

FOR YOUR MAJESTY'S APPROBATION  
AND SIGNATURE IF APPROVED

Your Majesty's letter to the General Assembly  
Of the Church of Scotland to be read at the opening  
Of the Assembly on 20th May 2023

Right Reverend and Well Beloved, We Greet You Well. We gladly renew on this Occasion Our pledge to preserve and uphold the rights and privileges of the Church of Scotland. In doing so, We acknowledge, with Gratitude to Almighty God, the Church's steadfast witness to the Christian faith and its services to our people in Scotland and in many lands overseas.

We deeply appreciated the many expressions of condolences we received on the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, our beloved Mother, and for the warmth and dignity of the National Service of Thanksgiving for her life that was held at St Giles' Cathedral.

We are very conscious at this time of the pain for so many people across the world who are suffering from the vagaries of war and poverty. We are, as ever, inspired by the way in

which the Church of Scotland, with other Churches and faith communities, has expressed the Gospel imperative to the poor and made the care of refugees and asylum-seekers such a priority.

It was most heartening to learn about the historic Ecumenical Peace Pilgrimage to South Sudan by His Holiness Pope Francis, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the past Moderator. Their messages of justice, peace and reconciliation were made all the more powerful by their visible presence which signified both the unity and diversity of the Churches. These messages are equally vital in Sudan where people are again threatened by conflict. We pray for a swift end to the current hostilities to ease the human suffering and bring peace. We were also greatly encouraged by the signing of the St Margaret's Declaration of Friendship between the Church and the Catholic Bishops Conference of Scotland, as well as with the Church's continued commitment to inter-faith dialogue to deepen understanding and relationships with other faith communities. This work is vital to support and strengthen local communities. Our prayers are with you as you help to lead the way in friendships which

contribute to peace, reconciliation and a commitment to our common humanity.

We are aware of the challenges which the Church is facing as it continues the process of reform, as well as its discernment of God's will for the future shape of ministry and mission across Scotland. Our prayers remain with you, and may the Holy Spirit continue to guide the Church with wisdom, grace and hope in all its decision-making. We also remain hugely encouraged that even in these uncertain times the local church continues to serve tirelessly their neighbours who are in need – such faith in action is truly a light for the world.

May your faith and courage be strengthened in your deliberations during the week ahead and through the times to come. As We are unable in Our Own Person to be present at your Assembly this year, We have chosen Our Right Trusty and Well Beloved Counsellor, The Right Honourable Lord Hodge, to be Our representative, being assured that Our choice will meet with your approval.

