

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND GUILD MAY 2024

Proposed Deliverance

The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.
2. Continue to encourage uniting congregations to ensure that the Guild is involved in discussions and enabled to explore ways in which Guilds merge or work in new ways, welcoming those mergers that have taken place (*Section 2.4*).
3. Encourage Kirk Sessions to consider if establishing a Guild can assist in their mission to their local community (*Section 2.8*).
4. Welcome the ways in which Guilds are reaching out to local communities and encourage Guilds and congregations to see this as an opportunity for mission together (*Section 3.3*).
5. Encourage youth workers, ministers, Kirk Sessions and Presbyteries to support the work of the Young Adult Guild (*Section 3.6*).
6. Commend the Guild for the work of its Project Partnership Scheme 2021-24 and recognise the important issues tackled and vital monies raised (*Section 4.2*).
7. Congratulate the Guild and the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia on their collaborative working and learning together (*Section 4.3*).
8. Commend Guilds Together Groups for exploring new ways of working together and welcome the new structure of Guilds at a Regional Level agreed by the Guild conference (*Section 5.2.2*).

Report

1. NEW WINE, NEW WINESKINS

1.1 'See, I am doing a new thing!'

1.2 The past year has been one where the Guild has focussed on how we renew and reinvigorate the movement as we look forward to the challenges and changes that are facing the church.

1.3 The report is written, recognising that the changes taking place in the wider church will undoubtedly have an impact on the number of Guilds, where they meet and when they meet. However it also provides an opportunity for growth and renewal.

1.4 Similarly, as we look forward, we have been exploring new ways of 'being' Guild that enables us to respond to the challenges we face and encourages Guilds to engage in new ways in God's mission in their area.

1.5 We are delighted that in the past year 402 new people have joined the Guild. This is a real source of encouragement to us and our branches and we look forward to welcoming more women and men to the Guild in the year ahead.

2. NEW GUILDS COMING TOGETHER

2.1 Guild branches in local congregations form the backbone of the Guild. They are where people come together in worship, prayer and fellowship to take action on a wide range of issues. They are integral to the success of the Guild and in supporting people in their local area.

2.2 One of the biggest challenges we have faced and continue to face is the position of Guilds in united congregations.

2.3 The Guild can play a pivotal role in the success of a Union if they embrace the new situation and find ways of working together.

2.4 There are a number of positive examples where the development of a new congregation has led to growth in Guild membership in that congregation. This has happened because people have, often for the first time, had the opportunity to join a Guild and participate in the wide range of activities a Guild provides.

2.5 It has also happened because the Guild is an excellent way of meeting people if you have come from a different congregation or you have moved to a new town, and of giving people a sense of being part of their new community.

2.6 The assumption of the National Guild is that when a congregation comes together into one place of worship then the Guild should also do likewise and help ensure that the Union is a success

2.7 However there are cases in more rural areas, where a church building has closed and there is no Christian worship in that area. In these situations, with the support of a Kirk Session, we hope it would be possible for a Guild to meet in a village hall or in a hotel, or other community space providing continued Christian witness. This also allows people, for whom travel may prove difficult to share in worship and fellowship together.

2.8 We have been encouraged by the success of new Guilds that have been established over the past few years. During this year the Guilds at Loudon, at Ellon and at Newport - on - Tay have been new shoots of growth and encouragement. We would encourage Kirk Sessions to consider how establishing a Guild may help in the mission of their congregation and we hope that these new Guilds will be an inspiration to other congregations.

3. NEW WAYS OF REACHING OUT

3.1 Over the year Guilds have been encouraged to think afresh about their programmes and find ways of reaching out to the wider church family and into the community.

3.1.1 New resources have been developed to support Guilds which enable them to be part of Sunday worship, help grow their faith and encourage the consideration of new ways in which they can be active in God's mission both in their community and the wider world.

3.2. Our Guild Initiative Fund provides grants to Guilds who embark on new community initiatives. This year we helped establish Faifley Flicks, a community cinema initiative which enabled outreach into the community of Faifley in Clydebank by the Guild and the local congregation.

3.3 The Initiative Fund is an important part of our outreach and we would encourage congregations and Guilds to come together and develop local outreach initiatives.

3.4 In Millport, the Guild working with the congregation and local school has developed a polycrub, a sheltered growing area, to grow produce and this has proved another excellent way of engaging with the local community.

3.5 One of the most encouraging events in the Guild calendar is our Annual Gathering where Guild members, together with representatives of sister organisations, come together to share, celebrate and look forward to the work God has for us in the year ahead. This year was no exception.

3.5.1 We returned to the Assembly Hall and were encouraged that over 750 members and friends made the journey to Edinburgh to share in the event.

3.5.2 We were also joined online by Guilds across the country. The use of modern technology has enhanced the event and allows the reach to extend to people's communities and even into their homes.

3.5.3 The day included an address by the Moderator, Rt Rev Sally Foster Fulton, who provided encouragement and challenge to our members to keep on renewing and developing as we witness for Christ in our communities.

3.5.4 Our keynote speaker this year was Professor Jason Leitch who provided an invaluable insight into his Christian journey, his charitable work in India and his role during the pandemic. His input was challenging and inspiring in equal measure

3.5.5 The Govan Songsters, a Salvation Army singing group, provided the musical input for the day and had everyone engaged in worship with a variety of songs both old and new.

3.5.6 We also presented the Convener's Challenge shield, this year for the best planter or hanging basket. This year the winner was from Glasgow North Guilds Together.

3.5.7 The day culminated in the installation of our new National Convener, who challenged members to change and renew themselves and their Guilds in the year ahead.

3.6 Our Young Adults Guild has been a positive development for both the Guild and the young people involved who have taken on the leadership of the group. This has been a source of great encouragement to the Guild and we would encourage congregations, youth workers, Ministers and Presbyteries to encourage their young people to get involved in the life and work of the Young Adult Guild.

4. NEW WORK WITH PARTNERS

4.1 Partnership working is key to the success of the Guild. These partnerships take place locally with Guilds supporting initiatives in their local community, nationally through our work with Faith in Older people, the Scottish Women's' Convention, our sister church organisations and with the Faith Action Programme. Internationally we work through our Project Partnership scheme and our developing links with Malawi.

4.2 Project Partnership Scheme

4.2.1 Our Project Partnership Scheme continues to be a beacon of hope in so many communities and we are delighted that £379,297.58 has been raised during this project cycle. This is a remarkable total given that year one saw Guilds unable to meet.

4.2.2 Project partnerships have for many decades challenged Guild members to tackle difficult and often pioneering issues such as prostitution, HIV/Aids, FGM and support for refugees. This project cycle has been no different.

4.2.3 This year saw the opening of the 'Sunflower Sanctuary', the first dedicated facility of its kind in Uganda for children with special educational needs. Working with Starchild this facility will transform the lives of these children and enable them to fulfil their potential.

4.2.4 In Kazunzu, Tanzania, the children who have moved into their purpose-built homes with loving foster families are progressing well. They are getting new opportunities to thrive and share in family life and families are getting a chance to build a sustainable future.

4.2.5 So many of our important events in life often revolve around food but for people struggling with eating disorders this can be challenging. Our support has enabled our partner Beat, to create a Coping with Celebrations workshop. A blend of e-learning and a live Zoom workshop, this training course aims to give carers of people with eating disorders the skills and strategies to support their loved ones through events that are food-focused.

4.2.6 Working with Pioneers in South East Asia, chocolate production has now expanded and the aim is for them to become self-sustaining so that the business will provide employment for many years to come. More than 2000 bars of chocolate have been sold across Scotland this year.

4.2.7 Last year in Scotland almost 3,000 children entered the care system, many due to abuse or neglect. Working with Home for Good, work is ongoing to encourage Christian families and mobilise local churches to find and sustain homes through fostering, adoption and supported lodgings for teenagers.

4.2.8 In Brazil, our partnership with UNIDA has provided 42 scholarships widening access to theological education and equipping women to serve faith communities and the wider society. The scholarships have made a huge impact on students' lives and to church life in local communities.

4.3 Malawi

4.3.1 We continue to develop our partnerships with the Guilds of the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia. We have shared in prayer, in worship and in faith development.

4.3.2 This year our National Convener was able to attend the biennial conference of the Women's Guild in Bandawe and to bring greetings from the Church of Scotland. These opportunities to share with each other, learn more about each other and encourage each other in love and enable us to grow our faith.

4.3.3 Our twinnings between Guilds Together in Ayr and District, North Ayrshire, Shetland and Dunbartonshire with Presbyterian Guilds in Bandawe, Milala, Dwangwa and Mzuzu respectively have continued to develop during the past year. Relationships have grown through prayer and dialogue and we are looking forward to welcoming five sisters and brothers from Malawi to Scotland in September.

4.3.3.1 These visits will involve time in their respective twinned areas, learning more about the work and witness of the Guild and how our relationships with Malawi enhance that.

4.3.3.2 The Green Canopy initiative which has seen a tree nursery established at Ekwendeni is progressing well and trees are now planted and more planting planned for 2024-25. This initiative helps with soil degradation, food production and the impact of climate change.

4.3.3.3 This year Guilds have also supported Ekwendeni Hospital, by providing much needed medical supplies both in cash and through the Banana Box Trust.

5. NEW REGIONAL STRUCTURE

5.1 Change is never easy but the changes to congregations and Presbyteries have without doubt impacted on the Guild. The Guild has, over recent years, sought to change how we work in a range of practical ways.

5.2 The Guild at a Regional level has traditionally been organised on the same boundaries as Presbyteries in Guilds Together Groups. It is these groups who elect members to serve on our National Council and provide the strategic direction for the Guild.

5.2.1 We recognised that the current structure needed to be reviewed and made more responsive to the needs of the Guild whilst at the same time maintaining important relationships with Presbyteries.

5.2.2 Following consultation with branches, Guilds Together Groups and the National Council, our National Conference has agreed a new more streamlined structure which reduces the size of our National Council, and combines Guilds Together Groups in such a way as works for the Guild.

5.2.3 We believe this new structure enhances the sustainability of the Guild at a Regional level, provides a responsive National Council and a positive new method of policy formation within the Guild.

6. NEW EVENTS

6.1 The Guild, like the wider church, continues to operate within tight financial constraints. However the National Council recognised that it remained important that we still found ways of meeting members in their local area and to be responsive to the needs of members.

6.2 Embracing modern technology we meet quarterly online with local Guild conveners to provide advice and support. These meetings are also an opportunity for Guilds to learn and share with each other.

6.3 Responding to requests from members we have developed a four-year rolling programme of Regional Mini Gatherings that will see the National Guild host events across the country. These events combine training for Guild members, ideas for Guild meetings and uplifting worship and fellowship. This year we have hosted events in Earlston, Fort William, Dingwall, Orkney, Shetland, Kilmarnock and Castle Douglas.

6.4 Our Big Sing events are also a source of encouragement to our members and also support our work with Malawian brothers and sisters through offerings. This year events in Glasgow, Kilmarnock and at the General Assembly will support the work of Ekwendeni Hospital.

6.5 The Guild Weekend has proved successful and has enabled Guild leaders and members to come together to share ideas, information and encourage each other.

7. IN CONCLUSION

7.1 The Church of Scotland Guild is in good heart. We recognise the challenges we face but believe that God still has work for us to do and will equip us for the road ahead as we seek to serve him in our branches, in our communities, in Scotland and in the wider world.

And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."

In the name of the Committee

RAE LIND, *National Convener*
KAREN GILLON, *General Secretary*

Appendix

Guild Finances 2023

Membership 10634

Groups 495

General Fund Income	£	General Fund Expenditure	£
Members' Contributions	149,571	Management and admin	182,470
Donations and Grants	10,279	Objects Expenditure	31,604
Sales of goods	9,715	Cost of sales	7,256
Project Support	23,073		
Other	28,106		
Total	220,744	Total	221,330

DONATIONS TO THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

Sums given by Guilds in 2023, based on returns received to 29 February 2024, were as follows:

To Ministry and Mission Funds via Congregations	35,080.21
To Congregational Funds	131,721.63
To work of the church, including projects	190,205.10
To work outwith the Church	67,064.15
Total	424,071.09

PROJECT DONATIONS FROM APRIL 2023 TO FEBRUARY 2024

BEAT - There is Hope	27,619.71
PIONEERS - Chocolate Heaven	22,106.14
STARCHILD - Finding the Light	26,676.29
VINE TRUST - Kazuznu Village	25,022.05
HOME FOR GOOD - A Home for Good	36,901.45
UNIDA - Hear our Voice	23,296.19
Total	161,621.83

Addendum

Rae Lind, National Convener, 2023-24

Rae’s time in the Guild began when she joined Young Wives Group in Annan in 1982. She then joined the Guild in Galloway in 1984. She then moved to Larbert Old where she served on the Guild committee.

From there she returned to Annan serving as convener of the Guild.

During that time she also served as convener of Annandale and Eskdale Presbyterial Council.

After moving to Stewarton in 2010 she served on the Guild committee. She was also an active member of Irvine and Kilmarnock Guilds Together, serving as Convener and as National Council representative.

In 2021 she helped establish a new Guild at Loudon Church in Newmilns where she is currently the convener.

Rae joined the Leadership Team of the National Guild in 2022 serving as a National Vice Convener with responsibility for developing resources and supporting Guilds in the South of Scotland.

We wish Rae and her husband George every blessing for the future and offer our sincere thanks for her service to the Guild at local, regional and national level.

CHRISTINA PATERSON,
FLORA BUTHLAY,
MORAG DUNCAN,
KAY COULL,
National Vice-Conveners
KAREN GILLON, *General Secretary*