

Very Rev Dr Susan Brown Speech—General Assembly 2023

Thank you, Convener.

It is good to talk.

And it is good to listen.

It is even *better* to **keep** talking and to keep listening.

The idea behind creating a glossary was not to provide definitive answers, but to offer possible beginnings through conversations between two particular parties – the Church of Scotland and our Jewish counterparts in the UK. The hope was those beginnings might lead to a deepening of understanding of how the way the words we each use is understood by the other and every bit as importantly, by ourselves.

The conversations which form the basis of the glossary were one-to-one conversations. Which means that the resultant insights come from the perspective of those individuals, further bolstered by the thoughts of partners and friends from within and beyond both communities. It is doubtful any of us will find an exact match for our theology within them, but that's kind of the point. The conversations provide a starting place from which, others are encouraged to hold their *own* conversations and from which it is possible to clarify our own thinking on these and other issues. The list is far from exhaustive. Very far from exhaustive. Very, very far.

The words with which we have begun our explorations are but a tiny drop in the ocean of all the words and ideas it would be good for us to explore together.

But it is a start.

A significant start.

We are deeply indebted to those from both the Jewish and the Christian (more specifically from the Church of Scotland) perspectives who so willingly and bravely offered their thoughts and engaged in the process. Moderator, one of those voices from the Church of Scotland you might recognise since your husband, Rev Stuart Fulton played a large and significant role in getting things off the ground. Thanks to him *and* to all our conversationalists. From both communities.

The greatest weight of the work involved in producing these beginnings, however, was carried by Dan Bacall and Felicity Ginsburg in the Office of the Chief Rabbi and by our own

Mirella Yandoli – all of whom are here today. The hours they have put in to gently cajole their respective participants to come up with the goods, their hard work and tenacity and patience, as well as their passion for the vision behind this document, has been the driving force to its being before you now.

From a Church of Scotland perspective, the hope is that ministers, worship leaders, office holders, members and the curious, may all find within this glossary something to pique their interest, leading them on to want to discover more about our own and the Jewish faith and the hope is too, that it will inspire individuals and groups within congregations, to make the effort to listen to one another from our two distinct faith communities, as friends and as fellow faith travellers.

This document exists to be built on.

By you.

The invitation this glossary extends, is to **continuing** conversations: conversations in which you, where you are, can sit down with your Jewish neighbours to learn and understand more about each other... so that interesting and inspirational as well as difficult things can be said with care and respect.

For both perspectives there will be things that are **hard** to hear, that **need** to be said. But there are also things that can help to inspire and encourage one another.

This document does not make our two communities of one mind. That cannot be. But it does invite us to understand one another even in our disagreement and it invites us too, to thank God for God's people.

Moderator, may I invite you to ask the Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis to address the Assembly now.