Future and to report the General Assembly of 2018.

*It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the Deliverance:*

*Add a new Section 2 and renumber:*

Express profound sadness at the attack at Manchester Arena and the tragic and pointless loss of life; affirm the courage and grace with which Manchester is already responding; call on the Church to continue to foster deep relationships across communities; and commit us to pray for all those affected.

*It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the Deliverance:*

*Add a new Section 9 and renumber:*

Note the imminent introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation and encourage the Council to monitor its effects on vulnerable people.

*It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of Section 9:*

*Delete 'Regret' and substitute 'Deplore'.*

*It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of Section 11:*

*After 'resident in Scotland' add 'and UK citizens resident in EU member states'.*

*It was moved and seconded as an amendment of the Deliverance:*

*Add a new Section 18 and renumber:*

Call on the UK Government to end its policy of destitution for failed asylum seekers.

*It was moved and seconded as an amendment of the proposed amendment:*

*Delete 'failed' and substitute 'rejected'.*

*On a vote being taken For or Against the amendment of the proposed amendment, it carried Against.*

*The amendment was then agreed.*

*It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of Section 21:*

*After 'develop resources to support pilgrimage in Scotland' add ', and to explore and develop ways of assisting congregations on pilgrim routes to fulfil the missionary purposes of the Church.'*

*It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the Deliverance:*

*Add a new Section 23 and renumber:*

Instruct the Council to consider the effectiveness of microcredit schemes in lifting people out of poverty and report to a future General Assembly as part of the Council's focus on an economy driven by equality.

*It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the Deliverance:*

*Add a new Section 25 and renumber:*

Encourage the Council to reflect on changes in the way that decisions are made at the level of Government and report to a future General Assembly.

*It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the Deliverance:*

*Add a new Section 27 and renumber:*

Condemn the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) as an act of violence against women and call on the Council to urge the UK Government to seriously consider an individual's risk of falling victim to FGM when determining asylum applications.

*It was moved and seconded as an amendment of the Deliverance:*

*Add a new Section 29:*

Call on the UK Government to ensure that ship to ship transfers of crude oil are not permitted in the Inner Moray Firth.

*On a vote being taken For or Against it carried For.*

*It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the Deliverance:*

*Add a new Section 29:*

Welcome the development of Visitor Centres in Scottish Prisons, welcome the engagement of the Church in this development, and encourage the Council to continue to pay attention to this and other matters relating to imprisonment and penal reform.

*The Deliverance as amended was then agreed.*

The General Assembly suspended their sitting at 12.27 pm until 2 pm.

## **CHURCH OF SCOTLAND GUILD**

The General Assembly called for the Report of the Guild which was given in by Mrs Rosemary Johnston, Convener.

*It was moved and seconded-*

### **The General Assembly:**

1. Receive the Report.
2. Congratulate the Guild on its 130th anniversary.
3. Encourage congregations without a Guild to consider establishing one.
4. Note the possibility of individuals joining the Guild.
5. Encourage Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions to consider their relationship with the Guild at all levels, including support of Guild Projects.
6. Welcome the on-going developments in the services delivered nationally by the Guild.
7. Commend the Guild's published resources for use by other congregational groups.
8. Welcome the developing relationship between the Guild and the Synod of Livingstonia of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian.

*It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of Section 3:*

*Add at the end 'or forming a linkage with a neighbouring congregation'.*

*It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of Section 5:*

*After 'consider' add 'reinvigorating'.*

*The Deliverance as amended was then agreed.*

Mrs Johnston, on her retirement as Convener, was thanked by the Moderator for her noteworthy service to the Guild and the General Assembly.

### **JOINT REPORT OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND GUILD AND THE NATIONAL YOUTH ASSEMBLY**

The General Assembly called for the Joint Report of the Guild and the National Youth Assembly which was given in by Mrs Rosemary Johnston, Convener, The Church of Scotland Guild.

*It was moved, seconded and agreed-*

#### **The General Assembly:**

1. Receive the Report.
2. Commend the Guild and the National Youth Assembly for their continuing commitment to developing intergenerational initiatives.
3. Encourage ministers, Kirk Sessions and other church leaders to consider how intergenerational work and ministry might be of benefit in their congregations and parishes.
4. Encourage Presbyteries to consider how they might support congregations in developing intergenerational work and ministry.
5. Encourage the Councils and Committees of the Kirk to keep intergenerational issues in mind in their discussions and decision-making.

### **IONA COMMUNITY BOARD**

The General Assembly called for the Report of the Iona Community Board which was given in by the Rev Alan Kimmitt, Convener.

*It was moved, seconded and agreed-*

#### **The General Assembly:**

1. Receive the Report and thank the Board.
2. Congratulate the Iona Community on the opening of its new Glasgow centre and the development of programme activities promoting peace and justice.
3. Commend the proposed refurbishment plans for Iona Abbey and encourage church members and congregations to support the *Sanctuary and Light – Iona Abbey Appeal*.
4. Congratulate the new Leader of the Iona Community, Dr Michael Marten, and wish him well; and thank Rev Peter Macdonald for his service over the past eight years.

Rev Peter McDonald, Leader of the Iona Community, was invited to address the General Assembly and was thanked by the Moderator.

The General Assembly adjourned at 3.37 pm to meet again in this Hall tomorrow at 9.15 am for business, whereof public intimation having been made, the Sederunt was closed with prayer.

ASSEMBLY HALL  
EDINBURGH, 23 May 2017, 3.37 pm

A special session, Catalysing Kingdom Communities, was held in the Assembly Hall following the close of business.