

CHALMERS LECTURESHIP TRUST MAY 2025**Proposed Deliverance****The General Assembly:**

1. Receive the Report.
2. Reappoint the following Trustees each for one further year of office, until May 2026: Mrs Kay Keith, Rev Dr John McPake and Mr Roy Pinkerton (*Section 3*).

Report**1. CHALMERS LECTURES 2022-2026****1.1 'Hope in today's world'**

1.1.1 The Rev Professor John Swinton and Dr Katie Cross each delivered three of a series of six inspiring and thought-provoking online lectures during October, November and December 2024 with the overarching theme 'Hope in today's world'.

1.1.2 Rev Professor Alison Jack also facilitated a hybrid (online and in-person) event in King's College Conference Centre at the University of Aberdeen – a dialogue between the two theologians with a Question and Answer session at the end of the conversation.

1.2 Dr Katie Cross – "Hope is a verb: from witness to action in a traumatised world".

1.2.1 Dr Katie Cross' three lectures considered hope as an action – a 'doing word.' They explored the scarcity of hope in the world today, and the way that trauma in particular challenges the ability to hope. Trauma is central to the Christian faith, so Dr Cross explored the cross and the way it had been interpreted both as a place of trauma and of hope. The second lecture considered the practice of witness particularly in the Easter story. Using the story of the disciples on the Emmaus road, thinking through Jesus' actions as he appeared alongside the traumatised disciples, bearing witness to their ongoing suffering. Finally, this was drawn together in the last lecture by looking to the future and how it would be possible to generate hope in a traumatised world. In doing so, Dr Cross presented hope not as a passive set of emotions but as an active and collaborative practice, one which draws on community, protest, and politics.

1.3 Rev Professor John Swinton – 'Being present: finding friendship in a 'hopeless' world.'

1.3.1 Rev Professor Swinton's three lectures offered a profound exploration of three interconnected themes crucial to navigating the complexities of modern life: presence, friendship, and hope.

1.3.2 The lectures invited people on a transformative journey, weaving together theological insights, contemporary challenges, and practical wisdom. Using the unifying metaphor of a garden to represent our spiritual and relational lives, the series explored how being present tends to the soil and plants the seeds of our existence, how friendship nurtures the soil that sustains the roots of our relationships, and how hope provides the essential sunlight for growth, flourishing and connection with God and one another.

1.3.3 Each lecture delved deeply into its specific themes in the light of a concept: "gentle time" – a slower, more reflective approach to life that contrasts sharply with the frenetic pace of our digital age.

1.3.4 By embracing gentle time, attendees were encouraged to cultivate deeper connections with God, themselves, and others. The lectures blended biblical and theological foundations with personal stories and interdisciplinary insights from psychology, sociology, and neuroscience, providing a holistic understanding of each theme. Practical strategies and actionable steps were developed in the hope of empowering participants to implement these concepts in their daily routines and relationships.

1.3.5 Throughout the series, the lectures addressed contemporary challenges such as digital distraction, social isolation, and global uncertainty, offering a faith-based perspective on finding meaning and connection in a world that often feels fragmented and hopeless. By the conclusion of this part of the series, attendees gained not only a deeper theological understanding of presence, friendship, and hope but also practical tools for living out these concepts in their communities and personal lives. The lectures aimed to inspire a renewed sense of purpose, deeper relational connections, and a more grounded, hopeful approach to faith in the face of life's challenges.

2. PUBLICATIONS

2.1 Work is underway on the format for producing a book from the lecture series, including the dialogue, and publishers have been approached. The book will be a resource for congregations.

3. TRUSTEES

3.1 Certain Trustees (Mrs Kay Keith, Rev Dr John McPake and Mr Roy Pinkerton) complete their current term of office in May 2025. It is proposed that they be reappointed for one further year to enable them to participate in the publication of the book from the current lecture series. Proposals for the appointment of new Trustees will be brought to the Assembly of 2026.

In the name of the Trust

FIONA SMITH, *Chair*