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**THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND GUILD**

**CONSTITUTION**

**(MAY 2019)**

**SECTION 1**

**THE BACKGROUND TO THE CONSTITUTION**

**Foreword**

It is a great pleasure to add my thoughts as a foreword to the revised Constitution.

I like that the Guild describes itself as a ‘movement’, rather than an ‘organisation’, as this suggests that we are not static, not stuck in a rut, and willing to embrace possibilities of change as we move forward.

As in the church as a whole, and down through the history of the Guild, we have had – and still have – our fair share of challenges, but we choose to turn challenges into opportunities for service, for recruitment and for faith-building. The ability and willingness to include folks of other denominations and of none in our fellowship is expanding our reach.

More flexibility in how we organise ourselves and operate locally means that groups are able to function in a way that suits them best, tapping into the gifts of the many rather than the few. I believe that this is liberating!

I trust and pray that operating with this revised Constitution you will be energised by the flexibility and freedom, always remembering whose we are and whom we serve.

So let’s continue to move forward, inspired by the hopes, dreams, visions and enthusiasm encouraged by our founder, Archibald Charteris all these years ago:

***‘It is they who dream bright dreams that in the end deliver….do not be afraid or ashamed to announce splendid hopes. It is enthusiasts the world needs, and I pray you to be enthusiastic. ‘***

Marian Macintyre, National Convener,

July 2019

**1. Introduction**

The Church of Scotland requires the Guild to have a Constitution. No matter how artistically it is worded or put together, it will look like the legal document it is.

**2. Where have we come from?**

Underpinning the Constitution is a vision which inspires freedom of interpretation and flexibility aimed at allowing the Guild to operate within its strengths and resources at the local level.

In 1887, Rev Dr Archibald Charteris was successful in ensuring that the General Assembly responded to his vision of a Church in which women could participate fully. The Woman’s Guild was formed so that the Church could benefit from the spiritual gifts and practical skills and energy of women.

Over the years, the Guild has evolved and adapted to changing environments within and around the Church. The ordination of women to the Eldership and the Ministry shifted the context of the Guild as did the working lives of women and the ways of life led by people in our country.

However, these changes in the way things work have never affected the spirit of the AIM of the Guild, which says:

*The Church of Scotland Guild is a movement within the Church of Scotland which invites and encourages women and men to commit their lives to Jesus Christ and enables them to express their faith in worship, prayer, action and fellowship.*

The aim is, in turn, underlined in the Guild motto :

*Whose we are and whom we serve,* words taken from Acts 27, v 23.

The Guild has a shape and a purpose and a structure, but it must always be open to the Holy Spirit and be ready to respond in new ways to new situations.

**No one should doubt that the Guild is a Christian organisation, rooted and grounded in Christ and an integral part of the Church of Scotland and remaining true to its role in the service of Jesus Christ, its Lord and Saviour.**

**3. How does it work?**

**3.1 Congregational Groups**

These groups are at the centre of the Guild’s life and witness.

They are formed as part of the family of the local Church, with the agreement of the Minister and Kirk Session. They can, however, take different forms.

* Groups may reflect different interests group or age-groups.
* Groups may be led and organised in different ways.
* A church might even have more than one group, meeting at different times of day or at different times of the year.
* In another place, it may be that a Guild is formed between congregations that are in linkage or in local proximity so that they can share leadership and resources.

**3.2 How are groups led?**

The Guild exists in many different places and how it is led will be affected by numbers, the skills and abilities of people, their availability, how and when the group meets and so on.

So, there is no “one size fits all” structure for leadership in a local group.

It is important that a contact person is chosen, who can liaise with the National Office and be the person to whom resources and information are sent.

**It is essential that someone be appointed as the Treasurer of the group so that accounts can be maintained within the legal framework of Church and charity law. That person need not, however, be a member of the Guild.**

It is good to share the work, though, and a leadership team can be formed to do that. The only rule would be that most of the team need to be Church of Scotland members.

Traditionally a team would consist of clear roles of Convener, Secretary, Treasurer, Project Partner and so on. Each of these would serve for a fixed period.

However, it is not always easy to find people able and willing to take on these roles, so many groups have a team of people who take the organisation of the meetings and admin in turns, maybe for a month at a time.

In fact, sharing the jobs out can be a real benefit in many ways, as it allows all the talents of the group to be use; it gives more people a chance to contribute; it keeps the group fresh and enthusiastic.

As far as possible, no one should serve more than three years...it is good for the group and the individuals to keep ringing the changes and refreshing the leadership team.

**3.3 What about Administration?**

Again, there will be differences in what is done and what can be done.

However, there **needs** to be an annual meeting at which the accounts are approved and when the year’s activity is reviewed. This is also a good time to look at the leadership team and the way in which it is formed.

**3.4 Capitation Fees**

To enable the Guild to operate as a national movement, it is essential that members contribute by paying an annual capitation fee, set by the National Executive. This is payable only once a year, even if a person chooses to join more than one group.

The Treasurer is responsible for the collection and payment of these fees to Guild Office.

**4. Beyond the Local Group**

The local group is where most of the Guild’s work is done and where most of its fellowship grows, but one of the great things about the Guild is the fact that it is a regional and national movement as well as a local organisation.

To help that all work, there are two levels of organisation…The Guilds Together Grouping and the National Council.

**4.1 Guilds Together Groupings**

Broadly, but not necessarily, reflecting the Presbytery boundaries of the Church of Scotland, these are groupings which bring together Guilds in a regional setting. They allow for the sharing of information, sharing of resources and general support for each other.

These groups, like the local group, have a lot of freedom in how they are organised. Again, it is important to have a contact person to link with the National Office. It should also keep its accounts in order, though it is not currently subject to the rules of the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator, (OSCR).

There should also be a Project Co-ordinator who is able to liaise between the local and the national settings on the progress of the Partnership Projects.

Another office of real importance and usefulness is that of Resources Co-ordinator, whose job is to help groups make the best use of meetings and resources and to pass on information about issues and thinking that inform our work.

Meetings of Guilds Together are open meetings, so anyone can attend. Each group that is a member of the Council can appoint two voting members who are able to take part in decision making for the Council.

As with local groups, it is good to encourage renewal and to aim for a maximum three year term of service.

It is also good for all groups within the area to play their part in sustaining the membership and leadership of the group.

**4.2 A “Two-way channel”**

Through the various contacts described above and making use of knowledge of resources and materials, there should be no lack of suggestions and ideas to enliven and enrich the work of the Guild.

It is open to the Guilds Together Grouping to discover the best ways of providing inspiration and support to local groups. To make it a two-way process, some method of consultation is helpful. Ideas to help with this include a “Sharing Session” at some Guilds Together meetings or the appointment by the Guilds Together of a “listening group” to visit groups on request.

Alternatively, it may simply be that members speak about their group’s activities and report back to the group on the work of the Guilds Together Grouping.

**4.3 Linking and Thinking**

Guilds Together are encouraged to invite members of their neighbouring groups to events whenever appropriate.

Links could be with:

* Other Guilds Together Groupings to plan larger meetings on issues of shared concern
* With Kirk Sessions and/or congregations
* With Presbyteries, encouraging them to have Guild representation on appropriate committees.

**5. The National Leadership**

Each Guilds Together chooses someone to be its National Representative, appointed for a three year period.

This person need not be the Convener and, indeed, it is good to share the work of the Guild to reduce the pressure on individuals and to involve more people in the work.

The National Reps form the National Council, which in turn operates a structure of working groups, representative roles and events to support the work of the Guild.

Each year, the National Council elects one of its number as National Convener for the following session, supported by four National Vice-Conveners, elected as described in the constitution.

These office bearers then represent the Guild within the Church of Scotland and attend many other meetings and events on our behalf.

The role of the National Council is to oversee the governance and operation of the movement.

That is not just an administrative concept, though.

It is one of the great strengths of the Guild that we have a national voice, one that is heard within the Church of Scotland and beyond in our ecumenical involvement and in the confines of the wider society through government agencies and other charities with whom we work.

This national work, regional work and local activities are brought together under the banner of the strategy, which operates on a three year cycle and themes, which last for one year.

Alongside this cycle, there is the Project Partnership scheme, which sees the Guild work alongside up to six Christian Charities at home and abroad, raising the profile of their work, reflecting on the theological and social basis of that work and raising funds for the Charities. More is said about this later in this document.

**6. The spirit of the constitution**

As described above, the Guild’s constitution is an essential document that sets out the formal rules that help shape and structure the movement.

However, the spirit of the constitution is one of flexibility, intended to allow people to operate in ways that reflect different realities in terms of personnel, location and resources.

In other words, the constitution exists to help us. It does not exist to constrain and limit what the Guild does or how it does it.

There is no one “right way” of ordering Guild life.

The only traditions that we need to maintain are those set out in our aim and in our motto!

The constitution should be seen as a support and not as a cage.

**SECTION 2**

**THE CONSTITUION**

**Foreword**

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Marian Macintyre, National Convener,

July 2019

**Guild Constitution (Revised May 2019)**

**1. AIM**

The Church of Scotland Guild is a movement within the Church of Scotland which invites and encourages both women and men to commit their lives to Jesus Christ and enables them to express their faith in worship, prayer, action and fellowship.

**2. MEMBERSHIP**

Membership of the Guild is open to all who accept the aim.

**3. STRUCTURE**

The Guild is organised as follows:

**3.1 Congregational Groups.**

3.1.1 Congregational Groups are formed within the family of a local congregation (or congregations in the case of linkage) with the agreement of the Kirk Session and are subject to the jurisdiction of the Session and in receipt of its care and support. Where there is a linkage, the group should agree with the relevant Kirk Sessions as to which will hold this jurisdiction.

3.1.2 Each group is free to run its business in a way that is appropriate to the group’s own circumstances. However, it is a requirement that there is a majority of Church of Scotland members or adherents on anyleadership team that is established.

3.1.3 Short periods of leadership are acceptable and no-one should be expected to remain on the team for more than three years.

3.1.4 Each group is registered with the National Office, which will hold records of office –bearers. It is a requirement that office-bearers include a contact person and a treasurer.

3.1.5 Groups are required to maintain their own finances within the current legislation of both the Church of Scotland and the civil frameworks and in accordance with the guidance published by the National Council in support of the constitution.

3.1.6 Groups are responsible for ensuring that annual capitation fees, set by the National Council, are paid timeously to the National Office.

3.1.7 The capitation fee will be reviewed by the National Council, normally every three years. The National Council reserves the right to consider additional reviews as necessary. Any change in the fee will require a vote of two-thirds of those present at the meeting at which it is proposed.

**3.2 Other forms of membership.**

3.2.1 Individual membership is available, subject to the payment of an annual fee equivalent to the capitation fee. Contact details for Individual Members are held by both the National Office and the relevant Guilds Together grouping.

3.2.2 The National Council can offer Honorary Membership to individuals and groups who it regards as particularly supportive of the Guild.

3.2.3 Other forms of membership may be established from time to time by the National Council

**3.3 Guilds Together groupings**.

3.3.1 Guilds Together groupings typically unite groups within a Presbytery area or part thereof. Where it is deemed appropriate and with the agreement of the National Council, a Guilds Together grouping can be formed within a geographical area that does not coincide with the boundaries of a Presbytery.

3.3.2 Where the boundaries, name or other relevant definitions of a Prebsytery are amended, the Guilds Together grouping’s own details will be reviewed in consultation between the National Council and the relevant Guilds Together grouping or groupings. Any agreed changes will be made by the National Council, subject to a majority vote.

3.3.3 Each grouping elects its own leadership team to run the grouping in a way that is appropriate to own circumstances. No-one should be expected to remain on the team for more than three years.

3.3.4 Guilds Together groupings each elect one representative to the National Council.

3.3.5 Each grouping is registered with the National Office, which will hold records of office –bearers, to include a contact person and a treasurer.

3.3.6 Guilds Together groupings are required to maintain their own finances within the current legislation of both the Church of Scotland and the civil frameworks and in accordance with the guidance published by the National Council in support of the constitution.

3.3.7 All Guilds Together meetings are open meetings.

3.3.8 Should the Guilds Together grouping be required to take a vote on any issue, each local group will nominate up to two voting members.

**3.4 National Council.**

3.4.1 The National Councilis responsible for policy and final decision-making, subject to Section six of the Constitution.

3.4.2 Guilds Together groupings representatives are elected to serve on the National Council for three years These appointments will not normally be extended.

3.4.3 The National Council can co-opt members for a period of up to one year. Such members will be non-voting and will be limited to five at any given time.

3.4.4 The National Council elects a National Convener who should normally serve for one year.

3.4.5 The National Council will elect four National Vice-Conveners, each with responsibility for one of these areas of work:

* + Communications and Marketing
  + Outreach
  + Resources
  + Events

3.4.6 National Vice-Conveners will be elected for a term of up to three years or for the term of their nomination to the National Council from their Guilds Together grouping, whichever is shorter.

3.4.7 Whilst their representative is serving as National Convener or Vice Convener, a Guilds Together grouping will be entitled to appoint an additional person to the National Council.

3.4.8 Any current member of the National Council, including those about to retire, is eligible to be elected as a National Vice-Convener.

3.4.9 The National Vice-Conveners are eligible to be elected as National Convener.

3.4.10 These appointments and other elected positions within the Guild take effect immediately after the General Assembly in any year.

3.4.11 The National Council must present an annual report, which is presented to the General Assembly, to whose jurisdiction the Guild is ultimately subject. The report is presented to the General Assembly by the National Convener.

**4. ADMINISTRATION**

4.1 The National Council appoints a General Secretary to administer its affairs, along with other staff as agreed by the National Council. Staff will be employed by the relevant employing agency of the Church of Scotland.

The General Secretary is a member of the National Council, **ex-officio.**

4.2 The Guild shall continue and shall assume the whole responsibilities and the whole rights and assets previously exercised and enjoyed by the Woman’s Guild, whose work and functions are incorporated into the work and functions of the Guild. Existing trusts funds and all future donations and legacies received in connection with the Woman’s Guild or any such work and functions shall be held and applied by the Guild, all according to the terms and conditions applying to them.

**5. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

5.1 A statement of accounts of the National Council of the Guild prepared as at 31 December each year, must be included within the audited accounts of the Councils and Committees of the General Assembly.

5.2 The General Treasurer of the Church of Scotland will be the Treasurer of the Guild, **ex officio**.

**6. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION**

6.1 The Constitution may be amended by the General Assembly following consultation with the membership of the Guild and on the recommendation of the National Council.

6.2 Proposed changes must be intimated in writing to all voting members at National Level at least one week in advance of a meeting at which they will be considered.

6.3 Changes may be considered only if two thirds of those eligible to vote are present at the meeting and such changes are agreed by two thirds of those present.