

Presbytery of Annandale and Eskdale

At Gretna and within St. Andrew's Parish Church, Tuesday, 1<sup>st</sup> May 2012.

Inter alia:

The Moderator warmly welcomed everyone to Presbytery especially the Rev. Roger Culter, Convener of the Galloway Regional Council of the Scottish Episcopal Church; the Very Rev. Dr. Sheilagh Kesting, Secretary and Ecumenical Officer, Church of Scotland and the Rev. Sandy Montgomerie, Ecumenical Relations Officer, Scottish Episcopal Church, Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway.

1. Signing of Learning Agreement between the Presbytery of Annandale and Eskdale and the Galloway Region of the Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway of the Scottish Episcopal Church

The Moderator reminded Presbyters that they had resolved at their meeting on Tuesday, 7/2/12 {Item 8]a]} and Tuesday, 20/3/12 {Item 11]g]} to i] enter into a learning agreement with the Galloway Region of the Scottish Episcopal Church, Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway [as set out in the draft agreement] and ii] to allow the Business Committee to make suitable arrangements for the formal signing of the agreement at a future meeting of Presbytery.

After the opening worship which included Praise, Prayers, Lord's Prayer and a Bible Reading the Narrative and Preamble was read by the Clerk.

"The relationship between the Presbytery of Annandale and Eskdale of the Church of Scotland and the Galloway Region of the Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway of the Scottish Episcopal Church ~ is being celebrated through this Learning Agreement.

It reached its current stage on the journey through an informal Network of Ecumenical Trainers, called together by Pauline Steenbergen of the Church of Scotland.

At these regular gatherings, resources, support, food and prayer were shared in a spirit of mutual care and generosity. Firm friendships were formed.

In the course of these gatherings it became obvious that our respective denominations ~

shared a training and learning agenda; each had developed training materials that could be adapted for use by the other; shared a need to 'release, equip and empower' all those with gifts in ministry and mission and were encouraging us to develop ecumenical links and freely share resources across geographical and ecclesiastical boundaries.

This growing relationship and shared local need ~ developed into a specific Pastoral Care Training Programme ~ drawing on existing material devised by the Scottish Episcopal Church. It was delivered by trainers and offered to participants from both denominations.

Other training and learning opportunities are being developed jointly.

The Presbytery of Annandale and Eskdale covers almost all of Annandale and Eskdale ~ minus a very small area in the SW corner of Annandale being in the neighbouring Presbytery of Dumfries and Kirkcudbright ~ plus Liddesdale in Roxburghshire and The Border Kirk in Cumbria.

The Galloway Region of the Scottish Episcopal Church covers an area from Portpatrick in the west to Gretna and then north to Moffat.

The areas covered by both denominations offer us the opportunity to work closely together ~ while at the same time encouraging us to extend our partnerships as appropriate.

The Presbytery of Annandale and Eskdale is exploring avenues of mutual learning across Presbytery boundaries. There are healthy Churches Together groups in Annan, Carlisle and Moffat, and other informal ecumenical networks throughout our region.

We are grateful for the partnerships and the co-operation already in existence between the denominations in our country and beyond. Our hope is that through this Learning Agreement these and other partnerships, geographical and ecclesiastical, will be strengthened and augmented. A draft Learning Agreement went to the World Mission and Ecumenical Relations Committee of the Presbytery of Annandale and Eskdale and to the Bishop's Staff Group within the Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway.

Working its way through the appropriate channels of both denominations it has been welcomed by both Churches.

In both cases the National Ecumenical Officers were kept fully informed, and were delighted by the developments.

With the whole Church we pray for the unity to which Jesus calls us ~ as we seek new ways ~ to strengthen and deepen the faith of those we serve.

These are exciting times. The future is in God's hands."

The Moderator then led the Presbytery in prayer.

Thereafter a hymn was sung and the Learning Agreement was signed by the Rev. Roger Cutler and the Moderator.

### "LEARNING AGREEMENT

between

The Presbytery of Annandale and Eskdale, Church of Scotland and the  
Galloway Region of the Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway, Scottish Episcopal Church

Acknowledging the existing formal and informal ecumenical work in this area, and as Christians together we commit ourselves, where appropriate, to:

1. sharing our resources and training across our Region/Presbytery to fulfil our shared Christian mission to spread the Gospel
2. increasing the confidence of our members to speak of God and faith in ways that make sense to others
3. sharing in networking

We will achieve these goals

- through sharing existing and future learning and training resources
- by extending invitations to relevant training and other events to our respective denominational areas
- by seeking new ways together to develop training and learning material and opportunities.

We agree to review this agreement two years after implementation."

Thereafter Mr. Montgomerie, Dr. Kesting and the Moderator spoke about the education link-up agreement and how it was symbolic of the increasingly warm relationships between Christian denominations that have developed over the last decades and of other close links that have been formed as churches increasingly work together.

The final hymn was then sung followed by the benediction.

Presbytery then had a short break before re-commencing for the remaining business.

The Minute, Order of Business and part of the Report of the World Mission and Ecumenical Relations Committee was then taken, followed by the address of the Very Rev. Dr. Sheilagh Kesting.

The full text of the address can be found at <http://www.furtherministriesteam.com/history.html> under Ecumenical Working.

4. Report of the World Mission and Ecumenical Relations Committee including an address from the Very Rev. Dr. Sheilagh Kesting, former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland  
Mrs. Dodds, Convener, gave in the report of the World Mission and Ecumenical Relations Committee.

f] The Very Rev. Dr. Sheilagh Kesting

The Convener asked the Moderator to invite the Very Rev. Dr. Sheilagh Kesting, former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and Secretary and Ecumenical Officer in the Church of Scotland, to address Presbytery as previously agreed {Item 11]g] of Minute of Meeting of 20/3/12}.

Dr. Kesting then addressed Presbytery.

"In times of change we need to go back to basics such as these, it is an opportunity to go back to basics. The 20th century vision of divided churches reuniting is no longer the key concern. New ways are being sought to make visible the unity of the Church. The focus has been put firmly on the local, where much is already happening.

But churches do not exist in isolation from one another. "Conciliarity belongs to the essence of the Church." (WCC Lebanon 2012). In our church that conciliarity is expressed in Presbyterianism. We are the church together as worshipping congregations connected to one another, bound to one another and to Christ and to the saints in all ages through our baptism. We take council in Presbytery and General Assembly. In ecumenism that thinking is simply extended to those from other traditions of the Church who share that bondedness in Christ through baptism and are therefore bound to us and we to them in the fellowship of Christ. The WCC report describes this fellowship as something that occurs when: local churches in all their human diversity meet for deliberation, service, formation, and shared celebration in council.

Through seeking this kind of fellowship with other churches, we are responding to God's invitation to participate in the reconciliation which Christ offers us through his cross and resurrection.

The divisions of the Church need to be healed - because they are a wound in the Body of Christ and a hindrance to the witness of the church as a reconciled community to a world so desperately in need of reconciliation. So when ecumenists speak of the goal of visible unity, they are recognising that this is both a divine calling and a human task and challenge. We seek common fellowship - in witness to the Gospel, proclamation of the Word, sharing of the sacraments and healing of the nations. The church as a household of faith, encompasses the rich diversity of humanity - so it is never about uniformity. It celebrates 'the dignity of difference' (Jonathan Sachs).

The measures we apply to ourselves as the Church of Scotland are by and large those that also apply within the wider ecumenical context. So the councils of the ecumenical movement are places where relationships of accountability are developed. There is need of trust and respect because there will be sharp differences of opinion. The ecumenical bodies we set up to enable us to relate to one another, open up space where we can listen to each other and learn how to respect different points of view. It is also space where we learn again that we need each other and are incomplete without each other. It is a space to support one another in times of difficulty.

The Learning Agreement signed here this evening will help prepare Christian disciples in this corner of Scotland to take their place in a network of relations which is both local and global.

Canonbie is an example of how a local church community has been and continues to be enriched and enlivened by acknowledging that the wounds of the past need no longer be carried into the future. What happened in Canonbie has shown the potential offered now by the Covenant at national level with the United Free Church. It is an example to others. There are examples elsewhere of the enriching effects of twinnings, e.g. where congregations and/or Presbyteries are twinned with congregations or projects overseas - sometimes with mission partners in Africa or Asia or through Christian Aid or with congregations or presbyteries on mainland Europe. In every example, exchange visits keep the initiatives alive and in all cases churches remark on the effect that these international relationships have on their local relations as churches together. There would certainly be the opportunity to set up other initiatives, not least between one rural area and another. These are just a few things that seem to speak to our times and which keep alive the commitment we have as a church to work ecumenically, whenever possible.

Drawing up formal agreements, when entering into a relationship, ensures mutual support and accountability. It holds before the rest of the Presbytery its calling to recognise the need to work together with others as a means of demonstrating the reconciled community we wish for the whole of society, and it makes it easier to share experience more widely.

I commend the ecumenical work in which you are already engaged and encourage you to seek every opportunity to do more, not for your own sake, but for the sake of him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to whom be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever."

The Moderator warmly thanked Dr. Kesting for her address.

Extract from the records of the Presbytery of Annandale and Eskdale by  
Rev. C. Bryan Haston, Presbytery Clerk.