

GENERAL SYNOD 2021

FEEDBACK FROM BREAKOUT GROUPS

SESSION 2 – INTER-CHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE ST ANDREW DECLARATION

Collated Responses

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1. *The St Andrew Declaration invites SEC and Church of Scotland congregations to work together for the sake of the Church's mission in Scotland. Can you share specific examples from your own experience of such collaboration between our two churches?*
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Many many examples of churches working together in their local context to help their local communities from pilgrimages to Walks of Witnesses, to shared prayer meetings either in person or on zoom, monthly services in local sheltered housing complexes, sharing of Holy Week services and Pentecost services, foodbanks working together, messy church as a joint venture, children's work and youth clubs as joint ventures.

Also the fact that sometimes in certain areas the Church of Scotland has closed its doors and so the only church available is the SEC and vice a versa. Mission is being done and many do not care which denomination is providing it!

Stornoway and some of the other islands working well together in terms of building relationships and being small communities.

Aberdeen not so well - too busy and too big but ACT works well together.

Some Church of Scotland 's don't work together or even speak to each other never mind speak to other denominations.

Inverclyde seems to keep themselves to themselves while in east end of Dundee there was almost an ecumenical partnership but for Canon 41 which of course now has been changed.

It works best when it stems from friendships between both clergy and laity.

It should not be driven by necessity or finance but as a way of making peace between us and serving the people of our communities.

Questions forcibly asked: What purpose is this Declaration serving? What is lying behind it? What is the end destination?

Ecumenical network in St Andrew's to address the climate emergency – very positive energising of ecumenical relationships.

Using CoS buildings in a variety of places.

People from different churches meeting together for worship.

Convergence in the rural parts of our Diocese and Provinces

Shared services in Holy Week, Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, etc.

- Singing together.
- Collaboration in services (especially in rural areas, may be more need in rural areas).

- World Day of Prayer
 - Local Ecumenical Partnerships
 - Prayer groups
 - Services leading up to Christmas and Easter
 - Week of Christian Unity
 - Pastoral help
 - Coordinating outreach and evangelism
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- Rural areas where no CofS: Piskies inviting other congregations to join them
 - Difference between places: some work well together and share resources and worship and others don't.
 - Previous covenant between churches broke down. Now groups (Catholic and CofS clergy) work together and that helps.
 - Asking what it means to be who we are. Sharing with the RC Church – joint **rosaries** on Friday;
 - Several Methodist / Pisky relationships in LEP's – lots of examples across the country. Also dispersed Methodists across Scotland who don't have local churches and who therefore find homes in other CofS congregations
 - Scottish Churches Leaders Forum – coming to the fore in pandemic. Rooted in prayer and the desire to work together despite difference.
 - Not worship... children's work; Christmas; Easter & Remembrance activities together.
 - Church fair as a successful ecumenical event
 - Missional opportunity for working together in different contexts: witnessing to how we live together despite passionate disagreement
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- Local C of S churches prayed for regularly at Sunday services and prayers in weekly church notice sheets for other local churches
 - Worship together in World Day of Prayer and take turns to host the worship
 - Joint study days on Psalms
 - "Bread basket", local initiative of meals together
 - Joint work on Eco congregations and climate change
 - Pulpit swap with local C of S
 - Zoom prayer meetings with local C of S and evangelical ministers
 - Plans to work together and share resources and church buildings

We shared specific examples locally of collaboration but did not think that the wording was particularly helpful and were not particularly sure that it would help locally. Collaboration in mission to students, mission at Highland games, joint witness to the schools, sharing buildings were what we discussed.

Thursday Eucharists with the Church of Scotland (CofS) congregation

Local Ecumenical Partnerships – shared chaplaincy in school

Shared loving service and teaching in schools

Prayer Spaces run by local congregations (CofS, Episcopal, Pentecostal, Roman Catholic ...)

Response to delays in payment of furlough during pandemic (food banks etc) run jointly

Shared study groups

1-1 supportive relationships between CofS and Piskie clergy
Shared Holy Week services with CofS and other denominations
Pulpit swaps
Ecumenical picnic
Ecumenical online presence (especially during pandemic)

3 churches joined together in rural team. Urban church shared building with CofS.
Ecumenical agreement that started well. When next CofS minister arrived it deteriorated. The building is now closed and not reopening due to deterioration to building. Now waiting to find out what will happen with partnership.

Depends upon the leaderships.

Joint walk of witness on Good Friday – four churches in RC and URC, now mainly SEC and CofS.

SEC Shared flat with two missionaries for CofS.

Pizza church / hot chocolate – part of CofS.

Bell ringers ring in both churches.

Different things happening in two locations. Some led by ministers some from grass roots. Good thing if laity involved, so it doesn't matter who is in charge.

Experience Christmas / Easter in school ecumenically (Baptist / CofS)

Food banks / radio service / 5 services, one hosts, all go.

Pre-pandemic there was collaboration. Not at the moment.

Morningside united – joint services 2x years. Sunday after Christmas and Maundy Thursday

Christian aid book sale

Willingness to worship together

Arran: churches together nearly all the churches are part of it

Lochgilphead – all the churches tend to work together in some way. Chaplains to the high school sometimes

West end churches together – wide range of projects – homeless, arts and crafts, also development of a pilgrim trail

Thematic – New Scots steering group. Refugee issues led by an employee of the Church of Scotland and a member of P's and G's.

Worship service during Advent - churches together in Lockerbie and Moffat.

V active - ministers council in Carnoustie, meetings in Holy Week, advent etc – very sadly broke down 2 years ago when we had a gay married priest... the town was divided and the other churches did not want to continue working with us.

Episcopal, RC and C of S combined together during Lent, ceased when their priest and the C of S minister left.

- Joint Services with CofS & RC during Holy Week & Easter
- Sharing of pulpits

- Administer Hardship Fund jointly
- Fare Share- joint setting up
- Praise in the Park
- Messy Church
- Nursing Home visits
- Shared High School Chaplaincy
- Friendship and fraternal between ministers/priests
- Supporting through the process of transition
- Not always a positive experience and some simple courtesies are absent

The examples, from our breakout group, of collaboration were wide ranging, although everyone had some experience to share from Formal LEP agreements, to very good personal relationships with colleagues. Some of the examples are shared projects, eg foodbank, shared buildings and active church together groups. Joint services on occasions as well as mutual sharing of pulpits and taking services in CofS Churches.

Several examples of collaboration, with joint working through Churches working Together and collaborating with Lent Groups, Christmas & some Easter Services. Working together on Social Causes, and monthly meetings of Ministers. Much of which was suspended during COVID as people struggled to reach their own congregations. One agreed Ecumenical Partnership of long standing in a small rural community and sharing of training resources.

Much however was predicated on the personalities of Clergy involved

Ecumenical coffee shop, prayer groups, feeding people on margins. Holy Week services (CofS and UF church, though not always well supported by non host church members. Eco Fair for COP 26. Work with other evangelical churches. CofS has closed churches in locality. Local co-operation. Countering hate crime.

Feedback

Building sharing.

Sound working relationships particularly in rural settings

In Western Isles there are 17 different churches. Collaboration takes place on a personal relationship basis.

Joint working providing soup kitchens, food banks.

Messy church where children of church going families mix with those of no faith.

We began with an example of bad ecumenical relationships because a Minister was hostile. We also heard of good work together, including RCs, on child poverty in Forres and working together on Messy Church. In Dunfermline good relations with the Abbey and the RC's centred on celebration of St Margaret and use of the Fife Pilgrims Way. Christingle services and an ecumenical Evensong. St Vincent's v close to Stockbridge Parish Church, particularly in the Arts Festival. Interesting that most examples include other churches beyond our two - The St Andrews Declaration is only part of the picture.

Ideally this should go beyond just clergy friendship and collegiality. Examples of good practice - joint worship at services eg Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Remembrance Sunday, joint Thanksgiving service for 100 year anniversary of a war memorial and joint funeral services. Also, Holy Week services, joint working in a food bank. It develops organically, but has been more difficult during lockdown.

- Joint outreach at Highland Games
- Linked churches in Edinburgh city centre
- School uniform pop-up shop as shared venture
- Teen cafe in church hall
- Shared school assemblies

2. *Looking to the future, what other examples of collaboration would you like to see in your own context?*

Feedback

Something more solid with a commitment to each other locally. Current events hanging on by a thread.

Rebuilding of ecumenical relationships generally.

Bishop steers ecumenical relationships in area – less top down and more grass roots, Sharing buildings could be useful. Meetings to allow people from different churches to meet – may lead to more collaboration.

Good for different churches to work together and share resources.

More unity rather than less.

Much more at local level (not just this paper)

Support networks for clergy (though organic rather than formal works best)

Support other church initiatives rather than being in competition. This requires knowing what we are all doing! E.g. joint food bank

We thought we had to be aware of the problems of the Church of Scotland when thinking of any future collaborations.

- Sharing of buildings
- Joint projects in the community
- Sharing church buildings with other Christian denominations
- Pray together and work together for the common good

- Common project for young people
- Diocese to run day for clergy of both SEC and C of S to study together and get to know each other
- Don't need to hold onto tradition but grow together
 - Shared buildings
 - Pisky clergy ministering to the whole parish regardless of denomination
 - United front at COP26
 - Talk to each other!
 - Informal contacts between clergy filtering down to congregation
 - Breaking bread together.

- Coordinating outreach particular in new housing projects
- Helping each other churches to stay open – in the most literal sense
- Sharing communion
- Sharing worship services
- Not just bilateral

There must be more communication between churches and between denominations. We are too small to ignore our brothers and sisters if we are to serve the Kingdom of God.

We should recognise each other's ministries.

More collaboration between General Assembly and General Synod in the great debates of society.

With the amalgamation of Presbyteries, Presbyteries and Diocese may be sharing common borders.

The future is uncertain but one aspect is that we will have to look at potentially sharing buildings and sharing clergy. What this means theologically, spiritually and practically is still to be worked out and will have to be done over the next few years.

The future is going to be 'blended model of worship' and again how we work this out going forward is to be discussed, seriously, in future. The Declaration is the next stage in our journey together as that seems to be the direction we appear to be moving in given all the examples that have been offered of the practical outworking of shared ministry offerings.

Ministry training? Is there merit in training together – giving a case of a confirmation of a relative who at school was confirmed into the Church of Scotland and Scottish Episcopal Church at the same event. A Bishop and the C of S moderator were both there.

Do things in the local communities together? Showing united witness – not polarised

Although our churches are large enough to do things ourselves, it was much better to do it together. In smaller places there is often a need to do things together

One of the best areas of collaboration was where in Kirkcudbright the churches worked together to run the foodbank.

Share worship services

- Shared use of church for pastoral services, such as funeral
- Co-operation
- Shared ministry such as covering for annual leave/funerals etc.
- Sharing of pulpits
- Understanding of our shared SCOTTISH history (drop the 'English Kirk' label)

_A closer formalised working relationship although we all felt this would be short of full integration. We wish to work together to grow the kingdom oh heaven and sustain ministry in every part of Scotland.

Ensure relationship are back to where they were before COVID. But would also like to see work to building sustainable links which do not rely on personalities.

More work with refugees, community support. Youth work, work with refugees and those recovering from addictions. Recognition of each others' orders. Not turning others away. Eco congregation co-operation. Recognition that things may take time as people are tired after Covid.

Feedback

Children. Extend Messy church.

Joint working in Well-being cafe.

Chaplains for schools

United congregations

Suit local needs

Practical considerations in term of resources

Are we entering an ecumenical ice age or are we developing new ways of ecumenism? A person from S India said that in the UK it all seems to depend on the views of the ministers involved. The people are willing (or are they indifferent) but the leaders can hinder it. A good example of ecumenism without priests and ministers is the World Day of Prayer.

In one area they are looking for Churches to come together in worship. In Cumbernauld they are looking to work together on child poverty.

Collaboration:

Good to share buildings and clergy.

One church shared the input into a Care Home with C of S, very different styles of worship but still appreciated.

Joint working needs encouragement from the hierarchy of both churches.

This commitment is good as far as it goes, but clergy not interchangeable.

The wording of the declaration is somewhat ambiguous.

3. *Are there any barriers to co-operation that we need to overcome?*

[This question could be omitted if time does not permit]

Feedback

There is much from the past to be worked through, there is much from the present to be encouraged and there is much in the future to be dreamed of.

Some ecumenical partnerships have taken decades to become established and trusted, but ultimately this has happened when frank open discussion is allowed.

For many the sacraments, primarily the Eucharist and the differing theological positions, is a real and continuing sticking point for future ecumenical relations. This along with differing understandings and concepts of ministry and ordained vocations are also barriers to a positive way forward.

Is ecumenism an extra, sort of luxury or an essential because of Jesus' command to be one as the Father and I are one?

Has ecumenism come and gone as 'flavours of the month'?

Recognised ministries in the West end of Edinburgh is a good model for shared ministries.

This declaration is a start. Section A6 is an important statement.

Realise that we can work together on things like Net Zero Carbon or on social projects and realise that we have more that unites us than divides us.

Can we or must we maintain our own traditions to the exclusion of others?

What will change because of this Declaration?

The "**acknowledgements**" might be a barrier because I might be having to acknowledge things that I don't agree with.

A working group can be a barrier if it takes away from the bottom up activity that has been happening whether or not there is a 'Declaration' or a working group

- Eucharistic understanding

- Theology of orders
- Question of episcopé
- Bilateral ecumenism (we should not exclude other churches)
- Online communion is stumbling block
- Theological differences understanding the church.
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- Need to recognise each others ministry
- Team development to cross denominational boundaries

We do not think we are heading for unity and that should be made clear. We think we should work together in mission in local areas.

Definition of Episkope

Theology of Eucharist

Theology of ordination and three-fold ministry

'Cure of Souls' – why one denomination has this and the others don't

CofS in a state of turmoil as congregations merged and closed causing distress and insecurity and sometimes arrogance

Theology

Geographical issues with churches in the Highlands / Islands.

Ministerial leadership barriers.

Length of service for church leaders affects collaboration.

No matter how enthusiastic a church leader may be, it is sometimes difficult to communicate that to the congregation.

Your own business takes up so much time, the thought of initiating things with other churches can be daunting.

The church leaders.

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- Sacraments
- Ingrained attitudes/prejudices
- Legal things within each own polity

We see a myriad of difficulties and barriers, however to acknowledge that we and the CofS have very broad understandings of the following and within our denomination we do not have consensus. However, it was felt that the following are particularly difficult. The CofS is the established church, the differences in our Sacramental Theology, same sex marriage, pay discrepancies of our ordained ministers. Differences in our governance structures and understanding of how they work. These are a mix of theology and practical differences that may prove difficult to overcome.

Personalities of Clergy and Laity, Canon's and Regulations of the Churches.

Recognition of each others' orders, but it is OK not to be comfortable with each other as we have different ways of working and expressing worship.

CofS is seen as struggling / has "gone missing", so that gives an opportunity to work across denominations.

Learn from examples of Meissen / Porvoo collaborations bringing warmth in fellowship.

Particular situation in the Islands. Working on mutual trust.

Communion and the challenges of differing timetables. CofS has communion 4 times a year. We have it every week.

The lack of mutual recognition of ministry.

We are seen as 'the English' church.

We are not in full communion.

Bigotry has been experienced, depends on which part of the country.

The disparity in size can be a barrier, C of S is bigger, has more money, facilities, equipment etc.

Presbyterians being a state church means they have a vocation to serve in their communities in a way that is different from our situation.

Current reductions in size makes that more difficult.

Unity is not uniformity, not about the larger church dominating the smaller church.

There is a distinctiveness of our smaller church.

A determination to seek for unity is required.

We should not just acknowledge the other church but also pray for each other.

A barrier is not recognising each other's ministry.

Reduction in clergy as churches shrink is a barrier to good relations when the joint working in churches depends on those relationships.

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- Personalities often get in the way of collaboration
- Clergy and laity can become frustrated by what is not shared
- Different - and often critical - views, preferences and biases in different denominations
- The current state of flux in the CoS vis-a-vis presbyteries and church closures. Insecurity of clergy.