

‘There are no words’

Statement from the Rt Rev Dr Shaw Paterson, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, marking the first anniversary of the October 7 attacks

THERE are no words that can adequately sum up our feelings and emotions as we reflect on a year of conflict in Israel and Gaza.

The massacre in Israel on October 7 2023 and the war, with widespread destruction within Gaza, that followed has brought suffering to hundreds of thousands and elevated tension between communities throughout the world.

It is hard to imagine that we are still witnessing scenes of horror and devastation, and yet it is a reality. Innocents are still suffering; families are still mourning; what we see through media images is an everyday reality for so many. We are horrified by the extensive loss of life.

While we cannot articulate words to describe what people are living through, we must use words to bring about a resolution to this dreadful situation. Last year, my predecessor, the Very Rev Sally Foster Fulton made comment about the conflict: "We call for calm and active consideration for the innocent civilians who are suffering in Israel and Gaza. Peace in our world can never come through violence.

Peace in our spirits can never come through revenge."

As events continue to unfold, we too pray for an end to the war on Gaza and Lebanon, an end to the attacks, and for a just resolution for all the people of Israel and Palestine, and call upon all parties to lay down their weapons and enter meaningful dialogue to bring this conflict to an end.

Our prayers are with those who are suffering the effects of this year of conflict that they might be comforted. We pray also for an end to hostilities and for meaningful dialogue that gives Israelis and Palestinians their rights to safety and self-determination. We pray that the familiar words from Isaiah will become a reality: "they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more." (Isaiah 2:4) ■

<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/articles/statement-from-the-moderator-on-the-one-year-anniversary-of-the-7-october-attacks>

Welcome to the Life and Work monthly newsletter, a free resource helping Church of Scotland members stay up-to-date with everything going on in the Church and its partners.

Each month there will be exclusive features, news and updates from Church organisations.

The newsletter is free to download from www.lifeandwork.org/newsletter. Feel free to share with church members, friends and family, and get in touch if you have any comments or suggestions.

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‘A Chance to Lift Themselves’

Jackie Macadam meets the founder of a Church partner project which is helping families affected by HIV/AIDS in Kenya

“WE provide healthcare, counselling and income-generating projects for women and their families affected by HIV and AIDS in Kenya.”

Esther Wanjohi head of Kenyan organization Ecludare, is visiting Murrayfield Churches Together (MCT) in Edinburgh, who have been in partnership with the project since 2009.

Through the years MCT have helped provide Educare with livestock, mosquito nets, mattresses, school supplies, solar lighting and hygiene products.

“Our home improvements project has benefited hugely from this partnership,” says Esther. “The women we work with have lost their children to HIV and AIDS and have been left to bring up their grandchildren – often with little income and no resources but love.

“They need the basics to help them care for these youngsters – cups, plates, spoons, blankets, everything and our partnership with MCT supports us.”

Esther has personal experience of the losses AIDS has inflicted on Africa.

Her own sister died from the virus.

“I stayed with her for the last few days of her life,” she says. “At that time around 30% of our nation was living with HIV and AIDS.

“There were so many children without parents or whose parents were dying and unable to care for them.

“I knew then, from being with my sister, that I wanted to find a way to get

the knowledge and experience to allow me to train to work with those with AIDS.”

There were courses available and Esther was able to get sponsorship for a course at St Paul’s University, Limuru. The course had funding from the Church of Scotland HIV Programme and it was through a visit by members that she met Shirley Brown from Murrayfield Parish Church and subsequently the Ecumenical Partnership developed. This has been a great opportunity for the churches to come together and includes Saughtonhall United Reformed Church and The Good Shepherd Scottish Episcopal Church.

Ecludare gives women not just skills, but an income stream they wouldn’t otherwise have had.

“The women do very good quality beadwork (they created the original beaded HIV ribbons which were part of a Church Of Scotland Guild Project) as well as aprons, bags, purses, hats and beautiful beaded jewellery.

“We also maintain a small garden that helps aid self-sufficiency and high quality food for the women and the children.”

Ecludare also runs a school, of which Esther is Head.

The principal aim of the school is to provide a decent education for the children that have been left behind.

Though school is free in Kenya, all the supplies to attend it aren’t, so poor



children can be left out.

“Some of the help comes from MCT. We aim to provide all needs including uniforms and even the meals they eat during the school day.

“We have over 50 children at the school,” Esther says. “And we are incredibly proud that one of our children has been accepted for University.

“Education will give these children the chance to lift themselves and their families out of the poverty that they have grown up with.”

Esther’s visit to MCT was helped by a Faithshare Grant. Kath Anderson from Murrayfield Parish Church says: “Esther lifted the profile of our Ecludare project immensely to all of the congregations and everyone that met her was inspired by all her enthusiasm and dedication and Christian spirit she brings to everything and especially to all the children and women in Ngong. Her visit has energised us all in working together to help her with her various projects.” ■

Faith Will

The Church of Scotland is partnering with Christian Aid and other churches from across the UK to encourage people of faith to consider leaving a gift in their Will to their church and to Christian Aid. Follow the link below to access free resources to promote legacy giving within your congregation.

Visit the Faith Will website: <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/key-appeals/faith-will>

National Interfaith Conference

A National Interfaith Conference will mark the start of the 20th Scottish Interfaith Week on Tuesday November 12.

The conference is set to include a keynote address, a celebration of the first anniversary of Dundee City Council's Faith Covenant, input from Interfaith Scotland's youth board, the unveiling of the community tapestry, and workshops exploring important issues facing society today.

The festival theme of 'Discovery' is inspired by Dundee, the host city for the conference.

"We are delighted to be hosting the launch event for Scottish Interfaith Week in partnership with Dundee City Council, the first council in Scotland to create a faith covenant," said Director of Interfaith Scotland, Dr Maureen Sier.

The keynote speaker will be Charandeep Singh, Deputy Chief Executive at the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, Scotland's largest business network, where he represents Scotland's business community nationally and internationally. In addition to his SCC role, he also serves as an Advisor to the Principal of the University of Strathclyde, Board Member at City of Glasgow College and Chair of national charity Sikhs in Scotland.

Charandeep is the founding member of The Sikh Food Bank, an award winning charity. He received a British Empire Medal in the Queen's New Years Honours List 2021 and was awarded the inaugural Pride of Scotland Award & Man of the Year Award for Services to Charity. He also served as the Secretary and Board Member of The Glasgow Gurdwara from 2013 – 2020, the youngest individual to serve in this position in any Gurdwara in Europe.

Register at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/national-interfaith-conference-tickets-912053635977>

An 80-year-old elder has almost completed a 100-mile walking challenge in a third of the allotted time.

Claudia Nicholson began her quest on October 1 and by the 10th had already clocked up 84 miles in aid of Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance (SCAA), even though she has until 31 October to complete it.

A member of Peninsula Churches - Ardgour, Morvern and Stontian with Arharacle and Ardnamurchan - in the West Highlands, the retired district nurse midwife said she took on the formidable task to support crews and their life-saving work across Scotland.

Ms Nicholson of Strontian said: "This fundraising walk is not about me, it is about you and all of us. We never know when any of us or our loved ones may be in a situation where the SCAA could be needed."

Read more at <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/articles/elder-80-on-track-to-walk-100-miles-to-support-air-ambulance-charity> and donate at <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Claudia1725441907192>

What's On

Christians and Climate Change Saturday October 19, 10am-1pm St Matthew's Church, Perth

An enlightening event discussing the intersection of faith and environmental stewardship. Dive into conversations about how Christians can play a vital role in addressing climate change and caring for our planet. This in-person gathering promises insightful talks, engaging discussions, and a chance to connect with like-minded individuals passionate about preserving God's creation. With input from the Church of Scotland's Faith Action team, EcoCongregation Scotland and Christian Aid Scotland, the event will explore Christian responses to the climate crisis - speakers, stalls, workshops and worship.

Organised by the Presbytery of Perth but all denominations welcome.

Attendance is free, but you are requested to register your intention to attend, for logistical reasons.

Register at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/christians-and-climate-change-tickets-1012736029727>

Chalmers Lectures

October 15, 17 and 29, 7-8.30pm King's College, Aberdeen and online

The 2024 Chalmers Lectures will address the theme of 'Hope in Today's World'. The first three lectures will be delivered by Dr Katie Cross, Christ's College Lecturer in Practical Theology at the University of Aberdeen, beginning with the cross and the way it has been interpreted both as a place of trauma and of hope.

They will be followed by a further three lectures in November and December from the Rev Professor John Swinton, before a Q&A with Drs Cross and Swinton on December 9.

<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/chalmerslectures2024>

In November's Life and Work

Remembrance

Islands Under Occupation: the wartime experience of a Channel Islands church

Remembrance Prayer from the Moderator of the General Assembly

'Ordinary People Doing Extraordinary Things'

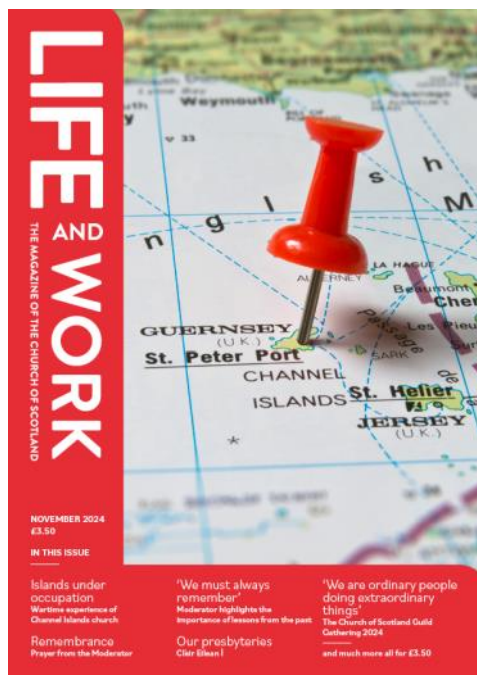
The Annual Gathering of the Church of Scotland Guild

Presbytery Focus

Clèir Eilean Ì, the Presbytery of the Highlands and Hebrides

'No Room for Comfort and Joy'

The Christian Aid Christmas Appeal



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The Big Picture

Tenandry Kirk, near Pitlochry, by Arkadiusz J Kilanowski



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