From the General Secretary

The referendum on 23rd June has determined that the UK will leave the European Union (despite a majority of voters in Scotland opting to remain). The consequences and uncertainty for British and Scottish politics are still being ascertained, but churches have an obligation to consider these implications in wider terms of faith, relationships, mutual accountability and humanity.

The relationship between Scotland’s churches and those of continental Europe are ongoing and indivisible. The theological contributions from both Rome and Geneva are far from merely historic; the World Council of Churches’ paper on mission Together towards life and Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation Evangelii Gaudium (the Joy of the Gospel) were both considered at the joint ACTS/Church of Scotland autumn conference held on 8th October. Professor Kirsteen Kim, Professor of Theology and World Christianity at Leeds Trinity University, gave an excellent presentation comparing and contrasting both documents. There is a clear mutuality between the two – a great sign of hope, encouragement and responsibility for all concerned with ecumenical relations.

Given the current political situation, the need for Scotland’s churches to remain in close touch with our continental sisters and brothers is vital. To this end, ACTS and the Conference of European Churches are planning a major conference on the implications of “Brexit”. This will be held in Edinburgh in Spring 2017 – further details will be published in due course.

On separate matters, ACTS is currently undergoing a strategic review. The basic question “what is ACTS for” is being considered – based on Jesus’ prayer for unity in John 17:21. ACTS has undergone great change in recent years, such as the sale of the former Scottish Churches House, the change from Networks to Programme work and considerable changes in staff. As part of these developments ACTS is
appointing a Consultant to work on ecumenical ministerial formation in its widest sense (both lay and ordained). Following interviews on 12\textsuperscript{th} October, I am delighted to announce the appointment of the Rev Peter McEnhill. I look forward to working with him.

ACTS has been working closely with Place for Hope – including facilitating the training of additional personnel to help with their work of reconciliation. I greatly enjoyed taking part in their conference on 3\textsuperscript{rd} October.

The ACTS Ecumenical Development Group works on issues of local ecumenism. Can we be of help in your local situation? Can we help put you in touch with others to learn practical examples of what can be done? Please do get in touch with the ACTS office.

The ACTS Programme Groups continue to work hard. If you are interested in exploring the idea of creating a new Programme Group on topics not currently covered please do contact me.

With every blessing and all good wishes,

Matthew Ross
General Secretary
TRAVELLING together

Christians on the way to UNITY

Tuesday 9th May to Saturday 13th May 2017

TRAVELLING together is an international gathering to be held in Castel Gandolfo, in the hills just outside Rome. This 5-day event, hosted by the Focolare Movement, is for Christians of all churches, ages and vocations. It offers a unique opportunity to experience a vibrant and living ecumenism with hundreds of others from all over the world.

Why 2017?

2017 marks the fifth centenary of the Lutheran Reformation. The Lutheran and Catholic churches world-wide hope that this anniversary might be an occasion to “bear witness together to faith in Jesus Christ” before today’s society.

2017 is also the 50th anniversary of the Focolare Movement’s first contacts in Istanbul with Patriarch Athenagoras I and the beginning of many rich encounters with Christians of the Orthodox churches.

The programme will include:

- Exploration of the theme, “Jesus Forsaken, Key to Unity”
- Projects and Stories from Christians of various churches
- Moments of dialogue and reflection
- Visits to Rome and General Audience with Pope Francis
- Ecumenical prayers in the Catacombs

From Scotland an itinerary is being planned from Sunday 7th - Sunday 14th May in order to do more sightseeing.

For more information please contact

Focolare Centre 30 Langside Drive
Glasgow G43 2QQ Tel: 0141 6373316 or email travellingtogether@focolare.org.uk or visit www.focolare.org/gb
Remember me…..
Prisoners Week, 20-27 November 2016

His name is not known, his words have never been forgotten. This remorseful prisoner, calls out to another: “Jesus, remember me.”

Prisoners Week is an initiative of the Churches that aims to stimulate discussion, highlight concerns and share hope, in prisons and communities across Scotland. It takes place in the third week of November.

You are warmly invited to the ecumenical National Launch Service for Prisoners Week at 18.30 on Monday 21st November in St Margaret’s, Drip Road, Stirling, FK9 4AU, followed by refreshments.

Local community and prison events also celebrate the week – we will be adding a calendar of events to the website www.prisonersweek.org.uk where there are resources, worship reflections from the Christian and Islamic traditions, further information and details of organisations that offer support and advice.

Joint Faiths Board on Community Justice

CCTV and Electronic Monitoring - new forms of community justice?

Faith group interest in criminal justice has traditionally been very prison-focused. Imprisonment will always be an important concern but there is much more to contemporary "community justice" on which faith groups could usefully ponder and speak. The Joint Faiths Board on Community Justice has prepared two papers – one on CCTV and one on Electronic Monitoring – and commends them to you for discussion and dissemination.

The Papers are available on the Community Justice Page on the ACTS website www.acts-scotland.org

Neither are the final word on their subject - they are simply intended to invite reflection by people of faith on current ways of addressing crime in Scotland with which they may not be familiar. If your organisation wants more information in order to take discussion further, or to give us feedback, please contact Miriam
CREATING A JUST SCOTLAND

Transforming our land and taxation policies

Speakers: Richard Murphy, Lesley Riddoch, Andy Wightman MSP

Saturday, 29th October, 2016  Time, 10.00 am to 11.50 am
Out of the Blue Drill Hall, Edinburgh, EH6 8RG

Scottish Quakers are committed to seeking a just society in which resources are shared more equitably. We are not alone; many others share this vision. The time seems right to join with others and call for change.

The Scottish Quaker Parliamentary Group has arranged this symposium on tackling inequalities in Scottish society. By agreement, it is on the programme of the Independent & Radical Book Fair in Edinburgh.

There are no tickets for this FREE event – Just come along.

The symposium will bring together a range of concerned parties including Scottish Quakers, other churches and faith communities, local organisations working on economic justice, and politicians.

Rev. Sally Foster-Fulton, head of Christian Aid in Scotland and former chair of the Church of Scotland Church and Society Council will chair the symposium.

There will be three speakers:

- Richard Murphy, well-known tax expert, has written extensively on taxation issues and has proposed radical reform of our taxation system in books such as ‘The Joy of Tax’. He now directs Tax Research UK and campaigns on issues of tax avoidance and evasion.
- Lesley Riddoch, journalist, author of ‘Blossom - what Scotland needs to Flourish’. Influential in making links between Scottish politicians and Nordic countries, with a view to learning lessons from their economic and political systems.
- Andy Wightman MSP, advocate of land ownership reform in Scotland and much published author whose books include ‘Who Owns Scotland’; ‘Scotland: Land and Power’ and ‘The Poor Had No Lawyers’

For further information, please contact Mairi Campbell-Jack, mairic@quaker.org.uk
Church Action on Poverty

ACTS is working with Church Action on Poverty to develop local projects in Scotland. Two initial local projects are being investigated – in Invergordon and Alloa. More information about the work on Church Action on Poverty is available at www.church-poverty.org.uk

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI)

‘Called to be One’ - a conference exploring the meaning of Visible Unity
From 11am Tuesday 22 November to 3.30pm Wednesday 23 November
Holiday Inn City West, 107 Queensferry Road, Edinburgh EH4 3HL

Booking and information

Full board - £140 including accommodation and all meals
Day delegate - £80 excluding accommodation, but including all meals
To book, please send an email to: natasha.richmond@ctbi.org.uk

Religion and the Media

A one day conference for Further Education Equalities Staff, Student Support Staff, and Chaplaincy Teams to network, share best practice and explore how religion and belief are portrayed in the media in the 21st century.

Thursday 17th November 2016
10.00 - 16.30

City of Glasgow College
Riverside Campus
21 Thistle Street
Glasgow
G5 9xB

£11.21 - bookings through www.eventbrite.co.uk

Meanwhile CTBI is holding a conference that explores current understandings of “visible unity”. The conference will be hearing from those involved in local contexts, new developments in inter-Christian co-operation, as well as recent ecumenical agreements. Participants will be guided in our conversations by those who will explore more deeply the theological and sociological issues. Professor Grace Davey will be one of the key speakers.
Resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2017 are now available. The theme is “Crossing Barriers”. The material for 2017 was prepared for worldwide use by the churches in Germany based around the verses 2 Corinthians 5:14-20. For more information please go to www.ctbi.org.uk

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is traditionally observed from the 18th to the 25th January – the octave of St. Peter and St. Paul. However, some areas observe it at Pentecost or some other time.

There are fifty million Christians in Germany who, traditionally, have mostly belonged to the Roman Catholic Church or one of the Protestant State Churches. Recent developments, particularly the reception of refugees and asylum seekers, have begun to change this balance and other Christian traditions are finding expression. Whilst that which unites the churches is stronger than that which divides, there are still areas of difference in which the churches remain self-absorbed or construct new walls.

The text from 2 Corinthians announces that God has, in Christ, reconciled the world to himself. The love of Christ compels us to be ambassadors of this reconciliation, which is enacted by dismantling the walls. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, Germany experienced how a seemingly insurmountable wall could be brought down. The fall of this wall is a symbol of hope that, with the love of God, nothing is impossible.

Advent Resources

Advent material from ACTS will be available shortly on the ACTS website.
Local Ecumenism

The Ecumenical Development Group supports and reviews Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs), and engages with local expressions of ecumenism, such as Churches Together Groups.

Over the last several months, ACTS has been visiting groups around the country, learning about the ecumenical work going on locally. Particularly, it has been interesting to note the increasing number of churches coming together informally to work on current issues, such as food banks.

This ‘issue-based ecumenism’ expresses current global trends in ecumenism towards mission-focused relationships. ACTS is exploring the mission documents Together Towards Life (World Council of Churches) and Evangelii Gaudium (Pope Francis) and hopes to

If your area is doing anything, and might be interested in learning more about this project, please contact Miriam at miriamweibye@acts-scotland.org

About ACTS

Founded in 1990, Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) is a joint initiative of the Church of Scotland, Congregational Federation, Methodist Church, Religious Society of Friends, Roman Catholic Church, Salvation Army, Scottish Episcopal Church, United Free Church of Scotland and United Reformed Church. ACTS aims to bring Christians of different traditions in Scotland closer to one another in their shared faith in Jesus Christ by meeting, praying, learning, reflecting and acting together on matters of common concern.

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Action of Churches Together in Scotland is registered in Scotland (at the above address) as a Charity (no. SC000295) and as a Company limited by guarantee (no. SC348236)

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