

## ECUMENICAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE MAY 2023

### Proposed Deliverance

#### The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.
2. Affirm the ecumenical imperative embedded within the *Articles Declaratory of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland (Section 1)*.
3. Note the ecumenical implications of the Presbytery Mission Plan Act (Act VIII 2021) and the "Presbytery Mission Plan Act: Guidance and Code of Practice" (*Section 2*).
4. Pass an Act amending the Sacraments Act (Act V 2000) as set out in Appendix 2 (*Section 3*).
5. Instruct the Ecumenical Relations Committee, in consultation with the Theological Forum, to explore the ecumenical implications of a theology of friendship, and report to a future General Assembly (*Section 4.1*).
6. Welcome the Signing of the *Saint Margaret Declaration* between the Catholic Church in Scotland and the Church of Scotland on 16th November 2022 in Dunfermline Abbey (*Section 4.2-4*).
7. Commend the *Saint Margaret Declaration* Liturgy, as set out in Appendix 3, and encourage its use within the parish as an expression of that which the Catholic Church in Scotland and the Church of Scotland hold in common (*Section 4.6*).
8. Approve the terms of the revised Remit of the Ecumenical Relations Committee, as detailed in Appendix 5 (*Section 13.2*).
9. Approve the delegates to Assemblies, Synods and Conferences of other Churches, and the appointment of representatives to Ecumenical Bodies as detailed in Appendix 6.

### Report

#### Executive Summary:

The Report of the Ecumenical Relations Committee affirms the ecumenical imperative embedded within the Constitution of the Church of Scotland and highlights its significance at this particular time in the life of the Church. In particular, the Committee highlights the ecumenical implications of the Presbytery Mission Plan Act (Act VIII 2021) and the process associated with it. The Report proposes the updating of the Sacraments Act (Act V 2000) to take account of recent ecumenical developments and welcomes the signing of the *Saint Margaret Declaration* with the Catholic Church in Scotland and offers a Liturgy for use in the parishes of the Church. The Report summarises ongoing bi-lateral relationships with ecumenical partners and notes the ongoing work of the Scottish Church Leaders' Forum and the Ecumenical Officers' Forum alongside continuing discussions on the creation of a Scottish Christian Forum. The General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Karlsruhe, Germany in August/September 2022 is highlighted as is the forthcoming General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches in Tallinn, Estonia, in June 2023. In relation to the future work of the Committee, a revised Remit is proposed for the approval of the General Assembly.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

**1.1** The work of the Ecumenical Relations Committee relates to the life of the Church of Scotland as a whole and is primarily grounded in the *Articles Declaratory of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland*, in particular Article VII:

The Church of Scotland, believing it to be the will of Christ that His disciples should be all one in the Father and in Him, that the world may believe that the Father has sent Him, recognises the obligation to seek and promote union with other Churches in which it finds the Word to be purely preached, the sacraments administered according to Christ's ordinance, and discipline rightly exercised; and it has the right to unite with any such Church without loss of its identity on terms which this Church finds to be consistent with these Articles.<sup>[i]</sup>

**1.2** The *Articles Declaratory* are incorporated into the Church of Scotland Act 1921 and are the constitutional touchstone of the Church. The *Articles* set out the fundamental basis of the faith of the Church in Article I and the present relationship of the Church to its subordinate confessional basis and affirm that its 'government is Presbyterian', and that its 'system and principles of worship, orders, and discipline' are in accordance with its historic basis. (I, II, VIII)

**1.3** Thereafter, the *Articles* affirm that the 'Church is in historical continuity with the Church of Scotland which was reformed in 1560...[and that the]...continuity and identity of the Church of Scotland are not prejudiced by the adoption of these Articles'. The Church of Scotland is to be understood as, and understands itself to be, 'a national Church' with a 'distinctive call and duty to bring the ordinances of religion to the people in every parish of Scotland through a territorial ministry'. (III)

**1.4** The spiritual independence of the Church is derived from the Lord Jesus Christ as King and Head of the Church and receives from him power with respect to 'all matters of doctrine, worship, government, and discipline in the Church'. Related to this, the independent spiritual jurisdiction of the Church within its particular 'sphere' is acknowledged by the civil authority. In like fashion, the Church acknowledges the role of the civil authority within its particular sphere and the mutual duties that the Church and State owe to each other. (IV, V, VI)

**1.5** In relation to the *Articles Declaratory*, the Church of Scotland Act 1921 sets out the 'effect' of the *Articles* in terms of their establishing the continuity of the Church of Scotland and the 'liberty, rights and powers in matters spiritual' of the Church. That is, the purpose of the *Articles Declaratory*, in the first instance, is to affirm the nature

and identity of the Church of Scotland in the terms described above. Indeed, if the *Articles Declaratory* contained only *Articles I-VI and VIII and IX*, we might say that this is the sole purpose of the *Articles* and that they are intended to describe what would be, in effect, a closed and essentially non-permeable ecclesiastical system.

**1.6** However, *Article VII* is an integral part of the *Articles Declaratory* and we may deduce from this that the *Articles* are intended to describe that which the Church of Scotland is and has historically been whilst, at the same time, pointing to a future in which the Church lives out its response to the prayer of Jesus 'that they may all be one...that the world may believe'. (John 17: 21) and is reshaped by the ongoing call to renewal. Indeed, we note that the explicit purpose of the *Articles Declaratory* is described by the Church of Scotland Act 1921 as being to 'facilitate the union of other Churches with the Church of Scotland'.<sup>[ii]</sup>

**1.7** Equally, we note that the Church of Scotland Act 1921, having set out the 'effect' of the *Articles Declaratory*, immediately thereafter affirms that:

Nothing contained in this Act or in any other Act affecting the Church of Scotland shall prejudice the recognition of any other Church in Scotland as a Christian Church protected by law in the exercise of its spiritual functions.

Therefore, the Church of Scotland may be said to have its 'liberty, rights and powers in matters spiritual' acknowledged, but not in such a way as to prejudice 'the recognition of any other Church in Scotland as a Christian Church'. That is, the Act recognises the plurality of the life of the Church in Scotland and does not seek to privilege one Church over another.<sup>[iii]</sup>

**1.8** Our contemporary reading of the *Articles Declaratory* takes place within our own particular sphere. We need hardly be reminded that it does not take place within a vacuum. The contemporary sphere of the civic authority is now shaped by a range of concerns that were not present in 1921 and these include, *inter alia*, the implications of the Human Rights Act 1998<sup>[iv]</sup> and the Equality Act 2010.<sup>[v]</sup> In like fashion, the plurality within the life of the Christian church in Scotland, recognised as it was in 1921, is now manifest in the ever-growing diversity of the contemporary Church.

**1.9** In the ever-changing landscape we inhabit, the vocation of the Church of Scotland requires to be constantly renewed. That renewal does not, of course, take place within a closed and non-permeable ecclesiastical system. Rather, it takes place in the context of a society shaped by very different values and concerns from those which shaped the landscape in 1921. Equally, the Church in Scotland as a whole is in a very different place within that landscape. Recognising this to be so, we do well to ask ourselves: What are the implications for the renewal of the vocation of the Church of Scotland presented by the contemporary situation of the Church in Scotland?

**1.10** The task of the Ecumenical Relations Committee is to continually raise these questions and we do so on the basis of that which is grounded in the *Articles Declaratory* and that we might together live out our response to the prayer of Jesus 'that they may all be one...that the world may believe'. The ecumenical imperative embedded within the *Articles Declaratory* asks of us no less than that we endeavour, with God's strength, to live out that response today.

## **2. ENGAGEMENT WITH PRESBYTERIES: PRESBYTERY MISSION PLANNING**

**2.1** The Committee is conscious of the particular challenges faced by the Church of Scotland at parish and presbytery level and, through the Ecumenical Officer, has engaged with a number of presbyteries in relation to the place of single congregation Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs) within their respective Presbytery Mission Plans.

**2.2** The Committee will continue to engage in this process and recalls that the Presbytery Mission Plan Act (Act VIII 2021) states that:

A Mission Plan shall describe how the Church of Scotland's engagement with Christ's Mission is to be shaped and resourced in the following five years and to that end shall demonstrate how the Presbytery will...sustain the commitment to a territorial ministry as described in the Third of the *Articles Declaratory* appended to the Church of Scotland Act 1921 and affirmed in Declaratory Act V 2010 *including its commitment to ecumenical working*.<sup>[vi]</sup>

**2.3** Declaratory Act (Act V 2010) states that:

The Church of Scotland remains committed to the ecumenical vision set out in the seventh *Article Declaratory* and, in pursuit of that vision, stands eager to share with other churches in Christian mission and service to the people of Scotland.<sup>[vii]</sup>

As the Report of the Committee to the General Assembly of 2021 noted in relation to Declaratory Act (Act V 2010), the implication is that:

[T]he future shape of ministry and mission in Scotland ought to be undertaken on the basis of cooperative partnership as a response to the challenges facing the church.

That is, the implication of Declaratory Act (Act V 2010) is that the primary basis of the 'shape of ministry and mission in Scotland' is one of 'cooperative partnership'.

**2.4** Within the "Presbytery Mission Plan Act: Guidance and Code of Practice", the Code affirms:

Ecumenism:...If a particular community is well served by another denomination, there may be no need for the Presbytery to duplicate that. Where a community is equally well served by the Church of Scotland and another denomination the Presbytery should explore what local possibilities there might be for recognising each other's ministry so that resources can be used elsewhere. The General Assembly of 2021 instructed the Forum, when developing principles for Presbytery Mission Planning, to include a principle of ecumenical working, bearing in

mind the Lund Principle, affirming that churches should act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately. That same deliverance also encouraged the forming of Local Mission Communities and regional Covenant Partnerships as outlined in the report of the Ecumenical Relations Committee.<sup>[viii]</sup>

**2.5** As noted, a number of presbyteries have engaged with the Committee in relation to the place of LEPs within their respective Presbytery Mission Plans. The Committee has also engaged with certain presbyteries in relation to the potential development of new ecumenical initiatives within their Plans, and the Committee would like to highlight a number of examples from the Presbytery of Fife. (Appendix 1) The examples do not conform to a single template and each reflects the particular initiatives taken in the local context which enabled the development of the partnerships described. The Committee encourages the exploration of potential opportunities for creative and collaborative ecumenical initiatives, which may take different expressions as shaped by their local context.

**2.6** The Committee would encourage congregations and presbyteries to draw upon the ecumenical implications of the Presbytery Mission Plan Act and the "Presbytery Mission Plan Act: Guidance and Code of Practice" when considering the ongoing review and implementation of the Plan in their area.

### **3. SACRAMENTS ACT (ACT V 2000)**

**3.1** The question of whether, or not, ordained ministers within different traditions of the Church can celebrate the Sacraments within the Church of Scotland on an occasional basis is addressed in the Sacraments Act (Act V 2000), in particular Section 1.<sup>[ix]</sup>

**3.2** The Committee is of the view that the terms of the Act require to be updated to take account, for example, of recent developments such as the signing of the *Columba Declaration* with the Church of England (2016) and the signing of the *Saint Andrew Declaration* with the Scottish Episcopal Church (2021). Alongside this, the Act in its present form (1. (3)) describes what is, in effect, the constituent membership of certain ecumenical bodies in which the Church of Scotland participates without specifically identifying those bodies. The Committee is of the view that such identification would be conducive to greater clarity.

**3.3** Further, the Committee has sought to establish whether part of the provisions made in the present Sacraments Act (1.4) have effectively fallen into desuetude. Subject to correction, we have found no indication of the recent use of the provisions in 1.4.

**3.4** The Committee proposes that the Sacraments Act (Act V 2000), Section 1 be amended in the terms set out in Appendix 2. The effect will be to update the Act to take account of recent ecumenical agreements and to give greater clarity as to the ecumenical bodies covered by the provisions of the Act. In all cases, the proposed amended provisions of the Act establish only a provisional eligibility to celebrate the Sacraments which is subject to the jurisdiction and final decision of the Presbytery.

### **4. BILATERAL RELATIONS: CATHOLIC CHURCH IN SCOTLAND – SAINT MARGARET DECLARATION**

**4.1** The General Assembly of 2022 approved the terms of the *Saint Margaret Declaration* between the Catholic Church in Scotland and the Church of Scotland, the original title "*A Declaration of Friendship*" having been amended by the General Assembly with the concurrence of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Scotland.<sup>[x]</sup> Notwithstanding this, the theme and theology of friendship that underlie the *Declaration* have resonated in a variety of different contexts and the Committee is minded to explore this matter further.

**4.2** The *Saint Margaret Declaration* was signed on the Feast Day of St. Margaret (16<sup>th</sup> November 2022) in Dunfermline Abbey by Archbishop Leo Cushley on behalf of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Scotland and by the Rt Rev Dr Iain Greenshields on behalf of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Further the Signing of the Saint Margaret Declaration was witnessed by the Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal.<sup>[xi]</sup>

**4.3** The Signing of the Declaration took place in conjunction with the Service to mark the 950<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of the Priory at Dunfermline, and the Committee is indebted to the Rev MaryAnn Rennie, minister of Dunfermline Abbey, for her gracious invitation to incorporate the Signing into the wider Service. The Sermon was preached by Archbishop Leo Cushley who stated:

We all know the history that we share. It contains much for us to regret, and it would be naïve to pretend it all away; but it's a further reason to do something about it. Given our context, then, a friendship that is the unlooked-for consequence of the last 40 years is something to be noticed, to be welcomed, and to be built upon...Instead of listing our problems and points of friction or grievance, old or new, the Declaration chooses to focus on what we have in common, and to underline that we treasure together, so much that is inspiring and ancient, profound and beautiful...We are brothers and sisters in Christ. We stand shoulder to shoulder before an unbelieving world. And we wish to respect each other, to be a support to each other, and to do all we can, with patience and humility, to achieve the unity that the Lord prayed for. And if St Margaret and the first men who came here nearly a thousand years ago were here with us now, I would like to think that they would welcome and approve of us setting out in this way, again, in friendship, to face the next thousand years, not as enemies or rivals, but as sisters and brothers – and friends in Jesus Christ.<sup>[xii]</sup>

**4.4** Within the context of the Service, the Signing of the *Saint Margaret Declaration* was preceded by a Liturgy in which representatives of the Catholic Church and the Church of Scotland articulated and affirmed the *Declaration* as an expression of our desire:

[T]o live as sisters and brothers in Christ, in public and in private, in life and in mission; to pray with each other and for each other; to be good neighbours, both to each other and to all people among whom we live, of all faiths and none; and to work together for the common good of the nation, as it is given to us to see it.

The Liturgy took up the substance of the *Declaration* and, with some slight adjustment in form, articulated and expressed that desire as embodied within it.

**4.5** The Committee reflected on the significance of the liturgical act in relation to the *Declaration* and gave consideration to the potential value of such a Liturgy being made available for use in the parishes of our two churches. The Committee consulted with the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Scotland and agreed that there would be value in commending the Liturgy to a wider audience.

**4.6** The Committee commends the Liturgy (Appendix 3) to the wider Church and encourages its use in the parishes of Scotland as an expression of that which the Catholic Church in Scotland and the Church of Scotland hold in common.

**4.7** The Committee was delighted to hear that the Rev Dr George Whyte, former Principal Clerk of the General Assembly, had been honoured by the Catholic Church for his contribution to the ongoing dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Church of Scotland. Dr Whyte was invested as a Papal Knight of the Order of St Gregory the Great by Archbishop Leo Cushley at St Bennet's, Edinburgh on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2023 and the Committee wish to offer their congratulations to him on the reception of this significant honour.

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## **5. BILATERAL RELATIONS: SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH – SAINT ANDREW DECLARATION**

**5.1** The General Assembly of 2021 approved the *Saint Andrew Declaration*, consisting of mutual Acknowledgements and Commitments between the Church of Scotland and the Scottish Episcopal Church and our two churches have engaged in ongoing conversations in relation to the living out of the implications of the *Declaration*.

**5.2** Within the Commitments, we pledge together 'to seek appropriate ways to respond to our common calling within the life of the Church of Jesus Christ', including how: 'To encourage, affirm and support local expressions of our common calling within the life of the Church as it participates in the mission of God, and to explore opportunities for new partnerships in the communities in which we serve'.<sup>[xiii]</sup>

**5.3** Although our ecclesiologies may differ and our ecclesiastical governance embody distinctive traditions, the same essential challenges face us in the living out of 'our common calling within the life of the Church of Jesus Christ'. No less than the Church of Scotland: 'The SEC today pursues its calling to mission and ministry in the very secular and increasingly diverse context of Scotland and the rest of the world'.<sup>[xiv]</sup>

**5.4** In the light of this, the Contact Group established by the *Declaration* wish to explore the implications of this shared context for our understanding of mission and ministry and to continue to explore opportunities for partnerships in the localities where we minister together.

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## **6. BILATERAL RELATIONS: CHURCH OF ENGLAND – COLUMBA DECLARATION**

**6.1** The Church of England and the Church of Scotland have continued to build on the relationships developed since the signing of the *Columba Declaration* in 2016 and the challenges facing our two churches are, in many ways, similar.

**6.2** In February 2023, the Moderator and the Most Rev & Rt Hon Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury and His Holiness Pope Francis journeyed to South Sudan. The symbolic significance of a shared Pilgrimage of Peace is considerable and offers a model to be reflected upon within the local and national context, as well as the international.

**6.3** In December 2022, the Moderator met with the Archbishop of Canterbury and discussions focussed on matters of common interest including, *inter alia*, the Coronation of HM King Charles III and the visit to South Sudan, alongside a discussion on the ecumenical significance of the *Saint Margaret Declaration* and the ecumenical implications of the *Living in Love and Faith* process being undertaken by the Church of England.<sup>[xv]</sup>

**6.4** The Church of Scotland is represented at the General Synod of the Church of England by the Rev Dr David Coulter who reported to the Committee on the meeting of the Synod held on 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> February 2023, particularly in relation to the outcome of the *Living in Love and Faith* process undertaken by the Church of England since 2017.<sup>[xvi]</sup>

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## **7. SCOTTISH CHRISTIAN FORUM**

**7.1** The General Assembly of 2021 agreed:

[T]o the participation of the Church of Scotland in the Scottish Christian Forum and recognise it as the national ecumenical body in Scotland and note the proposal to dissolve Action of Churches Together in Scotland once the Scottish Christian Forum has been formed.<sup>[xvii]</sup>

**7.2** The establishing of the Scottish Christian Forum continues to be a matter under discussion and the Committee is unable, at this point, to confirm a definite date for the realisation of the Forum. At present, Action of Churches Together in Scotland functions, in effect, as a grant-making body supporting ecumenical initiatives.

**7.3** On 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023, a conference organised by the Ecumenical Officers' Forum on "The Future of Scottish Ecumenism" took place in Edinburgh and sought to review the issues related to the establishing of the Scottish Christian Forum. Representatives from ten churches participated alongside representation from Action of Churches Together in Scotland, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, Christian Aid and the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office. The discussion on the nature and purpose, aims and vision of the Scottish Christian Forum is one that has

continued over a number of years and the contribution of the Church of Scotland to the conference, and to the ongoing discussion, is set out in Appendix 4.

**7.4** The conference resolved to task the Ecumenical Officers' Forum with bringing proposals for the realisation of the Scottish Christian Forum to a future gathering of those committed to the future of Scottish ecumenism.

## **8. SCOTTISH CHURCH LEADERS' FORUM AND ECUMENICAL OFFICERS' FORUM**

**8.1** The Scottish Church Leaders' Forum (SCLF) was established in March 2020 in the context of the initial response of the churches to the Covid-19 pandemic and is composed of senior representatives of participating churches. The scope of the work of the SCLF is described in the Report of the Committee to the General Assembly of 2022.<sup>[xviii]</sup>

**8.2** The Report of the Committee in 2022 noted that the SCLF had grown in representation from ten to twelve churches and we note that there are now fourteen churches and communities participating: 1. Church of Scotland; 2. Catholic Church in Scotland; 3. Scottish Episcopal Church; 4. United Free Church of Scotland; 5. United Reformed Church; 6. Methodist Church in Scotland; 7. Quakers; 8. Salvation Army; 9. Congregational Federation; 10. Baptist Union of Scotland; 11. Free Church of Scotland; 12. Redeemed Christian Church of God; 13. Orthodox Church (Ecumenical Patriarchate); and 14. Ukrainian Catholic Church.

**8.3** In the course of the past year, the SCLF has given consideration to, *inter alia*, the ongoing war in Ukraine and our support for refugees; drugs policy in Scotland; the churches' engagement with Local Government, Scottish Government and United Kingdom Government; the future shape of Scottish ecumenism; support for the *Thy Kingdom Come* Global Prayer Initiative and initiatives taken by participating churches to address the ongoing challenges of mission and ministry.

**8.4** The Report of the Committee to the General Assembly of 2022 noted the development of the Ecumenical Officers' Forum. The Forum is composed of those tasked by their churches with representing their interests in ecumenical matters, and is composed of representatives of the: 1. Church of Scotland; 2. Catholic Church in Scotland; 3. Scottish Episcopal Church; 4. United Free Church of Scotland; 5. United Reformed Church; 6. Methodist Church in Scotland; 7. Quakers; 8. Salvation Army; 9. Redeemed Christian Church of God; and 10. Congregational Federation. As noted above, the principal focus of the Ecumenical Officers' Forum has been consideration of the future shape of Scottish ecumenism.

**8.5** The Scottish Church Leaders' Forum and the Ecumenical Officers' Forum are two forums that have developed in recent years and which may be said to inhabit the space previously occupied by Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS). They embody an agile, flexible and responsive model of ecumenism and whatever future developments there may be in terms of the shape of Scottish ecumenism, we would wish to retain those characteristics.

## **9. CHURCHES TOGETHER IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND (CTBI)**

**9.1** The Trustees of CTBI met in Edinburgh on 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> March 2023 and consideration was given, *inter alia*, to the ecumenical implications of the *Saint Margaret Declaration* and the model of ecumenism to which it gives expression.

**9.2** The Committee welcomes the ongoing work undertaken by Dr Nicola Brady, General Secretary, in seeking to ensure that the work of CTBI is embedded in the life of its member churches.

## **10. CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN CHURCHES (CEC)**

**10.1** The General Assembly of CEC takes place from 15<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> June 2023 in Tallinn, Estonia on the theme: "Under God's blessing – Shaping the future", with keynote contributions from Archbishop Emeritus Rowan Williams and His All-Holiness Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople and Ecumenical Patriarch.

**10.2** CEC is a fellowship of 113 European churches from the Orthodox, Protestant, and Anglican traditions who seek to work together to strengthen our common witness, 'promote peace, and work for the unity of the Church', and the interests of the United Reformed Church in CEC discussions are currently represented by the Church of Scotland.

**10.3** 'The Conference of European Churches emerged as a peacebuilding effort in 1959, building bridges between the East and the West during the Cold War. This original mission carries us forward today as we continue to work for a humane, social and sustainable Europe at peace with itself and its neighbours.'<sup>[xix]</sup>

## **11. COMMUNION OF PROTESTANT CHURCHES IN EUROPE (CPCE)**

**11.1** CPCE was founded on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1973 on the basis of the *Leuenberg Agreement* with the Church of Scotland being one of the original signatories, and this year marks the 50th Anniversary.<sup>[xx]</sup> The *Leuenberg Agreement* (2) affirms:

The Church is founded on Jesus Christ alone. Through the gift of his salvation in preaching and the sacraments, he gathers the Church and sends it out. This is why, according to the understanding of the Reformers, the necessary and sufficient pre-requisite for the true unity of the Church is agreement in the right teaching of the Gospel and the right administration of the sacraments. It is from these Reformation criteria that the participating churches derive their understanding of church fellowship as set out below.

**11.2** CPCE is a community of Reformed, Lutheran, Methodist, Waldensian, United Churches, and others, and the interests of the Church of Scotland in CPCE discussions are currently represented by the United Reformed Church.

## 12. WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (WCC)

**12.1** The 11<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the World Council of Churches met in Karlsruhe, Germany from 31st August to 8th September 2022 under the theme 'Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity'. The WCC is a fellowship of 352 member churches who together represent more than half a billion Christians. The General Assembly is the highest governing body of the WCC, and normally meets every seven or eight years. It is the only time when the entire fellowship of member churches comes together in one place for prayer and celebration and, with more than 4000 participants from all over the world, is the most diverse Christian gathering of its size in the world.

**12.2** The gathering place for the General Assembly was of particular significance, both geographically and temporally, with the Assembly being hosted jointly by churches in Germany, France and Switzerland at Karlsruhe in the Rhine valley. This area has been both a place of historic conflict and a place of contemporary reconciliation. That the Assembly took place in Europe at a time of major conflict may be said to have heightened the urgency of the quest for unity and reconciliation, and highlighted the need for repentance by all nations and peoples for the attitudes and behaviours which lead to war.<sup>[xxi]</sup>

**12.3** A major feature of every WCC General Assembly is the publication of a Unity Statement which aims to give an overview of the state of global ecumenism.<sup>[xxii]</sup> The Unity Statement of the 11<sup>th</sup> WCC General Assembly focuses on the distinctive Christian calling to love and is built upon the concept of "ecumenism of the heart", an idea which seeks to move beyond a focus on difference and division to the quest for a true unity founded in love, as revealed in Jesus Christ.

**12.4** Recognising that the world in which we live is 'at the same time God's beautiful creation and broken by ecological crisis, war, pandemic, systemic poverty, racism, gender-based violence, human rights violations, and many other sufferings', (1) the Statement calls the churches to an 'ecumenism of the heart' (14), witnessing and working together across their differences. The Statement declares:

It is when we are kind to one another as churches, warmly welcoming of each other, building profound and evident friendship in sincerity and respect, when we are drawn to one another out of compassion, fascination, and longing for one another – across our differences and divisions – that we will find the grace to search for that common faith, the truth together held that will overcome our separation. (19)

**12.5** The love which unites churches should be a love which 'is able to address the deepest evil and injustice', recognising that 'that love which in private is tenderness in public is justice'. (20) In the Unity Statement, the churches of the WCC commit themselves 'to strengthen each other in a transforming discipleship'. (25)

**12.6** The concluding prayer of the Statement is one that we may echo in a broken and divided world that cries out for reconciliation and unity:

Holy God, source and creator of all things,  
eternal love, we give thanks to you:  
Father, who loves us infinitely,  
Son who reveals to us unconditional love,  
Holy Spirit who empowers us with divine love,  
gather us together in your love,  
that we may grow in visible communion and so witness to unity in the world.  
Where your people are broken, may love mend.  
When hatred shouts in the world, let love bring peace with justice.  
As creation groans, may redemption come to all the earth.  
Come with your divine love, and enter our hearts.  
Move your church, and move the world to reconciliation and unity. Amen.

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## 13. ECUMENICAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE REMIT

**13.1** The terms of the present Remit of the Ecumenical Relations Committee were agreed at the General Assembly of 2017.<sup>[xxiii]</sup> Since then, the ecumenical landscape has changed within Scotland. Alongside this, the Church of Scotland itself is in an ongoing process of reconfiguration. In addition, the Church of Scotland has approved a number of bi-lateral Declarations with partner churches (Church of England: *Columba Declaration* (2016); Scottish Episcopal Church: *Saint Andrew Declaration* (2021) and the Catholic Church in Scotland: *Saint Margaret Declaration* (2022)).

**13.2** The Committee is of the view that a revision to the terms of the Remit is required in order to take account of these changes. Further, it is of the view that any such revision should assume that the process of reconfiguration will continue and that the landscape will continue to change. This being the case, the revised terms ought to ensure that the Committee is not tied to the particularities of the present configuration of the Church of Scotland, nor to the landscape as it is at present. In the light of this, the Committee proposes that its remit be amended in the terms set out in Appendix 5.

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## 14. CONCLUSION

**14.1** 'No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.' (John Donne (1572-1631)) The words of Donne are found to be apposite in many different contexts and in the ecumenical context they might be thought to be especially so.

**14.2** A recent contribution to the discussion on mission in contemporary Scotland includes within its overall thesis the contention that disunity within the Christian church has been one of the primary contributors to the process of secularisation within Scotland. On this view, the movement of the provision of 'key social services', such as education

and the relief of poverty, from the Church to the State in the mid-Nineteenth Century is integral to the 'primary definition of secularisation'. Further, it may be said that:

In Scotland, this process [of secularisation] was not the result of atheist philosophies, anti-Christian government policy, or any other external factor, but the disunity and infighting of the Christian Church.<sup>[xxiv]</sup>

**14.3** As the Church in Scotland faces the challenges that now lie before it, the lessons of the past ought to inform our present and our future. The luxury of disagreement is no longer afforded to us and, to paraphrase Donne: No Church is an island, entire of itself, every Church is a piece of the Church in Scotland, a part of the Universal Church.

**14.4** The Report of the Committee offers no simple answers. Rather, it affirms the ecumenical imperative embedded within the Constitution of the Church of Scotland and highlights its significance at this particular time in the life of the Church. The Church of Scotland understands itself to be 'a national Church' with a 'distinctive call and duty to bring the ordinances of religion to the people in every parish of Scotland through a territorial ministry'. In seeking to live out that 'distinctive call and duty', it may be said to have an obligation to do so in partnership with the broad spectrum of churches throughout Scotland. There has been no more pressing time in its recent history in which to fulfil that obligation.

*In the name of the Committee*

ROSS BLACKMAN, *Convener*  
EILEEN MILLER, *Vice Convener*  
JOHN L MCPAKE, *Secretary*

## Addendum

### Rev Eileen Miller

The Rev Eileen Miller became Vice Convener of the Ecumenical Relations Committee at the General Assembly in May 2020 and the Committee is indebted to her for her service throughout the years since. Eileen brought to the task her commitment to ecumenism in its local expression and a desire to see that expressed relationally. Her characteristic sensitivity and attentive listening to the contribution of others, allied to her good humour, served the Committee well in its deliberations. Her opening up of new angles and the offering of fresh insights enriched the meetings of the Committee and we wish to express our thanks to her at this time.

ROSS BLACKMAN, *Convener*  
JOHN L MCPAKE, *Secretary*

## Appendix 1

### BEK (Burntisland Parish Church, Erskine United Free Church and Kinghorn Parish Church):

Easter 2022 saw the launch of the BEK Partnership Covenant which had gradually evolved prior to March 2020 and developed more fully thereafter. A major factor in this being the joint online services held during the Covid-19 pandemic, entitled: "BEK and Call", with inspiration for this taken from Mark 4: 41: 'even the winds and waves are at his beck and call'. The Partnership Covenant was launched during a united act of worship on Easter Sunday and has been deepened in working together to fund and appoint a BEK Children and Families worker. A contemporary service of worship: "Chilled Church" has been developed and is led by a team from the 3 churches and shared regularly among the 3 churches. The Ecumenical Partnership has seen joint working enabled across two communities and three churches and is the basis for the two Church of Scotland churches to move towards a Union as agreed in the Presbytery Mission Plan.

### Dunfermline Abbey:

Towards the close of 2021, Dunfermline Abbey, along with other congregations, secured funding from the Fife Presbytery Mission Fund to be used towards the recruitment of a Pilgrim Pastor for the Fife Pilgrim Way. While Dunfermline Abbey was the lead name on the bid for funding, part of the pioneering part of the role was to enter into partnership with other Church of Scotland congregations, the Diocese of St Andrew, Dunkeld and Dunblane of the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Scottish Pilgrim Route Forum. A Memorandum of Agreement was developed alongside the terms and conditions of the Pilgrim Pastor and, in due course, the Rev Duncan Weaver was appointed and a unique service of licensing and commissioning took place on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022, a year on from the signing of the *Saint Andrew Declaration*. Worshipers gathered at the Fife Pilgrim Way route marker at Ceres and participated in a torchlit procession to the parish church, where the worship was a collaborative combination of all partners with both the Diocesan Bishop and the Moderator of the Presbytery participating.

### Lindores Parish Church:

In Newburgh, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century there were six or seven church buildings, the places of worship of five different denominations. In 2023, only two of these, the Lindores Parish Church of Scotland and the United Reformed Church are still active. The two churches work closely together and join in worship on a Sunday morning once a month, sharing resources and collaborating in pastoral visiting and in a Community Choir. It is intended that a form of covenant between the two churches will be established. As an element of the work of Lindores Church in reaching out into the community, alternative forms of worship are offered on a monthly basis, such as a midweek celebration of communion in the form of Celtic Communion, and a Taizé style Sunday evening service. These have proved to be attractive to members of other denominations, and also to those who have little or no attachment to any church. The Taizé services appeals to a wider cross-section of ages.

Within the context of the Fife Presbytery Mission Plan, Lindores Parish is charged with establishing a pioneering ecumenical community within the parish and conversations are already taking place with the Diocese of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane of the Scottish Episcopal Church.

## Appendix 2

### [ ] ACT AMENDING THE SACRAMENTS ACT (ACT V 2000) (AS AMENDED)

Edinburgh, [ ] May 2023, Session [ ]

The General Assembly hereby enact and ordain that the Sacraments Act (Act V 2000), as amended, shall be further amended as follows:

1. *Delete section 1 and substitute the following:*
1. The Sacraments of the Church may be administered only by the following persons:
  - (1) a person who has the status of a minister of the Church of Scotland and who (a) has been ordained by a Presbytery of the Church of Scotland; or (b) has been inducted to a charge of the Church of Scotland; or (c) has been admitted by the General Assembly as a minister of the Church of Scotland;
  - (2) a person who has the status of an ordained minister of the United Reformed Church, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland or the Presbyterian Church in Wales, and who has been duly authorised to administer the Sacraments by the Presbytery of the bounds, in which matter the Presbytery shall be the sole judge;
  - (3) a person who has the status of an ordained minister in the Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe (Leuenberg Fellowship) or in the World Communion of Reformed Churches, and who has been duly authorised to administer the Sacraments by the Presbytery of the bounds, in which matter the Presbytery shall be the sole judge;
  - (4) a person who has the status of an ordained minister in the Church of England, in virtue of the *Columba Declaration* (2016), or of the Scottish Episcopal Church, in virtue of the *Saint Andrew Declaration* (2021), and who has been duly authorised to administer the Sacraments by the Presbytery of the bounds, in which matter the Presbytery shall be the sole judge.

## Appendix 3

### Liturgy for the *Saint Margaret Declaration*

*Two representatives each of the Church of Scotland and the Catholic Church in Scotland stand together, facing the congregation, and, following the Introduction, say:*

#### Introduction

The Church of Scotland and the Catholic Church in Scotland have agreed a Declaration of Friendship between the two Churches and have chosen to call it the Saint Margaret Declaration, conscious of Saint Margaret's important role in the life of our nation and of her work, in her own life, for the unity and peace of Christ's Church in Scotland.

#### Voice 1:

Jesus said: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you."

#### Voice 2:

In response to the commandment of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Church of Scotland and the Catholic Church in Scotland, recognising of each other as Christians and as children of God in Christ, now wish, publicly and irrevocably, to express our friendship and respect for one another as fellow Christians, and as citizens and partners in announcing the kingdom of God in our land.

#### Voice 3:

Together, we acknowledge and celebrate our shared faith. We believe in one God, the Creator; we believe in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, true God and true man, fully divine and fully human, who died in the flesh and rose to save us from sin and death; and we believe in the Holy Spirit.

#### Voice 4:

We believe in the Holy Trinity, one God in three persons. We believe that the Church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic; and we acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

#### Voice 1:

We believe our faith to be rooted in that of the Apostles, Christ's first disciples, those who knew and followed our Lord in this life.

#### Voice 2:

We recognise and treasure the Sacred Scriptures as God's revelation of His love for all humanity. We recognise and hold in common the great ecumenical councils of the first five Christian centuries.

#### Voice 3:

We acknowledge and celebrate our common heritage in the Gospel first brought to our shores so very long ago. We recall with gratitude to God the earliest missionaries, our forebears in the faith, who lived and preached the Christian faith to our land.

#### Voice 4:

We recall those from that time who led and formed the Church, nurturing a society inspired by Christian values, including St Ninian, St Columba and St Margaret.



**Voice 1:**

Before God and before one another, we recognise the hurt and the harm that our forebears did to each other in times past, and we repent and ask forgiveness of one other.

**Voice 2:**

We also recognise that, even in more recent times, much could have been said between us more kindly, written more magnanimously, and done more charitably, to promote pardon and healing and friendship among Christians in our land.

**Voice 3:**

We acknowledge that there remain points at which we have not yet found a meeting place, and that some questions still divide us.

**Voice 4:**

None the less, we reaffirm that what we hold in common is often greater than what divides us, and we commit ourselves to continuing our pilgrimage towards greater unity, as we believe that it is the Lord's will that we be one. We trust that such developing unity in Christ is the Lord's work and the Spirit's doing.

**Voice 1:**

Therefore, in faith and hope and mutual trust, we pledge ourselves to live as sisters and brothers in Christ, in public and in private, in life and in mission.

**Voice 2:**

We promise to pray with each other and for each other; to be good neighbours, both to each other and to all people among whom we live, of all faiths and none.

**Voice 3:**

And, building upon many years of co-operation and ecumenical work alongside one another as the body of Christ throughout Scotland and beyond, we recommit ourselves to work together for the common good of the nation, as it is given to us to see it.

**Voice 4:**

So, we pray together:

***May there be an ever more united Christian voice in this land.***

***May the charity and love of Christ renew our participation in the mission of God.***

***May we contribute together to the good of society.***

***May we learn humbly from others, and from our own mistakes.***

***May all our work together thrive.***

***And may our pilgrimage together bear much fruit,  
to the good of all,***

***and to the greater glory of God.***

***Amen.***

**Appendix 4**

**Scottish Christian Forum**

**Nature and Purpose:**

The Scottish Christian Forum is intended to be a forum in which particular Scottish Churches gather together for the purpose of sharing fellowship, information and insight. It is intended to be a participatory body and its purpose is to further the mission and realise the unity of the Church Universal and to encourage the living out of our shared response to the prayer of Jesus that we may 'all be one' (John 17: 21).

**Aims:**

The Forum seeks to:

1. Encourage the mission of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ in the light of the mission of God;
2. Encourage a broad spectrum of churches to participate in its life;
3. Encourage the commissioning of research into areas of mutual interest;
4. Encourage the living out of our shared response to the prayer of Jesus that we may 'all be one' (John 17: 21);
5. Provide a platform for working cooperatively with other church and ecumenical bodies within Scotland, and within Britain and Ireland;
6. Provide a platform for liaising and engaging with the Scottish Government;
7. Provide a platform for liaising and engaging with the United Kingdom Government.

**Vision:**

1. The vision for the Scottish Christian Forum is rooted in the belief that the Holy Spirit is calling the churches, inter-church and religious organisations in Scotland to a pilgrimage of greater unity, cooperation and common witness. The Forum will create an open space where respectful conversation among leaders and representatives from many churches and organisations can take place.

2. The vision is inspired with the renewal of the spirituality of ecumenism. Embracing this spirituality will lead to the deepening of a shared spirituality; support for ecumenical initiatives at all levels and the exploration of common challenges. It will foster ecumenical relationships and encourage participation among Christians in Scotland in mission, in service, and in a shared response to the promptings of God's Spirit.

3. The foundation will be based on mutual respect, acceptance, attentive listening, allied to the recognition of diversity among the participants and an emphasis on the local ecumenical situation. The Forum will discern the work of the Holy Spirit, will identify mission tasks, and will be challenged to engage in an ecumenism of action.
4. The Forum will resource and nourish theological and strategic ecumenical dialogue. It will provide a space for creative and imaginative thinking. It will seek to bring together senior church leaders, opinion formers, and theologians in ground breaking exploratory events. Implicit in these exchanges is the recognition that participation will not require any individual or organisation to abandon particular theological perspectives or traditional religious identities. Participation is to be understood theologically, whereby it is acknowledged that all participants are members of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-31).
5. The Forum's mission activity will be embodied in the local context, complemented by the experience of the Church at regional, national and international levels. It will be the task of the Forum to endorse good local ecumenical initiatives and to encourage further good practice.
6. The vision and mission of the Scottish Christian Forum will be rooted in respect for one another, so that Christians in Scotland might come together in pilgrimage in a flexible structure to work for God's Kingdom through mutual appreciation, genuine trust and authentic friendship. This will lead to renewed ecumenical cooperation and in engagement with the significant issues of the day.

John L McPake  
January 2023

## Appendix 5

### Church of Scotland Ecumenical Relations Committee Remit

1. Serve the General Assembly, and the bodies appointed by the General Assembly, in advising it with respect to the ecumenical life of the Church of Scotland, with particular reference to Article VII of the *Articles Declaratory of the Church of Scotland*.
2. Articulate the Ecumenical Policy of the Church, and review the Policy as necessary.
3. Brief and advise the Moderator of the General Assembly and the Principal Clerk of the General Assembly, through the Ecumenical Officer, with respect to the ecumenical life of the Church.
4. Facilitate engagement with the presbyteries of the Church with a view to encouraging the development of local and regional ecumenical initiatives.
5. Facilitate the establishing of mission-orientated local ecumenical partnerships in conjunction with the presbyteries of the Church and other partner churches.
6. Maintain and develop the relationship of the Church of Scotland with: the Church of England, in the light of the *Columba Declaration* (2016); the Scottish Episcopal Church, in the light of the *Saint Andrew Declaration* (2021) and the Catholic Church in Scotland, in the light of the *Saint Margaret Declaration* (2022).
7. Facilitate engagement with the member churches of Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) (and with any successor body), and with other churches in Scotland.
8. Facilitate engagement with the member churches of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI), Churches Together in England (CTE), and with other churches in the United Kingdom.
9. Facilitate engagement with the member churches of the Conference of European Churches (CEC), the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE), the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), the World Council of Churches (WCC), and with other churches and ecumenical bodies.
10. Facilitate theological and doctrinal engagement in Faith and Order dialogue in conjunction with the Theological Forum.
11. Nominate representatives of the Church of Scotland to represent the Church in the Assemblies and Synods of other churches, and on ACTS, CTBI, CTE, CEC, CPCE, WCRC and WCC, and to receive reports from them.
12. Support the work of the Ecumenical Officer in their representative and administrative functions.

## **Appendix 6**

### **Delegates to other Churches**

The following have been appointed as delegates to the Assemblies, Synods and Conferences of other Churches:

*Presbyterian Church of Wales* – Moderator

*United Reformed Church* – Moderator

*Church of England* – Rev Dr David Coulter

*United Reformed Church National Synod of Scotland* – Rev Dr Peter McEnhill

*Methodist Church in Scotland (Synod)* – Rev Dr John L McPake

*Methodist Conference* –

*Scottish Episcopal Church* – Rev Ross Blackman

*United Free Church of Scotland* – Rev Dr John L McPake

### **Ecumenical Bodies**

The following represent(-ed) the Church on Assemblies and Committees of the ecumenical bodies of which the Church is a member:

#### **World Council of Churches**

*General Assembly (September 2022)*

Rev Alexander Horsburgh, Ms Miriam Weibye

*Central Committee*

Ms Miriam Weibye

#### **Conference of European Churches**

*General Assembly (June 2023)*

Miss Gemma King, Mrs Pauline Weibye

#### **Churches Together in Britain and Ireland**

*Board of Trustees*

#### **Action of Churches Together in Scotland**

*Members' Meeting*

Voting Member: Convener of the Ecumenical Relations Committee

Non-Voting Member: Vice Convener of the Ecumenical Relations Committee

Non-Voting Member: Ecumenical Officer

*Trustee*

Miss Carole Hope

#### **Columba Declaration Contact Group**

*Co-Convener:* Rev Dr Russell Barr

*Co-Secretary:* Ecumenical Officer

*Members:* Rev Dr Peter McEnhill

#### **Saint Andrew Declaration Working Group**

*Co-Convener:* Convener of the Committee on Ecumenical Relations

*Co-Secretary:* Ecumenical Officer

Rev Dr Nikki Macdonald

Rev Eileen Miller

#### **Scottish Church Leaders' Forum**

Moderator, Principal Clerk, Ecumenical Officer

#### **Ecumenical Officers' Forum**

Ecumenical Officer

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