

**COMMITTEE ON ECUMENICAL RELATIONS**  
**May 2009**

**PROPOSED DELIVERANCE**

**The General Assembly:**

1. Receive the Report.
2. Pass an Act amending Act II 1984 anent Presbytery Visits to Congregations (as amended), as set out in Appendix II to the Report.
3. Adopt the protocols in relation to the Covenant with the United Free Church (Appendix III).
4. Welcome the report of the Conversation with the Free Church of Scotland (Appendix IV).
5. Approve the delegates to Assemblies, Synods and Conferences of other Churches as detailed in Appendix V.
6. Approve the appointments to ecumenical bodies as detailed in Appendix VI.
7. Approve the contributions to ecumenical bodies as detailed in Appendix VII.

**REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

**1.1** *We believe that it is time to think of the total church life in Scotland in terms of a woven fabric, a cloth for the cradle, a robe for the king. We believe that the woven fabric is best envisioned, for us, in terms of tartan. As we know, tartan has one or two basic colours through which strands of other colours are woven, giving the tartan its unique individuality. We aspire to such an understanding of Scottish Church life where each colour, large and small, has its importance in the final design.*

**1.2** With these words the Ecumenical Policy, approved by the General Assembly in 2004, drew to its conclusion. The policy clearly stated that the model of ecumenism adopted by the Church of Scotland was not one of a melting pot, but of churches together. It set out a model in which the churches hold out to each other what is important to them, in the expectation that this will be respected. The churches commit themselves to one another in such a way that authority remains with the churches and is expressed differently by the churches. The churches take responsibility for the agenda. (Para 8.2)

**1.3 The policy set out what is required of us as the Church of Scotland in five distinct areas:**

- (a) **Commitment to supporting and resourcing UK and International ecumenical structures** through financial contributions, participation in conferences, councils and assemblies, appointment of delegates and a commitment to rationalising the European and International ecumenical bodies.
- (b) **Commitment to and resourcing of Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS)** through what was then called the Scottish Churches' Forum (now the ACTS Members' Meeting), participation in the ACTS Networks and, when instructed by the General Assembly, through bilateral or multilateral discussions and agreements with other denominations, thus maximising the use of resources and strengthening our capacity to provide the "ordinances of religion" across the whole of Scotland.
- (c) **Commitment to and support of local ecumenism** through Presbyteries, parishes and chaplaincies supported by a network of Presbytery ecumenical contacts.

- (d) **Commitment to and support of the National Sponsoring Body for Local Ecumenical Partnerships and its Advisory Groups** as the channel through which to address matters of legislation, practice and procedure which can make such partnerships difficult.
- (e) **Commitment to ecumenism within the revised central structures of the Church of Scotland** through the role of the Ecumenical Officer and the composition of the Ecumenical Relations Committee and how each relates to the Councils of the Assembly.

1.4 The policy is due to be reviewed in 2010. In preparation, the Committee this year has taken a look at the current climate affecting ecumenical engagement.

## 2. Ecumenical Climate

2.1 In 2006, in Porto Alegre, the member churches of the World Council of Churches committed themselves to a deepening and a broadening of the Ecumenical Movement. There was to be a deepening of the commitment of the churches to work together in addressing both the needs of the world and the doctrinal issues which continue to divide the churches. By broadening the movement, more churches would be involved, particularly from the Evangelical and Pentecostal backgrounds.

2.2 These commitments were given against a changing background. The traditional faith and order agenda, through which churches address their differences either through bilateral or multilateral dialogue, continues as a specialist area. It is seen by many to have little relevance to the day-to-day life of churches in local communities. On the other hand, an increasing amount of the joint action of the churches is being done through new, light-structured organisations that can respond quickly in a focused and targeted way. There has been a blossoming of organisations *eg* ACT International which allows Christian aid agencies to co-ordinate their work, thus avoiding unnecessary duplication when responding to emergencies. ACT Development has evolved to do a similar task in the area of longer term development work, ensuring the place of the Christian voice in addressing the needs of the world's poorest communities. The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance has been co-ordinating the voice of the churches against injustice in the areas of HIV/AIDS and trade justice. In the next years the focus on trade justice will change to the global food crisis.

2.3 The broadening of the Ecumenical Movement to include Evangelical and Pentecostal churches has led to the formation of the Global Christian Forum which also includes the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox churches and the World Confessional bodies *e.g.* the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. The Forum had its first global meeting in Nairobi in 2007 and a second one is planned for 2011. At the moment, a series of regional meetings are being held in different parts of the world. One of the keynote speakers at the Nairobi Forum described the context in which the Forum had arisen:

*“the old 'mainstream' ecumenical paradigm is dying and nothing less than a re-birth of ecumenism is needed to embrace the challenges of the new faces, the different worldviews and the new voices of non-Western Christianity. Those wishing to create a new space for Christian unity need to undergo a process of conversion and all of us from the North, the South, the East and the West need to die to old assumptions regarding each other.”*

2.4 The World Council of Churches is part of the Global Christian Forum. Within the Ecumenical Movement the World Council of Churches remains a privileged instrument because of its expertise and leadership in global ecumenism. In the Global Christian Forum it

works alongside the World Evangelical Alliance, the Pentecostal World Fellowship and churches and organizations belonging to the Charismatic, Evangelical, Holiness and Pentecostal movements. The emphasis of the Forum is on sharing faith journeys, getting to know one another and to building up trust. It has not attempted to face contentious issues on which it is known that the churches divide.

**2.5** This reconfiguration of the Ecumenical Movement has implications for the World Council of Churches as it makes adjustments in the way it works. There are financial implications too as member churches from the global north, already facing financial constraints, reconfigure the distribution of their contributions to the ecumenical bodies.

**2.6** Another part of the reconfiguration process relates to a change in attitude to the purpose of the Ecumenical Movement. While there is still emphasis on the goal of Christian unity, more energy is being put into strengthening the distinctive denominational voices.

*“Only a minority of Christian communities would openly question or resist the call to greater fellowship. On the other hand, we see an increase of denominationalism in all parts of the world and the tendency among churches to affirm particular identities and to strengthen their institutional profile. In most churches ecumenism no longer seems to have the quality of a vision which mobilises people to transcend inherited traditions and to engage in acts of renewal.” (Konrad Raiser, Reformed World, Vol 55, No 2, June 2005 Geneva p 77)*

**2.7** All this feeds into the shift of emphasis that is inherent in the “Churches Together” model that is the basis of the Ecumenical Policy.

**2.8** Another change that is affecting the ecumenical movement as we have known it over the past 60 to a 100 years is the growth of the “fresh expressions” or “emerging church” movement. New initiatives are being taken which are given a freedom from the accepted denominational structures to find new ways of being the church which engages with today’s generation who know little or nothing about the church. Denominational identity is less important and freedom to pick and mix from the Christian tradition opens up new ways of doing things. Only time will tell what long-term effect the emerging church movement will have on the overall shape of the church of the future. What is clear is that it cannot be ignored and it presents challenges both to mainstream denominations and to the ecumenical bodies as they have developed in the past century.

**2.9** This complex and shifting picture in which church and ecumenical life as we have known it appear fragile and vulnerable, presents challenges to our ecumenical policy which will need to be taken up in the review next year. At the same time, the current model does give a strong sense that we are travelling along a path with others, seeking the best way to be faithful to our calling as followers of Jesus Christ. The commitment to work together, to cross the boundaries of our historical divisions and to make visible the unity we have in Christ continues to inspire and energise conversations between churches, to lead to the signing of covenants at local level and to many aspects of joint work which are reported on more fully by the several Councils of the Assembly.

**2.10** The next section of this report gives an overview of how the policy is working in relation to the ecumenical organisations to which we belong – the World Council of Churches, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Conference of European Churches, the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and Action of Churches Together in Scotland.

### **3. Supporting and Resourcing UK and International Ecumenical Structures**

#### **3.1 The World Council of Churches (WCC) ([www.oikoumene.org](http://www.oikoumene.org))**

Much has already been said about the changing global context and the place of the WCC within it. This will have implications for the way in which we engage with ecumenical work at global level. While continuing to meet our membership contribution we will need to take a look at how particular pieces of ecumenical work can be supported. The Ecumenical Relations Committee is in the process of opening up a conversation with the Councils of the Assembly which is posing the question how, as Councils, they can support and resource UK and International ecumenical structures. In some instances, this is work already in progress. In other cases, it is hoped that new opportunities will be taken to link the work of the Councils with the wider ecumenical agenda. Specifically related to the World Council of Churches, the Committee will be hosting a meeting in November with staff members responsible for the programmatic work of the WCC and Council Conveners and Secretaries to explore this further.

#### **3.2 The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) ([www.warc.jalb.de](http://www.warc.jalb.de))**

**3.2.1** The merger of WARC with the Reformed Ecumenical Council in 2010 to form the World Communion of Reformed Churches will effectively reduce duplication of effort within the Reformed family of churches and our general support for this development fitted well with our commitment to seek a rationalising of International ecumenical bodies in terms of their role and function.

**3.2.2** Tension is increasing within WARC in the area of resourcing. The work is concentrating in the South while the funding is coming from the North. More could be done to engender a sense of partnership in determining the agenda.

**3.2.3** It is anticipated that the Church and Society Council will participate in briefing the delegates attending General Councils in the areas of economic justice and environmental issues which remain key issues on the WARC agenda.

#### **3.3 The Conference of European Churches (CEC) ([www.cec-kek.org](http://www.cec-kek.org))**

**3.3.1** CEC, which will celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary at its Assembly in Lyons in July, keeps open relations between the churches in East and West Europe, between the Reformation Churches in the West and the Orthodox Churches in the East. It is not always a comfortable space, with incompatibilities evident not just on the positions taken but also on questions of process. The *Charta Oecumenica* has provided a valuable benchmark document for neighbourly relations. (See General Assembly 2002, p24/39.) It was agreed by all the main European Churches and is evoked in discussions between churches and with outside bodies.

**3.3.2** The Dialogue Commission in Geneva is well placed to concentrate on exploring relations with the Orthodox churches. The Church and Society Commission in Brussels is consolidating its position as a credible and sought-after partner with the European institutions. At the Lyons Assembly a third Commission will be added with the integration of the Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe. The churches will then have better access to the lobbying and educational work of this Commission.

**3.3.3** However, having two strong Commissions in Brussels increases the imbalance between the two administrative centres of CEC in Geneva and Brussels. Also, the holding together of East and West is perceived to be at the cost of sharpness of position. This has led some churches to want their own voice and office in Brussels and to the development of the Protestant voice of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe.

**3.3.4** The Church of Scotland supports CEC well. Here, too, with an increasing amount of project funding, opportunities for involving the Councils of the Assembly in supporting and resourcing the work of CEC are opening up. The Church of Scotland is well-represented on the Central Committee (Alison Elliot) and on the Church and Society Commission (David Sinclair). We have also been participants on Working Groups on Social Issues and Bioethics and Biotechnology. In the past year, we participated in a conference for church lawyers and a meeting organised by the Dialogue Commission on theological education.

**3.3.5** The “Scottish model”, as it has become known, of paying for a staff person has been appreciated and is used as an example to others who wish to make appointments or set up offices in Brussels. As Matthew Ross returns, the Church and Society Council have sought to strengthen the relationship with the Church and Society Commission through this mechanism.

### **3.4 The Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)** **([www.leuenberg.net](http://www.leuenberg.net))**

**3.4.1** The Leuenberg Fellowship of Churches, now the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe, exists to strengthen the voice of Reformed, Lutheran and Methodist Churches in Europe. It does particular pieces of doctrinal work and, under the umbrella of CEC, has taken forward discussion between the Orthodox churches and the Reformed and Lutheran churches. In recent years, it has strengthened its input to the church and society agenda with the appointment of a staff person to Brussels who works alongside the CEC staff.

**3.4.2** The Church of Scotland is invited, from time to time, to participate in consultations. Currently, we have been asked to participate in a study on “The Protestant Understanding of Ministry and Episkope”. The CPCE also works in Regional Groupings. A new Grouping is being set up for Northern Europe which will include the United Kingdom and Ireland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden. This group has yet to meet but it will allow us to strengthen our links with some of the Nordic Churches who, through the Porvoo Agreement, also relate to the Anglican Churches in Britain and Ireland.

### **3.5 Eurodiaconia ([www.eurodiaconia.org](http://www.eurodiaconia.org))**

Eurodiaconia brings together those involved in the social service and health care provision organisations of churches across Europe. The Church of Scotland’s participation in this is through the Social Care Council. Once again, the contribution of the Church of Scotland is greatly appreciated and is made visible in the fact that Alan Staff, the former Chief Executive Officer of CrossReach, was the President of Eurodiaconia.

### **3.6 Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) ([www.ctbi.org.uk](http://www.ctbi.org.uk))** **Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) ([www.acts-scotland.org](http://www.acts-scotland.org))** **Churches Together in England (CTE) ([www.churches-together.net](http://www.churches-together.net))**

**3.6.1** Following the last round of funding negotiations when it was apparent that there would be less money available to support the ecumenical instruments in Britain and Ireland, CTBI has been through a very difficult period, reducing the number of staff, while trying to maintain a co-ordinating role at four-nations’ level.

**3.6.2** Costs have also been cut by transforming the Commissions on Mission, Racial Justice and Inter Faith Relations into networks which are light on staff but ensure that those with similar responsibilities across the four nations maintain contact with each other and seek ways of co-operation. The Global Mission Network has now completely integrated what

were traditionally classed as “home mission” and “overseas mission”. The Racial Justice and Inter-Faith Networks have been recently constituted. Similarly, the Church and Society Forum has become a network. In all cases, the Church of Scotland seeks to be represented by the people with the appropriate level of responsibility and skill.

**3.6.3** The next round of funding negotiations are under way and it is clear that, once again, there is likely to be a reduction in the amount available to support the ecumenical instruments in Britain (Ireland is separately funded). This is being addressed. CTBI is looking again at the original vision set out in the “Marigold Book” for a lightly structured organisation at four-nation level. Proposals will be brought to the Trustees in the Spring and to the Senior Representatives’ Meeting at the beginning of May. These proposals, if accepted, will do away with the common pot which CTBI administered on behalf of the national instruments and will mean a return to direct negotiations between the churches and the instruments. These proposals have been reflected in the table in Appendix VII.

**3.6.4** The Church of Scotland makes the second largest contribution to the ecumenical bodies in Britain and Ireland and continues to benefit from the sharing of experience with churches in all parts of Britain and Ireland.

### **3.7 Commitment to and Supporting of ACTS**

**3.7.1** For over two years the agenda of ACTS has been dominated by issues relating to Scottish Churches House and to the development of a new constitution and governance structure to comply with the requirements of the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). There is now a new structure in place and financial capital has been accrued beyond all expectation which has enabled a programme of major refurbishment and development of Scottish Churches House to be put in place. A new manager, Carol Stobie, has been appointed to the House and a new Board of Trustees to manage the running of the House is to be appointed. The property is owned by the Trustees of ACTS.

**3.7.2** Once again, the pattern already noted in relation to the other ecumenical bodies is becoming apparent in relation to ACTS in that much of its work is done in short to medium term, time-limited projects. These receive support from project funding available to ACTS or from direct contributions of those churches that commit themselves to particular pieces of work.

**3.7.3** The ACTS Networks are well-established. The Church of Scotland endeavours to appoint those with experience and who can speak with authority and knowledge about the work of the Councils. In this way, we play an active part in shaping and moving forward the agenda of the churches together in Scotland.

**3.7.4** ACTS embodies the “Churches Together” model which is central to our ecumenical policy and strategy. At its best, it has brought the member churches together with common purpose and cemented friendships and deepened understanding between the churches. However, it has created a comfort zone which has failed to address the significant differences that exist between the churches and to challenge the churches to theological engagement on the path to unity.

## **4. Commitment to and support of local ecumenism**

**4.1** While it has not yet proved possible to set up a network of ecumenical facilitators among the Presbyteries, the Committee continues to rejoice in the amount of local co-operation and partnership that exists in many places. Local churches together groups continue to encourage congregations to journey together, sharing in joint acts of worship and

prayer and engaging in joint projects in the community. The annual October Conference and information sent in to the newsletter, "Groundswell", allow for stories to be told and experience to be shared.

**4.2** Through the Duncan McClements' Trust the Committee is able to give small grants to assist local people to deepen their ecumenical experience. In the past year this included enabling a member of the Student Christian Movement (SCM, [www.movement.org.uk](http://www.movement.org.uk)) to attend the International gathering of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF, [www.wscfglobal.org](http://www.wscfglobal.org))

**4.3** A new area of relationships is opening up as we become more aware of migrant churches in Scotland. The Romanian community in Scotland has been overwhelmed by the generous welcome they have received in Shettleston Old where they have been able to consecrate the church hall as a Romanian Orthodox Church. The Scottish Churches Racial Justice Group together with the Assistant General Secretary of ACTS have begun a mapping exercise to enable us all to see more clearly the number of migrant churches in Scotland. As small congregations, often representing large churches abroad, they have much to offer us and to enrich our understanding of the Christian faith. We are beginning to seek ways in which that gift can be shared both locally and nationally.

**4.4** A significant area of local support is provided by the National Sponsoring Body for Local Ecumenical Partnerships.

## **5. Commitment to and Resourcing of the National Sponsoring Body for Local Ecumenical Partnerships (NSB)**

**5.1** Under the umbrella of ACTS is the National Sponsoring Body which was set up in 2005 to encourage local church unity through formal and informal agreements and partnerships. It provides a means whereby those involved in local ecumenical partnerships (LEPs) can share stories and learn from one another. It also acts as a reference and support body providing advice and guidance to those who wish to develop LEPs.

**5.2** In addition, it initiates a biennial gathering for those involved in LEPs and which is hosted by one of the established LEPs. In November 2008, the second of these was hosted by Oakshaw Trinity in Paisley under the title of "Threads".

**5.3** A series of Regional Advisory Groups was set up in five areas of Scotland to support the work of LEPs. They have been variable in their implementation and practice as well as in their effectiveness. Where they do function well, they have begun to implement a Review Process, approved by the NSB and which draws together the requirements of all the participating churches so that congregations involved in LEPs do not have to be separately reviewed by each of the participating denominations. In the Church of Scotland, this ecumenical process has been affected by the "bedding in" of parish groupings which were, by and large, not seen as an opportunity for ecumenical working. Now, however, the Committee has been able to work with the Legal Questions Committee to seek the incorporation of the ecumenical review into the superintendence procedures of the Church of Scotland and an Act is appended to this report. The Ecumenical Review will apply to congregations involved in either single-congregation LEPs ("ecumenical charges") or churches in covenanted partnership LEPs. The Review is to be carried out by a representative appointed by each denomination. For the Church of Scotland this will be someone appointed by Presbytery, normally from the Committee charged with Superintendence. The resulting report will be presented to Presbytery. In this way the Ecumenical Review will respect the normal powers of superintendence exercised by the Presbytery. (Appendix II)

## **6. Bilateral Conversations**

We continue to be involved in a number of bilateral conversations and are in the process of developing two new ones with churches in Germany.

### **6.1 The United Free Church of Scotland ([www.ufcos.org.uk](http://www.ufcos.org.uk))**

**6.1.1** The Covenant Monitoring Group is concerned at how many people are unaware of the existence of the Covenant between the two Churches and the commitments for co-operation that it encourages.

*We commit ourselves to encourage local congregations to enter local covenants as a means of moving towards an ever deeper sharing of resources for mission and service to the community. (Commitment 4)*

**6.1.2** To this end, the Committee has been happy to produce a DVD of the very successful partnership at Canonbie as a resource to encourage further co-operation in other parts of the country. A section of the deliverance also encourages Presbyteries to take the Covenant into account when doing their forward planning.

**6.1.3** It is the intention of the two churches to continue the process of biennial review of the Covenant with alterations being put into immediate practice and being incorporated into the reworking of the Covenant every five years. The renewed Covenant would be signed by the Moderators of the General Assemblies, alternating between the Churches, thus also ensuring that the Covenant is given a high profile within both Churches.

**6.1.4** As requested by the General Assembly in 2008, a set of protocols have been drawn up which will take immediate effect. (Appendix III)

### **6.2 The Free Church of Scotland ([www.freechurch.org](http://www.freechurch.org))**

A joint report, detailing the outcome of the discussion with the Free Church is appended in Appendix IV. There are uncertainties about the goals of the conversation but all who are involved believe that the fact that there are talks is significant and can only be beneficial in seeking ways to build on the co-operation that exists in many places at local level and at national level in, for example, the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office Advisory Group.

### **6.3 The Roman Catholic Church ([www.bpsconfscot.com](http://www.bpsconfscot.com))**

**6.3.1** The Joint Commission on Doctrine was pleased with the way in which the document on "*Baptism: Catholic and Reformed*" has been received. It has been widely distributed and there have been requests for further copies.

**6.3.2** The Joint Commission agreed to organise a symposium to mark the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of John Calvin. The symposium, "*Calvin: Catholic and Reformed*", is to be hosted by Scotus College and will include four papers relating to Calvin, two from Church of Scotland speakers and two from Roman Catholic contributors. The day will finish with a meal. Church leaders and final year divinity students have been invited to the Symposium.

**6.3.3** Consideration is also being given to finding an appropriate way to mark the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation in Scotland. This anniversary offers the possibility of reconciling the memories of a particularly sensitive period in our shared history.

**6.3.4** The main focus of the Joint Commission's work has been the report of the third phase of the International Dialogue between the World Council of Churches and the Vatican, "*The Church as Community of Common Witness to the Kingdom of God*". The Joint Commission

was particularly fortunate in having with them two Scottish members of the drafting Committee, Prof Alasdair Heron and Rev Dr Harry O'Brien. It is the intention of the Joint Commission to produce a joint response to this document for submission to the WCC's Faith and Order Commission and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

#### **6.4 The Church of England ([www.cofe.anglican.org](http://www.cofe.anglican.org))**

**6.4.1** There are two ongoing conversations with the Church of England. There is the biennial consultation that shares experiences around the respective responsibilities and experiences as national churches. The twelfth consultation took place in Edinburgh last October. Jointly chaired by Dr Alison Elliot and Most Rev Dr John Sentamu, the consultation shared a general overview and particular developments relating to changing patterns of ministry, apologetics, International mission (including the proposed celebration of the centenary of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910) and issues relating to church and state relations.

**6.4.2** The second conversation happens annually and involves the Joint Working Group on Faith and Order. At its meeting last November, it was agreed to bring a joint report to our respective governing bodies in 2010. This report will effectively round off this series of conversations and leave the way open for another series which would include representatives of the Scottish Episcopal Church along with the Church of England because it is recognised that any faith and order agreement with the Church of England would necessarily have implications for our relationship with the Scottish Episcopal Church.

#### **6.5 The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria (ELKB) ([www.bayern-evangelisch.de](http://www.bayern-evangelisch.de))**

The relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria seeks to build on already existing relationships between Bavaria and Scotland. There is a well-developed Edinburgh Presbytery/Munich partnership which comprises biennial exchange visits and theological reflection. There are possibilities of developing the twinning arrangements between Perth and Aschaffenburg and between Aberdeen and Regensburg. Alongside this there are developing partnerships in ministry placements in Dundee and Orkney. These have been extremely well received and it is the wish of the ELKB to extend such opportunities. Encouragement is given to Church of Scotland ministers to seek short-term appointments in Bavaria.

#### **6.6 The Evangelical Church of Westphalia (EKW) ([www.ekvw.de](http://www.ekvw.de))**

In February 2009, we hosted a visit of representatives of the Evangelical Church of Westphalia. The Westphalian Church is seeking closer relations with a church in Western Europe which has a similar role to its own. The delegation met with representatives of various Councils and a return visit is being planned for August 2009. This relationship is still very much at an exploratory stage but there are good signs of there being plenty of scope for journeying together for a time.

### **7. Commitment to Ecumenism within the Councils of the Assembly**

Built into the revised structure of the Church of Scotland is an ecumenical remit affecting every Council. In order to support this, the Committee on Ecumenical Relations includes five core members who each relate as a full member of one of the Councils. These members monitor the way in which the ecumenical dimension is acknowledged and developed.

#### **7.1 Church and Society Council**

Much of the work of this Council is undertaken with an ecumenical dimension. Four representatives from the ACTS member churches serve on the Council on a rotational basis.

Staff attend ACTS' networks as part of their core activity. People from other churches are co-opted onto its working groups according to their particular expertise. The work of the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office is done with the assistance of an Advisory Group that draws its membership from most of the member churches of ACTS plus the Baptist Union and the Free Church. Mention has already been made of the Brussels post which is supported by the Council and which will continue in a way that strengthens the relationship between the Council's work and the work of the Commission in Brussels. The Society, Religion and Technology work continues to work ecumenically. Eco-congregations Scotland, which the council already heavily supports, has always been ecumenical in nature. It is soon to become a separate charitable company limited by guarantee and the new constitution will embed that ecumenical commitment.

## **7.2 Ministries Council**

Amid all the work on governance, the ecumenical dimension of the work of the Ministries Council is most noticeable in the work done in priority areas and chaplaincies. Consultations have taken place with the Church of England and Methodist Church on "fresh expressions" and with other churches as part of the review of ministries' training.

## **7.3 Mission and Discipleship Council**

The Mission and Discipleship Council carries a wide remit, working through a variety of specific task forces. From rural church issues, to worship and doctrine, to explorations and new patterns of mission and discipleship within Scotland, the various task forces seek to work with other church partners. Through this, they have gained the experience of other churches as they have sought to address contemporary issues and trends, and have engaged with other churches in seeking to address issues facing the Church in Scotland. On a number of questions, the Council has sought to suggest that work be undertaken through ACTS. While this has created difficulties in meeting General Assembly remit reporting dates, it has had the advantage of addressing an issue which commends itself to the churches in Scotland *eg "The Language of the Trinity)*. On the whole, the Council is seeking to work ecumenically, and is to be encouraged in and commended for working in this manner

## **7.4 Social Care Council**

CrossReach provides care to people of all faiths and of none and the care is delivered by people from many Christian backgrounds and, in that sense, the Council works ecumenically. When exploring new areas of service the possibility of working ecumenically is always explored and local support groups for care homes are always open to the participation of people from different church backgrounds. As already noted, the Chief Executive Officer was President of Eurodiakonia where the Council has for many years engaged with issues relating to service provision across Europe.

## **7.5 World Mission Council**

The review of the strategic plan of the World Mission Council highlights the areas where ecumenical working has been a success but it also notes that there are areas in which "resources, finance and unforeseen factors can have an impact on areas where progressive ecumenical work has been instigated." The projected plan continues to retain a strong emphasis on ecumenical issues and aims "to establish viable and fruitful ways of working with the ecumenical bodies in which the Council plays a part." The targets for each area of the Council's work all mention relevant ecumenical bodies as a key interface for the progression of the work and the section on networking highlights the importance of maintaining active participation in ecumenical networks.

## **8. Overlapping Areas**

There are several events which are providing the opportunity for ecumenical engagement across a number of Councils. These include:

**8.1 The Calvin Quincentenary – 2009 ([www.calvin500.org](http://www.calvin500.org))**

This significant anniversary has allowed us, together with other churches, to examine the legacy of John Calvin and to assess his influence on Scottish society and culture.

**8.2 The 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Scottish Reformation – 2010**

This anniversary provides the opportunity for a sensitive marking of the occasion that avoids a triumphalism and allows for a clear statement that, through the ecumenical engagement of the past century, the churches in Scotland are in a different place now than they once were. It also allows the churches together to address the changed context in which they minister and bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to find common ways of expressing their shared Christian identity and calling.

**8.3 Edinburgh 2010 ([www.edinburgh2010.org](http://www.edinburgh2010.org))**

The centenary of the World Missionary Conference of 1910 presents the opportunity for the churches to celebrate different aspects of belonging to a world church, to welcome people from across the world to our country and to seek ways to refresh and enthuse our churches with a vision of renewal and hope that, together with churches around the world, we can bring a Christian voice into work with people of all faiths and of none as we seek a more just, more equitable and more peaceful world for all. (For a fuller report, see under World Mission Council.)

**9. Conclusion**

What becomes clear from this survey is that, despite the difficult and uncertain context within which ecumenical relations take place, there is much that is being done which is exciting and full of life. The churches together model works locally, nationally and internationally. Local ecumenical partnerships continue to mature and develop new work, revising their commitments and covenants. Churches do seek opportunities to work together and to take the time to share information and learn from one another. Through it the local seeks support, encouragement and resourcing from the national and international and links are made between nations and, in all cases, across denominations. This way of working, which we have called “the churches together model”, leaves us less challenged to move beyond the security of our denominationalism. It encourages co-operation and commitment across denominational lines. It keeps before us the fact that we are bonded in baptism to all who confess the name of Christ and are called to serve in mission together in the one Church. The threads of the churches together model run horizontally and vertically, weaving a colourful tartan where, as we said in 2004, “each colour, large and small, has its importance in the final design”.

*In the name of the Committee*

WILLIAM D BROWN, *Convener*  
LINDSAY SCHLUTER, *Vice-Convener*  
SHEILAGH M KESTING, *Secretary*

**ADDENDUM**

**Rev William D Brown** completes his term as Convener of the Committee on Ecumenical Relations. Bill brought a wealth of local ecumenical experience to the task which he used not just to encourage others in their local ecumenical relationships but also to bring clarity and relevance to relationships at national and international levels. He carefully guided the Committee as it encouraged the implementation of the Ecumenical Policy across the Church. His thoughtful leading of worship, his natural enthusiasm and gentle chairing created a good atmosphere within which to work. The Committee expresses its thanks to Bill for the way he tended and nurtured ecumenical relationships at all levels and continued to remind the Church of Scotland of its ecumenical commitment and wishes him well in his continued ministry in Murrayfield.

*On behalf of the Committee*

LINDSAY SCHLUTER, *Vice-Convener*  
SHEILAGH M KESTING, *Secretary*

## **APPENDIX I**

### **ACRONYMS**

ACTS	-	Action of Churches Together in Scotland
CEC	-	Conference of European Churches
CPCE	-	Community of Protestant Churches in Europe
CTBI	-	Churches Together in Britain and Ireland
ELKB	-	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria
LEPs	-	Local Ecumenical Partnerships
NSB	-	National Sponsoring Body for Local Ecumenical Partnerships
OSCR	-	Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator
WARC	-	World Alliance of Reformed Churches
WCC	-	World Council of Churches

## **APPENDIX II**

### **ACT AMENDING ACT II 1984 ANENT PRESBYTERY VISITS TO CONGREGATIONS (AS AMENDED)**

*Edinburgh, 23 May 2009, Sess. IV*

The General Assembly hereby enact and ordain that Act II 1984 as amended is hereby further amended by the addition of a new section 11 as follows:

11. In the case of a Single Congregation Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) and Churches in Covenanted Partnership, which are recognised to be such by the National Sponsoring Body for Local Ecumenical Partnerships (NSBLEP), an Ecumenical Review in the form approved by the NSBLEP 14<sup>th</sup> March 2008 shall be deemed to fulfil the requirements of this Act for the purposes of the Church of Scotland. For the avoidance of doubt, this is without prejudice to the general right and responsibility of the Presbytery to exercise superintendence in other ways, and it is without prejudice to the requirement of the regulations of any other denomination which is a partner in the same LEP.

## APPENDIX III

### PROTOCOL TO THE COVENANT BETWEEN THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND AND THE UNITED FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND ON TRANSFER OF CONGREGATIONS AND MINISTERS BETWEEN THE CHURCHES

1. The Church of Scotland and the United Free Church of Scotland agree the following Protocol, which shall be regarded as a statement of good practice and implemented as far as possible by both Churches.
2. The Protocol shall be reviewed along with the Covenant, in terms of Commitment 7 of the Covenant document.
3. **Transfer of Congregations**
  - a) Where a congregation seeks to be admitted to membership of either party to the Covenant (“the receiving denomination”), and its current or last known denomination was the other party (“the releasing denomination”), this Protocol shall apply.
  - b) The Ecumenical Officer and the relevant Presbytery Clerks of both Churches shall confer together, and consult where necessary with the Solicitors, Principal Clerks or other relevant officials of either denomination.
  - c) The releasing denomination shall advise the receiving denomination whether any matters of Church law and discipline, or of civil law, remain to be resolved in respect of the congregation, and shall undertake to inform the receiving denomination when such resolution has been reached.
  - d) The receiving denomination shall not recognise the congregation in its membership until it has considered the advice received in terms of 3(c) above, and should explain to the releasing denomination its reasons if it decides to admit the congregation before the resolution of those matters.
4. For the avoidance of doubt, with the agreement of both denominations, a Congregation of the releasing denomination may be admitted to membership of the receiving denomination notwithstanding issues relating to ownership of heritable property remaining unresolved between the Congregation and the releasing denomination.
5. **Transfer of Ministers**
  - a) The transfer of ministers between the Churches shall be subject to the law of each Church.
  - b) Where a congregation transfers its membership from one denomination to the other, as described in 3 above, and there is a sitting minister (or other member of a ministry team) in place, the normal rules of transfer of ministry shall apply, subject to the provisions of 5(c).
  - c) In the circumstances referred to in 5(b) the receiving denomination shall take particular care to discover whether any disciplinary or other legal processes are in process to

which the minister or other individual is a party. In the event of such proceedings the normal rules of transfer shall not apply until the releasing denomination has informed the receiving denomination of the individual's good standing.

#### **6. Interpretation of Protocol**

If the Ecumenical Officer and the Principal Clerks of the two Churches disagree on the interpretation and implementation of this Protocol in any case, the Covenant Monitoring Group shall advise on the matter and each denomination shall implement its own interpretation of the Protocol, so far as possible in the spirit of the advice received and of the original Covenant.

### **APPENDIX IV**

#### **CHURCH OF SCOTLAND – FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND DIALOGUE**

##### **1. Introduction**

In 2007, the General Assemblies of both the Church of Scotland and the Free Church of Scotland warmly endorsed a Joint Statement. This Statement began with the recognition, so important to churches of the Reformed traditions, of Scripture as the “supreme rule of faith and life”. It acknowledged the common confessional basis we have in the Westminster Confession of Faith. It confessed the scandal of the continuing divisions within our Presbyterian family and called for a mutual recognition of each other as churches; mutual acknowledgment that each church needs the other and cannot be the Church to the exclusion of the other; mutual commitment to cooperate as far as possible in the advancement of the kingdom of God; and it called for the provision of a framework within which ongoing discussion could be accommodated and which would facilitate frank exchange of views. The Joint Statement then went on to suggest ways in which these aspects could be lived out in practice, acknowledging that there are already good examples that make visible what we believe and confess.

It was with great joy that the Conveners of the two churches' Ecumenical Relations Committees addressed each other's Assemblies. That crossing of the road was hailed as “a small step for a Christian but a giant step for the Church”. The Joint Statement expressed the hope that the two churches would grow in prayer for one another and identified areas of cooperation – evangelism and church planting, theological education in continuing professional development, moving from cooperation to commitment in local structures through formal links, joint social projects, joint conferences and fellowships, social events and representations to governments and public bodies.

The joint statement also committed the churches to ongoing dialogue and continued exchange of views in the hope of developing greater understanding and of expanding the framework for dialogue in the future beyond the Ecumenical Relations Committees.

Following the Assemblies of 2007, the Dialogue Group returned to consider the respective understanding of the two churches relating to the Word of God and Holy Scripture. The Group has endeavoured to identify more clearly those areas of common ground on which there is unanimity and those areas in which differences of opinion still provide a significant stumbling block to further co-operation.

##### **2. Seeking Consensus on an Understanding of the Word of God and Holy Scripture in the Church**

Following the Assemblies of 2007, the Dialogue Group returned to consider a revised paper which spelled out *The Constitutional Position of the Church of Scotland with respect to the Word of God and Holy Scripture*. A responding paper was presented setting out *The Constitutional Position of the Free Church of Scotland with respect to the Word of God and Holy Scripture*.

The two churches share a common history and a common theological heritage. Up to the later decades of the nineteenth century there was little divergence in the way in which the Word of God and Holy Scripture were understood. Divergence came as a series of unions led first to the formation of the United Free Church in 1900 and then to a reunited Church of Scotland in 1929. During that period the Free Church underwent a crisis on the very issue of the doctrine of Scripture and those who remained in 1900 felt unable in conscience to do other than maintain a separate, more strict witness to the *Confession* and to the doctrine of Scripture. This means that when it comes to discussing the Word of God and Holy Scripture it is to touch a very sensitive area for the Free Church – that of its historic identity. Nevertheless, by examining the shared theological heritage, it was hoped that there might be clarification of the shared understanding of the nature of the Word of God and the nature of Holy Scripture. It was also hoped that such an examination might clarify our understanding of the Church as the community of the people of God that, at one and the same time, hears the Word of God, and translates and communicates that Word to the community of all who are made “in the image of God”.

### **3. A shared theological heritage: *The Westminster Confession of Faith***

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* states that “Holy Scripture” is “given by the inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life”. (I.2) The *Confession* also affirms that: “We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture.” (I.5) In addition, it is clear from the *Confession* that Scripture is set within a broader context of divine revelation.

Therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in diverse manners, to reveal Himself, and to declare His will unto the Church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth ... to commit the same wholly unto writing: which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God’s revealing His will unto His people being now ceased. (I.1)

The *Confession* establishes, as a principle of interpretation, that the “infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself”, (I.9) with the “supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined” being “no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture.” (I.10)

The authority of Scripture and the grounds upon “which it ought to be believed” are not to be found in the Church, according to the *Confession*. (I.4) The Church can provide “testimony” as to the efficacy of Holy Scripture, but the “decrees and councils” and the “opinions of ancient writers” are alike “to be examined” by “the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture”. (I.10) That is not to say that “councils” have nothing to contribute to our understanding, but the *Confession* makes it clear that:

All synods or councils, since the Apostles’ times, whether general or particular, may err; and many have erred. Therefore they are not made the rule of faith, or practice; but to be used as a help in both. (XXXI.4)

It is clear that in the *Confession* Scripture is placed over and above the Church, and that the

“traditions of men” provide no possibility of insight into the counsel of God. (I.6)

Therefore in the *Confession* we find an affirmation that the testimony of infallible Scripture, interpreted by Scripture itself, is entirely consonant with the work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit, conjoined to the Word of God, unite to produce in the heart of the believer the experience of the power of God.

### **The relationship of the Church of Scotland to the *Westminster Confession of Faith***

The relationship of the Church of Scotland to the *Westminster Confession of Faith* is set out in the *Basis and Plan of Union* (1929) and, specifically, in the *Articles Declaratory of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland in Matters Spiritual*. The *Basis of Union*, as regards “Doctrine”, places the *Confession* in a relationship with the *United Presbyterian Church Declaratory Act* (1879) and the *Free Church Declaratory Acts* (1892 and 1894), as well as *The Church of Scotland Act on the Formula* (1910). Equally, with respect to the “General Constitution” of the Church, the *Basis of Union* places the “subordinate standard” in a relationship with the *United Free Church Act anent Spiritual Independence of the Church* (1906) (Weatherhead, 1997:154-179)

Within the *Articles Declaratory* we find embodied the spiritual constitution of the Church of Scotland, as found in *The Church of Scotland Act, 1921*, and as adopted by the Church in 1926. The *Act* is an acknowledgement by Parliament of the spiritual rights inherent within the Church of Scotland, as a Church that is a branch of “*the Holy Catholic or Universal Church*, rather than as *the Church of Scotland*. The *Articles*, and in particular *Article I*, embody the “evidently cardinal doctrines” of the Church, and identify those doctrines “which were clearly fundamental and essential to a Christian Church”. (Weatherhead, 1997: 26; Sjölander, 1962: 252-308, 363-374, 386-391; Murray, 2000: 63-114) Thus, while it is granted that: “The Church has the right to interpret these Articles, and ... to modify or add to them”, (*Article VIII*) it is stated that this act of interpretation takes place “always consistently with the provisions of the Article hereof, adherence to which, as interpreted by the Church, is essential to its continuity and corporate life”. (*Article VIII*) In this way a clear distinction is made in the *Declaratory Articles* between “what is fundamental (*Article I*), and what is expedient and may be altered by the Church (all the other *Articles*)”. (Weatherhead, 1997:5-6)

Following a description of the Church of Scotland as “part of the Holy Catholic or Apostolic Church”, a narrative of the work of Christ allied to the promise of the Holy Spirit, *Article I* gives a statement of the Church’s identity and its relationship to Scripture:

The Church of Scotland adheres to the Scottish Reformation; receives the Word of God which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as its supreme rule of faith and life; and avows the fundamental doctrines of the Catholic faith founded thereupon.

There follows in *Article II* the statement that

The principal subordinate standard of the Church of Scotland is the Westminster Confession of Faith approved by the General Assembly of 1647, containing the sum and substance of the Faith of the Reformed Church.

Equally, the “Preamble” to the Ordination to the office of the Holy Ministry affirms that:

The Church of Scotland holds as its subordinate standard the Westminster Confession

of Faith, recognising liberty of opinion on such points of doctrine as do not enter into the substance of the Faith, and claiming the right, in dependence on the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, to formulate, interpret, or modify its subordinate standards; always in agreement with the Word of God and the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith contained in the said Confession – of which agreement the Church itself shall be sole judge. (Weatherhead, 1997: 163; Murray, 2000: 168-171)

The relationship of the Church of Scotland to the *Westminster Confession of Faith* as constituted in 1929, and thereafter, differs from the relationship which existed before 1929. This is exemplified with respect to the *Preamble* cited above, with its reference to “recognising liberty of opinion on such points of doctrine as do not enter into the substance of the Faith”, and the 1929 Formula which is set out in terms consistent with *The Church of Scotland Act on the Formula (1910)*. The latter, as found in the *Basis and Plan of Union (1929)*, follows on from the *Preamble* and affirms, in relation to the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, that:

I believe the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith contained in the Confession of Faith of this Church. (Weatherhead, 1997: 165)

Thus, there is an affirmation of the place of the *Confession*, albeit that this is qualified with the recognition of “liberty of opinion”.

This may be contrasted with *Formula* previously used; essentially that of 1889, as modified in 1901 and 1903, and construed in terms consistent with the *Act for Settling the Quiet and Peace of the Church 1693 (c.38)*. This affirmed, in relation to the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, that:

I declare the Confession of Faith, approved by former General Assemblies of this Church, and ratified by law in the year 1690, to be the confession of my faith, and I own the doctrine therein contained to be the true doctrine, which I will constantly adhere to. (Mair, 1904: 530-532)

This *Formula*, declaring the Westminster Confession of Faith “*to be the confession of my faith*”; whose doctrine we own to be true, may be said to differ in character from the *Formula* enshrined in the *Basis and Plan of Union (1929)*.

From this survey the relationship of the Church of Scotland to the *Confession* four points are to be noted:

1. The primacy of *Article I* in the *Declaratory Articles*.
2. The placing of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* as the “principal subordinate standard” of the Church of Scotland in *Article II*.
3. The stating of the relationship between the Word of God and Holy Scripture (“the Word of God which is *contained* in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments”).
4. The terms under which the relationship of the Church of Scotland to the *Westminster Confession of Faith* is to be understood in relation to the *Preamble* and *Formula*.

### **The Word of God and Holy Scripture in the Church of Scotland**

As a Church in the Reformed tradition, the Church of Scotland is a confessional church. The *Scots Confession (1560)* established the principle of the primacy of Scripture over

*Confession*, when it affirmed that anything found in the *Confession* that is “contrary to God’s Holy Word” was to be subject to correction by Scripture. (“The Preface” to the *Scots Confession*). In this way the doctrinal formulations of a Reformed Church are, in principle, open to clarification and correction in the light of Scripture, perhaps the principal distinguishing characteristic of a Church in the Reformed tradition.

Commenting on the relationship between the Word of God and Scripture as set out in section I.1 of the *Westminster Confession* (see above), H.J. Wotherspoon and J.M. Kirkpatrick write:

*The Confession of Faith* here recognises the Holy Scriptures as the written Word of God to men in and through which it is God Himself who speaks in person, but it recognises also that Revelation was precedent to the Scriptural record. Thus in regard to the New Testament the Revelation was mediated and apprehended, the Christian faith existed and was stated and believed and taught, before the various scriptures it contains were in being... The Faith did not make its first appearance in a written but in an oral form: it existed, was preached, believed, and transmitted for some time before it began to have expression in inspired writings. When these writings appeared, they did not supersede the unwritten Faith which the Apostolic witnesses communicated to the Church, nor did they add to it. They are a photograph of that Faith in the process of transmission, and thus became the standard of reference for verifying the content of the Faith. (Wotherspoon and Kirkpatrick, 1960: 56-57)

While the extent to which Wotherspoon and Kirkpatrick express the authorial intention of the framers of the *Confession* may be open to debate, they do formulate an understanding of the relationship between the Word of God and Holy Scripture which is adequate as a description of the process whereby the Apostolic faith was first stated and thereafter expressed in Scripture. In addition, they see the function of Scripture as providing a measure for the adequacy of attempts to describe the normative content of the Christian faith. They also make clear that the context within which the Word of God is heard, the Apostolic faith is stated, the faith is expressed in Scripture, and its doctrinal content is described, is that of the Church.

There is, therefore, no absolute identification of the Word of God with Scripture, but an affirmation that it is through Scripture that the Word will be heard. It is understood that the framers of the *Articles Declaratory* made this distinction between the Word of God and Scripture and desired to avoid any equation of the two. (Sjölinder, 1962: 167-182; Murray, 2000: 63-114) The Word of God and Scripture relate to one another in a constant and unbroken relationship in which they mutually inform one another. Weatherhead writes:

This *Article* does not make a verbal identification of the words of Scripture with the Word of God, but states that the Word of God is “contained in” the Bible, thus leaving scope for the application of the phrase “as interpreted by the Church”, and also for liberty of opinion. (Weatherhead, 1997: 19)

So, in relation to the place of the Word of God,

1. The Church of Scotland stands within the Reformed tradition, with respect to its understanding of Scripture.
2. The Church of Scotland affirms the principle of the primacy of Scripture.
3. The Church of Scotland acknowledges that the Word of God “is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments”.

That having been said, it was acknowledged within the Dialogue Group that the precise sense in which the Word of God was “contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments” remains open to a variety of interpretations within the Church of Scotland.

### **The Constitution of the Free Church of Scotland**

Two important features of the Free Church’s constitution, in its own view and in the view of civil law, are the *Confession of Faith* and the Questions and Formula answered and signed by office-bearers at their ordination.

Office-bearers answer affirmatively the questions:

1. Do you believe the Scripture of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and the only rule of faith and manners?
2. Do you sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the *Confession of Faith*... to be founded on the Word of God...?

The Free Church affirms chapter I, Section 2 *Confession*:

Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the Books of the Old and New Testaments... all of which are given by inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life...

In addition, it is pointed out that the *Confession* also states:

The authority of the holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, depends not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the author thereof; and therefore is to be received, because it is the Word of God. (I.4)

From this basis the Free Church holds, as a constitutional principle, that the Scriptures are the Word of God. It takes issue with the Church of Scotland position stated in the *Articles Declaratory* that it “receives the Word of God which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as its supreme rule of faith and life: and avows the fundamental doctrines of the Catholic faith founded thereupon”, because this can be interpreted to mean that there may be Scripture that is not the Word of God. It understands that when the framers of the *Shorter Catechism* used the phrase “contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments” they would not have meant anything different from what was said in the *Larger Catechism* (“The holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the Word of God”), or that they used the word “contained” in a different sense from that in the *Confession* when it says that all books of the Old and New Testaments “are contained” under the name of Holy Scripture.

While welcoming the references in the Church of Scotland paper to those sections of the *Confession* which relate to the authority and infallibility of Scripture, the Free Church response highlights the area of the identity of Scriptures with the Word of God as the area of profound disagreement. “The Church of Scotland says they are not identical and the Free Church says they are.” From the Free Church perspective this question is foundational. If all of Scripture is not “God-breathed” (*ie* the Word of God) all Christian doctrine is uncertain.

The Free Church is not reassured by the non-negotiable statement of faith in the first *Article Declaratory*. It welcomes the positive statements on the Trinity and the Person of Christ. On the other hand it finds the phrase “glorifying in His cross and resurrection” too vague a

statement which says nothing about the meaning of these events whether by way of atonement, redemption or justification.

### **Summary of points of agreement and disagreement**

The following points emerge from the discussion on the Constitutional positions of the two churches in respect to the Word of God and Holy Scripture.

#### **A. Areas of Agreement**

1. Both churches stand within the Reformed tradition with respect to their understanding of Scripture in that both churches affirm the primacy of Scripture.
2. Both churches draw on the doctrinal statements of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* as their principal subordinate standard.

#### **B. Areas of Disagreement**

1. Both churches acknowledge the constant and unbroken relationship between the Word of God and Scripture but the Church of Scotland's relationship to both Scripture and the *Confession* are defined within *Declaratory Articles* whereas in the Free Church they are not.
2. The Church of Scotland allows "liberty of opinion" in relation to matters that do not enter into the substance of the faith. The Free Church's problem with this is that "the substance of the faith" is not defined.

### **Relations at Local Level**

The doctrinal discussions can be seen against the background of good relations that are developing between local ministers and their congregations. Presbyteries in the North and West were invited to give a picture of what was happening on the ground. The following responses were received:

#### **1. Presbytery of Caithness**

**Wick:** Pultneytown and Thrumster – relations cordial. There were some differences which were respected *eg* the Free Church insistence on the use of Psalms only in worship. This presented problems when joint services were suggested. The local Free Church minister (together with the Baptist Church and Salvation Army) took part in the Good Friday March and Open Air Service. The parish minister felt this was an important public witness of the unity of denominations in Wick. The Free Church minister also attended joint meetings for ministers in the area. Free Church members attend special events in other churches and members of other denominations accept the Free Church's invitations to attend their special Psalmody evenings.

**Lybster:** The Free Church Missionary and the Church of Scotland Deacon conducted the Remembrance Service together annually and took it in turns to visit Dunbeath and Lybster primary schools. They have on occasion conducted funerals together. They organise a holiday club together and have a good personal relationship.

**Thurso:** The Church of Scotland and Free Church of Scotland ministers are part of the chaplaincy team at the High School. They meet up at a regular fraternal, together with other ministers and priests in Thurso. Apart from the annual ecumenical Remembrance Day Service, the Free Church is not involved locally in church services with the CofS. However, the relationship is cordial.

**Reay:** All three Free Church ministers attend a monthly prayer meeting in Reay which is also attended by the local Church of Scotland minister. When Luis Palau comes to Inverness a local one-day event is being planned involving the Free Church, the Church of Scotland and other denominations.

## 2. **Presbytery of Sutherland**

“There is a slow, though sometimes tentative, improvement in relations with the Free Church – partly because the division in the Free Church some years ago removed the more conservative element to the Free Church Continuing.”

## 3. **Presbytery of Lochcarron and Skye**

Relations are good in the **Lochalsh** area. There are often midweek joint meetings in each other's halls followed by the usual tea/coffee and food. Meetings are intimated in each other's churches. In one part of Lochalsh the Free Church has no building and use the Lochalsh Church after the Church of Scotland service on a Sunday morning. The Church of Scotland minister has conducted worship in Gaelic in the Free Church and the Free Church minister has conducted a Preparatory Service in the Lochalsh church. They hope that the good relationship will continue.

**Strath and Sleat:** there are joint monthly joint services with the Free Church in the parish, (alternating monthly in the two churches premises). Elders and other members take services in the Free Churches in Skye and area. There is an annual Joint Elders' Conference. There has been a Joint visitation (over two years) to every home in the Strath and Sleat parish, which both churches serve.

Two joint services bringing both the **Poolewe & Aultbea** and the **Gairloch** Free Church congregations together with the **Gairloch & Dundonnell** Church of Scotland will take place on Sunday 31 August. There will be a visiting preacher over that weekend, Dr Sam Gordon, who used to be a broadcaster with Trans World Radio and has written several Bible commentaries. There will also have been a shared community evening on Saturday 30th involving the Inverness and District Male Gospel Choir, raising funds for Blythswood in the process.

## 4. **Presbytery of Uist**

**Benbecula** – enjoy extremely cordial relations with the Free Church. Each month the Free Church minister joins the Church of Scotland ministers from Benbecula and North Uist for a ministers' fraternal and prayer time. Church of Scotland members often join with the Free Church for missionary, evangelistic and/or prayer meetings in FC centre. The Free Church minister preaches annually in Church of Scotland – Gaelic Communion preparatory service (with Free Church elder presenting); the Church of Scotland minister has preached in Free Church. The Free Church, Roman Catholic and the Church of Scotland clergy work jointly as chaplains in the local Primary and Secondary schools (on rota). The Free Church, Roman Catholic and Church of Scotland plan/lead annual community Christmas carol service in local primary school.

**Carinish** – The Free Church minister from Benbecula and South Uist preached at the communion services. The Church of Scotland buildings were used for the induction and ordination of the Free Church minister for North Uist, Grimsay and Berneray. There is a joint weekly Youth Mission with North Uist “Urban Saints” which includes leaders and workers from both churches. Church of Scotland ministers meet with Free Church ministers on a monthly basis for fraternal rotating around different churches and manses. The Church of Scotland minister has been the guest preacher in the North Uist Free Church preparatory service.

**Berneray and Lochmaddy** – theological compatibility is noted, making co-operation possible. The Church of Scotland ministers have a prayer time, usually once a month with the minister(s) of the Free Church. In relation to more practical aspects, ministers, elders and members seek to support each other at times of funerals, and they work together with “Urban Saints”. When needed, there are several within the Free Church who are willing to help out with pulpit supply.

**Manish-Scarista** – Relations are good. There has been a marked improvement in this area since the Free Church split a few years ago. At a personal level relationship between the ministers are very good. The Free Church minister has preached twice during a recent Church of Scotland Communion Season. (He also preached at the recent Tarbert (Harris) Communion Season). The Church of Scotland minister was invited to preach at Free Church service but unable to accept because of prior commitment. In acts of worship at times of death and the funeral services, elders and members of both denominations support each other by helping with leading of prayers and presenting. “Urban Saints” meet weekly in the Church Hall in Leverburgh and it is led by the Free Church minister.

## **5. Presbytery of Lewis**

**Back** – Church of Scotland ministers are now being asked regularly as supply and guest preachers in the Free Church congregation.

**Knock** - There is a Joint Youth Program: *Point to Life*, including input from Church of Scotland and the Free Church. The Free Church minister conducted a joint Remembrance Day service.

**Ness** - The relationship is cordial and the Free Church minister recently took part in a Remembrance Day service with the Church of Scotland. The ministers also invite each other to participate in funeral services.

**Carloway** – There is a joint youth programs, a joint youth worker and joint “congregational fellowship” at communion times

**Stornoway** – Relationships are cordial. There is joint participation in funerals. A ministers’ fraternal has been started.

**Barvas** - The relationship is cordial and there is joint participation in funerals.

**Kinloch** - during a recent vacancy, the Free Church minister regularly conducted mid week services in the Church of Scotland congregation. Relations are cordial.

**Lochs** – There is regular interaction between the two ministers and the relationship is cordial.

**Scalpay** - The Free Church gets the use of the Church of Scotland building and the relationship is cordial.

## **Where from here?**

There is no question that the two churches regard each other as belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ. However, it seems that the points of divergence in relation to the identity of Scripture and the Word of God remain a serious stumbling block to co-operation, far less uniting. The words of the late John Murray of Westminster Theological Seminary provide a continuing challenge to the two churches:

Though the diversity which manifests itself in differentiating historical developments might appear to make ecclesiastical union inadvisable or even perilous in certain cases, yet the biblical evidence in support of union is so plain that any argument to the contrary, however plausible, must be false. (*Murray, 1976: Vol. 1 269f.*)

Both churches acknowledge that the continued divisions within the Presbyterian family in Scotland are a scandal and that the existence of separate congregations within the same community, with ministers who have sometimes little to distinguish them theologically, is a situation that is both unsustainable and gives a bad witness to the world. Nevertheless, while it is clear that co-operation will continue to take place and be developed in places where local congregations and ministers have a shared view of Scripture, it will take sensitivity to work out areas where the two churches can work together both locally and nationally on a broader front.

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## APPENDIX V

### DELEGATES TO OTHER CHURCHES

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

*Presbyterian Church in Ireland* – The Moderator, Chaplain and Elder

*Presbyterian Church of Wales* – The Moderator

*Church of England* – Rev D Galbraith

*United Reformed Church Scotland Synod* – Rev I Wilkie

*Scottish Episcopal Church* – Rev M Pearson

*Methodist Synod* – Mrs M Crawford

*United Free Church of Scotland* – Rev L Schluter

*Baptist Union of Scotland* – Rev A Kerr

## APPENDIX VI

### ECUMENICAL BODIES

The following serve on Assemblies and Committees of the ecumenical bodies of which the Church is a member:-

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

*Central Committee*

Mr G McGeoch

*Faith and Order Commission*

Rev Dr P H Donald

#### **World Alliance of Reformed Churches**

*Executive Committee*

Rev A G Horsburgh

#### **World Alliance of Reformed Churches/ Reformed Ecumenical Council**

*Uniting General Council (2010)*

Rev Dr A Falconer, Rev A G Horsburgh,  
Very Rev Dr S M Kesting, Mr I McLarty,

<b>Conference of European Churches</b> <i>13<sup>th</sup> Assembly (July 2009)</i>	Rev L Schluter Dr A Elliot OBE, Very Rev Dr S M Kesting, Rev Dr J L McPake, Miss A Watson
<i>Central Committee</i>	Dr A Elliot OBE
<i>Church and Society Commission</i>	Rev Dr D Sinclair
<b>Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (Leuenberg Church Fellowship)</b>	Rev Dr J L McPake
<b>Churches Together in Britain and Ireland</b>	
<i>Forum of Senior Representatives</i>	Very Rev Dr F A J Macdonald
<b>Action of Churches Together in Scotland</b>	
<i>Members' Meeting</i>	
Voting member: Convener of the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (alternate voting member: Convener of the Council of Assembly), non-voting members: Secretaries of the Mission and Discipleship Council, Church and Society Council and the Ecumenical Officer  (alternate non-voting members: Secretary of the Ministries Council, General Secretary of the Guild and the Moderator of the Youth Assembly)	
<i>Networks:</i>	
<i>Church Life</i>	Rev R Dobie, Rev A Paton, Rev F Penny, Rev N Robb, Rev A Scobie, Mrs N Summers
<i>Church and Society</i>	Rev E Aitken, Mrs S Aitken, Mrs H Fairgrieve, Mr G Lumb, Dr M Macdonald, Mr A Shaw, Mr A Staff, Mr J Thomson, Mrs A Twaddle, Mr R Whiteman
<i>Faith Studies</i>	Rev A Birss, Rev E Cranfield, Rev N Robb, Rev J Scott, Mrs M Whyte
<i>Mission</i>	Mrs L Dunnett, Miss L Hamilton-Messer, Rev A Millar, Rev J Reid, Mr J K Thomson
<i>Finance Committee</i>	Mr A McDowall
<i>Network of Ecumenical Women in Scotland</i>	Rev V Allen, Mrs K McPherson
<b>Joint Liturgical Group</b>	The Very Rev Dr G I Macmillan, Rev N Robb

## APPENDIX VII

### CONTRIBUTIONS TO ECUMENICAL BODIES

	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
	£	£
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland	176,000	15,000
Action of Churches Together in Scotland		160,000
Churches Together in England		1,000
World Council of Churches	45,382	46,000
World Alliance of Reformed Churches	24,057	24,400
Conference of European Churches	21,286	21,600
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	266,725	268,000