

Moderator Acceptance Speech – General Assembly 2020

Rt Rev Dr Martin Fair

I want to thank the Church for the enormous honour it has done me in installing me as Moderator of its General Assembly.

I'm not sure I've ever felt a greater weight of responsibility - but neither have I ever felt more supported, practically and by the prayers of God's people. If you would continue to pray for me as I settle in, I'd be hugely grateful.

In terms of practical support, my thanks to people across the Church whose advice has been enormously helpful, not least that of former Moderators.

George, our Principal Clerk, and Catherine, Personal Assistant to the Moderator - without you two I'd never have got to the start line. Thank you.

Likewise, Catherine and Gregor, my chaplains - friends from school days and fellow travellers in faith since youth fellowship and summer mission - you're friendship has never wavered and I'll count on it in the days ahead. Thank you.

To the family of St Andrew's Church in Arbroath, and in fact the people of Arbroath and Angus more widely, who have given me their unfailing support in this and throughout my ministry, my love for you runs deep and nothing in this business will change that for a minute.

But mostly to my immediate family - my sons and especially Elaine - my best friend in the whole world - you are everything to me and without your love and constant support, I could scarce 'be' let alone have agreed to assume this role.

My sincerest thanks to you and to all.

But let me now - for the first time! - speak on behalf of the General Assembly and of the Church. My first duty, and privilege, is to thank you, Colin, for your year in office as Moderator.

Little did you know when you started last May how things were going to finish and yet you never flinched. Instead you rose to the challenge of ministering to us and leading us in these recent days as if you'd been preparing for it your whole life. And who knows that in God's providence, you hadn't been?

With Ruth your constant companion, you have become such a recognisable team - and as a quick glance at your social media pages make clear - a team that has been appreciated and loved by countless thousands across this country and far beyond.

In terms of your work, you have been prodigious. How you've kept going, I've no idea! You've taken on everything asked of you and you've represented us with great dignity and wisdom but mostly with your passion for the Gospel of Jesus Christ shining through - the very reason we elected you in the first place.

Through your:

- Presbytery visits
- Your trips to Ghana and Zambia
- Your support for Crossreach, not least in climbing your stairs a zillion times!
- Your time spent with the Army
- At our various universities
- Engaging with political and civic and denominational leaders in Scotland and beyond
- And the countless ways in which you've got alongside the work of our Church, nationally and locally

...you've never stopped. You've given everything of yourself. Good and faithful servant? A hundred times over.

Were circumstances different, I'd have longer today to say more to you - but then again you didn't come into this for the vote of thanks but that you might serve the Lord and you've done it, from first to last.

Colin, Ruth - the Church is in your debt. We are grateful to you and thank God for you and wish for you now a time of resting and reflection - and that in quieter moments, you might hear a still, small voice whispering gently words of enduring love that will give you, first peace, and in time inspiration for what still awaits you in ministry in the years to come.

Our deep and sincere thanks.