



The Church of Scotland

SOCIETY, RELIGION AND TECHNOLOGY



Helping the Church to engage with
ethical issues in science and technology

Society, Religion and Technology (SRT) has covered a wide variety of topics in its 50-year history; these have ranged from stem cells to synthetic biology, and from economics to environmental issues.

SRT was set up in 1970 by the Church of Scotland to examine the implications of new and emerging technologies. It seeks to stimulate ethical understanding by engaging with those working in research, industry, government, NGO's and many other organisations. Its expert working groups provide a forum for multi-disciplinary interaction between scientists and specialists in ethics, theology, sociology, ecology, risk and other fields, to look together at wider dimensions of emerging technologies. Bringing insights from Christian ethics, it has built up a reputation for the quality and balance of its work on complex and vital issues of our times, from North Sea Oil in the 1970s to cloning, neuroethics and synthetic biology today. SRT also acts a catalyst of public debate on current issues and promotes practical environmental action through the Eco-Congregation programme.

SRT's Aims

- To foster an informed understanding in society of the issues confronting it as a result of emerging technologies; to bring a voice of balance into complex issues.
- To engage with scientists and technologists to reflect on ethical, environmental and societal implications of their work; to promote ethics teaching to science students.
- To respond with considered judgment to Government and national bodies on technology and environmental issues, and to be active in their European and global dimensions.
- To inform the churches of Scotland and the UK about key developments.
- To act as a Christian witness to the world of science and technology.
- To stimulate good environmental practice in the churches and in wider society.

SRT is currently led by two staff, Dr Murdo Macdonald (SRT Policy Officer) and Karen Hunter (SRT Administrator), who are based at the Church of Scotland offices in Edinburgh. The work is overseen by a committee of nine people, which is currently chaired by Dr Caroline Cowan. In addition, experts in specific areas are consulted in relation to particular issues.

Some issues covered by SRT in recent years

General Assembly 2017

Borders, Benefits and Biomedicine: Surveillance and Social Justice

General Assembly 2016

Energy Issues and Fuel Poverty

General Assembly 2015

Transplantation: Opting in or presumed consent for organ and tissue donation?

General Assembly 2014

Striving together: Celebrating competitiveness in sport

Families and the Church in the 21st Century: The meaning of kinship bonds

General Assembly 2012

Neuroethics: Who has the right to see what you're thinking?

What about manipulating people's brains?

Sustainable Agriculture: How do we reconnect with where our food comes from?

Ethics and economics: What has happened to ethics in economics?

General Assembly 2011

Suicide among young men: How should the church respond?

Mental health issues: Mental health friendly churches.

Ethics and the Internet: How has the Internet changed the way we interact?

General Assembly 2010

Synthetic Biology: Should we create artificial life forms?

General Assembly 2009

End of Life Issues: Caring for carers.

In the past we have also looked at many other issues, including: Food, medicine, IT, communications, transport, Nuclear power, GM food, cloning and stem cells, genetic information, animal research, mobile phone masts, food miles, climate change, ethical finance.....

