

**together we walk**

**WIM**

ensemble nous marchons

wir gehen zusammen

spolu chodíme

együtt sétálunk

insieme camminiamo

lopen we samen

juntos caminamos

tillsammans vi gå

sammen vi gå



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**WM**

## Foreword

**The story is told of the beginnings of Christian Aid. A Church of Scotland chaplain in Germany saw the misery of refugees in central Europe after the Second World War. He wanted to help, but was refused permission on the grounds that it might be fraternising with the enemy. The chaplain appealed and was given permission to do what he could. Letters were sent to Scotland. Not long after a war in which many Scots had lost loved ones there was a wellspring of support and vast quantities of top quality food poured in. So began the Inter-Church Refugee Service: today we know it as Christian Aid.**

There was wonderful moment at the General Assembly of 2014. Theo Davidovic from Kinglassie in Fife spoke on screen and he told the Moderator “I was one of those refugees.” He is nearly 90 now, and for the last fifty years and more he has been the Christian Aid organiser for his congregation. More than that: he has opened his beautiful garden year after year right through the summer to sell countless plants – for Christian Aid. He told the General Assembly “God met me in my need when I was a refugee: I must give back to him to meet the needs of others.”

This report is about Europe and the churches and the Church of Scotland. There is plenty of history in it – much of it living history like Theo’s story. There are inspiring stories of today: of heroic

Christian witness in very difficult situations, of new energy arising in churches which have lived through gloomy times; of churches all across Europe doing good. No wonder the report tells the story of the tremendous project “Out of Africa into Malta”. This was born and still lives in the Church of Scotland congregation in Malta. That island faces an enormous refugee problem as desperate boatloads reach its shores fleeing from fearful threats in North Africa and the Middle East. The project, supported by the Presbytery of Europe and the Guild, does marvellous things to bring hope to today’s refugees.

When you read this you will feel part of Europe, and you will feel part of the European churches. But you will not merely feel: you will want to do. So there is a great list of imaginative suggestions which will allow individuals, congregations and Presbyteries to act. Praying, reading, meeting, learning – Assembly reports are not boring and responding to them can be inspiring.



**Very Rev Dr Andrew McLellan**  
Convener

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## Our commitments

### Engage with presbyteries and congregations

- Read and study this resource, use the worship service and learn more about faith in Europe and the continuing work of the Church of Scotland with its partners in Europe.
- Welcome visitors or new residents from other parts of Europe and beyond into your congregation and community offering facilities, support and fellowship.
- Collect stamps for the Stamp Project to support Dorcas House, the Greek Evangelical Church's safe house for women.
- Get involved in the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women and its 2015 Pop-up Monastery.
- Explore links, particularly Twinings, with congregations and presbyteries of other churches, including those in Europe.
- Encourage young people to consider attending one of the international youth meetings 'Towards a New Solidarity' sponsored by the Taize Community.
- Remember the service and sacrifice of Jane Haining through prayer, commemorative events and interfaith cooperation.
- Encourage all members to support the work of Christian Aid across the world.

## Work with other Councils of the Church, Christian Aid and other partner organisations

- Share in appropriate events that mark and commemorate the centenary of World War 1.
- Support movements for justice, which seek to influence European policy-makers.
- Seek to educate on violence against women and girls, and enhance the participation of women in leadership.
- Work on advocacy issues which are of concern to our partners, especially human trafficking, migration, climate change, poverty and the purpose of economic activity.
- Develop cooperation with partners internationally in supporting those trafficked.
- Support churches and organisations in influencing European policy-makers to ensure that global expansion benefits all countries and continents and not just the wealthy.
- Engage with other churches and Agencies in Europe, in reviewing how the European Union is contributing to demand being created for trafficked persons.
- Engage with partner churches to support outreach work with migrants coming into Europe.



## Together we walk

### The World Mission Council recognises that the context of its calling is the oikumene – the whole inhabited earth.

This year the focus is on Europe where churches are facing similar challenges and opportunities to ourselves – increasing needs for witness and mission, and reduced resources and numbers of members. We are called to share the work of the gospel (Philippians 1:5), and working within the European context gives us the opportunity to give and receive, as we look for new ways and forms to do so together. The prophet Amos asked, ‘do two people walk together unless they have agreed to meet?’ (Amos 3:3). In Europe, we have not only agreed to meet, but we have an ongoing desire to walk together in the company of Christ; and we do so because we need one another; we walk together because we believe that such mission in unity is what the gospel demands of us.

The Council’s new strategy uses the road to Emmaus (Luke 24) to highlight how the whole Church of Scotland can build relationships with the church in the wider world. In that biblical story, the disciples’ eyes are opened and their hearts burn as they realise they are in the company of their friend, the now risen Christ, who ‘interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures’ (Lk24:27). Relationships are important: the Council is tasked with helping the Church of Scotland to enjoy being part of the worldwide Christian Church, whether in the Caribbean, Asia, Africa – or Europe. The road to Emmaus reminds us that it is through the journey, in the sharing, in the companionship, in the talking, and in the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the wine, that we can feel our eyes being opened; it is as we invite the journeying companion into our fellowship that we find our hearts ablaze in the company of Christ, as well as our comfort zones challenged as we labour to interpret the scriptures and traditions afresh for a new day.



## The Church in Europe

Our report this year emphasises our historic roots in wider European Christianity. It seeks to help us to open our eyes and remember we are part of a journeying church within the whole continent of Europe, and reminds us of how we have so fully and richly engaged in the life of this continent for centuries.

It will seek to raise questions about our common journey, about how we interpret our faith for the age in which we live, and how our common European threads can help us to discover new ways in which we can share together in the fruits of the gospel. Furthermore, it will also emphasise how we do this in partnership with other Councils, Committees, Presbyteries and Congregations within the Church of Scotland.

Throughout history, Scottish links with reforming people and movements have been plentiful and there was continuous traffic back and forward to share ideas and escape persecution: Huguenots, Waldensians, Bohemians, Moravians, Silesians, Slovaks, Hungarians, Flemish, Polish, Germans, Scandinavians, Swiss, English, Scots, and more, walked together, thought, discussed, prayed, and acted for a change in ecclesiastical systems, as together they reimagined a different future: *Ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*, a church always in need of being reformed, and traditions of being reinterpreted, for each new age.

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The best-known example of continental European influence on the Scottish Reformation of 1560 comes through John Knox's ministry in Geneva and his subsequent return to Scotland in 1559. Other famous names, such as Luther and Melancthon in Germany; Zwingli and Bullinger (who wrote many letters to Scotland) in Zurich; Calvin and Farel in Geneva and Lausanne, have all become foci of Reformation, but could not have reformed alone and certainly did not do so in a vacuum. A multitude of saints, the people of God, helped create a great movement of reformation activities, writing and discussions, which spread far and wide across the continent, even to distant Scotland. These reforming actions were built upon older traditions as seen in the pioneering work of Jan Hus, whose introduction of communion of both kinds (bread and wine together, a privilege formerly reserved for priests, not the people) in the St Martin in the Wall Church, Prague, reaches its 600th anniversary this year and will be celebrated by the churches of the Czech Republic – this is why the chalice is the emblem of the reformed churches in the Czech Republic. Hus had taken a lead from John Wyclif in his understanding that scripture could and should be read directly by the people and needed no priestly intervention. It was Martin Luther who, over a century after Hus's burning at the stake (in 1415) at the Council of Constance, declared, 'We are all Hussites now!' Luther saw his own contribution not as the beginning of a new branch of the Church, but as chiming with an historic stream of questioning and seeking for ways to oppose and reform the abuses of the church. He was very much in the Emmaus tradition of opening his eyes to reinterpret the tradition for his age.

Another significant anniversary in the Protestant Church is also drawing close, as we approach the 500th anniversary of Luther's historic action in Wittenberg in 1517. The Swiss Protestant Federation (FEPS) and the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) brought together representatives of churches from five continents and 35 countries in October 2013, to look at the diversity of reformation around the world, as well as to consider ideas to mark the 500 years of distinctively protestant identity. As people talked, ate, worshipped and shared together, the stories which were told demonstrated how

broad the reformed church movement has become, taking different forms and shapes in the different cultures in which it has become embedded. It was a timely reminder of the benefits of our connectedness, and the value of listening to and learning from each other. There will be further opportunities over coming years to mark the significance of these events.

A key moment in our particular European journey came 40 years ago when the General Assembly of 1974 agreed the Leuenberg Concordat (adopted in 1973, it led to the creation of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe: CPCE). Allowing, for the first time, all its adopters to share full table and pulpit fellowship, it has transformed relationships between Lutheran and Reformed churches all over Europe (see [www.leuenberg.net](http://www.leuenberg.net)). Today a Church of Scotland minister may preach or preside in a congregation of the Church of Norway (Lutheran) or the Reformed Church in Hungary, and vice versa. It is within this framework that the Rev Tabea Baader, of the Church of Bavaria, is ministering to the congregation of Fort Augustus (and building links between that congregation and a congregation in Bavaria), while the Rev Rhona Dunphy is serving as Chaplain to students in Regensburg, Bavaria. Such mutual recognition also leads to mutual accountability e.g. when the Lutheran Church of Poland objected to the Reformed Church of Poland ordaining its first woman pastor 10 years ago, it was encouraged into further discussion and peace building efforts, which were ultimately successful, by other Lutheran Churches within the CPCE community.





## The Church of Scotland and churches in Europe today

As we confront many similar problems, there is solidarity in also identifying opportunities which have broader applicability than in one country. For us to be properly obedient today requires that we walk and work with friends and partners all over the continent to maintain and to promote the gospel message.

It is when we walk together that we are most likely to have our eyes opened and discover both Christ in our midst and the gifts and talents of those we walk alongside. The Council asked churches in Europe to tell us something about their ministries and the issues affecting them today, and how they were actively seeking to interpret the gospel in their own situations for the present age. Here is what they said:

### **Czech Republic**

In the Czech Republic, the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren (ECCB), itself one of the earliest united churches bringing together Lutheran and Reformed since 1918, exists in one of the most secular societies in the world. With only about 15% of the population being part of a Christian church, the ECCB is trying to address some of the key questions of how a small historic church can engage with people outside any church and with little 'religious memory' resulting from the impact of communist rule. The ECCB is looking to ecumenical cooperation within the Czech Republic and to continue its strong relationships with outside churches, but sees that this is limited in its capacity to have an effect on the country. The Church runs a few schools, and is now asking whether it is right to open more as a service to both church and society, as well as how it can best manage these and what the role of faith schools should be.

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The Czech churches are facing a new situation: since 1948 ministers' salaries were paid by the state. Over the coming 17 years this subsidy will be incrementally removed and churches will take responsibility for their own finances, although gaining some restitution for the property and lands which the state confiscated. This will lead to further conversations and debates about how ministry can be done differently, with many small churches likely no longer to have their own minister, and how the church can financially meet its needs. It is a new time of much uncertainty for the ECCB and sharing and discussing different models of ministry and stewardship is something we can walk together in.

## **France**

The newly born United Protestant Church in France (EPUF: made up of French Lutheran and Reformed Churches) launched a campaign during the union process seeking to ensure it would not just result in a new entity from two former ones, but would create a church with a renewed life, as people in parishes would (re-)discover the vitality of Lutheran-Reformed spirituality resulting in a deepened spiritual life within parishes. A website, [www.ecoutedieunousparle.com](http://www.ecoutedieunousparle.com) was created, with parishes choosing different aspects to focus on. The EPUF staff person for International & Ecumenical Relations, Claire Sixt-Gateuille, has highlighted that while most parishes chose to try perhaps one or two activities, 'it has shown them that Lutheran-Reformed spirituality is not boring and has given them the feeling that it can be attractive, even for people outside the church. It was a first step to become "a church of witnesses", which is our aim'. The EPUF has now started to organise home groups and training for parishioners to welcome people as they are, and to speak about their faith in daily situations. There is also an exhibition and a website [www.eglisedetemoins.fr](http://www.eglisedetemoins.fr) in which parishes are invited to contribute.

A new campaign has also been launched looking towards the symbolic anniversary of the Reformation in 2017: 'Protester pour Dieu, protester pour l'homme', with the aim to support people and churches to express what they believe. There will be town hall style meetings where church members will be offered assistance to help them express their faith, and to

encourage churches to use these expressions during worship. The EPUF is also preparing a new confession of faith, and hopes to include some of the strongest and most relevant results from this grassroots interaction, as well as liaising with other churches for input.

## **Germany**

The Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) wants to shape Europe, together with other churches and religious communities, so that it is and remains 'our' Europe; a Europe of all citizens, a Europe with whose policies all can identify. The EKD wants to participate in shaping it – not only through our member states and the elections to the European Parliament, but directly as Christian citizens, in our associations and congregations, in social initiatives, ecumenical partnerships and cooperation projects, as Christians with our action and our prayers. We already experience Europe in many ways, from congregational exchanges to cooperation in European ecumenical institutions. That is the future: a living Europe, so that Europe can live.

## **Greece**

The Greek Evangelical Church (GEK) has 18 ministers and 35 congregations, all across Greece, with 3000-5000 members in a country of 10 million, where 95% are claimed by the Greek Orthodox Church. It is explicitly evangelical, seeking to challenge the 'Greek mentality' and understand the call of Jesus for a change of life for people. The GEK congregations today have more people attending worship than they have members. Many from outside Greece are becoming involved.

Because Greece is the point of arrival for many refugees – from Syria, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and more - since the early 1990's many congregations have been trying to help those coming into Greece, and this has intensified recently with many Greek people also in need because of the financial crisis. A consortium of churches offer food, friendship, laundry and washing facilities, Greek language classes and some trade skills, to those finding themselves with nothing.

**For us to be properly obedient today requires that we walk and work with friends and partners all over the continent to maintain and to promote the gospel message. It is when we walk together that we are most likely to have our eyes opened and discover both Christ in our midst and the gifts and talents of those we walk alongside.**

Many churches have outreach to the marginalised and young. There is youth outreach and a number of congregations have organised ministries which go out in the night to befriend sex workers and offer a listening ear and friendly word, often the only they hear. The GEK also runs a Detox Centre where men go for about a year, out of their own volition, to seek to get free of drugs in an explicitly Christian, and professional, environment; they attend prayers every morning and worship on Sunday. There is also a shelter for women who have experienced abuse, which will be the recipient of this year's Stamp Project. Preaching the gospel and social ministry go hand in hand for the GEK.

## **Hungary**

The Reformed Church in Hungary (RCH) understands itself as a 'border-crossing' community: crossing geographical and political borders in expressing church unity and communion. It feels challenged to move beyond the walls of the church in mission and social ministry in order to transform the church into a welcoming community that reaches out to youth, and transforms society by taking responsibility for social outreach and by standing on the side of the needy and vulnerable. This is a challenge to old and traditional forms of being congregations and living the traditional church life; however, the RCH sees changes for the better in helping communities and congregations go 'far beyond [their] own capacities', as an ever-reforming church.

With the Hungarian-speaking churches in the Carpathian Basin (generally speaking, the territories Hungary lost to its neighbours after World War I), it has set up the HRC: Hungarian Reformed Church (members are the Reformed Church in Hungary, Reformed Church in Romania, Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia, Reformed Church in Carpathian Ukraine, Reformed Christian Church in Serbia, Reformed Christian Church in Slovenia and Reformed Christian Church in Croatia). The HRC has a synod that can pass legislation and make formal statements concerning issues which have been decided upon in the highest levels of the participating churches. However, the member churches remain autonomous and independent.

## Italy

Being Church Together (BCT) is a programme of the Waldensian Church, which promotes integration. African pastors are important bridge-builders between immigrant and Italian members of the church. With BCT, the Waldensians seek to answer the spiritual call to be a beloved community where different identities and traditions can be reconciled and unified in Christ. Practically, they are aware that immigration is a major factor for the numeric increase and even stability of some of their congregations. Today, some 20% of the church members come from outside Italy and most of them belong to these multicultural congregations. The Waldensians are aware also of the difficulties and note, 'The different cultures and traditions can be enriching but can also clash. Therefore it is important that this process is accompanied by different measures of personal support and training.' They are conscious that the model needs to be flexible and respectful of different circumstances and of different sensitivities, both of the nationals and of the immigrants, and are aware that there will be further developments and changes when the next generation come up who are more integrated into the society than were their parents. However, the Waldensian Church is convinced that this is a useful model, not least because it witnesses to wider society that:

- Churches can be a laboratory for an integrated society;
- Churches can be social actors with a strong capacity to promote values, behaviours, good practices for the common good, for Italian people as well as for immigrants;
- Integrated churches are a vivid example of the new religious pluralism rooting in Italy.

In some ways this new model of church, combined with a financial tightening, which is putting pressure on the historic model of a 'steeple in every community', is requiring new thinking, and more 'circuit' style ministries with pastors shared among communities, a reminder, perhaps, of the original, historic Waldensian model of the itinerant preacher moving between communities.

## Netherlands

While the main issues in Dutch society are the economic and social issues related to the international financial crisis, as a church, a major concern is over the consequence of this hitting the disadvantaged disproportionately. The missionary outlook of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PKN) is being challenged by new communities within the Netherlands. With one million Muslims, as well as many Christians from other parts of the world, the PKN is planning to set up one hundred new pioneering 'spots' in urban and rural locations to seek to be church differently than in the past. This is an adventure for everyone; it is in the journey that we find new insights and ideas which will impact the life of the church, its order, ecclesiology and outreach.



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## **Norway**

In Norway, about 76% of Norwegians are still members of the Church of Norway. It is therefore not only a majority religion, but also an important sign of tradition and culture (often described as a 'folk church'). This role in society is an important factor when looking at the shape of the future Church of Norway. Last year the Church of Norway was separated from the State, an action which has led the church to re-evaluate its role in society. The Church of Norway has started a reflection process around the confessional heritage and Lutheran identity of the church, in order to be able to face new times. At the same time, an increasingly multicultural and multi-religious community also gives moral responsibility to the church regarding inter-religious and ecumenical relations, and demands flexibility when planning for the future. There have been some visits of Church of Norway leaders to Scotland and vice-versa and this is something useful and helpful.

## **Poland**

Although a small Church, the Evangelical Reformed Church in Poland tries to fulfil its service in preaching the Gospel in our modern times, which is a big challenge. The present crisis not only influences the economic stability of church members (individually and communally), but also has caused some psychological and spiritual tensions which have influenced the functioning of families. In this situation the Church tries to be active in two directions: the pastoral (exercising a classical pastoral ministry) and the diaconal. In the diaconal, the Church engages in 'humanitarian' actions, and cooperates with other evangelical churches. There is also the professional engagement, such as the OPiRO centre which is active at the Bęchatów congregation and gives help to families and persons with different kinds of psychological and social dysfunctions. The church also runs a Kindergarten in Zelów where 50 children receive a high standard fundamental education.

Being small means pastors must serve communities in different parts of Poland, often travelling hundreds of kilometres to visit the 'reformed diaspora'. One pastor acts as army chaplain in the 'general evangelical' army ministry, and there is an attempt to start a regular and formalised pastoral ministry in the regional (województki) hospital of Bełchatów. Being conscious of the need to exchange experiences, spiritual stimulation and practical support, the church tries to be active in interdenominational relationships in Poland as well as abroad. The church does not have a ministry among immigrants, but does support Chinese and Korean communities in Warsaw, whose evangelical congregations function under the formal 'patronage' and within the buildings of the church.

## **Portugal**

Portugal is experiencing a major economic crisis which has caused poverty, unemployment and emigration. This situation has also affected the Portuguese Evangelical Presbyterian Church (IEPP). Every congregation has lost significant numbers of young people who have been forced to go abroad to find work. While for some it is a wonderful opportunity, many find it traumatic to leave family and loved ones behind. Sometimes, because of their colour, they encounter racism in northern Europe, and struggle to find long-term skilled jobs. Most of the young people who leave Portugal have college degrees, so their departure is a terrible loss for the IEPP; the young people who could do most to help the church have to emigrate.

The IEPP members are ageing, and church income is decreasing. Pastors have been forced to reduce drastically their already small salaries. As a result, it is difficult to have enough people to do the work for the church. It needs Sunday school resources, liturgy resources, theological education, people to work with senior citizens, as well as youth and children's pastors.

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'We remember our roots: we share a common heritage, as IEPP was founded in the missionary work of Robert Reid Kalley, a brave Scottish doctor who brought the gospel into our country.' Today the IEPP can offer solidarity with the Church of Scotland with experience of living in a multicultural, multiracial society and with an ability to be creative and make an impact on society, even with few resources. The IEPP has two social solidarity foundations doing relevant social work recognised by Portuguese society. The IEPP has opportunities to host groups of up to 26 people to come to retreats in a small, sunny, seaside village; or to go to a farm where young people can join summer outdoor camps. The IEPP would welcome Scottish children or teenagers to join in these inter-cultural, bilingual camps.

## **Romania**

In the census of 2011, 90% of Romanians considered themselves Christian. The biggest church, which gets a huge amount of support from local and national government, is the Romanian Orthodox Church. The Reformed Church is based mainly in the north and is predominantly Hungarian speaking. Few had imagined that after the post 1989 changes that the social situation in Romania would deteriorate, but things have become worse. So many people have left the country looking for a better life that there are too few left paying into the state system to cover basic pensions and allowances. The Reformed Church has lost one third of its members since 1990, with many of the youngest and ablest people going to other countries for work or better opportunities. The Church is seeking to challenge secularisation and actively promote opportunities for young people, especially men, to get involved and also seeking to communicate the gospel message more broadly to society. Having regained some schools from state control, the Church sees opportunities to shape future generations of thinkers and teachers through education.

## Spain

The Spanish Protestant Church (IEE) is a united church, where social mission, ecumenism and theological training are the three big challenges. In the present economic context, the significant role of the church has become one of help and hospitality to those in need 'when many of the governmental instruments are failing'. The IEE is very much in a minority situation, faced with a very strong and powerful majority Catholic Church, and sees a key task as one of solidarity with other evangelical churches in pursuing theological education and training, as well as pressing for an open and committed ecumenism.

## Sweden

The Uniting Church in Sweden is the recently formed denomination made up of the Mission Covenant Church in Sweden (Reformed), the Methodist Church in Sweden, the Swedish Baptist Church and the Salvation Army. In creating a common structure, ministry and mission, one of its key influences came from the Church Without Walls process of the Church of Scotland. This new church has actively solicited input, experience and counsel from a wide network of sources. Recognising that without external input churches can turn in on themselves, there has been a deliberate effort to include examples and experiences from many different churches and movements in Europe and beyond.

**What is encouraging is that across denominations and countries there are people, and organisations, with committed leadership, who are reinterpreting and articulating the Christian message for our societies today.**

## Switzerland

The protestant Churches in Switzerland are experiencing both deterioration and renewal. Published in 2010 by the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches (FEPS), a religious sociological review of Swiss Protestantism concluded that in 20 years the churches would be 'smaller, older and poorer', and that major changes were urgently needed in structures, finances and communication to face the challenges and develop for the future. In the Protestant Church in Geneva Canton, the past twenty years has seen the number of ministers halved and it is being reduced again. However, the Rev Emmanuel Fuchs, Vice President of the Synod contends, 'our church is absolutely not dying; it is quite lively, full of ideas, energy and desire to share God's word. In our consistoire we have just debated and accepted a text called "Vision at the Horizon 2020", which tries to underline the church we want to be, having accepted the fact that we can no longer be everywhere. We will have to abandon some ministries, to group together parishes, to create more links between chaplaincies and local ministries, to create particular ministries for the city centre.' This is replicated across Switzerland where, with support from the central structures, congregations and cantons are not looking back to a golden age, but rather looking to how they can reinterpret their mission for today and tomorrow, redefining what they stand for and what kind of services and ministries the federal level should have in this time of mass communication and leisure society. The FEPS is using the focus of the Reformation Jubilee 2017 as a way to focus attention on this urgent task. The FEPS is also working with all the cantonal churches to consider whether it is appropriate to move away from being a Federation to being one Swiss Protestant Church.

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As we can note from this survey, the church in Europe today faces both challenges and opportunities. These include ecumenism; immigration; racism; poverty; economic systems, exclusion, mission and evangelism. Addressing why the church in Europe has experienced decline is also important. The long-term effects of the Enlightenment and the scientific revolution which followed, have resulted in a new intellectual environment and a new social culture in modern Europe. Almost every church is faced with finding its role in a changing world. It is too simplistic to characterise this as the churches seeking to fight secularisation. There is a rise in the influence of charismatic churches and other religions, as well as atheism and secular humanism. There is opportunity for the churches to join with other religions in the European context to explore further, and especially to reflect theologically on religion and pluralism. This area of the diversification of religion is worthy of further exploration by congregations engaged in twinings as well as between church agencies and within ecumenical instruments.

A number of churches are re-evaluating the nature of their relationship with the state. In recent years a wider interest has arisen in religious and cultural diversity as a social reality in Europe. However, the ways in which this diversity is framed and treated across different states has raised a number of questions that the Religare Project has reflected on.<sup>1</sup> Can the public sphere be simultaneously neutral and tolerant? Can new world views, social patterns and lifestyles be accommodated and/or incorporated in the public sphere? How respectful is the law of the private sphere? These are areas in which many churches and other faith traditions in Europe have views and experience, and which could be an area for further conversation and dialogue between the religions within the continent.

What is encouraging is that across denominations and countries there are people, and organisations, with committed leadership, who are reinterpreting and articulating the Christian message for our societies today. It is important that the different parts of the Body of Christ seek to walk together and work cooperatively for the up-building of the whole, as we share with our partners in Europe and beyond, the task of re-presenting the 'old world' with a faith which has the ability to meet modern needs and satisfy the modern intellect. This can link us with the Emmaus story, where many, like the disciples, are moving away from Jerusalem, feeling disappointed, and needing that same meeting with the incarnate Christ to reveal new ways to reinterpret the faith for life today.





**MAKE**

**POVERTY**

**HISTORY**

The  
GRILL  
ROOM

## Re-evaluating the economic order

One key issue for all the churches in Europe has been the economic situation. From Iceland to Greece, no country has been unaffected by it.

Professor Tim Jackson, in his introduction to a report for the UK government in 2009, noted: ‘Every society clings to a myth by which it lives. Ours is the myth of economic growth.’<sup>2</sup> The crisis goes to the heart of who we are as the Body of Christ seeking the greatest good and fullness of life for all people. In the 1990’s, Lesslie Newbiggin claimed that the ideology of the free market, ‘is not just a way of arranging economic affairs ... it is a form of idolatry ... and the churches have hardly begun to recognise that this is probably their most urgent missionary task during the coming century.’<sup>3</sup> The Church of Scotland’s Special Commission on the Purposes of Economic Activity (section 6) noted, ‘We believe this is a time of kairos – of crisis and opportunity – in the economic life of our country and a time when all who seek the common good must be prepared to speak out and to take action.’<sup>4</sup>

The economic crisis in Europe has been a call to the churches to open their eyes, not just to accept the dominant model, but to reinterpret the signs of the times. ‘We call for a change of heart – late, but hopefully not too late’, lamented Bishop Dr Wolfgang Huber in his introduction to the report on the financial crisis by the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD). Published in 2009, ‘Like a Wall, Cracked and Bulging’<sup>5</sup> emphasised that, ‘A social and sustainable market economy relies on firm moral foundations. To use the image from Isaiah, there must be an ethical foundation supporting the wall, and the mortar of trust to hold the bricks together. The essential foundation of the social market economy is responsible freedom’.

**The challenge for the churches in Europe is how to encourage, enable and support the movement for justice, both in Europe and with partners in countries beyond Europe. The positive for Europe must not be allowed to become a negative for others.**

Christian Aid has been pressing for an end to the secrecy in company ownership which enables anonymous companies to dodge tax, safe in the knowledge that even the police will find it very difficult to trace them. Christian Aid are now asking the churches to keep up the pressure on governments, MEPs and the EU, to ensure the creation of public registers which could reveal real owners of all European companies and trusts, and help tackle all forms of money laundering – including tax dodging.<sup>6</sup>

As the churches travel together in addressing and reinterpreting a Christian understanding of the purposes of economic activity, Rob van Drimmelen, General Secretary of the Association of World Council of Churches Related Development Organisations in Europe (APRODEV), emphasises that this call for justice in the economy is not a new one: 'The Sabbath and Jubilee year rules were radical but ... free market forces by themselves do not create economic justice. In the Bible ... just institutions and laws are to be set up to protect the poor, the vulnerable and Creation as a whole.'<sup>7</sup>

The challenge for the churches in Europe is how to encourage, enable and support the movement for justice, both in Europe and with partners in countries beyond Europe. The positive for Europe must not be allowed to become a negative for others; the churches can grasp the opportunity to seek and identify new ways to offer brighter futures for all.





## Caring for creation

Environmental threats transcend national boundaries. One of the main drivers of climate change and the loss of biodiversity has been the pursuit of unfettered economic growth.

The dominant economic model has treated the earth as a resource to be exploited and the huge economic growth of the past fifty years has been fuelled by oil, gas, and coal, which has led to climate change. Across the world, the churches are engaged in encouraging and modelling a more balanced use of creation's bounty.

Within Europe, the Conference of European Churches (CEC)<sup>8</sup> liaises with the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN)<sup>9</sup>, of which the Church of Scotland's 'Responding to Climate Change Project' is a member, to share information and experiences in environmental work among the churches and to encourage a united witness in caring for God's creation. Together they actively engage in advocacy towards the EU and the European Commission on climate change issues. Adrian Shaw, the Church of Scotland Climate Change Officer, attended a meeting on climate change between the churches and the European Commission in October 2013. Emphasising the importance and urgency of addressing climate change, Adrian highlighted that: 'Across Europe, eco-congregations and other green churches are growing in number, a movement that transcends denominations and demonstrates powerful unity of purpose; this ethical impetus can give governments the courage to act on climate change.'

The ECEN has also supported the Church of Scotland partnership with the Reformed Church in Hungary, which has resulted in the creation of Ökogyülekezet (Eco-Congregation Hungary) based on the model of Eco-Congregation Scotland,<sup>10</sup> which helps congregations to link environmental issues to their faith and take action in their church and local community.

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Dalbeattie Parish Church is twinned with Hajdunanas Congregation in Hungary. With a focus on the care for creation, the Rev Norman Hutcheson and members of the congregation travelled to Hajdunanas to promote the Eco-Congregation movement and forge friendships with this Hungarian Eco-Congregation. The local mayor took them to a small farm where those on benefit could work planting peppers, courgettes, tomatoes etc. and the money raised by the sale was additional income to their benefit. The mayor, an elder of the church, was keen to illustrate how he hoped the community would benefit from new developments in recreation and farming. This is not a wealthy community, but they have made creation care a priority. A lesson for all of us, said Mr Hutcheson, was the impact that church people can have on civil society. In April 2013, Dalbeattie welcomed the MP and mayor, Tibor Szollath, and a team from the community to discuss a civil twinning, and to explore micro hydro generation, wind farms, bio mass heating and other environmental considerations.

Highly involved in raising awareness of environmental issues since 2001, the Horní Krupá congregation in the Czech-Moravian Highlands, created the Living Water project by setting up an educational garden for children, a new summerhouse as a 'nature classroom', various education plots for growing herbs and vegetables, and an insect house. With support from the 2013 WMC Stamp Project they have expanded the project by restoring an old well and building a small lake to broaden the educational programme for children by providing 'hands on', interactive training on water cycles, water preservation and about the impact water features have on biodiversity. This has had an added impact of improving and developing relationships within the wider community who see the church at the cutting edge and making a tangible difference in the community.

A shared concern of eco issues can lead to twinning relationships being developed, as is evident in the relationship between St Andrews Church of Scotland in Brussels and Christ Congregation, Adentan, Ghana. After a recent visit, two young members of St Andrew's congregation, Catherine Tylke and Joëlle Permentiers, shared some of the reasoning behind why the two congregations were such a good match:

Working together on the ecological issue has brought the congregations closer together, whilst supporting and enthusing one another. The protection of the environment can become integrated into the life of St Andrew's and Christ Church – in Christian education, in worship, in awareness raising in the congregation at large, and in trying to have energy saving and less waste.





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## Political participation

War has played a significant part in the shaping of Europe over centuries, changing the contours and borders of, and within, the continent and giving people new national identities.

As we mark the centenary of the beginning of World War One, we can note, 'The history of warfare is inevitably Eurocentric because it was, after all, the Europeans who eventually conquered most of the world and the weapons and modes of warfare devised by European civilization still dominate the planet.'<sup>11</sup> As 2014 progresses there will be many markers of the Great War and its consequences. The Council will seek to share and cooperate with other European Churches in finding appropriate ways to mark this anniversary with sensitivity and grace, and use the opportunity to recommit ourselves to walking together and journeying together with others in Europe and beyond, so that Christian people and the churches may see ways to stand up for justice and freedom and not get drawn into ethnic or nationalistic conflicts.

In the 1950's, with both the Great War and World War II still strong in people's memory, the idea of a trading community to prevent conflict between France and Germany was born. The Church of Scotland's General Assembly has consistently encouraged interaction with this changing entity, now the European Union. Lesslie Newbigin's ideas of mission being a threefold enterprise: to individuals, to structures, and to ideologies, acts as a useful reminder of the nature of our engagement with the world. Martin Luther King, Jr., in his Letter from Birmingham Jail, wrote: 'Reinhold Niebuhr has reminded us, groups are more immoral than individuals. We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.' Just as Jesus reinterpreted the scriptures for the disciples, how do we reinterpret our structures and priorities to ensure they are always being directed to offer justice and fullness of

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life to all? Churches are institutions which must always be challenged, but churches and Christians must also challenge the political institutions which guide and govern our lives and seek to ensure they uphold the rights of the poor and oppressed.

The EKD (Evangelical Church in Germany) regards the European Union as an important instrument for striving to implement the values of peace, justice and care for creation. The world's future lies in God's hand; at the same time, the churches have the mission to help shape it in Christian discipleship. 'The future of a free, democratic and social Europe is worth our effort – not only as citizens of Europe, but also as Christian churches. Europe offers many opportunities for its citizens to enjoy a good future and, furthermore, to work worldwide for human rights, religious freedom, democracy and socially acceptable and environmentally sustainable forms of economics. Aware of the limits to financial and, in particular, natural resources we call, above all, for a stronger sense of solidarity – between the countries and peoples of Europe, but also with our neighbours, be they near or far.'

The Lisbon Treaty of the European Union specifically allows for an 'open, regular and transparent dialogue' between Europe's churches and the institutions of the EU.<sup>12</sup> A 'theology of insistence' is how one practitioner describes the work of the churches in dialogue with the political institutions, such as that of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) in engagement with the structures of the European Union. And it is work not only for the benefit of Europeans. The EU has huge trading influence all over the world, and the churches have a role to play in seeking to ensure the institutions do justice and practice fairness in dealing with those whose power in international negotiations is little and whose need is great. Europe's colonial history remains a pertinent factor in our changing world; as a period of global expansion breaks upon Africa, Asia and Latin America, Europe retains an influential role in globalisation through its governments, banks, trans-national corporations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The churches can have an influence on these big questions through their engagement with the political instruments.

The EU has significant impact on our lives, in everyday issues like weights and measures and the price of mobile phone calls, as well as on the big issues of European Integration, the EU Financial and Debt Crisis, and a common European Foreign policy. Wider than the EU, the European Court of Human Rights is also a key institution whose judgements affect us all. The questions of Scottish independence and EU membership, and use of the Euro, will be of real significance in 2014. There is also the distinct possibility that the UK Parliament may legislate for an in/out referendum on EU membership. These are significant issues for life in Scotland and the people of Scotland, as well as having an impact on relationships with the rest of Europe. The Church and Society Council is the General Assembly's body tasked with helping the church ask the right questions and address these important issues.

The Conference of European Churches (CEC) is one body that can, on our behalf, press the political institutions to keep the fact that they are working for the betterment of humanity, not just for themselves, corporations or governments, at the forefront of their deliberations. Václav Havel commented: 'Following the collapse of the bipolar division of the world, our civilisation has not yet found a new and better order. Nor will it, so long as the political technocrats so massively outnumber the dreamers.' The churches and faith communities must dream dreams and have visions which will help reinterpret methods and structures for the future, and keep the churches on the side of those whom Christ prioritised. 2014 is an election year for the European Parliament leading one faith based project, The Soul of Europe, to ask: 'Is there more to Europe than a market? What is the place of religion and culture in the Europe of the future?'



## Living our faith

The Church of Scotland is a member of Eurodiaconia, a network of churches and agencies in Europe committed to putting the love of Christ into practical action through care for the elderly, tackling drug and alcohol abuse, and medical and social intervention.

In 1947, in the middle of the worst winter of the century, a young Church of Scotland minister working as a military chaplain with British forces in Germany was approached by a man wearing a Luftwaffe jacket. Joseph Makovec, a former bomber pilot, told him about the plight of 80,000 nearby refugees, who were nearly frozen to death. Could the minister help? Douglas Lister went with him to see the refugees and was horrified by what he saw: babies wrapped in newspapers; the stench of boiling cabbage everywhere: the refugees had very little to eat. He knew he had to help these starving people.<sup>13</sup>

High Command refused permission on the grounds that it would be fraternisation with the enemy. Lister appealed: 'I consider it my duty to help those people in their need if I possibly can. I would be grateful if you could give me permission to do so.' He won the appeal. Letters were sent to Scotland asking for support to help the German refugees survive the winter hardship – all this only two years after a war in which many Scots had lost loved ones. The churches responded. Despite calling on a war-weary people to do what Jesus asked them to do: to love their enemies and do good to those who had hated them, and pray for those who had persecuted them, there was a well spring of support. Vast quantities of top quality food and clothes poured in.

As a result of the campaign, the lives of hundreds of so-called 'enemies' were saved. From this cooperation, the Inter-Church Refugee Service was born. It still exists today: we know it as Christian Aid. It is still the agent of the British

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and Irish Churches in offering that same practical help to those in need of relief from catastrophe or a helping hand in seeking to develop their livelihood and build a sustainable future or campaigning for political solutions. It is rooted in the conviction that costly reconciliation is at the heart of the gospel, and that comes from its very foundation.

One area of diaconal ministry which exercises many of the churches in Europe is with the Roma people who experience persecution and/or marginalisation all across the continent. In many cases they have historically lived in ghettos and been kept away from mainstream life. The Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren (ECCB) notes that there is an upswing of discrimination in Czech society, with groups seeking to provoke conflict with the Roma and misusing the fear within Czech society to stigmatise the Roma people. The Rev Eszter Dani, of the Reformed Church in Hungary (RCH), has pioneered work with Roma communities, having spent most of the past 20 years working closely with and amongst the Roma people – first in Munkács in Western Ukraine and later in Hungary. She found that it was more difficult for the Roma to get jobs and that too many were unemployed (around 90%), trapping them in a cycle of poverty where, without even the basics such as food, water, housing and health care, they ended up on the margins of society, both physically and socially. When there is no prospect of work, the youngsters see little point of going to school – so illiteracy levels are almost as high as the unemployment levels. Eszter worked with the community to develop leadership ability and capacity, start worship services, and provide holistic support offering social, medical, and theological input to the community.

In 2013, the Very Rev Lorna Hood visited a diaconal project in the village of Mera (40% of which is Roma) in the Cluj District of the Reformed Church in Romania. Starting from the local doctor, a Church member, noticing high levels of illiteracy in the Roma community and seeking to do something about it, it has developed into one of the most important diaconal outreach projects in the area. The Roma children, mainly Christian, 'even if they do not much attend church', participate in an after school club (which they can attend ONLY if they have gone to school that morning) where they

get a hot lunch (a key element in attracting them, and helpful with their concentration levels) and stay for lessons which reinforce the learning in school. With support from a Presbyterian Church in Ireland mission worker, nearly all children in the village now complete at least 8 years of schooling, a major improvement, with many also now finishing High School. One additional element is that the programme seeks to offer work opportunities to Roma people, which has helped significantly with trust, as well as developing more individual and community respect. Bishop Csury, of the Oradea District of the Reformed Church in Romania, commented that 'the Diaconal work of the church experienced a revival after the changes and is now the most dynamic area of church work.'

Human trafficking is a major concern of all the churches in Europe. The Churches Commission on Migrants in Europe (CCME),<sup>14</sup> Eurodiaconia and the Conference of European Churches (CEC)<sup>15</sup> engage in advocacy towards the European Union as well as helping member churches understand the issues more clearly and develop strategies to get usefully involved. In late 2013, in a case brought by CEC, the European Court of Human Rights criticised the Dutch Government for not respecting the Human Rights Charter on migrant issues, which is now part of the legal texts of the EU. One area in which CCME has expressed a hope for further work is on how the European Union, as an actor in foreign policy, international cooperation, economic development or trade, is contributing to demand being created for trafficked persons. For example, does agricultural policy support a price regime for exports which is built around exploitation? Does competition policy undermine efforts in public procurement policy to favour those offers which guarantee fair working conditions? CCME suggests that analysis of the demand for the services of trafficked persons is best undertaken in the context of a wider analysis of certain types of labour or services in which trafficked persons could be exploited<sup>16</sup>. The challenge to the Churches in Europe is to be advocates for more just systems and for a living wage.

Walking together and cooperating with others is essential. Last year we reported on the abolitionist movement which had

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inspired David Livingstone; today slavery remains a horror for many people around the world. Anti-slavery International reports that children and adults are being trafficked across Europe, forced to beg in towns and cities and to commit crimes such as pickpocketing, ATM theft, metal theft and cannabis cultivation.<sup>17</sup> Despite international laws, many of the individuals are prosecuted, convicted and imprisoned for crimes they have been forced to commit, while their traffickers enjoy impunity.

The Church of Scotland resource, 'To be silent is to be unfaithful,' highlighted the story of Eftim, a 30 year old man who came to Scotland legally from Bulgaria, having paid £2,000 for what he thought would be a well-paid job. The reality was very different. Employed in fruit picking, he worked from early morning until late evening. By lunchtime everyone was worn out with legs, arms and backs hurting. He reported: 'The supervisors shouted at us, swore at us ... did not call us by our names, we were called by numbers. They treated us like slaves. We were paid in envelopes; we had a lot of deductions ... so we had nearly nothing left. But we did not have a choice as we did not have our passport and very little language knowledge. I felt so miserable. My dreams did not come true. I was imagining it differently'.<sup>18</sup>

Can congregations, denominations and ecumenical agencies make links between the 'sending' and 'receiving countries'? There are few structures that make the link between countries from where humans are trafficked to countries to which humans are trafficked. Would it be possible, as churches, to build a support structure for trafficked people across the sending and receiving countries and to be in communication with each other? Some years ago the Evangelical Church in Germany and the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren developed a common text on cross-border prostitution which led to cooperation of these churches in targeting this issue. Could congregations and denominations in different parts of the world consider how they might build and develop cooperation in supporting those trafficked as well as looking at how to combat trafficking?<sup>19</sup>

The Churches should be trailblazers for justice for women, but have often been repositories of violence and discrimination. 'Living a theology which counters violence against women' is a report from the Violence Against Women Advisory Group, and

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appears in this year's report of the Church and Society Council as a follow up to the 2012 General Assembly instruction to all parts of the church to address issues of violence against women. As the Church and Society report notes, the World Council of Churches and the World Communion of Reformed Churches have named violence against women as sin and encouraged members, in partnership with others, to address its causes and consequences. The WCRC has produced 'Created in God's Image',<sup>20</sup> which the Violence Against Women Advisory Group commends as a valuable resource for study, worship and action on gender justice. Christian Aid is also engaged in this and is already active with its partners internationally. The WM Stamp Project this year is supporting a project of the Greek Evangelical Church, Dorcas, which is a safe house for abused woman in northern Greece, near Thessaloniki.

The Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women (EFECW)<sup>21</sup> has also asked the churches to open their eyes to the realities and to live up to their promises made in the Charta Oecumenica in 2001, when the CEC member churches and the Catholic Bishops Conference in Europe agreed, 'to strengthen the position and equal rights of women in all areas of life, and to foster partnership in church and society between women and men'.<sup>22</sup> EFECW is planning a three week 'Pop-up Monastery' in Kloster Mariensee, near Hannover, in August 2015 to give women of all ages and denominations, from any part of Europe, an opportunity to share in an intergenerational exchange and mutual learning; to take time for a personal spiritual retreat in an intercultural environment; and to contribute to the spiritual development of the Forum. The Council encourages women to consider getting involved in the Forum and the Pop-up Monastery.

HIV is still a major health risk in Europe, with approximately 1 million people in Western and Central Europe living with HIV. The rates of new infection are highest within Eastern Europe and challenges remain in encouraging those most at risk to present for testing at an early stage of infection. While the Church of Scotland HIV Programme does not currently partner any specific European projects, it is a member of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance,<sup>23</sup> based in Geneva, whose, 'Live the

Promise' campaign 'holds individuals, religious leaders, faith organisations, governments and intergovernmental organisations accountable for the commitments they have made, and advocates for further efforts and resources to respond to HIV.'

Churches are at the heart of offering care, concern and practical help all across Europe. In the diaconal centre in Beregszász, Carpathian Ukraine, the Reformed Church has a social ministry, with a bakery providing hundreds of loaves each day, and a soup kitchen which prepares over 100 meals per day for people who otherwise would have nothing to eat. In addition, it provides 140 school meals, runs a clothing store, and last Christmas delivered 3,700 parcels to the needy. All this comes from a people who themselves have very little. They also run a home for the elderly which is now of a high local standard. 'The purpose of the church is to preach and teach ... You can't preach without living the gospel through diaconia,' Bishop Sándor Zán Fábíán of the Reformed Church in Transcarpathian Ukraine told Very Rev David Arnott on a Moderatorial visit in 2012. Mr Arnott noted that, 'We have much to learn about what it means to be the Church. With Kiev 600 miles away, this church is the welfare arm and the social care for the community as the state is notable in its absence.'

St Columba's Church of Scotland in Budapest partners the Reformed Church in Hungary (RCH) Refugee Mission in providing, 'assistance, comfort and fellowship to anyone in need regardless of nationality, race, religion or social position'. It is also actively seeking to 'welcome the stranger' as a brother or sister. This is an important task in a country which has had, and continues to have, trouble with racist and nationalist gangs attacking incomers. There is much prejudice within Hungarian society, and sometimes the church also, against those from outside. The Refugee Mission helps with material needs, as well as with spiritual and psycho-social needs, and welcomes people into a supportive community. St Columba's Church finds that, with their English language worship, it can be easier for refugees to be part of their community; one man even travels three hours by train from Debrecen to join worship each Sunday. As part of the congregation's wider ministry, members take turns to cook a warm lunch every Sunday for all who want to stay and share fellowship.



## Reinterpreting belonging in the 21st century

Professor Andrew Walls has highlighted that from the 1500's there was a huge migration out of Europe to the world beyond which 'produced' the Americas, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa – with Russia expanding across Asia and a significant number of people from Africa taken away, often by Europeans, to the Americas for slavery.<sup>24</sup> Added to that were many minor migrations, all of which played their part in setting up the world order and the Christian traditions that we are familiar with in the west – establishing not only nations but trade 'worlds' too – maritime and land empires.

The great European migration came to an end in the mid-20th century – the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 being about its last burgeoning. The movement of people continued, but in different directions. People from outside Europe began to move to Europe and to the 'new world' that Europe had created, and United Nations predictions for the future indicate that this movement is unlikely to change for some time. Europe is ageing so quickly that it has been estimated that the European Union will need thirty-five million immigrants by 2025 if the levels of the active work-force is to be maintained. They may be considered as 'non' or 'new' citizens of their adopted countries but Europe's cities have become a dazzling constellation of global cultures.

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Many world Christians contrast what they see as Europe's material wealth with their perception of its spiritual poverty. Andrew Walls is convinced that: 'Europe needs more than revival, we are past revival. Europe needs re-evangelisation.'<sup>25</sup> Professor Walls believes that the only hope for the future is the great oikumene, the whole inhabited earth, and how we relate to and live with each other, as Christians in the Body of Christ, as well as with people of other religious beliefs. Can we, like the risen Christ, reinterpret the faith for life in the 21st Century? Can we recapture the Ephesian spirit of the bicultural element of faith where Judaic-type Christians lived in tension with the 'incomers', those who did not adhere to the old Judaic laws, but all held together as one Church? Can African, Indian, American, European Christians (whether Catholic, Pentecostal, Reformed, Orthodox or whatever) live together, witness together, united in Christ, able to embrace completely different lifestyles, understandings, languages? And how also do we do this with those from other faiths and traditions? He contends that we are living through an early church experience in Europe (and the wider world) today and can use these historic experiences as ways to help us find a way through, and exhibit and exemplify Christian love and fellowship with all people of any faith.

The Protestant Academies in Germany are places where a wide range of social-political topics (environmental issues, science, medicine, art, media, psychology, philosophy, theology) are explored.<sup>26</sup> One activity which could be productive for the future might be academy-type events where Scottish people could meet with those from other parts of Europe to discuss and debate important and current issues faced by church and society within the continent.

While there has been a faster recession of Christian faith in Europe than ever seen before, simultaneously there has been as big an accession to the Christian faith worldwide as ever happened in history. The cultural and demographic centre of Christianity has moved to the non-western world. The decline seen in Europe would have been even greater but for the 'reverse migration' of the 20th century which has brought people of many religions, including many Christians, from the rest of the world into Europe. Many of the churches in Europe have been active in sharing their calling within their society and reaching out to preach and teach and live as Christ calls. Many today are concerned with how many people are counted as members of a church. Others suggest it is not simply about numbers, but about those whose eyes are open, whose hearts are ablaze and who are willing, like Christ, to reinterpret the faith and to challenge the world in which we live. Europe is still a religious continent; the contours of its faith are not so much being withdrawn as being redrawn. Europe's cities are increasingly pluralist with new forms of Christianity and other world faiths strengthened through new immigrants.





## Scots and Europe over the centuries

Scots too have long been migrants; Scottish travellers and adventurers were to be found in all parts of Europe, as soldiers of fortune, traders, refugees, diplomats, and more.

Some of the congregations of the present day Church of Scotland Presbytery of Europe<sup>27</sup> were set up to provide worship for migrants; for refugees in, for example, Amsterdam and Rotterdam; for those seeking to eke out their pension or to attend boarding school, for example, in Lausanne; for those seeking to evangelise such as the great mission station of the Committee on the Conversion of the Jews in Budapest (well known for the ministry of Jane Haining); for those going out to support the Huguenots in France; or those committed to the movement for protestant evangelism in Italy in the late 1800's in Rome, Florence, Genoa, and supporting the Waldensians all over Italy; at its peak a century ago, the Scottish Waldensian Society was one of the biggest supporters of Waldensian ministry and mission, and still exists today. The Church of Scotland congregations in mainland Europe today face the same challenges as their neighbours, and are looking at new ways of sharing and witnessing. Some of the congregations are also members of another Protestant church.

The Church of Scotland congregations in other parts of Europe are increasingly made up of people from Africa or Asia seeking to worship in English, and these migrant peoples are a major and revitalising presence in some of the congregations. In Amsterdam, the English Reformed Church had, in its most recent survey, 40 nationalities represented, with eight different countries (Ghana, US, Scotland, England, Netherlands, Italy, Canada, Germany) represented on the Consistory (Kirk Session). Rotterdam also has forty nationalities in the congregation with 50% of the elders and up to 40% of the congregation from Africa.

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It is estimated that 75% of Europe's population now live in urban areas. Many in these cities have come to find work, or as refugees, from countries, and churches, outside Europe. In Rotterdam, members of the Scots International Church reinterpreted their mission to answer the need they saw around them; they developed ministries which have now grown into their own agencies and are independent of their parent, but they continue to support those coming into a new country. SKIN-Rotterdam is an umbrella group for new (and old) migrant Christian communities. Mamre started as a church project offering a warm meal and safe space; this was as a result of professional bodies highlighting that they had no time to listen to the stories of refugees, but that the refugees needed a place to share their stories and feel welcome and involved. It continues to flourish as a volunteer project, with people from other churches or no church, giving safe space to uprooted and homeless people. On Wednesdays, at least fifty people gather to eat and greet one another.

In Malta, nearly every month, boats with refugees are rescued from the waters having made a perilous journey from North Africa, often in direct fear of their lives. The St Andrew's Scots Congregation in Malta<sup>28</sup> is ministering to those, like Paul, who have been washed up on the shores of the island. Reinterpreting its role in Malta, the congregation created the 'Out of Africa into Malta' project which offers to walk together with those refugees seeking to reshape their broken lives, and who, on arrival in Malta, face detention, living in 'open centres' (branded by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as breaching basic human rights), and rejection by many of the island's population. Out of Africa into Malta has been adopted by the Guild as one of its current projects, to raise awareness and funds.

Many migrants are keen to get a job, move out of the open centres and make a life for themselves. St Andrew's Church has offered support through English classes at Marsa Open Centre, and supporting local initiatives to create a jobs bank to bring together employers and migrants to find suitable work. Malta Microfinance (MM) helps refugees invest in their

own future. Launched in November 2013 in the presence of the President of Malta, this project breaks new ground in refugee and mission work. Many male immigrants already have trades: electricians, plumbers, mechanics, plasterers, etc.; by reacquiring the tools to match their skills, Malta Microfinance will help families to enhance their quality of life through small loans which regular banks will not consider due to issues of credit-worthiness. The reclaimed and redeveloped church crypt will serve as the MM office, and will house the Asulon Centre for refugees, run in partnership with the International Association for Refugees.<sup>29</sup>

Church of Scotland congregations across Europe are reporting increasing numbers of people living on the streets, finding it increasingly difficult to feed themselves or heat their homes. The efforts which they make to respond to such needs is a key part of their Christian witness, such as a hot meal in an ecumenical centre in Fuengirola, or sharing the leftovers from church lunches with those living on the streets in Paris, or running a food bank in Brussels, or a second hand shop in Lisbon. Walking together, showing solidarity, engaging with and welcoming the stranger, as well as reinterpreting our calling for the new era, is essential for us all.





## Faithshare: twinnings and visits

The centre of gravity for Christianity in the world has changed, and the challenge is to find new ways – and maybe structures – to enable and encourage sharing of faith as a two way process.

‘From the west to the rest’ is no longer realistic; it is a much more fluid reality and process today. How do we encourage and enhance that sharing and journeying together? How do we feel the breath of fresh air, the reinterpretation of the gospel, from other churches and be enabled to ‘receive as well as to give’? This is a key part of the work of the World Mission Council as it seeks to support and encourage congregations looking to twin with a congregation beyond Scotland.

The congregation of Orlova, in the industrial belt in the eastern Czech Republic, is twinned with St Ninians, Dunfermline. Over the past 10 years they have been travelling back and forward every two years. On their most recent exchange visit, in Orlova, they decided on something ‘a wee bit different. To the accompaniment of thunderstorms and rain, a mini Highland Games took place, with a Scottish Food Tasting Stall serving haggis, stovies, cranachan, trifle, cheddar cheese, oatcakes, and Irn Bru, which all went down a treat. Six Scottish Country dancers and an accordionist demonstrated and taught Scottish country dances. Moravian country dancers did the same, creating a balance and sense of shared culture.’ Another opportunity in the Czech Republic is for Scottish youth to go to the annual Summer Camp of the ECCB and mix with young people from all over Czech as well as from other countries.

Dumfries and Kirkcudbright Presbytery is twinned with Debrecen in Hungary. The Hungarian group came to Scotland and, as well as staying with and sharing in congregational life, went to Whithorn and celebrated communion at the site of the cell of St Ninian. Beside a cave that has seen 1500 years of pilgrimage, the sisters and brothers from Hungary and

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Scotland experienced a quiet moment of worship to the accompaniment of the waves crashing in on the shore. All felt a special moment had been shared. There was also a Covenanter Service held at Dalry, introducing one of the least attractive parts of our history, as people of good faith were hunted down for their reformed convictions. This open air event in the grounds of Earlstoun Castle was widely supported by the wider community, who came to meet the Hungarian visitors and share in the open air act of worship. Another opportunity for youth to come together in a 'value-based community which points to God' in Hungary is the youth festival, Starpoint (Csillagpont). Meeting every two years, the festival preparatory work is open for anyone. The RCH leadership sees the journey towards the festival as being as important as the festival itself. Everyone can offer something to enrich the festival. Scottish youth have previously attended and are welcome in the future.

The Edinburgh-Munich Partnership has been active for over 30 years. Every two years Christians from Edinburgh and Munich take turns visiting each other, valuing the opportunity to learn from one another as they spend time together exploring a theme. Edinburgh will host the visit in 2014 under the heading: 'Who is my neighbour?' The visit offers an opportunity to learn about the Church's work in local communities by visiting projects, reflecting on the experience, eating and celebrating together.

Since 2001, when it was recognised that those living in some of the poorest parishes of Scotland rarely connected with the world church, while facing very similar issues to some of our partners overseas, the Council has been working with Priority Areas in the 'Together for a Change' Project (TFAC). This has enabled congregations, with their communities around them, to make links with communities in other parts of the world in a series of focused visits. The encounters and the learning gained from these have been transformative for the communities involved, both in Scotland and in the Gambia, Malawi, Kenya and Zambia. In 2013, a new link was set up between the communities of Cranhill and St Andrew's East in Glasgow and the Women's Orthodox Society in East Jerusalem. Still in the early stages, it is hoped that this friendship will strengthen and allow opportunity for understanding of life in a very different situation.

Last year, the Priority Areas Committee hosted a visit of 9 people from the Evangelical Church of Westphalia, situated in Germany's Ruhr valley, with many of the same problems facing Scotland's post-industrial communities, including poor health and high levels of unemployment. The group visited a number of priority areas as well as taking part in a meeting of the Poverty Truth Commission. Of particular importance was the direct involvement of people struggling against poverty. The Council, working within the 'Together for a Change' ethos, will engage with the Priority Areas Team to seek a European link. The Council welcomes the new Priority Areas Action Plan and looks forward to supporting its implementation and delivery.

In Stromness, the Rev Magdaléna Trgalová is serving the Church of Scotland congregation on a secondment from the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren. Coming from the reformed tradition, she sought an opportunity to share the life of a sister church and offer her family an intercultural experience. Stromness Parish welcomed her and there is mutual benefit and enjoyment from the ministry that Magdaléna is able to exercise in Orkney; something similar and different from that which she shared in her own land-locked homeland. The Council has been grateful for the support of the Ministries Council and looks forward to future collaboration.

Churches in different parts of Europe have found themselves changed through the mass movement of people through the open borders policies within the European Union. Scotland has a special role to model welcoming the migrant into our midst as we were welcomed in so many countries around the world when we left these shores either forcibly or voluntarily. Our eyes can be open and our hearts welcoming to those coming amongst us. As Christians we understand that we are interdependent; as a society we know we need those from other parts of the world to play their part in our country's social and economic life.



## Ecumenical influences

The Continent of Europe has played a significant role in the development of the Ecumenical Movement and not just the dry, historical story of ecumenical structures and events, but also in providing the energy that drove the Movement forward in the 20th century.

Exchange visits between Britain, including Scotland, and Germany at the end of the first decade of the century led to the formation of Associated Councils and, in 1914, the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches, which stretched across the Atlantic. Against the odds, the Alliance survived and was in a position to be involved in reconstruction work as the First World War drew to a close.

The nascent WCC was able to withstand the rigours of World War Two, once again on the strength of the personal relationships that had been built up, even as tensions gathered across the Continent, between people like the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Bell, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Karl Barth and others. Because of work already done, the churches were in a very good place to maintain an ecumenical witness during the war years and to pick up the task of building the peace after it. The formation of the World Council of Churches in 1948 in Amsterdam bears testimony to this.

When the Continent divided in the seemingly unbreakable grip of the Cold War, once again the churches in Europe bore witness to their oneness in Christ through the Conference of European Churches, which began as a simple, annual conference in 1959 and very quickly became a fellowship of 125 churches. And if the former German Democratic Republic delegates were not given visas, as was the case in 1964, then a boat floating on the Baltic Sea in the neutral waters

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between Denmark and Sweden provided the perfect location for the meeting. It was not then surprising that the summer before the Berlin Wall came down, the churches of Europe gathered in Basel, the city that straddles three countries, for the First European Ecumenical Assembly. The times were changing and the churches were instrumental in that change. And after the wall was down and the Communist bloc was dismantled, in a matter of years, Christian people from across Europe gathered for the Second Ecumenical Assembly, in Graz, Austria, to celebrate their oneness in Christ and the new freedom they had hoped and strived for.

These movements are part of a wider, global ecumenical movement but Europe's contribution to that global movement has been immense and can continue to be so, if we can recover something of the driving force that has been the inner story of the Ecumenical Movement from the beginning. The Church of Scotland, as a church in and of Europe, is connected to many other churches across Europe through strong and positive relationships of mutual involvement and sharing. It is not only a bilateral engagement of church to church, but there is also a complex web of relations between the European Churches and churches in other parts of the world. The Church of Scotland plays its part in this interconnected web. World Mission is responsible for relationships with other churches and, through the Committee on Ecumenical Relations, the Church of Scotland is an active participant in the international ecumenical instruments working in Europe: the World Communion of Reformed Churches Europe Council (Reformed family), the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (Reformed, Lutheran, United and Methodist) and the Conference of European Churches (Orthodox, Anglican, Baptist, Protestant, etc.). The Council and the Committee work hard to ensure that the Church of Scotland contributes fully within all these spheres to maintain the positive engagement for which the Church is internationally well regarded.



## Playing our part – a message for the Church in Scotland today

### The World Mission Council supports congregations and Presbyteries to be in the vanguard of involvement with the world church.

It is through our engagement and involvement with our partners that we are able to share the realities of everyday life with those with whom we are in relationship around the world. We encourage all in the Church to share the journey of faith with the church around the world, to walk the road together, to welcome and engage with visitors, to develop relationships, to become friends, and share the good news in each other's lives and communities, learning with and from one another, and finding Christ within that shared fellowship.

A key focus of the World Mission Council is to encourage individuals, congregations, presbyteries and church organisations in Scotland to journey together with those from other countries. There are opportunities to be a mission partner and go for a longer period to walk alongside our partners. There are also short term possibilities through the Professional Volunteer Programme, run in collaboration with Challenges Worldwide, which has so far led to a number of volunteers taking up placements. Twinning with a congregation is also an opportunity, if also sometimes a challenge, as we learn to walk alongside those from a different part of the world. The WMC wants to see more Church of Scotland people take up the challenge to walk with our partners. Just as on the road to Emmaus, as we walk together and share the good news in each other's lives and communities, and learn with and from one another, so we will find Christ within our shared fellowship.

Wherever we find ourselves; whatever language we speak; whatever accent we have; whatever our ethnicity or wealth or physical or mental aptitude; we are God's people, called to love and serve God, which we do when we walk together; when we open our eyes to the world around us; when our arms are as wide as Christ's on the cross; when our hearts are as large as Christ's in concern for others; when our voices speak Christ's words and our hands do Christ's deeds.

# Get involved with the Church in Europe

## Pray/Worship

- Allocate one Sunday this year to focus on an aspect of the church in Europe, using the WMC service materials (see website for information)
- Explore the background of, and sing hymns from other European countries
- Learn the Lord's Prayer in another European language (see website for information)

## Read

- **The Luneburg Story**  
by Douglas Lister
- **The Waldensians**  
by Giorgio Tourn
- **An Alliance across the Alps**  
by RD Kernohan
- **Mission Implausible**  
by Duncan MacLaren
- **Religion in Modern Europe**  
by Grace Davie
- **To Romania with Love**  
by Tessa Dunlop
- **Along The Enchanted Way**  
by William Blacker

## Support

- Collect used stamps for the Church of Scotland Stamp Project
- Support the Guild's project 'Out of Africa into Malta'
- Support the Church and Society's work on anti-trafficking

## Meet

- Invite WMC members or partner church members to visit your congregation to share their experiences
- Reach out to migrants living in your community
- Spend your ministerial student summer placement or study leave with a partner church
- Visit a congregation in the Presbytery of Europe when travelling ([www.europepresbytery.net](http://www.europepresbytery.net))
- Noting the anniversary of the beginning of WWI, seek a link with a European congregation to learn more about the impact of the war on families, villages, towns and the church
- Get involved in the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women's 'Pop-up Monastery' in August 2015 ([www.efecw.net](http://www.efecw.net))

## Learn

- Invite congregations to pick a European country and learn about it, exploring culture, religion and history
- Explore the possibility of developing a twinning relationship with a congregation/community in Europe
- Hold a Europe night with food and activities (see website for information)
- Host a forum to engage in debate and discussion about issues which affect all Europeans, and invite people from other European countries to participate

## Write

- A modern version of one of Paul's letters to a European Church, or to your own congregation (see website for information)
- Send a Christmas card to one of our partner projects

## Watch

- **Dark Blue World**
- **Babette's Feast**
- **War Horse**



HOLZBAU  
WOOD CONSTRUCTION

| NOVEMBER | NOVEMBRE | NOVEMBER 2013 | NOVEMBRE | NOVEMBER |
|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|
| 44       |          |               | 2        | 3        |
| 45       | 4        |               | 9        | 10       |
| 46       | 11       |               | 16       | 17       |
| 47       | 18       |               | 23       | 24       |
| 48       | 25       |               |          |          |

FLOORBOOR  
FLOORING

| DECEMBER | DICEMBRE |  |    |  |
|----------|----------|--|----|--|
| 48       |          |  | 15 |  |
| 49       | 2        |  | 22 |  |
| 50       | 9        |  | 29 |  |
| 51       | 16       |  |    |  |
| 52       | 23       |  |    |  |



## Endnotes

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