

FAITH IMPACT FORUM MAY 2023

Proposed Deliverance

The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.
2. *Legacies of Slavery – section 3*
 - a) Commend the report on ‘the Church of Scotland and the legacies of slavery’ for study and action and reaffirm the Church of Scotland’s teaching and action for racial justice.
 - b) Instruct the Faith Impact Forum to consider ways to support the delivery of the recommendations set out in the report.
 - c) Instruct the Faith Impact Forum, in partnership with the Theological Forum and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group to prepare a statement of acknowledgment and apology for the Church’s involvement with and connection to historic chattel slavery, to be considered for adoption at a future General Assembly.
 - d) Encourage congregations to research the history of slavery and its connections in their local areas, and to continue to celebrate Racial Justice Sunday to challenge racism and speak out against racial injustice.
3. *Net Zero – section 4.3*
Urge Kirk Sessions, Presbyteries, and national committees and agencies to note and consider ways of taking forward the outcomes of the ‘Net Zero Strategic Outline’, and instruct the Faith Impact Forum, in partnership with the Assembly Trustees, General Trustees, CrossReach and Eco Congregation Scotland to continue to develop plans and activities to encourage and enable all parts of the Church to work towards the target of Net Zero by 2030.
4. *Earthquake in Syria – section 5.3.4*
Encourage Presbyteries and congregations to offer prayerful and financial support to the rebuilding of lives and churches in Syria and Lebanon through ‘Standing Firm – Rebuilding lives in Syria’.
5. *Pakistan – section 5.4.1*
Instruct the Faith Impact Forum to continue to engage with ecumenical and international partners on the misuse of the blasphemy law and forced conversion and forced marriage in Pakistan.
6. *Integrity: Violence Against Women Task Group – section 7*
Instruct the Faith Impact Forum, in collaboration with Integrity to develop the Violence Against Women Charter as a resource to build a network of congregations, supported and equipped to help respond to and prevent this form of violence.
7. *Cost of Living – section 8*
Instruct the Faith Impact Forum to share the Church’s practical experiences and policy ideas in relation to tackling poverty and helping people with the cost of living with the Scottish and UK Governments, and to report to the General Assembly of 2024.
8. *Assisted Suicide – section 10.4*
Support the current legal protections which prohibit assisted suicide/assisted dying and urge members of the Church to make representation to their MSPs.
9. *Constitutional issues – section 10.1*
Reaffirm that the Church will remain impartial on the issue of Scottish independence and on related questions about the holding of a referendum.
10. *Addictions/substance use – section 11*
Instruct the Faith Impact Forum to research and develop thinking on the policy, ethical, spiritual and theological issues arising from Scotland’s current crisis with regards to addictions and substance use, including producing advice and information to support the work of local congregations.

Report

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Governance

Since last year’s General Assembly, the Faith Impact Forum has continued to work to fulfil the deliverances agreed by previous General Assemblies. In addition, this year we have worked closely with the staff based at the national office to plan our work and governance properly in line with the Assembly Trustees D10 Strategic Planning Team (D10 SPT) (see section 13.4 of the Report of the Assembly Trustees).

1.2 Staff Structure

In September 2022 the staff who previously worked for individual Forums became one Faith Action Programme staff team and the agenda for the Forum meetings adjusted to reflect this change under the new Programme Group areas, namely: People and Training; Mission Support (including Presbytery and Partnership Support); Public Life and Social Justice; and, Resource and Presence.

1.3 Budgets

In preparation for the expected closing of both Forums to be replaced by a single Faith Action Programme Leadership Team the individual budgets of both Forums were united in January 2023. As regards both sets of Forum financial accounts we are able to report to the General Assembly that net savings were made between both Forums of over £1m (Faith Impact Forum net saving of £384,732 & Faith Nurture Forum net saving, (excluding ministries staffing costs), of £722,348).

1.4 Reporting

Recognising the changes made and anticipated to governance, staff structure and budgeting, Commissioners may note changes to where previous work areas sit; these are highlighted in the new Programme Group areas reflecting the movements made in the last year. Please find below a short executive summary to cover the areas of our output over the last year. We hope this means of reporting to the General Assembly will help Commissioners.

The report following this summary will deal directly with the deliverances relating to the Forum, and the strategic plans we have developed with the Assembly Trustees as priorities to deliver the Faith Action Programme over the next 3-5 years.

We invite the General Assembly to recognise and acknowledge that, with new staff structures, changing committee structures and with a new strategic Faith Action Programme, the immediate capacity for developing or taking on new areas of work this year is limited. With this in mind, it will be hard for Convener’s to be willing to accept significant new and unplanned work in the form of additional deliverances. If the Assembly were to insist on new work, we have to caution that it may not be possible to fulfil in a timely manner or to the high standards which would be expected. This would help us all as we move forward into this new governance and staffing arrangements, and develop focus on Programme delivery. We do not envisage the same situation to be facing us next year by which time we expect work to be running smoothly, and so we would be prepared to return to normal and discuss significant new deliverances at the 2024 General Assembly.

1.5 Public Life and Social Justice

This staff team’s role is to support the delivery of the Faith Action Programme with particular regard to helping the Church of Scotland’s contribution to public life and social justice, through the sharing of ideas. This is in response to and in support of the development of congregations’ and presbyteries’ social action work and witness for the benefit of congregations and the wider community.

Public Life and Social Justice includes the work of Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees, the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office, the Society, Religion and Technology Project and Integrity: The Church of Scotland’s violence against women task group. It also supports the work of the Church’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group and Interfaith relations work. Public Life and Social Justice also helps other departments with support and advice on public issues, including media relations and helping the Moderator in their political and civic facing role.

1.6 Mission Support

Included in the work of the new Mission Support programme group is the work of Congregational Engagement, which has worked to support Faith Impact Forum priorities such our supporter-facing communication (e-newsletter and social media channels), relations with relevant Presbytery committees and for taking forward projects related to the HIV Programme and Twinning. Congregational Engagement have also supported the running of events online and onsite, and in providing speakers for talks, Guild meetings etc. Another important element of Mission Support is the work of the Priority Areas team, which has been and will continue to be an important collaboration on issues of public witness, solidarity and mutual support to express the Gospel bias to the poor.

1.7 Presbytery and Partnership Support

The critical strategic task in International Partnerships is to set priorities between supporting individual mission partners, and grant aiding partners, against a three-to-five-year horizon, with a reducing budget.

1.8 Resource and Presence

The Israeli Institutions continue to recover well after Covid-19, with the second half of 2022 in particular being extremely strong in both Jerusalem and Tiberias. The School in Jaffa has also worked well, although it is now in need of serious renovation work over the coming years. All three organisations continue to be self-sustaining on an operating level, with some financial help required for investments in the fabric of the buildings.

The Furlough properties will be the subject of a review in 2023 to ensure that the Forum is maximising the return from them.

2. UPDATE ON PREVIOUS DELIVERANCES

Deliverance from General Assembly 2023		Update/Action/Comment
	Commend the Report “The Earth is the Lord’s: A Theological Account of Creation Care” to congregations for study and instruct the Faith Impact Forum to provide opportunities and resources to aid reflection, conversation and response. (Section 3; Appendix 2)	We have worked with the Theological Forum to produce the report in a format which is more accessible to the local, and at the time of writing are in the process of developing resource materials with our partners at Eco-congregation Scotland and Christian Aid.
Faith Impact Forum 2.	Instruct the Forum, in partnership with the Assembly Trustees, General Trustees, Social Care Council and Eco- Congregation Scotland, to continue to develop plans and activities towards meeting a ‘Net Zero by 2030 Strategy’ and to report to the General Assembly in 2023. (Section 3)	The report on this work can be found below at section 4.3.

Deliverance from General Assembly 2023		Update/Action/Comment
Faith Impact Forum 4.	In view of the call from the UN and International Energy Agency to recognise that there can be no new oil and gas developments if we are to limit global heating to 1.5 degrees Celsius, call upon the UK Government to grant no further licenses for new fossil fuel exploration or extraction	The adoption of this public policy position has been made clear in our public statements, including in our response to a Scottish Government consultation relating to onshore conventional oil and gas in August 2022.
Faith Impact Forum 5.	Instruct the Forum to work with congregations (particularly in Priority Areas) and with partner organisations on advocacy and practical action to address the growing crises of fuel poverty and energy insecurity.	As part of the reconfigured Faith Action Programme staff team, the work of previously separate departments is now being delivered and shared across the Priority Areas team and the Public Life and Social Justice team. The Forum notes the success of Fife Presbytery’s Poverty Task Force. The Forum continues to support the development of partnership with other churches, including the Joint Public Issues Team, and civil society organisations, such as the Poverty Alliance. More details can be found below at section 8.
Faith Impact Forum 6.	Give thanks for the life and witness of Mission Partners who have died, acknowledge with gratitude those who have completed their period of service overseas, and uphold in prayer all who continue to serve.	Follow the work of and support in prayer our Mission Partners working with Partner Churches and organisations: https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/connect/international-work-and-global-partnerships/mission-partners
Faith Impact Forum 7.	Urge the UK Government to do more to ensure Covid-19 vaccines are available throughout the world, particularly in resourcing poor countries, and instruct the Forum to make representations and to promote this campaign with church members. (Section 4.1)	Our engagement with the UK Government has included a call to restore the international aid spending requirement to the statutory minimum of 0.7% of Gross National Income as soon as possible. The Forum has promoted efforts and work by others, including Christian Aid and the People’s Vaccine Alliance, through its congregational engagement work.
Faith Impact Forum 8.	Instruct the Forum to share with congregations and Presbyteries the work of Mediterranean Hope and other international partners providing humanitarian and integration support to displaced people, and promote opportunities for local churches to respond with prayer, action and giving. (Section 4.2)	The Forum has continued to promote the work of Mediterranean Hope, and to highlight the role of Fiona Kendall as Mission Partner. A further update is below at 5.1.2
Faith Impact Forum 9.	Instruct the Forum to continue to support work with asylum seekers and refugees, alongside Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees, and encourage congregations to participate in the ‘Faithful Welcome’ project and to explore Community Sponsorship so that they may be directly involved in refugee resettlement. (Section 4.6)	The Forum has been committed to supporting the work of Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees, which is a partnership led and hosted by the Church of Scotland. ‘Faithful Welcome’, a project jointly delivered with Faith in Community Scotland reached 153 congregations and faith communities (39 Church of Scotland). An update on our refugee work is below at section 9
Faith Impact Forum 10.	Commend the Korea Peace Appeal and instruct the Forum to promote the appeal to church members and congregations for them to sign as part of the effort to bring an end to the Korean War. (Section 4.8)	The Forum has promoted the Korea Peace Appeal to Church members through our social media channels and newsletter. The Moderator was due to visit Korea but had to cancel his travel due the timing of the death of Her Majesty the Queen.

Deliverance from General Assembly 2023		Update/Action/Comment
Faith Impact Forum 11.	Note the report of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Pakistani Minorities: Abductions, Forced Conversions, and Forced Marriages of Religious Minority Women and Girls in Pakistan; instruct the Forum to continue to engage with ecumenical and international partners on the issue and to provide resources to encourage church members to write to MPs urging the UK Government to implement the Report's recommendations. (Section 4.9)	In addition to promoting this work through our congregational engagement programme, the former Moderator, Lord Wallace of Tankerness KC has continued to take an active interest, and has asked questions of the UK Government in Parliament and hosted a reception in the House of Lords (with the current Moderator) in November 2022.
Faith Impact Forum 12.	Commend to congregations this year's Stamp Appeal which will support the Church in Lebanon in its ministry. (Section 4.10)	The Forum is grateful to the continued support of individuals and congregations for this appeal.
Faith Impact Forum 13.	Commend to the prayers of the church the members, ministers and leaders of the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar who continue to worship and witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in a context of conflict and danger and instruct the Forum to write to Her Majesty's Government urging the use of diplomacy and sanctions in order that the elected government of Myanmar be reinstated.	A letter to the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office was sent. The Forum and staff continue to be in contact with – and pray with – churches in Myanmar.
Faith Impact Forum 14.	Commend the ongoing dialogue and collaborative effort with the Office of the Chief Rabbi to produce a Jewish-Christian glossary to shed light on divergent uses and understandings of theological and political terms that relate to the Holy Land. (Section 5.1)	A report on this work can be found in a Supplementary Report.
Faith Impact Forum 15.	Note with concern that Islamophobia remains widespread in the UK, and in line with other faith-based, social, political and governmental organisations, adopt for internal use the All-Party Parliamentary Group's (APPG) definition of Islamophobia, and its guidelines, to aid the Church of Scotland in challenging Islamophobia. (Section 5.2)	The Forum hosted a webinar in November 2022 (during Islamophobia Awareness month and Interfaith Week) to encourage church members to think about the issues and deepen their understanding. At the time of writing an e-training module based on this webinar is planned.
Faith Impact Forum 16.	Endorse the definition of Conversion Therapy as outlined in the 'Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy in the UK', noting that the Methodist Conference have supported and adopted this definition and the Church of England General Synod have endorsed a similar statement; urge the Scottish Government to ban Conversion Therapy and instruct the Forum to make representations to the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament. (Section 7.3)	During the late spring and summer 2022, the then Convener of the Forum, the Very Rev Dr Susan Brown, was appointed to a Scottish Government advisory group to help with the framing of legislation to ban conversion therapy in relation to sexual orientation or gender identity. This group's work has concluded and the Scottish Government are expected to begin a process of public consultation in 2023 to which the Forum (or its successor) will respond. A Scottish Parliament Bill may be introduced around winter 2023/24.
Faith Impact Forum 17.	Instruct the Forum, in consultation with CrossReach and others, to report to the General Assembly of 2023 on issues relating to drugs and substance use. (Section 7.4)	This report can be found below at section 11
Faith Impact Forum 18.	Instruct the Forum to convene a cross-Church group to explore the benefits and opportunities afforded to the Church of Scotland by digital technologies and to support congregations in their utilisation of these. (Section 7.8)	The Forum has supported the development of this work though the initiative for it has been taken on by Sanctuary First and, in the Faith Action Programme, by the Mission Support Programme Group. The Society, Religion and Technology Project (which has come under the responsibility of Faith Impact), has played a part in these conversations, the fruits of which are discussed in the Report of the Faith Nurture Forum.

Deliverance from General Assembly 2023		Update/Action/Comment
Faith Impact Forum 19.	Following the publication of the paper 'Apologising for Historic Wrongs' produced by the Theological Forum, acknowledge and regret the terrible harm caused to all those who suffered from accusations and prosecutions under Scotland's historic witchcraft laws, the majority of whom were women, and apologise for the role of the Church of Scotland and the General Assembly in such historical persecution.	Information about the Church's apology has been made available on the website [insert web link] and further consideration to marking this deliverance will be given over the coming months.
Faith Impact Forum 20.	<p>a) Condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>b) Call for an immediate ceasefire and urge all parties, supported by the international community, to negotiate a just and peaceful solution which respects human rights, democracy and the rule of law.</p> <p>c) Urge prayer across the Church of Scotland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for the people of Ukraine suffering under war. • for wisdom among the leaders of the nations and all who work for justice and truth, and who keep open the horizon of reconciliation and peace. • for the generosity of the Church in supporting the spiritual and humanitarian efforts of the local partner churches for those afflicted by war. • to strengthen all those working in response to human need in Ukraine and other places around the world afflicted by war and violence, and for those working to welcome refugees. <p>d) Condemn any Russophobia and discrimination against Russian citizens living and working in Scotland.</p> <p>e) Encourage members of the Church who wish to host refugees to register with the Homes for Ukraine scheme run by the UK Government, under the aegis of the Scottish Government as a 'super sponsor'.</p> <p>f) Instruct the Forum to continue to respond to developments in the war in Ukraine, and to raise issues with the Scottish and UK Governments, with ecumenical partners, and with Reformed church partners around the world.</p>	An update of our work in response to the war in Ukraine is below at section 5.1.1.
Social Care Council 5.	Commend the close collaboration between CrossReach and the Faith Impact Forum in responding to areas of concern to the Church as they impact on wider society and instruct the Faith Impact Forum to continue to work with CrossReach to make representation on issues of national importance including the proposed legislation on a National Care Service; the investment needed to support a net carbon zero target in the care sector; and the policy and funding framework required to tackle Scotland's high level of drugs related deaths. (Section 3)	The Forum has continued to seek to work closely with CrossReach, especially on the issues of Net Zero, in the development of our report on substance use and drugs deaths, and on the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill.

Deliverance from General Assembly 2023		Update/Action/Comment
Work from Previous Years		
Faith Impact Forum GA2020	Reaffirm that racism is a sin, and declare that Black Lives Matter; instruct the Faith Impact Forum, in partnership with the Faith Nurture Forum, Assembly Trustees, and General Trustees to report to a future Assembly on the issue of racial justice and the legacy of slavery and the Church of Scotland and to consult widely with people of colour in the Church of Scotland and with Black Majority churches in Scotland	The Forum presents this report this year, and can be found below at Section 3.
Faith Impact Forum GA2021	Appoint a Special Committee of five persons to consult with the Faith Impact Forum, the Church of Scotland Investors Trust and the Assembly Trustees to consider the best framework for future recommendations about the ethics of investment practice being brought before the General Assembly, and report to the General Assembly in 2023.	The work of the Special Committee is presented at this General Assembly in a separate Report.

3. THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND AND THE LEGACIES OF SLAVERY

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 In 1846 New College, Edinburgh – now home to the General Assembly Hall – opened its doors as a training college for the ministers of the newly seceded Free Church of Scotland. In the same year the Free Church would find itself in the middle of a transatlantic moral storm which gathered momentum when a trio of American abolitionists arrived in Britain, including the self-liberated former slave Frederick Douglass (Shepperson 1951). The impetus for the Americans’ visit was an event which had taken place two years earlier. Following the 1843 Disruption, a deputation was sent by the Free Church of Scotland to the United States of America to raise support for the new Free Church. Amongst the donations, around £3000 was received from southern congregations who admitted slave owners into their fellowship. The new Free Church of Scotland thus found themselves embroiled in a fierce debate on the compatibility of slave ownership and church membership which was dividing the American Church and Nation (Whyte 2012).

3.1.2 Douglass spoke passionately against slavery and proclaimed that Christianity and slavery were incompatible. He declared that the Free Church should “send back to America, that blood stained money”. The cry of ‘send back the money’ would be repeated numerous times during the course of 1846. In response to the furore, Free Church minister John MacNaughton argued, in a speech given in Paisley in April 1846, that the abolitionists’ demand was both impractical and hypocritical. If the money was to be returned, he stated, then “We must not buy [American] cotton, nor wear it, we must not use their rice nor purchase their tobacco, [for] the stamp of slavery is on them all.” (Quoted in Murray 2023)

3.1.3 The intense debate was influenced by wider social, political, and moral issues on both sides of the Atlantic, but this episode in Scottish church history is one of many that highlights that everyday religious life in Scotland was not isolated from the tragedy of slavery in Africa, the Caribbean and the Americas.

3.1.4 This report focuses on connections between the transatlantic slave trade and the Church of Scotland during the years between the Union of Parliaments (1707) and the Emancipation of the British West Indies (1838). Connections relating to the historic Free Church of Scotland and the United Presbyterian Church are generally not included, although these do in some cases constitute part of the present-day Church of Scotland’s legacies. It is hoped that this work encourages the Church, as a largely White institution, to engage in self-reflection and to examine the roots of racial discrimination that many in Scotland still experience today. It does not seek to lay blame or make people today feel guilt for actions that happened in the past.

3.1.5 Nearly 200 years have passed since the Abolition of Slavery Act 1833 was passed which gradually outlawed slavery across most of the British Empire, however slavery sent waves across the globe that continue to this day. It has shaped our modern world economies and contributed considerably to the wealth of slave owning nations. Enslaved people in the Caribbean produced many of the raw materials that drove industrial revolution in Europe, whilst the Caribbean nations themselves were excluded from participating in industrialisation with long lasting effects. Intergovernmental organisation CARICOM (2013) assert that 400 years of “trade and production policies of Europe could be summed up in the British slogan: “not a nail is to be made in the colonies””. The effect is not purely economic either. Across the Caribbean poor health outcomes in present-day Black communities have been correlated with the harsh treatment and malnutrition of historically enslaved populations (CARICOM 2013). On the other side of the Atlantic, slavery also severely deprived many African nations of generations of men and women who would have otherwise contributed to local economies. The transatlantic slave trade was the largest of four major slave trades to affect the African continent. It is estimated that around 20 million people were translocated out of Africa between the years 1400-1900 due to slavery, with at least one study concluding that slavery is directly responsible for the significant income gap between African nations and the rest of the world (Nunn 2008).

3.1.6 Closer to home, the legacy of slavery still shapes the experiences of Black people living in Britain. Chattel slavery (whereby enslaved people were considered the legal personal property of the enslaver in perpetuity) helped to shape a worldview where Black people were treated as lesser than White people. Many of the offensive attitudes that fuel racist behaviours today stem from ideas and beliefs that were used to justify the transatlantic slave trade. Chaplain and psychotherapist Delroy Hall notes that “the history of dehumanization of African Caribbean people has been detrimental and the effects are still not fully known” (Hall 2021:5).

3.2 Summary of the Church’s Position

3.2.1 *Over the last 25 years racial justice and tackling racism has at times been more of a slow gander than a quick sprint for the Church of Scotland, both ecumenically and as a national church. That said, there have been several deliverances passed and reports received by the General Assembly on racism and racial justice, including:*

In 2005

Deliverance: Recognise the continuing problem of racism in Scottish society and encourage Church members to take every opportunity to inform themselves of the issues, and to find appropriate ways to support work for racial justice, including the marking of Racial Justice Sunday. Commend to the Church inter-faith dialogue and acts of solidarity which seek to overcome religious or racial intolerance.

In 2011:

The Church and Society Council brought its report ‘One Scotland Many Cultures’ to the General Assembly. The report took its name from a Scottish Government project aimed at tackling racism and discrimination in Scottish society. The Church of Scotland offered its support for the eradication of racist views, prejudice and discrimination in Scotland, with its prayers and action for racial justice. The report and its follow-up literature for congregations stated:

The culture of the Church itself is not homogenous. We need to ask how our culture fits in with a diverse and changing Scotland. Of central importance is how as a Church with a real focus on mission, our culture can speak to those outwith the Church, either as a counter-cultural witness, or as a way to reach those to whom the Church’s traditional way of being is outside their comfort zone. Continuing to offer Jesus’ radical hospitality must remain one of our core principles.

The report focused on radical hospitality but did not go as far as actively tackling or supporting congregations to tackle racial injustice.

In 2013

Deliverance: Reject racism and religious hatred and condemn antisemitism and Islamophobia.

In 2020:

The General Assembly reaffirmed that racism is a sin and declared Black Lives Matter, and for the first time the legacy of slavery was linked with racial justice issues.

What is unclear is whether these deliverances have had any impact over the years. Did they influence local Church of Scotland congregations and the communities they serve, both in Scotland and its English and International congregations? What impact, if any, have they had on people within these congregations who are suffering from and experiencing first-hand racial injustice?

(Extract from *The Church of Scotland and the Race for Justice*, by Rev. Mandy Ralph, EDI Group Convener, in *Race for Justice* (Reddie 2022)

3.2.2 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

The Church of Scotland’s Theological understanding of Equality and Equity “means recognising that all humans are created alike in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-28). All humans have equal dignity in the eyes of God (Psalm 8). All humans deserve respect, and all humans are equally loved by God (John 3:16). Christians are called to love their neighbour as themselves (Mark 12:31). In Jesus we are one and the divisions of this world are broken down (Galatians 3:28). We are called to a form of discipleship marked by justice, fairness, acceptance and love (Amos 5:24; Psalm 89:14; Luke 4:18-19; John 15:12).” (Church of Scotland 2023).

3.2.3 The mission of the EDI Group is to ensure that everyone in the Church of Scotland is made to feel and know that all are welcome. This may sound like a mission that the Church has already fully embedded, evidenced by the fact that many Churches have ‘all are welcome’ on their signs and notice boards. However, the practical elements of helping visitors and members feel valued, loved and accepted are what turns a ‘welcome’ sign into a lived reality. It is the subtle act of using language that is inclusive and considerate. It is in the act of encouraging behaviours and building cultures that help people feel seen and not ignored, that know the difference between showing interest in a person’s story and alienating them by it. Welcome is also found when the Church creates environments that meet the physical and practical needs of everyone. When it comes to a racially just welcome, this can mean checking one’s assumptions about another person’s background. It can also mean recognising what is known as micro aggressions. These often occur when those from the majority White community ask questions or make comments which alienate and belittle others. These may not be intentionally aggressive, but the impact is often experienced as such. This is partly due to the frequency with which they are experienced by those from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds and also because they subtly point to stereotypes and differences in a way which is alienating and othering. Such aggressions include being repeatedly asked ‘where do you really come from?’, ‘do you find it cold here?’, or ‘when are you going back?’

3.2.4 Conversely, a lack of welcome can also be experienced by those from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds when no one from the congregation reaches out as people are too worried about saying anything wrong or assuming a person won’t be able to speak English. This can feel profoundly lonely. Work on the legacy of slavery, and other work like this, alongside research on the contemporary experiences of Black and minority ethnic members of the Church or Scotland are vital to helping the EDI Group identify gaps in the collective knowledge of the Church. This is not always

easy, but by listening and understanding we can recognise patterns of behaviour that have been shaped by the history, culture and theology of an era in which stereotypes and inequality were pervasive, and yet still shaped so much of the world we see and experience today.

3.3 Race relations in Britain

3.3.1 This April marked thirty years since Stephen Lawrence was murdered in South-east London by a group of White men in an unprovoked racially motivated attack. The subsequent bungled metropolitan police enquiry became a watershed moment in the history of UK race relations. Lawrence’s killing was just one of many murders of young Black and Asian people to take place in the UK during the 1980s and 1990s, often without prosecution. The Government inquiry which followed, stated that the police’s handling of Lawrence’s murder had been “marred by a combination of professional incompetence, institutional racism and a failure of leadership” (Macpherson 1999:365), and brought the term ‘institutional racism’ into the public forum.

3.3.2 More recently, a renewed wave of interest in racial justice issues swept across Europe and North America following the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota in the summer of 2020. Floyd’s death followed a number of well publicised homicides in the USA, and became a symbol of police brutality worldwide. The global ‘Black Lives Matter’ demonstrations that followed Floyd’s death can now be seen as a major moment in the ongoing campaign for racial equality. In the UK many people who had not previously encountered issues such as institutional racism and White privilege began to become aware of the systemic nature of racism in British society.

3.3.3 Despite this, there has been a perception among some British people that racism is more prevalent in other parts of the world. In Scotland, because of historically low levels of racial diversity, the perception ‘that racism is not a problem here’ persisted much longer. Floyd’s murder was not an isolated incident on the other side of the world, however. The deaths of Black men in police custody, similar to that of George Floyd, were covered in a 2021 BBC Panorama documentary which also re-examined evidence relating to the killing of Sheku Bayoh in Kirkcaldy, Fife in 2015. A public enquiry into Bayoh’s death began evidential hearings in May 2022 and will examine if race was a factor in the killing. This conversation was reignited once again in September 2022 when 24-year-old Chris Kaba was killed by a Metropolitan Police officer following a police pursuit of the vehicle Kaba was driving in Streatham Hill, South London. Kaba was unarmed. Institutional racism in British society, it would seem, is endemic.

3.4 British Church Responses to Legacies of Slavery

3.4.1 Whilst some of the key figures in the abolition movement were heavily involved in Christian churches, such as the influential ‘Clapham Sect’ which included William Wilberforce MP, many churches now are learning that there is another side to the abolition narrative, and that many European churches also benefitted from Black enslavement.

3.4.2 As a result, a number of denominations and ecumenical groups across Britain have committed to addressing their legacies of slavery over the last two decades. Including;

- The United Reformed Church
- The Methodists in Britain
- The Baptist Union of Great Britain
- The Church of England (a number of Dioceses and the Church Commissioners)
- Quakers in Britain
- Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI)
- Council for World Mission
- The Scottish Episcopal Church

3.4.3 Research by Dr Katherine Gerbner (2018) into the relationship between Protestant Christianity and slavery in the Caribbean suggests that Christianity, rather than Whiteness, was used as the primary symbol of power and authority over the enslaved in the emerging plantation societies. Scripture was also sometimes used to defend keeping another person in a state of chattel slavery (e.g. Ephesians 6:5-8; Philemon 12), whilst the so-called ‘curse of Ham’ (Genesis 9:24-27) was manipulated to specifically sanction Black slavery. In this way scripture could be use alongside the invention of ‘scientific race’ and ‘racial categories’ to differentiate between White ‘labourers’ and Black ‘slaves’.

3.5 Methodology

3.5.1 Legacies of Slavery Project Group (LoSPG)

The Church of Scotland Legacies of Slavery Project Group was formed in August 2021 to fulfil the 2020 Deliverance:

Reaffirm that racism is a sin, and declare that Black Lives Matter; instruct the Faith Impact Forum, in partnership with the Faith Nurture Forum, Assembly Trustees, and General Trustees to report to a future Assembly on the issue of racial justice and the legacy of slavery and the Church of Scotland and to consult widely with people of colour in the Church of Scotland and with Black Majority churches in Scotland.

3.5.2 The group consisted of members of staff from the Faith Action Programme and the General Trustees, and the Convenor of the EDI Group and reported to the Faith Impact Forum. The LoSPG was joined by representatives from the Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago and the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria in November 2021. Between April and September 2022, the LoSPG was supported by an MSc Heritage student from the University of Stirling who carried out targeted research with two churches in Inverclyde.

3.5.3 Group Remit

The agreed scope of this research was to ascertain whether legacies of slavery, primarily within our church buildings could be barriers to inclusion. The group sought to examine church buildings held in trust by the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland to note any physical evidence of slavery connections, such as memorial stones, inscriptions and stained-glass windows dedicated to enslavers. They also noted links to slavery in buildings that were historically

associated with the Church of Scotland but are no longer the responsibility of the General Trustees, as these serve to evidence a cultural legacy of slavery within the Church. Burial Grounds fell outwith the scope of this report. The group also sought to uncover the ways the Church may have benefitted from slavery, financially or otherwise.

The group’s discussions were guided by the following three questions:

1. What physical evidence remains in Church of Scotland buildings today that reveals involvement in the transatlantic slave trade?
2. To what extent did the Church of Scotland benefit both directly and indirectly from the profits from transatlantic slavery?
3. What is the cultural legacy of slavery in the Church today?

3.5.4 In this report direct connections to slavery are considered as links with enslavers and traders. Indirect connections are less easily defined, but generally refer to links with the decedents of slave owners, and also those linked with businesses that traded in commodities produced by slave labour. As indirect connections to slavery have repercussions for almost every part of life in Scotland from the Seventeenth century onwards (see MacKinnon and Mackillop 2020), this report will almost certainly underestimate the impact of slavery on the Church.

3.5.5 Language

The terms enslaved person/people and enslaver are used throughout this report in place of slave and slave owner, except in specific circumstances. This is to afford dignity to the enslaved people who, although they were considered property, were autonomous individuals forced into slavery against their will. Likewise, the term slave owner refers to a hierarchical system where one individual was legitimised in their ownership of another. Although this may have been accepted in the social system of the time, this hierarchy intentionally devalued the lives of countless Black men, women and children and our language should reflect this.

3.5.6 Methods

Over a period of 18 months, the group examined Scottish heritage sources, historic and archival records, and published academic texts and databases. By far the most enlightening source of information was the University College London Legacies of British Slavery database, an encyclopaedia of British slave-ownership at the moment of abolition in 1833, largely comprised of the records of the Slave Compensation Commission.

3.5.7 Between August and September 2022, a questionnaire on church history and architecture was distributed to each Presbytery in Scotland to be forwarded to every congregation. Eighty-two congregations responded to the questionnaire. The responses informed this report and shaped our recommendations. A summary of the questionnaire responses can be found in a separate report available online at <https://churchofscotland.org.uk/general-assembly-2023/reports-documents>.

3.5.8 In January 2023 a focus group of ministers and members of congregations met with the project group to discuss both the challenges and the opportunities of researching the role of the Church of Scotland in relation to issues such as historic slavery (see Section 9).

3.6 What have we been finding?

The role of Presbyterian Church in the Caribbean in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century

3.6.1 The *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae* provides a comprehensive list of Church of Scotland’s appointments in the Caribbean from 1799 onwards. A Church of Scotland presence is recorded in The Bahamas, Grenada, Jamaica, Tobago, and Guyana (British Guiana), between 1799 (first missionary) and 1838 (emancipation) and later in Antigua, St Vincent, Belize (British Honduras) before the end of the Nineteenth century. By far the largest Church of Scotland presence during this period was in Guyana and Jamaica.

3.6.2 The earliest missionary recorded is Joseph Bethune, who was appointed by the Scottish Missionary Society to Jamaica. Bethune arrived in 1799 however died from a fever after only a few months. He is the only Presbyterian missionary recorded in the *Fasti* to have been in the Caribbean pre-1807 (abolition of the slave trade).

3.6.3 Up to as many as 20,000 Scottish migrants arrived in the West Indies during the latter half of the Eighteenth century. Dr Stephen Mullen (2016) has argued that the establishment of Presbyterian churches across the Caribbean towards the end of the slavery period demonstrates the desire of Scots abroad to preserve their national identity. It is likely however that many places of worship in the Caribbean, like many historical buildings, were built by enslaved people. For example, St Andrews Church, St George’s, Grenada, where Church of Scotland ministers were in post between 1833 to 1945, was constructed by enslaved labourers whilst the church bell was cast in Glasgow. Part of the cornerstone inscription reads (in Latin) “For the worship of the True God, Omnipotent, Eternal, according to the rights and disciplines of the Presbyterian Church, est. in native Scotland” (Presbyterian Church Grenada 2023).

3.6.4 Guyana (British Guiana)

Although Guyana is located in mainland South America, it has more in common culturally, demographically and historically with the Caribbean islands. The historic colonies that today make up Guyana were ceded to British from the Dutch in 1814. The country is perhaps best known for the production of sugar in the Demerara region.



Map of the Caribbean and wider region (adapted from Serafy et al 2015)

3.6.5 Archibald Browne was for several years the only Scots Minister, serving between 1816 and 1824 at St Andrews Kirk, Georgetown. Browne travelled widely across the colony and it is recorded that he married and baptised a number of enslaved people. He was in post when the 1823 Demerara uprising broke out, and wrote an article for the pro-slavery *Glasgow Courier* criticising the role of the London Missionary Society in the uprising. He also published three sermons, later serialised in the *Courier*, entitled “*On the Duties of Subjects to their Sovereign and the Duties of Slaves to their Masters*” (Alston 2021).

3.6.6 St Andrews was the first church in British Guiana that admitted enslaved people, with members recorded as early as 1819. During the 1823 uprising the building was requisitioned by the Demerara Militia as barracks to suppress the revolt (Hernandez 2013).

3.6.7 Rev. James Struthers, Church of Scotland clergyman and minister of the Scots Kirk in Georgetown between 1826-1857 is recorded in the registers of the Slave Compensation Commission. The extent of his compensation or slave ownership is unknown.

3.6.8 Jamaica

Jamaica was a key destination for Scottish ‘sojourners’ (temporary residents). Scots played a disproportionate role in the administration of the British Empire, despite only representing around ten percent of the British population. People of Scottish descent constituted a significant minority in Jamaica making up around one third of the White population in the year 1774. Enslaved people in Jamaica made up forty percent of all enslaved people in the British West Indies. As such, Jamaica was also one of the most profitable colonies and the island contributed just over half of the entire wealth of the British Caribbean (Whyte 2004).

3.6.9 The Established Church in colonial Jamaica was the Anglican Church; Presbyterianism was considered a dissenting faith. Although ‘non-conformists’ had originally been barred from political life in Jamaica, by the 1800s there were a number of powerful Scots in the Jamaican Assembly. In 1814 a failed attempt to achieve legal establishment of Presbyterianism in Jamaica led to a substantial amount of money being secured from the Jamaican Assembly to contribute towards a place of Presbyterian worship (Mullen 2016).

3.6.10 The Scots Kirk, Kingston

The building of the ‘Scots Kirk’ (St Andrews) was completed in 1819, financed primarily by subscription from Scots in Kingston and two grants from the Jamaican Assembly. Many of the first trustees were wealthy attorneys, merchants and plantation owners (Mullen 2016).

3.6.11 Under part of the Jamaican legal system (*Code Noir* (1696)), slave owners were encouraged to baptise and instruct slaves into the Christian faith, however in practice many enslavers felt that the Christian message of freedom in Christ would encourage slaves to challenge their enslavement. The Rev Peter Duncan, a Wesleyan Missionary, confirmed to a Commons Select Committee in 1832 that there was “general hostility” amongst planters that enslaved people should receive religious instruction by “the Established Church of England and by the Church of Scotland”. During the later 1700s and following 1807 however, some policies which encouraged the religious instruction of enslaved people began to emerge. Mullen (2016:10) quotes kirk minutes from 1819 to note that the minister, Rev. John Brown – appointed by The Presbytery of Edinburgh – supported a petition to the Jamaican Assembly stating that “one of the great and most important objects [of the Kirk]...[was that] Ministers should be devoted to the instruction of people of colour and slave population’ in order to encourage them to ‘attach themselves to the congregation”.

3.6.12 Scots Ministers Engaged on the Plantations (Estates)

The above 1832 Select Committee *report* makes several references to Church of Scotland ministers and Scottish missionaries being present on the plantations in Jamaica. Additionally, the *Annals of the Calabar Mission 1846-1945*, notes the appointment of Rev George Blyth of the Scottish Missionary Society in 1824 to minister to the enslaved population at the Hampden and Dundee estates, Trelawny, Jamaica. As part of the appointment half of the expenses for the chapel built at Hampden were paid for by Scots Archibald Stirling (the Younger) and William Stothert, Scottish-born owners of the Hampden and Dundee estates.

3.6.13 Evidence of the Legacies of Slavery within The Church of Scotland in Scotland

3.6.14 The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

There is little research that specifically examines the role of the Church of Scotland in slavery and the slave economy. Much of what is known about Scottish churches’ involvement in transatlantic slavery comes from the work of Dr Iain Whyte. His research (2004;2006) provides key insights into the role of Scotland’s Christians in the abolition movement.

3.6.15 Whyte notes that there were many anti-slavery petitions promoted by Church of Scotland Presbyteries and Synods, and highlights individual Church of Scotland ministers who played key roles in anti-slavery campaigns. There are no records that the General Assembly, despite condemning slavery, ever petitioned parliament in relation to transatlantic slavery (Whyte 2004).

3.6.16 The 1788 General Assembly received proposals on the abolition of slavery from three Synods (Lothian and Tweeddale, Angus and Mearns, and Merse and Teviotdale). Whyte (2004) references a contemporary report from *The Scots Magazine* which described the commissioners as mostly unanimous in their agreement on the principal of abolition, (save for concerns about loss of life and property for Europeans in the Caribbean, and one commissioner who believed the atrocities of the slave trade to be ‘greatly exaggerated’). They were however less decided over ‘the mode in which they ought to interfere’. It was suggested that the issue should be raised in a loyal address to the King, as to petition Parliament would be ‘beneath the dignity’ of the supreme court of the National Church. The vote to petition lost by 34 votes. The Assembly instead declared,

“The General Assembly think themselves called upon as men, as Christians and as members of the national church, to declare their abhorrence of a traffic contrary to the rights of mankind and the feelings of humanity. (Whyte 2004:111)

3.6.17 The 1788 deliverance was reaffirmed in 1791, and the Assembly was satisfied to trust Parliament to take the necessary steps towards abolition. The 1792 General Assembly produced a more strongly worded deliverance that the slave trade was “incompatible with the great principles of religion and morality” and expressed “ardent wishes and earnest prayers” that Parliament should speedily act to bring the trade to an end” (Whyte 2004:112). The debate was observed favourably by Black abolitionist Olaudah Equiano, and the sentiments of the General Assembly were reflected in the petitions sent by Presbyteries and Synods. Whyte contends that even without any formal petitions from the General Assembly, the activities of the lower courts of the Church in 1792 represent a truly national campaign for abolition (Whyte 2004:140).

3.6.18 Following abolition in 1834, the General Assembly wrote to King William IV,
...the Ministers and Elders of the Church of Scotland beg leave to embrace the opportunity which our meeting in the General Assembly affords us, of approaching your Majesty's throne, for the purpose of expressing the lively satisfaction with which we have observed, that an Act has recently been passed by the Legislature, in consequence of which the system of Slavery, so long contemplated by ourselves and our brethren with feelings of regret and anxiety, will, before the termination of the present year, stand abolished forever throughout the British dominions. We humbly beg to congratulate your Majesty on this event, as one which cannot fail to bestow eminent distinction on your Majesty's reign and to afford so great facilities for the spread of the Gospel throughout your Majesties Colonies...
(Records of the General Assembly, 1834)

3.6.19 Individuals within the Church with links to slavery

The British Government paid £20 million to slave owners in compensation for their loss of ‘assets’ when slavery was abolished across most of the British Empire in 1833. The funds distributed by the Government were precured as a loan and it was only in 2015 that British tax payers finished paying towards this Government debt. This is despite the dehumanising ‘Apprenticeship Scheme’ which followed, where former slaves were compelled to work for their former masters for indecently low wages. The scheme was argued to ease the social transition from enslavement to freedom and to prevent the collapse of colonial economies, however it was considered to be slavery by another name by abolitionists. The scheme was ended and enslaved people finally emancipated in 1838.

3.6.20 The records of the Slave Compensation Commission have been digitised by the University College London Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery (LBS), which holds the most comprehensive registers of British slave ownership and involvement in the Caribbean. The records contain references to a number of individuals related to the Church of Scotland, including some who benefited from slavery through inheritance. In some cases, money from slavery was bequeathed to parishes for specific purposes, such as poor funds distributed by the kirk.

3.6.21 Listed below are a number of examples from the LBS database:

Angus Mackellar – Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (1840), Minister at Pencaitland, inherited a part-share of Hampden and Kerr estates in Jamaica through his wife Helen Stirling.

John Ross of Berbice – Plantation owner in Berbice and later Scottish merchant and banker. Elder in the Church of Scotland, commissioner at the General Assembly for a number of years (Alston 2021)

Rev. Thomas Davidson – Minister at Tollbooth Church, Edinburgh, party (capacity unknown) to a deed in 1804 concerning the Providence estate in Tobago

Rev. Stair McQuhae – Minister of St Quivox and son of senior clergyman Rev. William McQuhae, awarded compensation with others as executor and trustee of Alexander McDowal, likely to be his half-brother-in-law, for the Two Mile Wood estate in St Catherine, Jamaica.

James Smith of Jordanhill – Elder in the Church of Scotland. Silent partner in Leitch/Leith and Smith, West India merchants. Received compensation from a number of estates in Grenada.

William Taylor – Member of the Church of Scotland, one-time merchant and attorney in Jamaica turned abolitionist.

Rev. Peter Robertson – Minister at Callander, awarded compensation for enslaved people on the Friendship Estate, Jamaica as an executor and trustee of Duncan Robertson (uncle).

Rev. Robert Walker – Prominent abolitionist, minister at Cramond and later Canongate Kirk, known as, “the skating minister”, was left the residuary estate of his brother John Walker, merchant in London and St Lucia.

Rev. Robert Walker (Snr) – Moderator of the General Assembly (1771) and Minister of St Giles’ left £100 by John Walker (above)

3.6.22 Sons and relatives of Church of Scotland Ministers recorded on the LBS Database

William, Thomas and James Collow – Sons of the Rev. John Collow, Minister of Penpont, slave-traders and merchants in St Vincent, St Domingue, St Vincent and Tobago.

Robert Haldane Scott – Enslaver, Jamaica, son of Rev. James Scott, Presbytery of Dundee, and nephew of Thomas Munroe (below).

Thomas Munroe – Wealthy planter and surveyor. Owner of the Kinloss and Esher Estates, Jamaica. Son of Rev. James Munroe, minister of Kinloss, Presbytery of Elgin.

Katherine Forbes – Wife of Rev William Asher, minister of Inveraron. Major beneficiary in the will of John Gordon in Jamaica, who owned numerous estates and 300 enslaved persons.

Richard Brodie – Son of Rev James Brodie, minister of Latheron, Caithness. Resident in Jamaica, enslaver.

Robert Douglass of Better Hope – Son of George Douglass, minister of Kirkwall and later Tain. Planter in Demerara.

William Morrice – London West India Merchant, and awarded compensation for several estates in Jamaica, chiefly as a trustee. One of three sons of Rev William Morrice, of Kincardine O’Neil who went to Jamaica.

Hugh Rose of Glastullich – Fifth son of Rev Hugh Rose, minister of Tain, Rosshire. Wealthy enslaver in Berbice, and land owner in Scotland.

3.6.23 Church Buildings

Details relating to church buildings were gathered where possible from information on individual church websites, from academic publications, Historic Environment Scotland's CANMORE database, and through the questionnaire survey. This data is incomplete as a full index of Church of Scotland buildings is not currently searchable, and to research each church building individually was beyond the scope of this project. Some of the buildings noted are no longer the property of the Church of Scotland. There are also a number of former Free Church of Scotland buildings that are now in the care of the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland. Some of these buildings are likely to have been financed by donations from enslavers from both Scotland and the USA, (as referenced in Section 1). Additional research should be undertaken on the history of the former Free Church buildings.

3.6.24 A note on the responsibilities of the General Trustees: church buildings and closures.

In the majority of cases church buildings including the fixtures and fixtures are vested in The General Trustees, although there are examples mostly former United Presbyterian churches, which are held by local trustees. The furniture and other movable items are the property of the congregations.

3.6.25 When a church closes and is sold, any remaining funds are held on behalf of the congregation in the consolidated fabric fund. Once a building is sold Church of Scotland interest ceases, and responsibility for the building passes to the new owner.

Alexander Grant of Aberlour – Enslaver and merchant in Jamaica, nephew of Rev. Alexander Grant, minister of Glenrinnies. Financed the clock tower at Aberlour Parish Church (Questionnaire).

Margaret MacPherson Grant – Heiress of Alexander Grant, financed the building of a school at Craigellachie which is now a Church of Scotland building (Questionnaire).

Stanley Parish Church (closed) – The building of the church, housing and stipend of the minister was financed by Dennistoun, Buchanan and Co, a West India Merchant firm and cotton mill investors (Cooke 2012).

Killearnan Parish Church – It is understood that the church building benefitted from the local laird and heritor whose fortune was made in sugar, and the son of a former minister who owned a plantation (other details not known – Questionnaire).

St Columba's, Oban (closed) – Originally built as Argyll Square Free Church, the building was given £1000 by Robert MacFie whose family had made their fortune from sugar refining in Greenock (Questionnaire).

Gourock Old and Ashton – The coat of arms of Gourock, which is widely understood to depict an enslaved man, appears in several locations in the church, including on one exterior wall. The coat of arms has strong links to Duncan Darroch, who made his fortunes in Jamaica (Zuliani 2022).

St George's Parish Church (St George's Tron) – Highlighted in the Glasgow Slavery Audit as having been the place of worship for a number of Glasgow's elite merchants, including John Gordon, James Ewing, Colin McLachlan, James Connell (Mullen 2022).

St Andrews-in-the-Square, Glasgow (closed) – Served some of Glasgow's wealthiest citizens, the Church was built between 1739-1756 and was paid for by the magistrates and the city council, it is also assumed that the tobacco merchants of Glasgow contributed toward the cost. The mahogany interiors were imported from plantations in the Caribbean (Mullen 2009).

Buchanan Parish Church – Built in 1764 by William Graham, 2nd Duke of Montrose, son of the James Graham 1st Duke of Montrose, who kept a black servant in his Glasgow home. This servant may have been one of the earliest black slaves in Scotland and may also have worn a silver 'slave collar. (Lewis 2019).

3.6.26 Monuments, memorials and dedications within churches

All data gathered from the UCL Legacies of British Slavery Database, unless otherwise stated.

Glasgow Cathedral (under the care of Historic Environment Scotland) – Contains a number of memorials to prominent Glasgow merchants who made their fortunes through tobacco and sugar in addition to plantation owners in the West Indies. These include,

- Memorial Window to Alexander Spiers of Elderslie, "Tobacco Lord"
- Memorial Window to William Stirling, Chancellor of Glasgow University, son of enslaver Archibald Stirling (the Younger).
- Memorial inscription to Sir James Stirling of Keir, enslaver in Jamaica
- Memorial inscription to Andrew Cochran, Lord Provost of the City "Tobacco Lord"
- Cecilia Douglas, Grand Dame of Glasgow, planter, enslaver and art collector donated a large window to the Cathedral.

St Machar's Cathedral, Aberdeen – Memorial window (Bishops' Window) to Hugh Leslie and his wife Ann Agnes Lamond, absentee owner of an estate in Jamaica.

St Michael's, Edinburgh – Stained-glass window in memory of Robert Dall, owner of the Cedar Valley estate, Jamaica.

Bothwell Parish Church – Two memorial inscriptions to Cecilia Douglas and her husband Hugh Douglas, planters and enslavers in St Vincent and Demerara.

Dornoch Cathedral – Memorial window to the Hoyes Family, whose wealth came from Lewis Hoyes, a merchant resident for 34 years in Grenada. Dornoch Cathedral itself was rebuilt between 1835 and 1837 with funds obtained from Elizabeth, Countess-Duchess of Sutherland. Sutherland is largely infamous for her role in the Sutherland Clearances, however she is also noted to have familial links to inherited wealth from slavery in Jamaica, through her mother and grandfather (Alston 2021).

Dallas Parish Church – Memorial to Thomas Cuming of Demerara, prominent member of Demerara society and owner of two plantations.

St Nicholas', Aberdeen – Memorial erected in 1787 by the Jamaica merchant and slave-trader, Alexander Allardyce, to his wife Ann Baxter in St Nicholas' Kirk.

Rosemarkie Parish Church – Memorial to John Fowler, an estate owner in Jamaica and agent for the Bristol based slave-trader James Rogers.

Greyfriars Kirk, Edinburgh – Memorial inscription to Frances James Adam, part owner of the Nismes Estate in British Guiana.

Fullarton Parish Church – Memorial to James Montgomery, abolitionist poet and hymn writer (Scotland Churches Trust 2023).

Colinton Parish Church – James Gillespie and brother John, philanthropists and tobacco merchants are buried in the church yard and understood to be memorialised inside the church as well (Dick 2018).

Crimond Parish Church – Clock gifted by James Laing of Haddo, doctor and plantation owner in Dominica (Crimond Parish Church 2023).

3.6.27 Funds and financial legacies

All data gathered from the UCL Legacies of British Slavery Database unless otherwise stated. At the time of abolition (1830s) £100 had the equivalent purchasing power of around £6780 today.^[1] Financial legacies predating abolition may have had greater purchasing power.

Logan Parish Church – Bequeathed £500 Jamaican currency (recorded £3500 sterling) by John Bean, owner of the Stirling Castle estate Jamaica.

Irvine Kirk Session – Bequeathed £100 in trust for the benefit of the poor of the Parish by William Gemmell, merchant in Messrs Gemmell, Bogle & Scott. Associated with the Mount Craven estate, Grenada.

Reverend Thomas MacKnight – Minister at Edinburgh, and Moderator of the General Assembly in 1820, left £250 by William Gemmell (as above).

Minster and Kirk Session (likely Forres) – Bequeathed £100 sterling by John Hoyes of Grenada, likely merchant in St George, Grenada, Speaker of the House of Assembly Grenada and Treasurer of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, for the purchase of coals and 'other articles' for the poor of his "native town".

Presbytery of Aberlour – Bequeathed £200 in trust for the local schoolmaster by Alexander Green associated with two estates in Jamaica.

Ministers and elders of the parish of Aberlour – Bequeathed £100 for the benefit of the poor by Joseph Green, attorney and enslaver in Jamaica.

Ministers and Elders of the parish of Kilmadock – Bequeathed £300 for the poor of the parish by Thomas Paterson, owner of Downe Castle estate Jamaica.

Parishes of Selkirk and Robertson – Bequeathed "£20 sterling to the poor" of both parishes by William Chisholme, owner of sugar plantations in Jamaica. Also left "£20 to the minister of Selkirk for a ring".

Alexander Urquart – Minister at Tough, Aberdeenshire, left £60 per annum for "his natural life" by Robert Harvey enslaver in Antigua.

Rev. Norman McLeod, North Uist – Named in the will of Malcolm McLeod, enslaver in Jamaica.

Ministers of Kilmarnock – Left a perpetual annuity of £180 by William Paterson, an attorney in Jamaica. One half of the annuity was for the "indigent" poor of the town and the other to "promote rivalry and emulation" amongst the scholars of the town.

Minister of Sanquhar, Dumfriesshire – Left £40 for the poor of the parish by Charles Scott, attorney and enslaver in Jamaica.

Dollar Kirk Session – John McNabb, ship owner who transported slaves to the West Indies and benefactor of Dollar academy, left "70,000 pounds bequeathed to Dollar Kirk Session for a "Charity or School for the parish of Dollar and shire of Clackmannan wher I was born."

Bell's Trust – Rev Andrew Bell was a Church of England clergyman who spent a portion of his career in Virginia. He became involved in tobacco trading and received shares and bonds as payment for tutoring services. He left the City of Glasgow £10,000 for educational purposes, and the funds were disseminated by ten Kirk Sessions.

Augusta Lamont Bequest – The great niece of John Lamont, a sugar planter and enslaver resident in Trinidad who received £9000 in compensation on the abolition of slavery. Although illegitimate, John is credited with reviving the Lamont family's fortunes, and he left the majority of his wealth to his nephew James, Augusta's father. Augusta was the last of the family to inherit Clan Lamont's property in Scotland. Upon her death in 1950 she bequeathed the entirety of her share of the estate, which largely related to the contents of Knockdow house, to the Church of Scotland to further the work of the Church in the Cowal Peninsula. The sale of the property and the contents was completed in 1990 and in 1992 £1,549,814.16 was received by the Church of Scotland. The fund is currently understood to be valued at just over £5.5 million.

3.6.28 Miscellaneous

Guarantor: Rev. John Anderson of Bellie – Controversial minister, demitted in 1819. He paid a "substantial sum" as a guarantee for Kenneth McPherson, a relative of his wife, and indebted enslaver in Jamaica (LBS).

Architect: John James (JJ) Stevenson – Architect who designed a number of churches across Scotland. Son of James Stevenson, merchant, broker, co-owner of a cotton spinning mill and business partner of members of the Oswald family, who were linked heavily with slavery (Dictionary of Scottish Architects 2016; MacLehose 1885).

Trustee: Rev Lewis Gordon – Minister at Kinnadar, named as a trustee for lands, plantations, shares of ships and all personal and real estate in Scotland and Jamaica by James Peterkin, estate owner in Jamaica (LBS).

Communion Ware, Kilmadock Parish Church – Two silver communion cups commissioned for Kilmadock Parish Church by William ‘King’ Mitchell, enslaver in Jamaica and activist for the West India Interest. Now in the ownership of National Museums Scotland (National Museums Scotland 2023).

Robert Story, St Modan’s – A previously enslaved man who was transported to Trinidad via Rio de Janeiro. He was brought to Scotland as a free man by Stewart Kerr of Kelso, and taken in to the manse by Rev. Robert Story, under whose name he is buried (Questionnaire).

Executor: Rev Morris Forsyth – Minister, Mortlach Church. Executor of the will, and received the compensation payments, of his late brother James a ‘mortgagee of an estate in St Lucia’ (LBS).

3.6.28 Heritors

The heritors of a church were generally local landowners, who would have contributed towards the church building and its upkeep. Some of this landholding and wealth predated slavery however, there is an interconnected relationship between colonial Britain and estate ownership in Scotland, particularly in the Highlands and Islands. Profits derived from slavery often financed large scale land purchases in the region during the early-to-mid 19th century (Mackinnon and Mackillop 2020).

3.6.29 In general, assessing the wealth of individual heritors requires site specific research which goes beyond the scope of this report. Similarly, without examining the rolls of each individual church it is not possible to know exactly who was worshipping in each church, (aside from some high-profile examples), paying teinds (a historic form of tithing based on agricultural produce), or contributing in other ways towards financing the ministers’ stipends.

3.6.30 There were exceptions to these traditional funding arrangements. For example, across Scotland’s major cities some ministers’ stipends were paid for by mixture of teinds, voluntary giving, and funds from the municipality (Sawkins 2022). Prof John Sawkins (2022) has noted how in 1661 a 6% annuity tax was placed on the rental values of a number of premises across Edinburgh to finance the stipends of six ministers serving the Burgh churches. Another six ministers were financed from other revenue sources, including seat rents and a duty on goods imported through Leith Harbour. The 6% annuity tax was abolished in 1860 with the establishment of the Edinburgh Ecclesiastical Commission, and the harbour duty soon after. Overall the income derived from the Leith Harbour duty was minimal, however Leith Harbour Custom House was noted by the Edinburgh Slavery and Colonialism Legacy Review as having a minor link to slavery as the “importation of goods produced by enslaved people into Leith was a major part of the trade coming into Edinburgh, generating significant revenue” (Edinburgh City Council 2022).

3.7 What have we learned?

3.7.1 Through this work the Legacies of Slavery Project Group have become aware of a wider story around slavery and the Church of Scotland which goes beyond the role of the Church in abolition. We have learned that stories of slavery and abolition are often nuanced and not always clear cut. For example, we note that one of the most visually recognisable proponents of abolition Dr Robert Walker, Edinburgh, (immortalised as the ‘skating minister’ by Henry Raeburn), who led the Presbytery of Edinburgh to petition parliament in 1788, was also named eight years previous in 1780 as the residuary heir of the estate of his brother John Walker, a merchant operating in St Lucia. We are also mindful of the number of ‘sons of the manse’ who profited, some significantly, from the enslavement of their fellow humans, whilst also recognising the commendable campaigns of many Presbyteries and Synods as part of the abolition movement.

3.7.2 In many cases we do not see clearly defined direct relationships between slave ownership and the Church of Scotland, although slavery related connections between Scotland and the Caribbean clearly abound. This research however has identified the breadth of indirect connections between the Church and slave derived wealth.

3.7.3 We have learned that there is architectural evidence of connections to slavery within some of our church buildings, although it is not believed to be as wide spread as first thought. There are some prominent examples, such as those at Gourrock Old and Ashton, which has been the subject of previous media reports, and others which specifically mention Caribbean connections, such as the window dedicated to Robert Dall at St Michaels, Edinburgh, or the memorial to Thomas Cuming at Dallas Parish Church. Many examples however require a degree of local or historical knowledge to connect them with slavery, such as the examples of the clock tower and church building in Aberlour, or the clock gifted to Crimond Parish Church. Others such as the memorial to James Gillespie at Colinton Parish Church relate to slavery indirectly through associated industries (in this case tobacco). There are also examples of memorials to those connected to the abolition movement, such as James Montgomery in Fullarton Parish Church. It is hard, however, to ascertain whether a memorial within a church relates to someone connected with slavery by their name alone. There are certainly examples which have been missed by this research as a nation-wide examination of every person named on a church memorial would have been impractical.

3.7.4 There are some examples where the Church or ministers can be seen to have benefitted directly from the profits of slavery, for example enslaver Robert Harvey left £60 a year to the minister at Tough, Aberdeenshire for the rest of his natural life. These examples are not widespread however. What we do see are many instances where money was left to ministers and kirk sessions to distribute amongst the parish or to be used for philanthropic causes: Does this itself though, constitute a benefit to the Church?

3.7.5 Many of the examples listed above relate to Scots who made financial and social gains from enslavement but left a portion of their money for what could be seen as ostensibly ‘good’ purposes, caring for the poor for example. This raises important questions regarding the origins of money from which many people in Scotland, including the Church, benefitted. If the Church is committed to seeking racial justice then we must seek to acknowledge the origins of such funds that the church either received for its own use, or distributed for others.

3.7.6 The case of the Augusta Lamont bequest, which was donated to the Church, does however represent a direct benefit. This family’s revived fortunes originated mainly with Augusta’s great uncle John Lamont and his business interests, and slave ownership, in Trinidad. The money donated to the Church came primarily from the sale of the contents of the estate in Scotland, rather than directly from the Caribbean. We know that Augusta played no part in slavery personally and, from original documents, she had a strong connection to the Church of Scotland with a desire to see the work of the Church furthered in her local area. But we also know from the experiences of people in our partner church in Trinidad and Tobago that the actions of Augusta’s family had an irrevocable impact on the lives of people living in Trinidad, both in the past and today.

3.8 Statement on the impact of slavery in Trinidad and Tobago

Daily life in Trinidad and Tobago, as in most if not all of the Caribbean, is constant testimony to the legacy of slavery. Streets, parks and communities are named after slave owners. Landholding patterns and usage were dictated by those who owned slaves and plantations and then chose to dispose of the land and resources as they chose.

To use one example, the Lamont family owned several plantations in Trinidad and, after the abolition of slavery, disposed of their property and possessions according to their economic, political, religious and social interests.

The Church of Scotland was established in Trinidad and Tobago by those who were part of the British Empire at the time of slavery. The Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago began afterwards with missionaries whose families had migrated to Canada because they had lost their homes in the highland clearances in Scotland. These Presbyterian missionaries saw people here who, like them, had been forced from their homes, culture and language. The missionaries established schools whose locations and curriculum were then shaped by local powerful interests such as those of the Lamont family.

Our present green spaces, roads, social and economic infrastructure have all developed from the decisions made by slave owners. It is therefore a fair conclusion to say that the way we eat, breathe, think and talk as well as the places we live, study, work and worship are all today influenced by slavery and slave owners.

(Rev. Adrian Sieunarine, Principal St Andrews Theological College, Trinidad and Tobago)

3.9 Where do we go from here?

3.9.1 The Church’s Legacy of Slavery and Racial Justice today.

A focus group was held in January 2023 made up of ministers and members of congregations from across the Church of Scotland; participants came from both rural and urban locations. The group explored three questions to draw some conclusions about the legacy of slavery in Scotland and the Church, and what the role of the Church should be today in addressing these legacies.

• **What do you think the legacy of slavery is in Scotland today, and does this episode of history have an impact on our Church?**

The focus group acknowledged that a substantial proportion of Scotland’s wealth came from the industries connected to transatlantic slavery, and that this wealth was not just confined to cities, such as Glasgow. For one participant, alongside the abhorrence of slavery was also a sense of gratitude towards the enslaved, and an acknowledgment that our lives in Europe would be very different had slavery not been integral to the industrial revolution. This was also evidenced in others’ reflections that poor funds, schools and church buildings in their areas were known to have been partially, or fully, funded by the profits of enslavers. Many participants shared they had no knowledge of slavery links in their local areas before beginning to actively research the topic. The focus group concluded that there has not been enough acknowledgment of this part of Scotland’s past, which extended to an acknowledgment that the Church had also profited through slavery. It was thought that the perception of Scotland as a ‘freedom-loving country’, with no mention of slavery in its past has been allowed to perpetuate for too long. Many felt this was a difficult issue to address in congregations, although it was suggested congregations did need to be challenged to engage in new ways of addressing historic slavery and present-day racial justice. Participants felt churches often wanted to raise awareness but were unsure about how they could do this well without increasing risks of inflaming local tensions, or taking on a disproportionate responsibility for this part of Scotland’s history.

• **What is the responsibility of the Church to address issues such as historic slavery?**

It was felt that the Church should use any knowledge it had about past links to slavery to educate people, and learn from this past, not to downplay or try to conceal it. It was felt that physical features of buildings that had links to historic slavery should not be removed, but instead used to help congregations and people the local area learn about this part of Scotland’s history. This was seen as an opportunity for the whole Church to examine the story we tell about who we are and what we value. One participant questioned whether, as part of this, the Church should seek to better understand the ways that Christianity was introduced to other parts of the world. It was also suggested that part of the Church’s response to the issue of historic slavery and racism today should be to examine its internal structures, addressing where our processes may have been shaped by biases and ignorance, often inadvertently, and thus have been exclusionary. The importance of listening to, and taking seriously, the experiences of people within the Church who are not White was voiced strongly. It was expressed that any acknowledgment or apology must be carefully considered so that the Church is fully aware of what is being acknowledged and apologised for, and there must then be actions behind these words.

• **What role does the Church of Scotland have in working towards racial justice across Scotland?**

Whilst it was acknowledged that there is national work that can be done, some participants felt that there would be more benefit in exploring what can be done locally in communities to make changes. It was expressed that there is not a one-size-fits-all approach that would be effective across the whole of Scotland. It was hoped that a fresh look at liturgy and resources could help equip congregations to have conversations about racial justice, and sharing examples of what is being done and working well could help everyone to engage. It was suggested that the Church

often waits for anniversaries or specific moments to progress work around issues such as racial justice when instead we should be weaving equality and justice into all aspects of our common life. One participant felt that we can take the lessons we have learned about the Church and historic racial injustices and apply this to climate change today, and encourage the Church to consider that climate change caused by fossil fuel extraction in the wealthy global north has had a disproportionate effect on the poorer global south. Others were keen to point out that slavery still continues today and we should support work that fights against this. In discussing if the Church should take steps towards reparations, it was acknowledged that engagement with ethnic minorities in Scotland were critical, as are our relationships with Churches abroad. The group also noted it was important to consider how any reparative action today differs from the philanthropy of those who made their fortunes from slavery.

3.9.2 Next steps for Churches

The findings of the Legacies of Slavery Project Group can be supplemented by the work of MSc Heritage student Nathan Zuliani who undertook research with two churches in Inverclyde during 2022. Zuliani quotes Annalisa Bolin (2022) to explain that “what we do with heritage reflects how we understand ourselves: who we were, who we are, and who we want to be” (quoted in Zuliani 2022:58). Zuliani worked to understand how both churches, who had links to historic slavery wealth, aimed to acknowledge their past, consider difficult objects in their buildings, and tell this story to present and future generations

3.9.3 Zuliani (2022) recommends a three-step approach that churches could take when dealing with difficult or challenging pasts: **Understanding; Engaging; and Managing for future uses**. This framework can apply nationally, but would allow individual churches to make decisions based on their own communities and in ways that make sense for them locally.

Step 1: Understanding means describing what is already known and openly discussing the outcomes within the church community. A key part of this is also acknowledging the differing moral context between the present day and of the past period.

Step 2: Engaging asks congregations to work through the following questions;

- What does this history mean for us – as the people who are the inheritors of this history?
- Why does this history need to be told? Why is it important to tell it?
- What is it about that history that still speaks to us today? Is it meaningful? Is it a warning?
- For objects: What was the objects purpose then, and what is its purpose now?

Step 3: Managing for future uses moves these questions into considering practical actions. Churches can then consider;

- How do we share what we know today so that it will not be forgotten?
- How do we deal with physical evidence of the past? Can we remove, relocate, replace, reframe or re-tell it? And what do we need to do this?
- Are we equipped to bring people to engage, converse and interpret safely? What training or guidance do we need?
- Are there any other means available to help us tell difficult stories and help people engage with them?

(adapted from Zuliani 2022:66-67)

3.9.4 Acknowledgement and Apology

The questionnaire responses (see in the online additional appendix at <https://churchofscotland.org.uk/general-assembly-2023/reports-documents>) and the discussions of the focus group evidence a desire of many to see the Church acknowledge the harms that slavery has done in our society and to acknowledge, and apologise in some cases, for the role the Church of Scotland played in these harms.

3.9.5 Through this research we can see that there is evidence of historical connections to, and benefits from, slavery within the Church. As such, the Legacies of Slavery Project Group feel that the Church should acknowledge these connections, confess that we do not worship in a church that is untouched by racism and racial injustices, and offer an appropriate apology.

3.9.6 Apology: A Theological Response

In its 2022 report, ‘Apologising for Historic Wrongs,’ the Theological Forum of the Church of Scotland drew attention to the importance Jesus placed on being reconciled with a brother or sister who has something against us. The history recounted above highlights a number of wrongs that might stand between sisters and brothers of African descent and the Church of Scotland. Past officers and members of the Kirk participated in or benefitted financially from the enslavement of others. They also embraced racist ideals that they attempted to justify on theological grounds. Many of them bequeathed their racist ideals and ill-gotten gains to the Kirk. And subsequent generations of the Church continued to make use of both the material and the ideological inheritance for years thereafter, in some cases extending up to the present day. The Theological Forum observed that ‘Issuing an apology for our historic sins can be an important step toward reconciling with neighbours from whom the church’s past has alienated her’ (CofS Theological Forum 2022). For this apology to succeed in helping to reconcile us with the communities that were wronged, more will be required than merely words. Nevertheless, an apology is a good place to begin.

(Prof. Glen Pettigrove, Chair of Moral Philosophy, University of Glasgow and member of the Theological Forum)

3.10 Recommendations

- 1) A statement of acknowledgment and apology should be brought to a future assembly, to be worked up by the Faith Impact Forum (or any successor body) in collaboration with the Theological Forum and the EDI group. This should include a process of consultation with the wider church where possible to ensure a Whole Church approach.
- 2) A permanent acknowledgement of our legacies of slavery by creating a dedicated page on the church website

- 3) A commitment to becoming anti-racist church and to encourage congregations and presbyteries to continue to engage with the topics of historic slavery, racial justice, and to mark Racial Justice Sunday
- 4) An appropriate art work is commissioned that can help congregations to begin conversations around historic slavery and racial justice in their own local contexts
- 5) The Church supports an academic scholarship, with student support, in partnership with a Scottish University. Our recommendation would be that this scholarship be open to any student linked with our partner churches in Africa and the Caribbean, with as little restriction on topic of study as possible.

3.11 For a list of references for this report, see Appendix 1.

4. SAFEGUARDING THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

4.1 Climate Crisis

The Climate Crisis struck hard in 2022, continuing to smash temperature records in Europe and the UK. Heat, droughts and wildfires raged across the continent causing unprecedented damage, affecting crop yields, food prices, water supplies, transport and public health. As Europe reeled from so-called 'once in a decade' climatic events, the reality is that it got its first taste of what many in the global south have suffered for over a decade but who have less financial resilience to cope. India and Pakistan also scorched in heatwaves, the latter alongside Brazil, China and parts of West and South Africa as regions that experienced devastating floods.

Christian Aid reports the global tally of lives lost in climate related disasters for 2022 to be around 1,800 human beings, with a further 7 million displaced. The financial impact cost around \$200bn. These under-estimates cannot account for long term impacts, nor slow-onset climate events, such as long-term drought occurring in Madagascar which is the first caused exclusively by climate change.

The collapsing climate continues to impact the poorest communities who are least responsible and church communities across the world, including our Partner churches continue to tell their stories and speak up for justice. It is for this reason that we must use our influence to hold the Scottish government to account on its promises on Loss and Damage funding and meeting climate targets. We must also act internally to end our own contribution to the injustice of climate change by decarbonising our operations to achieve Net Zero.

4.2 Biodiversity

As global numbers of insects, birds, mammals, reptiles and other flora and fauna continue to plummet, climate change and biodiversity are increasingly viewed as two sides of the same coin. Landmark agreements on reforestation at CoP26 in Glasgow (2021) and the Biodiversity CoP15 (2022) in China to ensure 30% of the world's surface land and 30% of the sea are dedicated to biodiversity conservation by 2030. Scotland's Biodiversity strategy sets ambitious nature recovery targets to main-stream nature conservation into our way of life. Decades of nature conservation targets have been missed and Scotland now ranks as the 12th most nature depleted nation on earth.

As a church with compassion for God's world, we must care for creation with fervour and call for a better relationship with nature not only in our role as stewards but in preserving the ecosystems that sustain our planet and provide us with resilience to limit climate change.

4.3. Net Zero by 2030 Strategy

4.3.1 The Forum has continued to develop work to realise the General Assembly's goal for the Church of Scotland to be a net zero carbon emitting organisation by 2030. The Forum has convened a cross-Church strategy group which brings together the main entities and decision-making bodies in the life of the Church, including the General Trustees, CrossReach and the work and outputs of the national office at 121 George Street. To ensure inclusion of younger people's perspectives, the Strategy Group includes a former member of the National Youth Assembly. The approach that the Forum is recommending in the following *Net Zero Strategic Outline* has been considered and supported by: The Faith Impact Forum, Faith Nurture Forum, General Trustees, the Central Services Committee, Social Care Council, and the Assembly Trustees.

4.3.2 A *Net Zero Strategic Outline* paper (available at <https://churchofscotland.org.uk/general-assembly-2023/reports-documents>) has been developed with the aim of providing a framework which different agencies and entities of the Church can use to gather data on their current greenhouse gas emissions, and plan for reductions. CrossReach and the General Trustees are currently using the strategic paper to begin data collection. The *Net Zero Strategic Outline* focuses on collecting data, reviewing current practice, raising awareness and setting targets in four areas: buildings and land, activity and travel, finance and investments, and policy and behaviour change. The strategy includes researching and developing a policy on carbon compensating, or "off-setting", which can be used by the different entities in the Church. It sets out work in three phases. Phase 1 is 2022-2025, Phase 2 is 2025-2030, and Phase 3 is 2030-beyond.

The targets in Phase 1 are focused on collecting data, policy change and planning to support action and implementation at local level. Implementation will follow. Although in many congregations action is already underway, experience suggests that previous deliverances of the General Assembly instructing all congregations to reduce their carbon emissions have been rendered largely ineffective by a lack of support, tools and policy-change across the whole church. Phase 1 of the Strategic Outline aims to ensure that local planning and action are effectively supported and implemented.

4.3.2.1 Property and Land

How property is used and maintained will be one of the largest sources of emissions within The Church. This is likely to be the biggest challenge, especially during structural reform in many areas of The Church. Understanding the role of property and land in achieving Net Zero must involve long term strategical planning. An Energy Footprint Tool is being developed to facilitate data gathering on energy use of church property which is a good start in this area, however there is more to be done for other areas.

How will this be measured?

Congregations will be asked to use the Energy Footprint Tool (EFT) to record and submit the energy use, the size of their buildings and the number of regular users of their buildings. The data will then be used to measure the cumulative footprint of The Church and to spot trends in consumption pattern, energy loss and operational costs. This understanding will enable the church and its entities to develop a strategic approach to planning for energy reduction using prioritisation criteria.

Target Outcome 1

- 50% of congregations using the EFT to submit their data via the EFT system by 2025, rising to 75% by 2027
- All other entities of the church submit data on at least 50% of their properties via the EFT system by 2025, rising to 100% of properties by 2027.

Target Outcome 2

National Church emissions reduction plan agreed by 2024

- All entities of the church have agreed a standardised emissions reporting system by 2024.
- Understand the feasibility of emission reduction opportunities for property and land.

Target Outcome 3

- Review of buildings and land to identify feasibility, requirements, and priorities for Net Zero by 2025 and a carbon management plan for all land owned by The Church by 2025.

4.3.2.2 Activities and Travel

Being a national church with various entities in Scotland and partners across the world, The Church must look at its emissions associated with its activities and travel. There will be variation between the different areas of The Church but collectively, The Church is likely to have a large travel and activity footprint.

How will this be measured?

Congregations will be encouraged to use [Climate Stewards](#) to capture emissions data from the day-to-day operations (i.e. goods and services) of their church. This data can be collected and combined with EFT data to get a full picture of congregational church emissions.

Target Outcome 1

- Net Zero Pathway (a web-based resource for congregations with advice and sign-posting to practical information on reducing emissions) available for churches by early 2023
- 50% of congregations are submitting additional annual activity data by 2025, rising to 75% by 2027.
- All other areas of The Church audit their financial expenditure to calculate the emissions footprint of day to day activities such as procurement, waste management, staff travel etc.

Target Outcome 2

- All areas of The Church understand their emissions footprint by 2024
- All areas of The Church have an environmental policy aimed to reduce the emissions of day to day operations by 2024

4.3.2.3 Finance and Investments

The church has wrestled for quite some years with the complexities of how the finances of its pensions and investments are managed. [A report in 2021^{\[ii\]}](#) found that the UK's banks and financial institutions are responsible for emissions nearly two times that of all the country's domestic emissions. This has fuelled ongoing debate on how the church manages its own finances and pressure to ensure its finances are not being used to fund high carbon activity.

Achieving net zero demands that the church no longer indirectly fund climate change through its investments and that the emissions of its assets are fully accounted for.

How will this be measured?

All areas of the church to request inventory emissions data from investment bodies and financial institutions responsible for church funds. This data should be used to understand the emissions footprint of the church's financial assets.

Target Outcome 1

- All areas of The Church understand the emissions footprint of their investment portfolio by 2025
- Where emissions data is not available, church bodies should explore other means of gathering data and/or moving investments to an institution that can provide faith consistent investments for The Church.

Target Outcome 2

- All areas of The Church should have Net Zero compatible investment policies by 2027

4.3.2.4 Policy and Behaviour Change

The Church has two roles when it comes to policy. The first is internal policy. All entities of The Church, including congregations, have policies and standards which determine acceptable terms, outcomes and behaviours of its employees and office-bearers. Individual entities will have varying degrees of power to initiate policies which will reduce the emissions of their employees, office-bearers and operations/ activities. The Net Zero Pathway aims to assist congregations in identifying changes they can make in policies and practices to reduce their carbon emissions.

How will this be measured?

All areas of The Church to instruct Human Resources departments, with appropriate support, to review all staff policies which may have potential to help reduce emission producing activities. Undertake to update any relevant policies that have the potential to reduce emissions or encourage behaviour change toward low emission practices. This includes congregations reviewing their policies and practice, including purchasing policies, at a local level.

Target Outcome 1

- From 2024, Net Zero and emissions reductions will be considered in all new policies.
- All areas and levels of The Church to review operational policies and guidelines that influence decision making. Undertake to update any relevant policies that have the potential to lower the emissions impact of operations and activities by 2025

Target Outcome 2

- All national office staff, presbytery clerks, MDS and parish ministers and relevant decision-making staff in Church entities are briefed and Net Zero aware by end of 2023
- All areas of The Church should have Net Zero policy coherence across relevant national office departments, in presbyteries and at a local level by 2025.
- All national entities in The Church have developed a behaviour change recording system which covers all services and operational areas by 2024 with agreed reporting system to track annual progress.

The second role is that of its national influence on local congregations and public affairs. The Church can bring about behaviour change throughout the institution through its ministry, teaching and practical application of the Marks of Mission. It already has the support of the Theological Forum’s paper on caring for creation. It can also influence national policy change through its relationship with partners and the Scottish government.

Target Outcome 3

- Care for Creation and climate justice will be evident in church teaching and ministry.
- Church is visibly engaged with staff, congregations and its entities to ensure their views, experience and business operational and service needs inform policies, strategies and actions towards meeting the net zero targets.
- Church is visibly engaged, participating and challenging world leaders at the highest levels of international debate

4.3.2.5 Carbon Compensation

Recognising that there are areas of The Church in which emissions are irreducible is equally an admission that the church must have a robust and reasonable carbon compensation or off-setting plan that is consistent with the Church’s ethics. Navigating the path through an unregulated market of carbon trading and offsetting schemes to a verifiable, long term carbon capture solution which verifiably meets ethical and human rights requirements will be challenging but necessary in order to achieve net zero. The Net Zero industry standard encourages no more than 5-10% of emissions should be offset

Target Outcome 1

- All areas of The Church to look at the fiscal feasibility and the ethical impacts of offsetting and agree on national or independent offsetting strategies which meet appropriate criteria in these areas. These are developed by late 2024.
- Voluntary emissions offset and reporting opportunities available for congregations by 2024.

The Faith Impact Forum commends the *Net Zero Strategic Outline* across all parts of the Church as the basis for making Net Zero a topic for consideration and action at congregational, presbytery and national levels. The Forum would also like to express its appreciation and thanks to the staff and committee members from other departments and agencies for their willing assistance and collaboration in preparing the *Net Zero Strategic Outline*.

4.4 Other Net Zero Activity

An ‘Environmental Footprint Tool’ is envisaged to help congregations measure carbon footprint in their buildings, is being developed in partnership with the Church of England. This project has not progressed as planned over the last year due to issues arising on data protection, but these have now been resolved and the tool will be developed and trialled in 2023.

A Net Zero Pathway is a new web resource aims to help congregations to identify practical actions they can take to reduce emissions. The Pathway contains tips for free and relatively simple actions and also signposts sources of advice and information on a range of more complex issues. It is expected that this will be launched in the Spring of 2023.

Weekly worship materials about climate change and climate justice are expected to be on line for Sunday 6th June 2023, to coincide with the UN World Environment Day on 5th June.

Project Eve, aimed at providing electric car charging points in church grounds, continues as a pilot, with a number of congregations trying different approaches to installation. Congregations’ experiences and learning are informing a “Route Map to EV Installation” which will be available for interested congregations.

5. INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP, PEACE AND DISARMAMENT

5.1 Europe

5.1.1 Ukraine

The war in Ukraine has overshadowed life within the continent of Europe over the past year. Transcarpathia is the westernmost region of Ukraine where many internally displaced people from the war-torn areas of the country have sought refuge. The region is home to a large Hungarian minority population in Ukraine. The Churches in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries have been at the forefront of supporting those fleeing and in providing support to them and to those still in Ukraine. The Church of Scotland already had good and long connections with the Reformed Church in Transcarpathia (RCT) and the Reformed Church in Hungary (RCH), and congregations and members very generously raised £430,000 to help. This was sent to the Reformed Church in Transcarpathia, the Reformed Church in Hungary, Hungarian Church Aid and St Columba’s Church of Scotland in Budapest

The most important and critical asset of the Reformed Church in Transcarpathia's social ministry is the pastors and their families who have remained in Transcarpathia and who coordinate the effort of the local parishes to take care of all those who suffer from the war and are left behind: the elderly, the sick, the large families, the disabled and the internally displaced persons who cannot return to their homes. With 108 congregations, led by 75 pastors, including 12 women, and 64,000 members (many have fled the country or were forced to leave their homes) it is a heavy load. They carry emotional and physical burdens.

The Church provides internally displaced people with free accommodation for the short and the long term. Food for refugees has been prepared in schools, kindergartens, and parish halls. Healthcare and personal hygiene products, clothes and non-perishable food have also been provided.

The Church opened its community spaces for refugees and organised day-care and summer camps for children, and adults were offered pastoral consultation and care. Religious books and worship services were provided in the Ukrainian language. In the midst of it all, the Church maintained its focus on the children of its congregations. Summer camps and preparatory weeks for confirmation have been held, providing a welcome diversion for them from the depressing weight of the war. Additionally, bomb shelters were built to meet the newly set legal conditions for schools and nurseries to open and continue educational services.

Dr. Károly Czibere, head of the Diaconia of the Reformed Church in Hungary and chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Hungarian Reformed Church Aid (HRCA) said *'We are grateful for the tremendous wave of solidarity, the prayers and donations from sisters and brothers and partner organisations around the world. Congregations and members of our sister churches have shown that their hearts go out to refugees and victims of the war. They have contributed substantial donations to the ministry of the Hungarian Reformed Church Aid, which has been shared with refugees in Hungary and internally displaced people in Transcarpathia, Ukraine. There are no words sufficient to express our gratitude on behalf of the HRCA and the Reformed churches in Hungary and Ukraine, as well as the thousands of refugees to whom you have offered hope in a time of hopelessness.'*

As of 9 February 2023, a total of 23,282 displaced persons from Ukraine have arrived in Scotland and congregations have offered a warm and generous welcome through hosting, befriending, activities in their buildings and more. To support the response of congregations in Scotland, £42,000 of external funding from Action of Churches Together in Scotland was secured to employ a part-time Churches Support Officer for two years until summer 2024. In the first 6 months of the role we have engaged with 62 churches and established local ecumenical networks of churches working to support Ukrainians. If you would like to develop your own work with Ukrainians please contact David Moodie David.Moodie@churchofscotland.org.uk or visit <https://www.sfar.org.uk/ukraine/>.

Church life has been marked by regular prayer for Ukraine and those displaced. Most recently congregations were supported in marking the first anniversary of the start of the war with prayers commended by Rt Rev Kenneth Nowakowski, Eparchial Bishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic community in Great Britain and Christian Aid, as well as an ecumenical prayer service for peace on 24 February attended by the Moderator

5.1.2 Mediterranean Hope

Fiona Kendall, Mission Partner in Italy continues to work with colleagues to support and grow the migrant programmes. In the past year there has been the development of migrant corridors providing safe passage for some, innovative new work beginning in the Balkans and further afield in Pakistan. In Scotland we have been able to highlight the issues faced by migrant populations through the excellent Fairtrade Co-operative in Calabria. In 2023, it is hoped to visit Calabria with members of the Church of Scotland who will then be able to take forward this initiative at local presbytery level.

5.2 Africa

5.2.1 South Sudan

In 2019, Pope Francis, the Archbishop of Canterbury and a former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, hosted a retreat at the Vatican for the leaders of South Sudan. They prayed it would be a space for the Holy Spirit to work, and in that meeting they saw the possibility of hope. Pope Francis knelt to kiss the feet of each politician. Almost five years later, in February 2023, this leadership group returned to South Sudan, in humility, in prayer, ready to wash feet, to listen, serve and pray with the people. The Church of Scotland was joined by a delegation from the Presbyterian Church USA, led by co-Moderator, Rev Shavon Starling-Louis, which has supported the Church in Sudan and South Sudan for over 100 years.

In the Ecumenical Pilgrimage of Peace to South Sudan, the Pope, Archbishop and Moderator emphasised different aspects of the things that make for peace. The Pope spoke of a need to change direction: "I beg you, with all my heart, to accept four simple words: not my words, but those of Christ.... he cried: "No more of this!" (Lk 22:51). Dear President and Vice-Presidents, in the name of God... now is the time to say "No more of this", without "ifs" or "buts". No more bloodshed, no more conflicts, no more violence and mutual recriminations about who is responsible for it, no more leaving your people athirst for peace. No more destruction: it is time to build! Leave the time of war behind and let a time of peace dawn!"

They met those displaced from the conflict going on across the country to hear their stories and understand their context. They heard about the devastation, suffering and grief, but also the beauty of the land, and the hopes of the people. They met with young people and women and were able to share their dreams and aspirations with the political leaders.

The Archbishop of Canterbury spoke of how "We come to encourage the church...Remember your wonderful work in building peace and bringing people together... we come to listen to the young people, 70% of South Sudan, for without listening to their voice, there will be no peace and reconciliation. And we come to honour the women who have known such terrible suffering. And yet to this day are the sign of resurrection life."

They felt God’s presence in the country. And sought to encourage the church and its members to remember and call to mind the dedicated work so many people from so many different churches had done over many decades to support peacebuilding and reconciliation. When all else was in disarray, the churches continued to meet, to worship, to offer hope, and to support the people.

The International community is becoming fatigued by a perceived lack of political will to build peace. The people are fatigued by the complications which the lack of peace brings to their lives, in food scarcity, homes destroyed, crops unplanted and so unharvested. Christian Aid continues its witness in the difficult situation by offering humanitarian assistance.

In the Ecumenical Pilgrimage for Peace, the Moderator emphasised how: “All the people are essential co-workers in God’s desire for a world in which all people can live life in fullness... (and) extend the reach of justice and compassion to the whole of this young and optimistic country, full of people ready to work for a vibrant and fulfilling future.” And that in the power of the Spirit, the people might “live as the prophet Isaiah promises:

21 They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant fields and eat their fruit.

22 ... for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be ... (Isaiah 65)”

5.3 Middle East

5.3.1 Israel and Palestine

The situation in Israel and Palestine shows no sign of changing, with the Occupation bringing hardship and difficulties to Palestinians, but also to Israelis. 2022 was one of the worst years on record for deaths due to the conflict, with numerous clashes throughout the year. The Church of Scotland’s partners have remained strong in the face of such hardship, but are also suffering both emotionally and financially in the current climate. It is important that the Church continue to support those who are on the ground making a difference, in both physical and material ways.

The Forum has spoken out on two major items – the E1 Settlement block and the move of the UK Embassy to Jerusalem. Both of these are seen as destructive to the peace process, and steps which will confirm facts on the ground that will be difficult ever to reverse. Working with our ecumenical partners throughout the UK, there have been letters written, with positive results.

Relationships continue to be built across the faith communities, and we hope to develop these further in the coming year. With two new Ministers in place in Jerusalem and Tiberias, we are also hopeful of developing our partner relationships during this year. Here in Scotland, links through presbyteries are providing opportunities for learning and sharing being developed.

5.3.2 Friends of St Andrew’s Jerusalem and Tiberias

In 2022, the Friends of St Andrew’s Jerusalem revised their statutes and elected a new Board to seek to revamp the work of the Friends in supporting the broader ministry of St Andrew’s Jerusalem and Tiberias. New members are sought to support the work and develop the life of the Friends. In January 2023, the Friends supported the visit to Scotland of Jamal Shehadeh from House of Grace in Haifa, a ministry to former prisoners. Rev Muriel Pearson, Mission Partner in Tiberias, accompanied Jamal to help highlight the work of House of Grace. He was able to engage during the visit with a number of different groups including sharing the scope of the work with FICS, Crossreach and church members.

5.3.3 The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) took an historic step on January 22, 2023 when it ordained Ms Sally Azar as its first female pastor. Ms Azar is a graduate of the Near East School of Theology in Lebanon, and undertook further study and preparation for ordination in Göttingen, Germany. She also serves on the Lutheran World Federation Council.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), highlighted how: “Sally’s ministry sends a powerful message of acceptance and progress in the church’s journey toward Gender Justice.” Ms Azar highlighted the important role her friends have played in offering support and encouragement, not least Rev. Mathild Sabbagh, from Syria, who was ordained last year in the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon, the Church of Scotland’s partner there.

The newly ordained Rev Sally Azar celebrated the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper with her father, Bishop Sani Ibrahim Azar, at the Lord’s Table in the Church of the Redeemer in the Old City of Jerusalem. Rev Dr Stewart Gillan, the Church of Scotland’s Mission Partner and minister of St Andrew’s Jerusalem and Tiberias, commented, “I was seated with a large number of women bishops from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, who shared stories of their own journeys to ordination. Outside in the sunshine we enjoyed a youth band, replete with bagpipes, from Bethlehem. It was one of the most thrilling days I have had in ministry. Let us answer Sally’s call for prayer – for herself, her Church and the peoples of Israel and Palestine – that the compassion, justice and healing of God be theirs.”

Rev Sally Azar will serve the ELCJHL English-speaking congregation in Jerusalem, and also work as a bridge between the Arabic-speaking and English-speaking congregations, as well as working with youth. She commented, “With my ordination, I hope that not only young women are inspired to pursue theology, but that women of all ages who may have wanted to study theology, but didn’t think it was possible, will be encouraged to do so.”

5.3.4 Earthquake in Syria

Following the strong earthquakes which hit Syria and Lebanon as well as Türkiye, the Church of Scotland was immediately in touch with the Rev Joseph Kassab, General Secretary, of the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (NESSL), and his colleagues to offer prayerful support and solidarity, and then followed up with an emergency grant of £10,000 for the church’s work in the affected areas in Syria. Many individuals and congregations have given to the emergency response, through organisations such as Christian Aid and the DEC, but the situation will be ongoing

for many months. It is planned to develop a resource – ‘Standing Firm – Rebuilding lives in Syria’ – for presbyteries and congregations to have opportunity to support work in rehabilitation and physical and psychological support through the NESSL. With the Lebanese economy imploding and Syria still not out of a civil war, outside help is essential. This is an opportunity to make a big difference to the life of the Church in Syria and Lebanon and for them to know the love and support from presbyteries, congregations and people in Scotland.

5.4 Asia

5.4.1 Pakistan

Pakistan has been in political turmoil and the economy is struggling with the real possibility the country will default on its sovereign debt. Blasphemy has been weaponised and Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) position themselves as the party that champions killing of people accused of the crime. Mainstream parties like Pakistan Muslim League (N) and Pakistan Tehreek Insaf have moved to show their pro-blasphemy credentials by attacking Ahmadi and Shia Muslims to gain approval from the powerful Islamist lobby. The blasphemy law affects everyone but it disproportionately affects marginalised people and communities more. The misuse of the law appears to pass the Pakistan equivalent of the dinner part test, e.g., people boast that they threaten domestic servants with blasphemy charges when they demand their contracted days of leave. Some tradesmen use similar threats against customers from minority faith backgrounds if they complain about high charges. False accusations can ruin people’s and families’ lives as they have leave home and go into hiding. With TLP able to put huge pressure on the authorities and people involved in blasphemy cases, judges and lawyers who are involved in blasphemy cases are at risk of violence and some have been killed.

The scale of misuse of the blasphemy can perhaps be shown by the fact that while there has been no judicial executions of anyone convicted of blasphemy, there are about 80 people currently on death row. At least 20 people accused of blasphemy have died in extra-judicial killings.

In January the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan expressed its concern over the Criminal Laws (Amendment) Act 2023, which was passed unanimously in the National Assembly. While the stated aim of this bill is to curb sectarianism, HRCPC believes it is likely to exacerbate the persecution of Pakistan’s religious minorities and minority sects. The proposed legislation increases the punishment for using derogatory remarks against holy persons in Islam from three years with a fine to imprisonment for life ‘which will not be less than ten years’. The bill also makes the offence non-bailable, thereby directly violating the constitutionally guaranteed right to personal liberty under Article 9. Given Pakistan’s troubled record of the misuse of such laws, these amendments are likely to be weaponised disproportionately against religious minorities and sects, resulting in baseless cases, harassment and persecution. Moreover, increasing the penalty for alleged blasphemy will aggravate misuse of the law to settle personal vendettas, as is often the case with blasphemy allegations. At a time when civil society has been calling for amendments to these laws to prevent their abuse, strengthening this punishment will do the exact opposite^[iii].

Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is a mechanism to combat money laundering and terrorism financing but is also used against Non-Profit Organisations and so stifles civil society. Churches, including our partner Church of Pakistan, have largely retreated from working on or even commenting on justice and peace issues with only occasional references to particular blasphemy cases.

The Forum works with the Centre for Legal Aid Assistance and Settlement (CLAAS), a Christian organisation committed to addressing ongoing religious persecution in Pakistan. With the Church of England, we have continued to co-host webinars exploring related issues; using insights from partners and activists, two bishops and Lord Jim Wallace of Tankerness have asked questions in the House of Lords about the UK Government’s commitment to upholding human rights in Pakistan especially relating to forced conversion and forced marriage of Christian and Hindu young women and girls. Earlier this year a group of United Nations Special Rapporteurs has written to the government of Pakistan on the issue of forced conversions to Islam. They express alarm over the rise in abductions, forced marriages, and forced conversions of underage girls and young women belonging to religious minority groups in Pakistan. It cites a lack of access to justice for victims and their families and the court system’s enabling of these offenses through the acceptance of fraudulent evidence. The experts have urged the Pakistani government to take immediate steps to prevent such acts, investigate ongoing and future cases in line with domestic legislation and international human rights commitments, and hold perpetrators to account^[iv].

5.4.2 South Korea

The Korean War ended 70 years ago in June 1953 with an Armistice rather than a peace treaty. Nearly five million people died, more than half – about 10 percent of Korea’s pre-war population – were civilians. Among the military casualties were 1,114 British soldiers. Perhaps 10 million families were separated on either side of the 38th Parallel. As we reported in 2022, our partners urge us to support the Korea Peace Appeal (<https://en.endthekoreanwar.net/>) to bring about a Peace Treaty to formally end the Korean War, end sanctions against DPRK, promote links between North and South Korea, and sustainable peace on the Korean peninsula. National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK) is one of over more than 370 South Korean civil society organizations, religious groups, individual supporters and over 75 international partner organisations participating in the Korea Peace Appeal campaigning to end the Korean War by collecting 100 million signatures by June 2023, the 70th anniversary of the signing of the Armistice Agreement.

In a statement in January 2023, NCCCK said a strengthening of the New Cold War Order with military cooperation between the US, South Korea, and Japan could provoke North Korea into its own confrontational military responses. This has led to both South Korean and North Korean governments releasing more statements threatening dangerous policies that edge both countries closer to war, whether planned or accidental. The NCCCK affirms that the people living on the Korean Peninsula should not be used as collateral, but should be sovereign and be able to work for peace.

NCKK again claims that only the restoration of mutual trust through peaceful dialogue and diplomacy can lead to common security. NCKK notes that the constitution of South Korea includes language that makes the government responsible for “democratic reform and peaceful unification” which would “contribute to lasting world peace and humanity.” The South Korean government should honour this responsibility rather than pushing the peninsula to the brink of war.

NCKK calls on the South Korean government to ‘stop relying solely on a military response, but instead to put its full effort into breaking the deadlock by pursuing peace through dialogue and building mutual trust. The administration should honour the sovereignty of the people, the majority of whom want peace rather than war. We should work toward a peninsula that feels the warm wind of peace blowing freely’.

5.4.3 Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is facing an immense debt crisis. In December 2021 their debt was sitting at 104.60% of GDP according to the Sri Lanka Central Bank. This is an extreme situation where Sri Lanka pays more than two thirds of its revenue as interest cost: “...compared to all the countries for which data is available in the world, Sri Lanka was recorded as having the highest percentage of interest payments compared to its government revenue in 2020. Sri Lanka’s interest cost to revenue ratio reached an unprecedented level of 71.7% in 2020.”

This unsustainable debt is severely affecting the government’s ability to provide its citizens with basic services such as healthcare, education and social security. With an economy heavily reliant on tourism and exports of textiles, garments and tea Sri Lanka was highly affected by the Covid Pandemic. This is the worst economic crisis Sri Lanka has faced in its post-independence history, and it has plunged Sri Lanka deeper into a political crisis that shows no signs of resolution³. As Sri Lanka deals with multiple crises – political, social and economic – it is also vulnerable to the effects of climate change which requires funds for adaptation, as well as finances to tackle loss and damage. Civil society has been pushed to the point of street protests in the light of food, fuel and medicine shortages, including frequent power cuts. We have received several accounts in the last year of how our partners including National Christian Council of Sri Lanka, Presbytery of Lanka and St Andrew’s Scot’s Kirk have to tried to mitigate the worst of the effects.

Faith Impact Forum has held exploratory conversations with Jubilee Scotland about helping to amplify their campaign for debt justice for Sri Lanka. This is an opportunity for Church of Scotland congregations to get involved in the Debt Justice for Sri Lanka campaign through supplied worship packs and/or craftivism campaign packs which will have clear actions they can take to support the campaign, influence the Scottish Government and in turn demand action in Westminster.

5.5 Twinning and Faithshare visits

Due to the Covid pandemic and congregational focus being internalised as presbytery plans were developing during the last two years, congregations and presbyteries have not been able to travel or receive visitors from twinned congregations. It is however heartening to have several planned visits for 2023 and inklings of new twinning developments. Of course, there has been various degrees of online communication over the period of the Covid-19 pandemic and this has surely galvanised using digital media to keep in touch. However, nothing can replace face to face connection – the opportunities to sit around a table for a meal and chat or to share another’s life for a few days can truly change people. Just one example of this, in 2023, the congregation and community on Benbecula will once again welcome their friends from Chuka in Kenya to the island. This visit will be a celebration of a 10-year friendship, a renewing of twinning objectives and the opportunity to expand faith journeys.

5.6 Stamp Project

Despite the use of postage stamps reducing, by collection at congregational level of used stamps we have been able to support the salary of a pastor in the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon this year. This money raised from used stamps provides the vital resource of pastoral teaching, care and support in Lebanon, a country which is facing crisis after crisis and yet where our partner church continues, despite its small size, to provide more than church on a Sunday! The stamp project will continue in 2023-24 and will support tree planting in Malawi as part of climate mitigation work.

5.7 Fairtrade and Traidcraft

The Church of Scotland and Christian Aid have supported the Fairtrade movement for many years and the General Assembly has repeatedly urged congregations to buy Fairtrade and encourage church members to advocate for a wider range of Fairtrade products in shops and supermarkets.

The Forum was saddened to hear the news that Traidcraft, a fair-trade innovator rooted in church life, had gone into administration in January 2023. We recognise that many congregations will have sold Traidcraft products through Fairtrade stalls. The work of Traidcraft, which was founded in 1979, helped to transform awareness of and support for Fairtrade for more than 40 years. We want to give thanks for all that Traidcraft has achieved, and to acknowledge the incredible work for economic justice that its staff and countless local volunteers and Traidcraft reps helped to deliver. They leave an important legacy and we encourage the Church to continue its steadfast support for Fairtrade and to continue to maintain Fairtrade Church status as a way to honour this heritage.

5.8 Nuclear disarmament

The Moderator was able to demonstrate the General Assembly’s continued and consistent position in support of nuclear disarmament at a prayer vigil and peace witness held outside Faslane naval base in October 2022, together with the Archbishop of Glasgow, the Most Reverend Bill Nolan, president of the Scottish Catholic Justice and Peace Commission.

6. INTERFAITH RELATIONS

6.1 Jewish-Christian Glossary Project

It is anticipated that the Forum’s work in relation to the Jewish-Christian Glossary Project will be outlined in a Supplementary Report.

6.2 Islamophobia Webinar

Following the General Assembly’s approval of the deliverance to “adopt for internal use the All-Party Parliamentary Group’s (APPG) definition of Islamophobia, and its guidelines, to aid the Church of Scotland in challenging Islamophobia”, Faith Impact Forum arranged a webinar with members and activists within the Muslim community to discuss the importance of this definition and how Islamophobia affects Muslim individually and across society. With the tangible examples discussed at the webinar and the suggestions of what would express solidarity from non-Muslims will be turned into an e-learning training available to everyone in the Church to access and engage with. This will be ready some time in 2023 with access details released via the Church of Scotland website or Ascend.

6.3. Interfaith Week 2022

The Moderator managed to visit the places of worship of the Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist and Jewish communities during this week along with receptions for the Council of Christians and Jews and Interfaith Glasgow. These visits are an important way of extending and maintaining existing interfaith relationships and a way to discuss common areas of interest and listen to the specific experiences and insights of those from different communities.

7. INTEGRITY – THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN TASK GROUP

7.1 Integrity’s strategy since September 2021 has been focused on building the capacity of individual Church members and leaders to understand, respond and prevent violence against women, building on the 2021 General Assembly Deliverance. In order to achieve this, the strategic priorities have been narrowed to two areas of work. The first has been the objective of improving awareness within the Church of Integrity’s work and thus creating a communication unit dedicated to promoting resources and training. This unit has also dedicated time to learn from congregational feedback as to which resources and aspects of training needed to be adapted and improved. The second priority has been focused on developing one single form of introductory training piloted in 2021, rather than expanding the range of topics Integrity could offer. This decision was reached out of recognition that a diversity of knowledge, confidence and understanding exists within the Church and, in order to determine that the Church as a whole seeks to ‘do no harm’ at the very least, Integrity was better to continue delivering introductory knowledge to a broader base of people, rather than focusing on the smaller group who had already been trained.

7.2 By focusing on this one singular form of training Integrity, has ensured that over 100 people across a diverse range of roles and leadership within the Church of Scotland, received the same foundational training. The impact is that individuals in a variety of roles receive consistent advice and information which they can then share safely with others. Integrity would then seek to continue offering introductory training, for which demand has been high, and also approach those who have been trained with more in depth and practical training opportunities. Impact reports for each training Integrity can report that 95% reported that their knowledge improved, furthermore 85% reported that their confidence had grown in responding to disclosures due to the pragmatic information regarding what is helpful, unhelpful and actively harmful for victim survivors. Overall the training has helped Integrity make direct contact with those who have just begun to journey on this topic and are looking to gain basic insights and those who are further ahead but require encouragement and more pragmatic advice. As a result, Integrity has found that the training sets people up with a range of ideas for people to implement in their own context and provides a link to allow individuals to reach out for future support and resources from Integrity. In addition to facilitated training, Integrity has also developed e-learning training for anyone within the Church to access and learn at their own pace. The course takes individuals through the issues underpinning violence against women, practical ideas in responding to disclosure and initiatives to help your Church become a safe and trustworthy environment for people to turn for support.

7.3 Integrity has been keen to connect the wider societal issues of gender inequality, with issues that specifically affect those in Church life and faith, often an ignored dimension when women access support services. At the same time, Integrity has increased our engagement with Scottish Women’s Aid, Rape Crisis and others to share knowledge and experience regarding how their support might be better suited for women of faith.

7.4 Integrity is piloting a men’s only training in February entitled ‘*What’s a man to do?*’ which was borne of the recognition that much of prevention starts with men having open and frank conversations about attitudes and behaviours that can lead to abuse. As well as offering skills and advice to build their confidence in speaking out when they hear and see problematic behaviour. The general training already offered can only go so far in encouraging men given that 90% of participants have been women. Very Reverend Martin Fair has been a key part of putting this training on and summarised the need for this work as follows:

“...For men simply to say they wouldn’t commit acts of physical violence isn’t enough – violence comes in many forms and is happening so I want all men to consider that they have a part to play. Men need to raise awareness and take action.”

7.5 The final focus for Integrity this year will be to review the Violence Against Women Charter. This was developed in 2016 as a way for congregations to find a way into the topic as well as identifying related areas of Church life that they can positively influence. Integrity would like the charter to be a way of building a network of congregations actively engaged on this topic and working with each other to promote gender equality alongside healthy, happy and flourishing relationships. The charter would also seek to help them create environments that would encourage anyone in the Church, or those outside of it, to seek support and be met with love, grace and kindness in keeping with our calling as Christians. Integrity’s vision can be summed up using the words of a victim survivor within the Church:

7.6 *"I long for the church to be a supportive community...friendly. A community of courage, willing to challenge the causes of violence. Not a place to hide or cover up suffering in our midst, but accepting of vulnerability, pain and the messy realities of human life. A sacred space where it's safe to be just who we are, and loved by God. A place of celebration, hospitable, open..."*

(Rosie, domestic abuse survivor)

8. POVERTY AND COST OF LIVING

8.1 Congregations and communities have continued to endure the crisis of rising food, fuel and energy costs over the past year. Stories of people struggling against poverty and the increasing pressures on public services have been widely shared, and the response of churches through support of individuals, families and communities has been substantial. The Forum commends those churches that have delivered practical projects to meet human need, including through the provision of emergency food aid or to offer warm spaces for people to gather during the winter. However, important though it is that those who are able to help do so, the emergency stop-gap provision offered by churches and charities must not become normalised or an expected response to poverty. Governments and society have a moral duty to provide a social security safety net that is sufficient to allow people to live with dignity and thrive.

8.2 The Forum is grateful to Fife Presbytery for establishing a Poverty Task Force in partnership with the Priority Areas team, which convened a Poverty Hearing Day in Methil in November. The event was addressed by Gordon Brown, former UK Prime Minister. The Forum had earlier in the year collaborated with Church partners to share research and ideas about the growing urgent need for policy-makers to respond to the impact of rising prices and cuts to public services. ^[v]

9. SCOTTISH FAITHS ACTION FOR REFUGEES AND FAITHFUL WELCOME

9.1 The Forum continues host Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees (SFAR: <https://www.sfar.org.uk/>), and the project co-ordinator is an integral part of the Public Life and Social Justice staff team in the Church of Scotland national office. SFAR was involved in a faith-based response to the passage of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 through the UK Parliament, and has continued to advocate for a return to the principles of the UN Refugee Convention and against the proposed Rwanda deportation flights. SFAR has also supported Scottish churches and faith groups in speaking out against the treatment of people seeking sanctuary through crossing the English Channel. SFAR has also been working to influence the Scottish Government's New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy to ask that it takes more account of faith and belief issues in refugee integration. SFAR has also offered a comprehensive response to the displacement of Ukrainians and the dispersal of asylum seekers to other parts of Scotland, supporting dozens of local congregations as they welcome New Scots in their communities. Every year engaging resources are produced for congregations to mark Sanctuary Sunday (25 June 2023) and we encourage the celebration of this day across the Church.

9.2 The Faithful Welcome project reported at the last General Assembly concluded in autumn 2022. This partnership project with Faith in Community Scotland was funded by the European Union and aimed to support faith communities to welcome refugees and asylum seekers to enable them to be an integral part of community life. The Faithful Welcome partnership and work will continue in a new form after securing further external funding. *Somebody Reaches Out* is the name of a summary report of focus groups held throughout the project which helps faith communities shape their responses to New Scots. ^[vi]

10. PARLIAMENTARY AND POLITICAL AFFAIRS

10.1 Scottish independence

Following Brexit and the Covid pandemic, the last year has seen a renewal of arguments for and against Scottish independence, and political disagreement and legal arguments about whether or not the Scottish Parliament should have the power to legislate for a referendum.

The General Assembly of 2012 agreed a deliverance: *Confirm that the Church will remain impartial with regard to the question in the forthcoming referendum.* The Forum believes that, ten years on, it is the time to invite the General Assembly to reaffirm this position. It is clear that within the membership of the Church there are passionate supporters of independence and passionate defenders of the union. There are also many undecideds. The Forum believes it would be unwise for the Church to take a corporate position for or against independence at this time. If the Church were to express an opinion on the highly politicised and controversial debate about whether or how there should be a referendum, or if the next UK Parliament election should or should not be considered a *de facto* referendum, there is a real risk of alienating a large section of society and impairing the mission of the Church. It is also likely to severely impede our role as an institution that builds bridges across the constitutional and party-political divides and our role in society as a safe space that puts the highest interests of the people above the political rifts of the day.

10.2 Human Rights Reform – UK Bill of Rights Bill

In 2022 the UK Government consulted on new reforms to human rights legislation. The Forum responded on behalf of the Church, in consultation with the Legal Questions Committee, based on the reports received and deliverances agreed by the General Assembly in 2013 and 2016. The response echoed the view of these earlier Assemblies in opposing reform of the Human Rights Act. At the time of writing, the Bill of Rights Bill is waiting for its Second Reading in the House of Commons.

10.3 National Care Service (Scotland) Bill

Over the last year the Faith Impact Forum has continued to work with CrossReach on the Scottish Government's proposals for a 'National Care Service for Scotland', implementing recommendations of an independent review headed by Derek Feeley which reported in early 2021. A "Framework" Bill, which proposes governance structures for the National Care Service has been introduced to Parliament, and – at the time of writing – is expected to complete Stage One consideration by 17 March. Under the proposals, responsibility for social care will be transferred from local to national government. The details of how the National Care Service will operate are to be developed through a "co-design" process, which gives care providers including CrossReach the opportunity to give input from their experience. Further legislation is likely to follow the "co-design" process and we will continue to follow this and provide opportunities for churches to share their views. For more information please see <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about-us/our-views/social-care-reform>

10.4 Assisted Suicide

Liam McArthur MSP has proposed an Assisted Dying Bill in the Scottish Parliament. The Forum responded on behalf of the Church to his proposal. At the time of writing, it is expected that the Bill will be introduced shortly and there will be a chance for parliamentary scrutiny and wider public debate, possibly happening in Spring of 2022. The Forum has continued to promote the view of the General Assembly, which is to support the current law prohibiting assisted suicide. The Forum plans work in 2022 to support engagement with MSPs, so decision-makers are aware and informed of the views of the Church.

10.5 Gender Recognition

Last year the Forum reported to the General Assembly that it would consider the Gender Recognition (Reform) (Scotland) Bill. The Forum agreed a process which led to the submission of written evidence and the giving of oral evidence to the Scottish Parliament Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee. This generated some feedback from some within the Church who were unhappy at the position the Forum presented, or who had expected a broader level of consultation across the Church before making a public statement.

Some Church of Scotland people complained that the Forum had adopted a position and made a public statement that went beyond the decisions of the General Assembly, and which it therefore did not have the competency to do so. Here, the Forum asserts its role and remit as a General Assembly-appointed Forum, which includes a "making theological, ethical and spiritual contributions to public policy and decision-making on issues of societal, economic, and political significance". When the political world moves faster than our Assembly timetable, developing positions and making statements would seem to be a necessity if we want to retain a credible public voice. But the Forum does acknowledge that in this case its position did go too far for some members. One particular sticking point which has been highlighted is a section in the 2022 FIF GA Report, which said:

7.6.3 On the first debate about the Bill, the Faith Impact Forum will seek to consult and engage constructively on the issues that will soon come before Holyrood and where the views of the public will be invited. We urge individual ministers, elders and members to consider the ideas for reform themselves, and if they are so moved, to make representation to their own MSPs. The Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office will publish a briefing on the issues once the legislation is introduced.

Some Church members who were surprised at our response went back to the Report to find this, and were disappointed not to have been consulted. It became obvious that there was a difference in our understanding about that commitment to 'consult' and what others might have expected of us. We are sorry for this misunderstanding and our part in it. Between the January 2022 drafting of this section and the May 2022 submission of written evidence to the Committee, the Forum discussed this on a number of occasions, and unusually for this topic, recognising its sensitivities, the written response was shared for comment from several other departments and key stakeholders at the level of the national Church. The Forum has reflected on this process. We are sorry to those Church members who wanted more involvement or who felt that the view that was presented did not reflect their opinion. We aim to improve our processes for future controversial topics, and will make sure that that this experience is not forgotten when the Forum is dissolved and the new committee structure introduced.

The second main focus of internal criticism was that, in taking our position, the Forum was seeking to push for or create a theological position with regards transgender identity. In our responses we sought to make clear that this is not the case, but we have instead been following the pastoral care and sensitive approach agreed previously by the General Assembly. Our views on changes to civil law about how a person applies for a Gender Recognition Certificate were about how to make an administrative process less harmful for the individuals concerned.

A webpage has been created which includes links to the Forum's response to the Parliamentary Committee, as well as other reports and information about the Church and diverse gender identities: <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about-us/our-views/diverse-gender-identities>

10.6 Conversion Therapy Ban

Following the decision of the General Assembly 2022 to support a ban on conversion therapy, the former Convener, the Very Rev Dr Susan Brown, was invited to be part of a Scottish Government independent group on conversion therapy. The Scottish Government are expected to consult on plans and introduce legislation in the near future. The Forum expects that the Faith Impact Forum (or any successor body) and Public Life and Social Justice Programme Group will continue to represent the Church's position at the appropriate time.

10.7 Abortion Buffer Zones

In summer 2022, Gillian Mackay MSP launched a consultation on a proposed Abortion Service Safe Access Zones (Scotland) Bill. This proposes a ban on protest – possibly including static or silent prayer – outside health care facilities providing abortion services. The Bill's supporters argue that there has been a recent rise in the number of aggressive and intrusive campaign protests which are harming the wellbeing of patients and staff, and that if people want to campaign

against the law on abortion they should protest outside Parliament. Opponents have argued that the right to freedom of expression is deeply held, and that would be a deeply serious matter if the state were to decree that there are places in Scotland where it were not permissible to pray, if it did not interfere directly with another person. The Scottish Government's Programme for Government 2022-23, published in September, said they would support the development of legislation on this topic as soon as practicable. The Forum expects that the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team and Public Life and Social Justice Programme Group will continue to monitor news, and engage in the debate where appropriate.

11. DRUGS AND SUBSTANCE MISUSE

11.1 Background and language

It is sadly well known that Scotland has a problem with drugs and alcohol, and that the challenges our society faces are greater than in other parts of the UK and Europe. The police, NHS, social work, courts and prisons service as well as other statutory and voluntary agencies will attest to the financial costs. As the Church we can add the spiritual and emotional impact of addiction on individuals, their friends, families and communities. It was with this in mind that the General Assembly last year instructed the Faith Impact Forum to prepare a report on issues relating to drugs and substance use. The following paper has been prepared on the Forum's behalf by the Society, Religion and Technology Project. We are inviting the Assembly of 2023 to agree a new deliverance instructing further work and action on this topic.

One issue that we have considered and is worth highlighting at the start of this report is about the language deployed in relation to this subject, namely do we talk about drug *use* or drug *misuse*. Across the sector there is sometimes differing approaches, no doubt related to how language and our approach to an issue evolves over time.

One problem with talking about drug *misuse* is that it might be perceived that there is a degree of judgement or stigma against the individual struggling against addiction: they have misused the substance, they are to blame. To talk about 'drug use' might remove this sense of apportioning individual blame or judgement. As you will see, our report emphasises that addiction is not a choice, and that to reduce drug harm we need to tackle stigma and judgemental attitudes towards drug users.

There is a contrary – and valid – view that would say that talking about drug use may normalise attitudes towards consumption, which downplays the medical issues for individuals and the scale of Scotland's public health crisis.

Our conclusion is that there is not one single answer, but that how we talk about this issue might well depend on context and audience. You will note that in the following report we have chosen 'misuse' and we do so on the basis that this is a social policy report and it felt more appropriate. With this comment we underline that our position is non judgemental and we believe the Church should work actively to tackle stigma. There may be other circumstances that it would be better to choose 'use'. We invite Commissioners and readers of this report to think about their language before they write or speak about this topic.

11.2 Introduction

The growing use of recreational drugs in UK, particularly Scotland, is having devastating effects on individuals and their families. Perhaps most obvious is the tragic death toll due to drug misuse.

Substance misuse, in its most severe form, is referred to as addiction. Medical researchers are increasingly of the view that substance use leading to addictive behaviour is best understood as a chronic illness caused when addictive substances, such as heroin, overstimulate and reset specific brain circuits involved in reward and self-control. "Opioid dependence is not just a heavy use of the drug but a complex health connotation that has social, psychological and biological determinants and consequences, including changes in the brain. It is not a weakness of character or will." (World Health Organisation 2006.)

It is important to realise that substance use disorders are preventable and treatable and Church congregations can have an important role in healing those whose lives are dominated by drugs.

11.3 The size of the problem.

Illicit drug use is global, affecting millions of people of all ages from all sections of society. Estimating prevalence is difficult because of its hidden nature, but data on drug use from the National Records of Scotland reveal that around 10% of survey respondents aged over 15 are using drugs, the commonest being cannabis (8%), cocaine (3%) and ecstasy (1.6%). "Problem" drug users, who are most likely to have severe and life-threatening health and social problems, are mainly those regularly taking heroin, morphine or methadone (opiates), often in combination with other substances. The number of individuals in this group has remained fairly steady over the past decade at around 60,000 or 1.6% of the Scottish population; the majority are male and tend to live in the cities. In this group there were 1339 deaths in 2021, nearly twice the number recorded for 2009, and a fivefold increase compared to 1996. 84% of deaths involved heroin and in nearly every case the user was taking a combination of drugs, often with alcohol and Valium. The rate of drug-misuse deaths is 3.7 times higher in Scotland than in UK as a whole, and is among the highest in Europe.

In addition to drug misuse, 24% of adults in Scotland drink alcohol at harmful levels of over 14 units a week, presenting a major public health challenge due to the associated risks of physical and mental health problems. Excessive alcohol consumption leads to an increased risk of high blood pressure, liver cirrhosis, pancreatitis, cancers, mental illness, accidents and infections such as tuberculosis HIV and hepatitis. In 2021 there were 1,245 deaths in Scotland where alcohol was the underlying cause of death- a similar number of deaths attributed to drug misuse, though in much larger section of the population. (However, it should be remembered that, in comparison to drugs, alcohol is freely and legally available.)

11.4 What is substance misuse?

Substance misuse can be defined simply as the use of drugs or alcohol in a way that causes harm to the user and those around them. Each substance causes its own pattern of physical problems, and can be linked to the breakdown of relationships at home and work contributing to unemployment and poverty, partner violence, child neglect, increased risk of accidents and, at its most severe, death from overdose. There is a growing body of research evidence relating Adverse Childhood Experience (ACEs) and substance use. This is being used by organisations such as CrossReach to seek to reframe the question from “why are you behaving like that?” to “what happened to you that has contributed to your current behaviours?”. Adopting a new, compassionate, approach can help reduce stigma surrounding substance misuse.

The substances most frequently misused are opiates such as heroin, stimulants such as cocaine and ecstasy, hallucinogens including LSD and ketamine, cannabis, some drugs prescribed as pain relievers, sleeping tablets, and tranquilisers and also “designer drugs” which are synthetic variations of a legally prohibited drug devised to circumvent drug laws.

11.5 What is addiction?

Some people develop addictive behaviours and need to take a substance regularly to function normally. They have built up a tolerance to the drug, needing increasingly larger amounts to get the same effect, and experience withdrawal symptoms when they try to stop. They give priority to getting the next fix, disregarding cues for other rewards to be gained from family and social life. This complex pattern of changes to a person’s thinking, feelings and behaviours is caused by adaptations in the reward system of the brain, in response to repeated stimulation by an addictive substance.

Substances that cause addiction share the property of activating the reward system of the brain, producing feelings of pleasure, euphoria or even ecstasy referred to as a “high”. This group of interconnected brain structures is responsible for the feelings and behaviours associated with wanting, desiring, or craving a reward. Primary rewards, for most animals are water, food, parental care and sex. Reward circuits have evolved to sustain and reinforce the fundamental behaviours on which survival and successful reproduction depend. When a substance such as alcohol or heroin repeatedly over-activates the reward system, these crucial brain pathways respond by overly reinforcing reward seeking behaviours which then become dysfunctional.

Not everyone who misuses a substance will become dependent and millions of people use alcohol and illicit drugs without developing serious complications. Why some people are more prone to dependency than others is not well understood, but drug addiction is more common in some families and genes make a substantial contribution to risk. The frequency, duration and amount of a drug used is also important, as is the age when a person starts to use drugs. Adolescents and young adults are at particular risk of serious drug use disorder because the developing brain is more sensitive to damage- especially the frontal cortex and the other brain regions mediating impulse control and reward.

Increased mortality linked to alcohol and substance misuse is partly due to the direct adverse effects of these substances on liver, heart and other organs, but several other factors, including serious mental illness which is over-represented in this group, poverty, social isolation and reduced likelihood of seeking medical care may each contribute to the high mortality rates measured.

As a public health issue, drug misuse with addictive behaviours has features in common with disorders such as heart disease, diabetes or asthma. All of these disrupt the normal, healthy functioning of an organ in the body, are influenced by genetic, behavioural, social and environmental factors and in many cases are preventable and treatable. If left untreated they can last a lifetime and may lead to death.

Drug misuse is a public health issue, but the field is highly stigmatised and criminalised. A medical explanation may benefit someone living with addiction by reducing stigma. A better understanding of pharmacology opens exciting possibilities for new kinds of interventions (for example clinical trials are being conducted on an anti-cocaine vaccine and treatment of addictions using hallucinogens. Proposals to legalise cannabis and other potentially harmful substances, lie between the two extremes of prohibition and a completely free market. Understanding how drugs affect the brain can inform this debate.

11.6 Can a person dependent on a substance recover and stay well and what treatments are available?

Recovery is a process of change to which both preventative programmes and treatment strategies contribute. Prevention measures aim to reduce substance use in the general population among recreational users who are not adversely affected. Treatments are available for the smaller numbers of people with severe addiction. Guidelines published by The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) reviews the evidence for different treatments of drug misuse under the headings: detoxification, pharmacological treatments and psychosocial interventions including the 12-step approach of Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. Although it remains controversial to what extent the spiritual component of the 12-step approach of Alcoholics Anonymous is essential to the effectiveness of the treatment, the programme is widely followed to help people remain abstinent. The first three steps are:

We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.

Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

Mindfulness-based psychotherapy is a secular behavioural programme that has roots in spiritual meditation practices. It is at least as beneficial as other types of psychotherapy in a variety of settings including treatment of addictive behaviours.

The importance of spirituality in treatment interventions is supported by many published studies which tie various aspects of spirituality to a number of improvements- including fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety, a lower incidence of suicide and lower severity of alcohol and drug use. One recent US study using data from over 100,000 participants who were followed up for 16 years, reported that deaths from suicide, unintentional poisoning by alcohol

or drug overdose and chronic liver disease and cirrhosis were substantially reduced in the group of men and women who identified themselves as Church attenders, even after adjusting for medical and psychiatric history and other lifestyle factors.

11.7 What is the Church of Scotland doing?

CrossReach is responsible for this aspect of the Church’s ministry, employing around 1,700 staff and mobilising over 300 volunteers in order to support more than 11,000 people each year. The Church of Scotland has committed to supporting CrossReach as a vital outworking of Jesus’ command to love our neighbours as ourselves. CrossReach provides a range of responses to Drug or Alcohol dependency, including harm reduction advice and support, provision of over 100 residential rehabilitation placements every year, places for people under the new Prison to Rehab initiative to help people whose offending is linked to substance use, supported accommodation for people learning to live their lives free from drugs or alcohol, and a training programme to help people in recovery use their experiences in a positive way to help and inspire others.

In addition to the work of CrossReach, a number of individual congregations also run volunteer-led activities in their communities which support local people by providing a welcoming, non-judgemental safe space where local people can drop in. Congregation-led services often have the advantage of being friendly, informal places and in some cases, this can make it easier for people to discuss what’s on their minds. Examples are:

- Havilah, St Andrew’s Church in Arbroath started in 2006 is and named after a place of abundance mentioned in the book of Genesis. Havilah offers a drop-in service, providing simple food and drink, activities and a welcome to anyone seeking company and non-judgemental listening, five days a week.
- The Shed Project, Martin’s Memorial Church in Stornoway, Isle of Lewis. This community resource, initiated and managed by Martin’s Memorial Church in Stornoway, fulfils the Church’s vision for a community space. The Shed focuses on providing safe spaces for women and men affected by addiction, to meet and socialise without anything getting in the way
- Menzieshill Parish Church, Dundee provides a range of supports into the community and works with CrossReach and Bethany Christian Trust to offer advice and support to people who want to stop using drugs or alcohol.
- Parish Nursing, The Steeple, Dundee: The Parish Nursing initiative has been set up to provide whole-person health care for people who are experiencing homelessness, or are at risk of becoming homeless, life and health inequalities, addictions, and loneliness. The project operates as a drop-in clinic which runs twice a week at the Steeple Church where the parish nurses provide a broad range of services

There are a number of practical ways for congregations to respond to the suffering caused by substance misuse, including:

1. Seeking to help reduce stigma experienced by people living with substance misuse and recognise that substance misuse is a major public health issue.
2. Open your doors. Create an inclusive supportive Church community where individuals and families coping with addiction are welcome.
3. Support the work of CrossReach and other Christian charities and encourage volunteering to work with homeless people.
4. Promote spiritual healing as a part of medical and social interventions – the bio-psycho-social-spiritual model. (John Swinton – Disability Theology.)

As part of this work, we invite the General Assembly to instruct the Faith Impact Forum to undertake a series of conversations with key players in this area, with aim of developing the twin themes:

1. identify the views of people in Government, the NHS, Social Work and academics in the field, about the importance of Churches taking a role responding to the drugs epidemic.
2. Discuss the theology of addictions and, together with CrossReach and other charities, suggest a practical toolkit of ways that congregations can be involved.

The Forum suggests that this work be carried out through the Church’s Society, Religion and Technology project.

11.8 References See Appendix 2

Addendum

VERY REVEREND SUSAN BROWN

The Church is indebted to the commitment and dedication which Susan has shown in her willingness to serve the national church in a variety of ways over many years, not least as a previous moderator of the General Assembly and as a member of the Chapel Royal in Scotland. Susan's breadth of expertise and talent has served the church well in the mission field both here in Scotland and abroad, having been past Convener of World Mission. When Susan was appointed as the first Convener of the new formed Faith Impact Forum in 2020, we could not have had a better person to lead us through what was going to be a difficult time as the world found itself gripped by a global pandemic.

Forum members valued her compassionate empathy and self-effacing humour as both a delight and encouragement as we grappled together with new ways of working together. Susan led the Forum through its inception, helping to shape its work in those early days. We are indebted to her especially for her contribution towards the compilation of the Jewish-Christian glossary, which in itself is an important piece of work that is being presented to this year's General Assembly.

Susan's legacy to the Church is far reaching and beyond summarising in a couple of short paragraphs here. On behalf of the wider Church, the Faith Impact Forum would like to express our grateful thanks to Susan and wish her every blessing in her continued ground-breaking ministry within the Presbytery of Duns.

KAREN HENDRY, CONVENER PRO TEM

The Faith Impact Forum would like to heartily thank the Reverend Karen Hendry for her hard work, leadership, wisdom and the calm style in which she led the Forum since August 2022. Her guidance through a time of great change and at times, anxiety has been very much appreciated. She has steered the Forum towards becoming part of the greater whole when uniting with the Faith Nurture Forum as the new Faith Action Programme Leadership Team. This has been no easy task which involved taking on the role at short notice and keeping up the excellent standard set by her predecessor. A true talent within the church who is self-deprecating, full of gently humour and yet as sharp as a pin, Karen is willing and able and has much to offer the church in leadership terms in the future having proven her worth with the Faith Impact Forum. A joy to work with and for – many, many, thanks.

REVEREND PETER JOHNSTON

Peter is a man of many talents and the Church is grateful for his commitment to the variety of ways in which he has served.

At this year's assembly Peter completes his term as Vice Convener of the Faith Impact Forum, having served on the previous Church and Society Council. He has aided the Church well in various capacities, sitting on many of its sub-committees. In particular, the Forum is grateful for his contribution to the ongoing work of the Science, Religion and Technology (SRT) Committee, the exploring the world of artificial intelligence.

The Forum would like to express our heartfelt appreciation and thanks to Peter for his commitment and servitude to the wider Church.

In the name of the Faith Impact Forum

REV KAREN HENDRY, *Convener pro tem*
 REV PETER JOHNSTON, *Vice-Convener*
 REV DR SCOTT SHACKLETON, *Secretary*

Appendix 1

Legacy of Slavery Report References

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