



The Church of Scotland
Church and Society Council

Church & Society Council

A Report for the Church of Scotland General Assembly, May 2012

Sectarianism

Sectarianism

From the 2002 report on Sectarianism to the General Assembly:-

Sectarianism is...a complex set of attitudes, actions, beliefs and structures at personal, communal and institutional levels, which involves religion and typically involves a negative mixing of religion and politics. It arises as a distorted expression of human needs, especially for belonging, identity and the freedom of expression of difference, and is expressed in destructive patterns of relating. (From Joseph Leichthy, Irish School of Ecumenics – for more information see Appendix 1, below.)

In 2012:-

Sectarianism within Scottish society is a phenomenon which has not gone away. In 2011 some specific football-related incidents of violent sectarian behaviour once again plunged Scotland into the centre of international media attention. The rivalry of football teams, compounded with our sad history of political and religious difference has kept sectarian attitudes and behaviours alive. Sectarianism at football is however just one manifestation of this insidious problem which corrupts our common life. Many Scots will know of those little asides, nasty jokes or bigoted attitudes which still persist.

Last year the Scottish Government demonstrated its desire to take action to attempt to end sectarianism at football. The Church of Scotland has consistently been a leading voice contributing to the debate about sectarianism and helping to shape a response, both at the level of national politics and the media, as well as in local communities.

Background

The General Assembly last received a report on sectarianism in 2002. The report and Deliverances associated with it can be found below in Appendix 1.

Many of the findings of that landmark report still apply.

Sectarianism is not someone else's problem, it's an issue for us all.

The issue of ongoing sectarian attitudes and practices must be pursued with sensitivity and vigour. We must acknowledge the Church of Scotland's own history, and recognise that this demon in our past has been brought into the open and has been faced head on. The General Assembly has expressed its regret at the previous statements that were made in its name regarding Irish Catholic immigration.

The Nil by Mouth Charter for Change (see Appendix 2, below) sets out the key principles and areas of action which need to be followed if we are ever to eradicate sectarianism from Scottish life.

Sectarianism in Scotland today:

- is seen and heard in the small asides which say little and reveal much
- is most publicly evident in behaviour associated with football matches but is by no means confined to this
- is maintained by the presence of exclusive organisations that perpetuate sectarian divisions
- is, thanks to changing patterns in society, less blatant than before
- is still, in its most extreme form, ugly, intimidating and murderous
- is still very much in the public eye, generating extensive media coverage and comment
- is capable of demonstrating itself throughout Scotland; it is not limited to cities and urban communities
- will continue to be pervasive unless we are willing to search our own consciences and to review our own language, attitudes and actions.

And we are reminded that:

- we each have a personal responsibility to tackle sectarianism in Scotland today. We are not guiltless in our own behaviour and, as in addressing other areas of discrimination such as gender and racism, we must be very cautious and remember that "we will be called to account for every useless word" (Matthew 12:36).
- while we must be part of the solution, we should recognise that we may also be part of the problem
- our silence often renders us complicit in sectarianism and that an awareness of the consequences of our behaviour and language is the first step towards change
- much can be achieved by committed individuals, even when tackling a belief system which goes deep in our society.

Context

The General Assembly in 2011 instructed the Church and Society Council to report on the work of Councils, Committees, Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions in relation to sectarianism (see Appendix 3)

The debate at the General Assembly in May 2011 took place towards the end of a football season which had seen repeated incidents of sectarian behaviour, including the posting of letter bombs to prominent Celtic Football Club supporters and a Heart of Midlothian fan physically assaulting Celtic Manager Neil Lennon at a match.

Following last year's Holyrood elections, the Scottish Government indicated its clear intention to demonstrate decisive action to tackle sectarianism at football. Its response was to introduce the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Bill in June 2011. This Bill was originally introduced as a piece of emergency legislation, with the Government's wish to have complete all its

Parliamentary stages within two weeks, in time for the start of the new football season. The Church of Scotland expressed deep concern about the haste involved in legislating so quickly. Our advice to the Government was that without proper scrutiny of legislation the Government would have ridden roughshod over the traditions of Parliament and that rushed laws often make bad laws. The newly elected Scottish Parliament is, for the first time, a majority for the Government, meaning that it can in theory have a much freer reign over legislation than in the past. We were also worried that the first act of the new Parliament would be to force through a new law without the consensus of the other political parties; we feared that this might set a dangerous precedent for the remaining five years of the Parliament. The Church of Scotland offered a leading voice in calling for greater time for the Bill to be considered, which would allow the rest of civic Scotland an opportunity to reflect on the Bill and engage properly with the issues. In the end the Government heeded our call for delay, and instead of two weeks they allowed six months for the Bill to undergo proper explanation, debate, consultation and scrutiny.

The Church of Scotland, working through the Church and Society Council and in partnership with Faith in Community Scotland, gave written and oral evidence to the Justice Committee of the Scottish Parliament which was examining the Bill (See Appendix 4). Our key message was that our experience in local communities gives the Church an expertise in the issues under consideration that is unique in Scotland. Our response also focused on the need for the Government to resource and support local development work on the ground in local communities. As our evidence suggests this works best at changing hearts and minds. National criminal legislation may help deter bigotry, but new laws alone are not enough to tackle sectarianism.

Since the 2010-11 football season we have been encouraged by encounters with police officers responsible for matches. The work of anti-sectarianism units, using surveillance technology such as video cameras, is helping to force a change of behaviour at and around grounds. Legislation can be a useful driver of change (for example the ban on smoking in public places), but laws are not always followed, and so often public awareness campaigns can be equally effective in changing how people think. (Such as the changing approach to drink driving, or the hard-hitting HIV AIDS public campaigns of the 1980s). The best response to a deep-rooted problem such as sectarianism will be multi-faceted: education, legislation, police presence, national and local leadership, community development, initiatives with young people in and outwith school, individuals taking a stand when friends or family members behave inappropriately. What will it take to finally eradicate sectarianism? Both the vision and the will but also the energy and concerted action of everyone involved – which includes the Church at a local, regional and national level.

Church Action

The Church and Society Council was asked to work with other Councils, Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions to report here what each is doing in relation to Sectarianism. Here we share some stories to affirm and encourage those who are mentioned and to inspire others to take action themselves.¹ These are the voices from the congregations and projects from the length and breadth of Scotland:

Bridging the Gap was set up by Blessed John Duns Scotus Church and Gorbals Parish Church to bring the two denominations (Protestant and Catholic) closer together to work across divides in the community. Originally the work addressed sectarianism and divides between generations and now it has been extended to work with asylum seekers, welcoming them and helping them to integrate into the area. The project is a visible sign that there is Christian unity with a focus on enhancing the lives of all the people in the community. This is a formal way of demonstrating commitment to one another, which is more than just about inter church relationships.

Some of the work has involved relationships with local schools. There is a peer tutoring system in the two local high schools – one Roman Catholic the other Non-denominational. S4 pupils help P7s from the nine primary schools in South Glasgow that feed into the two high schools.

In 2011 Bridging the Gap took 90 S4 pupils to Northern Ireland where there is a twinning arrangement with a school in West Belfast. The trip involved time spent at the Corrymeela Community reconciliation centre.

The work of Bridging the Gap has grown and developed, and is now working with hundreds of young people each year.

¹ This list is not intended to be a full description of all the Church of Scotland's work on the issue; it is simply a list of examples that were supplied following a call for stories in the summer of 2011.

In 2011 the General Assembly commended the work that the Iona Community is doing in prisons and in particular the '**Can you hear the Bigots sing?**' programme and encouraged the Iona Community in its work to counter sectarianism.

'Can you hear the bigots sing?' was originally produced for working with the young offenders in HMP Polmont. Community Safety Minister, Fergus Ewing MSP, visited Polmont to take part in the course and expressed a desire to use the course to tackle anti-sectarian behaviour across Scotland in adult prisons. The Iona Community received funding to run a pilot project of the course twice in HMP Addiewell and twice in HMP Barlinnie. According to our evaluations, 63% of participants showed a more positive attitude around issues of sectarianism in HMP Addiewell and 58% in HMP Barlinnie. As a result of the success of the pilot project further funding was awarded to enable the programme to be offered in a greater number of prisons between August 2010 and March 2011. HMP Kilmarnock, Addiewell, Greenock, Barlinnie and Glenochil all participate in the course.

This course aims to provide learning as well as a positive change in attitude, producing an ability to tolerate diversity and promote citizenship. Outcomes are measured by assessing learning gained from taking part in the course, by recording a change of attitude evidenced by participants. These are monitored at the beginning, during, and at the end of the course. A short (internal) evaluation is recorded at the end of each session by the facilitator. These recordings are kept and used to help the final external course evaluation as well as to enable the course to be adapted if necessary to suit the needs of the group, and to pick up on learning areas. The course is run over 4 weeks, twice a week. Each session lasts 2 hours. Session leaders work with one group in the morning and a different group in the afternoon.

On the final week of the course the Old Firm Alliance, which delivers workshops regarding anti-social behaviour, sectarianism, racism and territorialism, offers a 2 hour workshop and coaching session with the participants. The credibility and status of Celtic and Rangers football clubs should further enhance this programme and also act as an incentive for participants to attend every session of the course. At the end of the seven session course, an independent external group conducts an evaluation with the group participants, using Specific, Measured, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound (SMART) principles. A formal report is then submitted to the Government with recommendations on if/how/when a wider piece of work should be conducted among the prison population.

The Scottish Government has indicated that there may be further funding available for the course to be delivered for another year (2011/2012) which would see the course continue until 2012 and target other prisons in Scotland.

Larkhall Churches have regular ecumenical events including an Easter Parade where Catholics and Protestants march united in faith which was widely reported in the press as a unique ecumenical event in a community which had developed a reputation for being the most sectarian town in Scotland.

The **Machan Trust (Lanark)** has done a number of specific projects addressing sectarianism. In 2011, for example, they ran drama workshops with P7s across 10 schools developing stories/plays on the subject, showcasing one from each school at a performance in the church (which was picked up by STV) and collecting them in a book and DVD. In 2010 they arranged visits from Theresa Bresland, author of *Divided City*, to each school followed by craft workshops which were again showcased at a big event. www.themachantrust.co.uk

Cranhill Parish Church – Glasgow works through community initiatives including the Cranhill Development Trust and an arts project called *Out of the Box*. They engage on issues of sectarianism at different levels, including through explicit effort. One project saw two local primary schools, one Catholic and one Non-denominational, make a mosaic for the other school.

The constitution of Cranhill Development Trust requires membership from both the Church of Scotland and Catholic churches, and that the mix of the community is reflected.

Much of the work of the two organisations and the church itself facilitates mixing between people from all parts of the community.

Grassmarket Community Project - Edinburgh

www.grassmarketcommunityproject.co.uk

The main impact is through bringing people together in the same space and working side by side, cutting across sectarian lines by building up new communities and a sense of identity. The football banter can still happen but it is in the context of a different sense of belonging. The community building methodology of the project inherently addresses sectarianism.

There were several groups which felt they addressed sectarianism by the fact that they are intentional partnerships between the different churches working for the benefit of the wider community. For example:-

Two Lochs Project - Lochaber

The Two Lochs Project began about seven years ago when the two Church of Scotland ministers and the Catholic Priest and the Episcopal Priest got together and began to fundraise to employ a Christian Youth Worker. "We wanted to show Christ's love in action and make no religious demands on the young people – well, it would be hard to encourage them to go to one church when we are all involved – the Salvation Army are also involved now."

Stirling Street Pastors – Stirling

www.stmarksstirling.org.uk

Like many other projects and other Street Pastors schemes, intentionally working in partnership with different churches for the benefit of the wider community is a demonstrable way of addressing sectarianism. Practical working together is a sign that past barriers to co-operation and to common mission are no longer there.

CAOS (Community Arts; Open Space) is an arts project in Clydebank

"It allows people to communicate with one another in a safe environment who may otherwise not do so because of their faith or beliefs. The Catholic primary school and the non-denominational school are at opposite ends of the estate. Every morning the children walk in opposite directions from one another... CAOS brings the families and the young people together breaking down religious and cultural barriers that have existed for generations."

The **Mission and Discipleship Council** was invited by Cardinal O'Brien to bring a group of young people from the Church of Scotland to attend the World Youth Day in Madrid in 2011. World Youth Day is the Roman Catholic youth celebration event that happens every 3 years or so. The Church of Scotland has been attending since 2000.

"We are generally invited by Cardinal O'Brien and he takes part in the preparation of our young people for the event. The main reason we go is to stand with people who are different from us so that we can learn about them and about ourselves. In my experience young people in the Church of Scotland don't really know what the word 'protestant' means except that it means that they aren't Catholic! Lots of interesting conversations will happen this week in Madrid when pilgrims realise that we come from a Protestant Church."

A drop-in for those recovering from addiction which takes place at **Colston Milton Parish Church**. While its main aim is not around anti-sectarianism work it includes people from both Catholic and Protestant backgrounds and the subject is present in discussions especially from a football perspective as both Rangers and Celtic fans go to the drop in.

Givin' it Laldie is a Community Music organisation based in the Gorbals of Glasgow that uses singing to give positive opportunities for social interaction, addressing issues that exist in the community including deprivation, health and sectarianism. The Children's Choir run by the organisation brings together young people from both the Catholic and the Non-denominational school. Rehearsals take place in both schools throughout the year giving the children the opportunity to have some time in the other school and this year they hope to have performances in the schools so that the parents will also mix.

The **Church and Society Council**, in addition to the work conducted around the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Bill has met with the Scottish Government on several occasions to discuss these issues, and in September 2011 the Council wrote to the Minister for Community Safety, Roseanna Cunningham MSP regarding the work that the Church is doing to help tackle social problems at a local level, and welcoming the inclusion of an extra £3million to support local anti-sectarianism projects across the country that was announced by the Finance Secretary as part of the Scottish Government's Comprehensive Spending Review.

In 2011 the Church and Society Council published a study guide, *Exploring One Scotland Many Cultures*, which accompanies the Council's report of the same name to the 2011 General Assembly. The Council encourages congregations and individuals to continue to use this resource in dealing with issues of diversity and radical hospitality.

At **Yoker Church** the drive for community work is coming from some of the school heads, and in many ways the Church of Scotland minister is responding to their requests. The doors are wide open, and they are wanting input. Two primary schools in particular are working closely together, and the Minister and the Catholic priest have a friendly relationship. Each church leader is able to work in both the Catholic and non-denominational schools, where there are also chaplaincy teams and both run a 'sense over sectarianism' project. They have also helped to arrange a harmony torch, which has passed all over Yoker and which has helped to engage both younger people in primary school as well as the older generations – it has often been found that the greatest resistance and stereotypes have been found among older people. A key part of the work is to promote a sense of local Yoker identity and community, and not define people by their religious heritage. School visits to different churches and places of worship, to get to know the religious cultures, also make the 'other' side seem less different.

Made4U in ML2 is a project supported by local churches in Wishaw (where the postcode area is ML2). Made4U offer a mixture of different activities, with the goal around relationships and being alongside the community for the long term. Sectarianism has been a feature of life in working class industrial communities, and in Wishaw there is very little movement of people – a large number have not spent any time living outside the local area. With the troubled economy and difficult employment prospects, many are looking for, and trying to hold on to, an identity that helps them feel they belong, that they are a somebody, that they matter and that there is an anchor in their lives. Sectarianism may be a hang-over of old religious difference, but it is sustained in places like Wishaw by the economic reality facing many people.

Made4U in ML2 is a project that came out of a shared concern to put Christian faith into action and to make a difference in response to four "sudden deaths" of young people aged 16-24, whose homes were all within 400 yards of each other over a six week period in 2000, and the despair and needs this reflected; and is backed by local churches in Wishaw Church of Scotland, Roman Catholic, Baptist and Methodist. Made4U in ML2 offers a mixture of different activities, working alongside vulnerable individuals young and old (around 600 every week across the ML2 community) to listen, encourage, support and empower. It is important that like Christ's, our commitment is unconditional and for the long term.

There are a number of aspects where the Church of Scotland is working with the Roman Catholic Church, such as a summer holiday club for children and a joint pre-Christmas programme in primary schools. Over the past 12 years the minister and priest have shared priorities and a strong friendship that has helped them successfully take a joint petition to Parliament and work together effectively on a number of local issues. The leadership and volunteer team running Made4U includes people from across a broad range of denominations and backgrounds, and now enjoys cross-community support. Activities include: Home School Partnership team in three local high schools; Duke of Edinburgh Award programmes and expedition work; band concerts; football coaching; peer tutoring; youth club; parents' support groups; seniors' clubs; and alternative dance exercise for adults with learning difficulties.

In **Bellshill** the Priority Areas Committee helped with a recent development of the church as a community space for everyone. One of the things they discovered in the process was that people, without exception, said that sectarianism was not present to the same extent as a generation before. Now in the centre one of the 25 or so activities that takes place each day is an act of worship, which is led by a variety of people, from the Church of Scotland Parish Minister, to other ministers, priests, Catholic sisters and even at one time the Cardinal. A partnership was formed with a community centre based in a church in West Belfast.

Reflections

The Churches in Britain and Ireland have, long ago, accepted that historical theological issues that underpin our differences are no barriers to fellowship and to commitment to one another, yet we acknowledge there remains ongoing hurt. We also acknowledge that there are differences of opinion on a range of theological, ecclesiastical, ethical and moral issues, which create tension and are not easy to live with. These cannot be dealt with quickly.

Just as there are differences of opinion between the Churches in Scotland, so there are differences within our denomination. The issue is not that we have differences, but that we can live with contrary convictions and still call one another sister and brother.

Relations between the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church at a national level have been transformed in the past fifty years. Whereas in 1961 a General Assembly deliverance tentatively suggested that the Moderator might make a courtesy visit to the Pope in Rome, today the situation has changed substantially. The Church of Scotland and Scottish Catholic Bishops' Conference Joint Commission on Doctrine, together with the Scottish Episcopal Church, helped to celebrate the 450th Anniversary of the Scottish Reformation at a service in St Giles, using a liturgy for the renewal of baptismal vows that had been commissioned for it. This says something about how far we have come in the recognition of our common baptism. This should also encourage all those who are downhearted by local,

intermediate or national levels of ecumenism today; we are on a long pilgrimage and have come far in a short period of time. Our focus at a local level should still remain that of facilitating good relations and taking part in practical action together.

Aggression, violence, prejudice, discrimination, bigotry – these attitudes and behaviours associated with sectarianism are a residue of past tribalism in Scotland which we, the members of the Church of Scotland in the 21st century, repudiate and renounce. There are those on both sides who will try to stir things up or try to make trouble of wrongs that should long ago have been laid to rest.

Relationships are key. We are committed to working things out together, in partnership with all who share our aims for the well-being and peace of all the people of Scotland.

We have more that unites us than divides us. It does not matter from which place on the theological spectrum you are, or which part of the country you live in, as our examples of local actions and initiatives demonstrate. All over Scotland people are working out their differences, overcoming disagreements, and working together to care for one another and to serve, pray, evangelise, and learn together.

Changing attitudes will take time. The Church will remain committed to serving communities.

By working with communities to create feelings of self-worth and identity we can help each other to find inspiration which lifts us out of sectarian ideas and gives us a different vision of our future together.

Appendix 1

The 2002 General Assembly received the following report on Sectarianism. The Deliverances that were agreed then were:

- Regret any part played in sectarianism by our Church in the past and affirm our support for future moves toward a more tolerant society.
- Recognising that sectarianism is not someone else's problem, commend the Report to the Church for study and encourage congregations to set up local working groups to look at the issue within their own communities.
- Instruct the Church and Nation Committee to set up the working group recommended in the Report, and to seek to do this in partnership with the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission.
- Commend the Nil by Mouth Charter to congregations and individual Church members.
- Commend all those who seek to combat sectarianism in Scotland today.

SECTARIANISM

Instruct the Church and Nation Committee to carry out a study of the adverse effects of sectarianism within Scottish society and report to the General Assembly of 2002 and encourage all who work throughout the Church to work to overcome sectarian barriers. (General Assembly 2001)

1. Introduction

The format of this report reflects the process undertaken by the Committee. We realised at an early stage that it would not be wise to rush to conclusions about what is a large and complex subject. We have instead approached the topic in a spirit of humility and with an attitude of listening. The style and content reflect what we have learnt from the conversations we have had, the reading we have done and the research we have carried out. We offer our recommendations, not as “experts” but as those that have participated in and seek to reflect Scottish society as experienced in 2001-2002.

Although the report is limited to sectarianism between Protestant and Catholic, it is our contention that much of what has been learned is readily applicable to other forms of bigotry and intolerance, evident in Scottish society today.

Sectarianism in Scotland today ...

- is seen and heard in the small asides which say little and reveal much
- is most publicly evident in behaviour associated with football matches but is by no means confined to this.
- is, thanks to recent legislation and changing patterns in society, less blatant than before in employment and recruitment practices but continues to generate claims of prejudice in the work situation.

- is still, in its most extreme form, ugly, intimidating and murderous, including a series of attacks on a priest in Easterhouse and the murders of eleven Rangers and Celtic football fans since 1995;
- is still very much in the public eye, generating extensive media coverage and comment
- is capable of demonstrating itself throughout Scotland. It is not limited to cities and urban communities
- is pervasive and will continue to be so unless we are willing to search our own consciences and to review our own language, attitudes and actions.

Sectarianism is not someone else's problem. It is an issue for all of us.

2. We have researched our past

We have researched our past as the Church of Scotland and we have learned that our Church's record on this issue in times past is far from blameless.

In the years around the Great Depression of the early thirties of last century, the Church and Nation Committee campaigned intemperately against Irish immigration into Scotland.

The reports and letters of the Committee from 1926 to 1934 on this issue make disturbing reading today. Let one quotation from a letter written by the Committee to the Secretary of State for Scotland in 1926 stand as one example. On the subject of Irish Immigration the Committee writes:

A law-abiding, thrifty and industrious race (the Scots) is being supplanted by immigrants whose presence tends to lower the social conditions, and to undermine that spirit of independence which has so long been a characteristic of the Scottish people, and we are of opinion that, in justice to our own people, steps should be taken to prevent the situation becoming any worse.

This is racism akin to the "rivers of blood" speech of Enoch Powell in the 1960s. The Irish immigrants are shown in the worst possible light. No attempt is made at understanding the social and economic conditions both in Ireland and Scotland, which produced the immigration and shaped the character and life-style of the immigrants. Of course, the great majority of the immigrants were Roman Catholic and the sectarian implications are clear.

From a current perspective, it is a matter of regret that the Committee and the Church could have taken such a position.

Reflecting on this, it is worth making two comments:

First, it is cautionary to note the prejudice that so recently infected churchmen and a committee, which in general were generous and socially concerned. It ought to raise for us the question as to where our blind spots and prejudices are today. We may consider ourselves enlightened nowadays, but unless we are prepared to put ourselves under the spotlight we may also be judged, in hindsight, to have turned a

blind eye to sectarian attitudes which still remain on and under the surface of the Church of Scotland of today.

Second, while the issue of continuing sectarian attitudes and practices must be pursued with sensitivity and vigour, we do have to recognise that a demon in our society has been acknowledged and brought into the open. Much progress in breaking down barriers across Scottish society has been made since the days of the 1930s. Ecumenical relations, friendship and co-operation between the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church have improved greatly at both official and local parish levels in the last fifty years.

3. We have listened

We have met and listened to many individuals and groups, both secular and church-based, who recognise the effects of sectarianism in Scottish society and are working in different ways to counter it. These include:

Cara Henderson, founder of Nil by Mouth

Cara Henderson was a school friend of Mark Scott, the Glasgow schoolboy who was brutally murdered on his way home from a Celtic v Rangers football match in 1995. She was moved to act, however, by Donald Findlay's singing of sectarian songs at a Rangers Supporters function in 1999. Her letter to *The Herald* about this event evoked a huge response – much very supportive, some very abusive. This in turn encouraged Cara to “do something”, which became Nil by Mouth.

Nil by Mouth acts as a catalyst by asking the awkward questions and raising awareness of the issues. In 2001, Nil by Mouth launched its Social Charter, inviting people to sign up to a code which challenges sectarian attitudes, language and behaviour (see Appendix 3). They believe that language is a key factor and that, by fostering attitudes of tolerance and respect, a positive change is possible in Scottish society.

It is through the work of this very small group and its dedicated founder that much has happened in the West of Scotland.

Celtic Football Club has developed its own social charter

Celtic F.C. and Rangers F.C. are working together with Glasgow City Council to develop educational materials for incorporation into the school curriculum.

Celtic FC and Rangers FC, along with Glasgow City Council, Glasgow Presbytery and the Archdiocese of Glasgow, have come together to promote the Millennium Awards, which will be granted to individuals working against sectarianism in local situations (see below).

Glasgow City Council

On 22 February 2001, Glasgow City Council formally recognised that sectarianism continues to be a major problem facing Glasgow and the West of Scotland and instructed the Chief Executive to identify current policy and how that might be developed. The report from the Executive argued that in the absence of a coherent

assessment of the scale, nature, causes and impact of sectarianism, future policy might not be as well informed as it might be, and therefore policy made from a flawed basis. Research has been commissioned and is at present being undertaken. It will attempt to describe the features of sectarianism in Glasgow today, who is affected, and how and what the scale of the problem is. The findings of this report will be key to future work for churches in Glasgow and it is hoped will provide baseline data for other academic work.

Sense over Sectarianism

A joint initiative between Glasgow City Council, Rangers FC, Celtic FC, Glasgow Presbytery and Glasgow Archdiocese has been set up. Each organisation has two representatives (in theory, one policy maker and one practitioner). The mere fact of their getting together in this way is a significant breakthrough. The initiative has received over £500,000 from the Millennium Awards to distribute to individuals who are tackling sectarianism locally. A co-ordinator has been appointed who will promote the scheme, support applications and facilitate the assessment process. Several innovative applications have already been received and the Church and Nation Committee learned how seriously the issue is being taken.

Celtic and Rangers Football Clubs

Football, and what goes on around football, provides the context for the most overt expression of sectarianism in Scottish society and as such defines us quite differently from expressions of sectarianism in Northern Ireland. The Committee met with representatives from both Rangers and Celtic Football Clubs. We were impressed by their commitment to tackling the issue, firstly by education (both have packs for schools) and secondly by monitoring behaviour. Celtic now has a social charter (code of behaviour) which they use in educating youth supporters, and which anyone who has caused trouble at a match must sign. A further breach of the code means dismissal from the ground and being barred from attendance at games. Both Celtic and Rangers have been working with Glasgow City Council in the production of a film and study pack, which will be sent to every school in Glasgow, and both are willing participants in the Millennium Awards scheme (see above).

A key issue for both clubs and teams is behaviour at away games, where they have much less control over the fans. They are also concerned about the material offered by street vendors at their home games, who sell goods which are blatantly sectarian and divisive. The clubs have no control over these vendors, whose licences are granted by the local authority. Both clubs are arguing for a mile-wide vendor-free zone around the grounds to diminish the sale of this material. We believe that both clubs are committed to co-operation, but that they are ahead of many of their fans in their way of thinking.

The Orange Order

The meeting with Jack Ramsay, General Secretary of the Order, highlighted our very different understandings of sectarianism. The Orange Order believes that by our very church membership we are sectarian, and Mr Ramsay's description of the Orange Order was of something primarily "tribal". This is at odds with our understanding, which emphasises the destructive patterns of relational behaviour. It does not sit easily with our belief that our identity comes primarily from Christ and not from our culture. Although we must all be free to enjoy our separate

cultural/religious identities, this liberty cannot be at the expense of others or, indeed, the sole basis of our faith.

We were told that the marching bands so widely associated with the Order are in fact quite separate from it, be it the Grade A, the Accordion or the Blood and Thunder bands. Members of the Order see these as distorting their image and giving them a bad press. Mr Ramsay described these as the *bêtes noir* of the Order and also made adverse comments about some fringe supporters.

The Order clearly see themselves as a law-abiding group which promotes civil and religious liberty in Scotland. This attitude led us to reflect on the difference in emphasis we might place between law and grace, or on upholding the letter of the law rather than the spirit.

Whatever the statements made to us in all sincerity, we are aware that the Orange Order is widely perceived to be a sectarian organisation. The Order is not alone in being viewed in this way, but in its case there is a sharper focus which results in the perception becoming, for many people, the reality. We believe that those within the Church of Scotland who associate themselves with the Order should reflect upon this and take this to heart.

Dr Elinor Kelly

Dr Elinor Kelly, Research Fellow in Race and Ethnic Issues at Glasgow University, spoke with us about her research into serious crime committed within the context of Old Firm hatred, and also shared her submission to Holyrood in response to Donald Gorrie's proposed bill.

Dr Kelly has documented a disturbing sequence of football-related incidents resulting in death or serious injury in recent years. The Committee found this a chilling catalogue of repeated violence sparked by a mixture of football and sectarian division. One incident feeds off another and assumed sectarian labels provide a focal point (occasionally mixed with a racist dimension) for regular life-threatening violence on our streets. We forbear from recording them in detail because the Committee does not focus on individual cases, but would not wish anyone to underestimate what it repeatedly means. We are also sympathetic to Dr Kelly's concern about the unwillingness of certain members of the judiciary to take seriously the issue of "sectarian aggravation" in the trial and subsequent sentencing in these cases.

We would commend two of her proposals for the Assembly's consideration. In relation to the serious crime issue, we note that the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act (ACTSA), December 2001, introduced in the wake of September 11 brought into law measures relating to "religiously aggravated" crime. We commend Dr Kelly's submission that there is a need for the introduction of similar measures relating to "sectarian aggravation", to deal with crimes which arise from divisions within faith communities.

Such measures would go some way in dealing with the most serious and obvious injuries caused by sectarianism in Scotland. In the longer term we have argued for the need for a persistent and sustained approach, geared towards changing societal

attitudes. In this context, Dr Kelly draws attention to the measures introduced in Scotland by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 (RRAA), which both places a duty on all public authorities to promote racial equality and requires them to follow a Statutory Code of Practice that challenges custom and practice and requires new standards of professionalism within institutions. The RRAA could well serve as a template for equivalent measures relating to sectarianism.

4. We have taken a view from Northern Ireland

We met with Joseph Liechty of the Irish School of Ecumenics, who with his colleague, Cecelia Clegg, has led the Moving Beyond Sectarianism project on examining the rôle of the churches in contributing to, nurturing and ultimately tackling sectarianism in Northern Ireland. The project has run for five years and had two distinct phases:

A consultation with focus groups and a wide range of interviews, which led to the design and piloting of a new model for group work. This phase ended with two major conferences, one a Northern Ireland conversation and the second applying international insights to the situation.

Phase two focused on training and dissemination of findings.

We found his definition of sectarianism helpful and would wish to commend it: *Sectarianism is...a complex set of attitudes, actions, beliefs and structures at personal, communal and institutional levels, which involves religion and typically involves a negative mixing of religion and politics. It arises as a distorted expression of human needs, especially for belonging, identity and the freedom of expression of difference, and is expressed in destructive patterns of relating.*

The core of this Northern Irish project focused on helping people understand how sectarianism works, as a system of which they are part. Those who found this most difficult to accept were (a) those who work ecumenically and (b) those who see themselves as victims of sectarianism rather than contributors to it. While there are gradations within sectarianism, as experienced in Northern Ireland, Dr Liechty found a continuum from comparatively innocuous, subtle and polite forms to the overt violence on the streets, and argues that all are complicit to some degree. However, long-term endemic sectarianism breeds a culture of blame when what is needed is a culture of responsibility, in which we start from our own part in sectarianism and what we can do to change that. Rejecting the common feeling that "if we were all secular the problem would disappear", the project aimed at redeeming the parts of identities/institutions/communities that have been distorted by sectarianism. This redemption nurtures hope where other approaches are perceived as threatening. As one person had put it, "Whatever you do, don't take our communities away from us".

The study found that issues of power and its imbalances are important, and must be correctly named in their various forms in different communities. Sensitivity of approach is also needed when initiatives claim the moral high ground. We all find it easier to deal with the "safely other" (the groups with whom we don't expect to find common ground) than with the groups in which we see something of ourselves but which speak with a different voice.

While the churches (in Ireland) can find reasons to exonerate themselves from blame (for example, that many of the sharpest instances occur where churches have least impact), the study recognises that no-one else has a comparable "socialising" influence. Churches are found to have a tendency to evade responsibility and miss opportunities when they say that the problems are political rather than religious. While there are examples of co-operation among churches (as well as contradictory stories), churches could do more to spread examples of good practice and give clear, authoritative "permission" for grass-roots working together. Church leaders run the risk of becoming too focused on one model of reconciliation work and thereby becoming alienated from their base, but still have the responsibility of "speaking with a voice that cannot be duplicated to a community that cannot otherwise be reached". Perhaps the most widespread and damaging contribution of churches is to reinforce segregation. To counteract this has led the Church of Ireland to look at reconfiguring its whole understanding and practice of ministry.

While noting that these observations are made from a Northern Ireland perspective, they cannot be dismissed as being only relevant to that context. The wide spectrum of sectarian behaviour is worthy of note. Although we may perceive our own attitudes to be on the "comparatively innocuous, polite and subtle" end of the scale, we must recognise our complicity in the system as a whole. Furthermore, however sectarianism is expressed within our own country, the notion of a redemptive and transformative approach to tackling it must be a challenge to the Church in Scotland today.

5. We have witnessed

We have witnessed local and national initiatives including joint work by churches and community organisations, which can act as a source of hope and encouragement, addressing sectarianism at its roots.

Bridging the Gap

Bridging the Gap is an initiative in Gorbals, Glasgow where Gorbals Parish (Church of Scotland) and Blessed John Duns Scotus (Roman Catholic), have come together to work on ways of breaking down barriers, whatever they might be. Their aim is "to work across the divides which are apparent in the community" and to provide opportunities for people to discover their "common ground".

Their statement of mission for the new Millennium reads:

- *As we enter the year 2000, the year which closes the Second Millennium of the Christian era, we are moved by the Holy Spirit to make this statement of common ground on which we stand.*
- *As the Church of Jesus Christ in Gorbals, we recognise that we serve one Lord Jesus Christ; that we worship one God, the Father Almighty; that we enjoy one baptism in the Holy Spirit, through the grace of God revealed in Holy Scripture.*
- *Grateful for opportunities we have already found to grow in faith, we undertake to work together in the service of God, in whatever ways are found to be appropriate. We celebrate our common work in the church and community project "Bridging the Gap" through which we aim to extend the work of the church in serving all God's people in this place.*

- *We pray that the church will find, in joyful obedience, the path by which God will bring us to fuller unity, now that we acknowledge that all are one in Jesus Christ, to whom with the father and the Holy Spirit be all glory and praise now and for ever, Amen.*

*Blessed John Duns Scotus
Fr Brian McGrath*

*Gorbals Parish Church
Rev Ian Galloway*

This statement hangs in the foyer of each church as a sign of their commitment to the work and as symbol of their commitment to working together.

Bridging the Gap employs two project workers, part funded by the Board of National Mission, and they are working in many creative ways, including through music and art, to bridge the gaps as they find them in Gorbals society. They registered their delight at a recent remark about the “Christian community “ in Gorbals, and by working together on gaps between primary and secondary school, between young and old, between incomer and resident, they provide a model of good practice for the national church to follow.

The Scottish Centre for Nonviolence

Based in Dunblane, the Scottish Centre for Nonviolence has a good track record of working on reconciliation and conflict resolution, and is now looking at transferring those skills to understanding the hurt and violence associated with sectarianism. They have begun work with a group in Livingston (Women in West Lothian for Peace) and are planning to develop a "tool kit" for the training of trainers, including teachers and community workers.

Donald Gorrie’s Private Member’s Bill

The Committee was represented at a gathering of Scottish churches to discuss the proposed Bill with Donald Gorrie, and subsequently made our comments on the Consultation document.

6. We are aware of the limits of this study

We are aware that, within the time and resources which were available to us, we have been unable to carry out in-depth studies across the length and breadth of Scotland and that our contacts have centred primarily in West/Central Scotland. We are conscious that while sectarianism may be more overt in that area, it would be wrong to ignore its presence in other communities across Scotland. We hope that churches and congregations will give earnest consideration to their own local circumstances.

We are also aware that we have not included the issue of Education and separate schooling in our study. Nevertheless we have been conscious of the depth of this issue and we have learned of the hurt and mistrust experienced by people working in education. This burning issue has been considered as recently as 1999 by the General Assembly which reached the conclusion that *“Separate schooling, while not necessarily causing sectarian attitudes, and indeed there is no real evidence to show that denominational schools, in themselves, lead to prejudicial attitudes, may nevertheless help reinforce the prejudices and stereotyping which are passed on by*

society." We have heard that, for some, this statement itself has been perceived as sectarian.

We believe that it is right to acknowledge this perception and, in the spirit of our report, to reflect upon its significance.

7. We have learned

We have learned that:

- we each have a personal responsibility to tackle sectarianism in Scotland today. We are not guiltless in our own behaviour and, as in addressing other areas of discrimination such as gender and racism, we must be very cautious and remember that "we will be called to account for every useless word" (Matthew 12:36).
- while we must be part of the solution, we should recognise that we may also be part of the problem.
- our silence often renders us complicit in sectarianism and that an awareness of the consequences of our behaviour and language is the first step towards change.
- much can be achieved by committed individuals, even when tackling a belief system which goes deep in our society.

We have learned that:

- as a church we have a role to play in countering sectarianism.
- what might honestly be expressed and intended as a positive statement of our faith may be heard and experienced by others as sectarianism.
- although there is common consensus that sectarianism is not the blight it has once been in Scottish society, local media reporting suggests that it is still a live issue which we need to be aware of as a church, both nationally and locally.
- although sectarianism in Scotland is at its sharpest outside the church, nevertheless, the church can have an impact in a local situation which could be transformative.

We have learned from the Irish School of Ecumenics:

- that while there are significant cultural and other differences between our experience and that of Northern Ireland, in some ways the situations in both countries can feed off one another.
- about starting from an acceptance of our own part in a culture of sectarianism and discerning what we can do to change things.
- about the need for an honest analysis of power imbalances.
- that we must move from a culture of blame to a culture of responsibility.

We have learned that much good work has been initiated by many individuals and organisations in society and that there is a need to document these and to share good practice. What we have learned has reinforced our awareness that a positive embracing of diversity can and does enrich human life and society (and does not diminish it).

8. We recommend

In the light of all that we have learned we recommend:

That the Church of Scotland signifies the seriousness of its role in eliminating sectarianism by initiating the setting up of a working group along with the Roman Catholic Justice and Peace Commission to:

- research, document and communicate good models of practice;
- act as a point of contact for those seeking resources, human and material;
- offer creative additions to the established patterns of ecumenical activity.

That all congregations in Scotland commit their full support to those who are working to combat sectarianism and dissociate themselves from any who would seek to undermine this work.

That congregations set up working groups to consider the issue of sectarianism in the circumstances of their own community. We recommend that they give specific consideration to the Nil by Mouth Charter as a way of encouraging each member to fulfil their personal responsibility to tackle sectarianism.

That we must each search our own conscience and examine any reluctance to embrace the diversity of faiths and cultures which enrich Scottish society today.

Appendix 2

Nil by Mouth Charter for Change

www.nilbymouth.org

Nil by Mouth's Charter for Change spells out our campaign's vision for Scotland

Sectarianism, racism and bigotry have no place in a modern Scotland. Everyone's religious beliefs should be respected and cultural diversity should be celebrated.

Everyone should be encouraged to remember this and to take responsibility for the language they use and the way they behave. In this way we can all help to change our society for the better.

Nil by Mouth calls on:

- The Scottish Government and local authorities to promote anti-sectarianism throughout the education system
- Rangers and Celtic Football Clubs to agree and announce measurable targets to reduce sectarian behaviour amongst their supporters
- Employers to make clear in their recruitment and employment processes that they do not tolerate any form of sectarianism or bigotry
- Voluntary organisations, sports clubs, public bodies and businesses to include a commitment to non-sectarianism in their constitutions, mission statements and application forms
- The Scottish Parliament to monitor how the police, the Crown Office and the Courts apply Section 74 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003, which gives courts the power to impose stiffer sentences where a crime is motivated by religious prejudice.

The Churches to preach a strong anti-sectarian message and to work together in partnership across the diversity of faiths followed in Scotland.

The Nil by Mouth Social Charter

This Social Charter is a non-political, non-religious document and is inclusive of all sections of Scottish society, regardless of creed, colour, sexuality or religion. Although its principles are formed in response to the particular issue of sectarianism in Scotland, such principles can and should be applied to other forms of prejudice and pejorative stereotypes that influence our society.

- (a) The Nil by Mouth Social Charter calls upon members of society to examine their own attitudes and language and not to view bigotry simply as an external problem.
- (b) The Nil by Mouth Social Charter calls upon individuals to see that his language, actions and behaviour do make a difference in his society and have determining influence in the shaping of it.

- (c) The Nil by Mouth Social Charter calls upon the individual to accept that his role in society carries with it a personal responsibility for the effects of his behaviour.
- (d) The Nil by Mouth Social Charter calls upon the individual who sings sectarian songs, who tells and laughs at bigoted jokes, simply because those around him do so, to stop and think about the meaning of the words, even for a few seconds.
- (e) The Nil by Mouth Social Charter calls upon the individual to see that he has a choice to collude or not with a bigoted code of behaviour. In recognising this choice, the individual can no longer claim to be acting out of habit and thereby not see the implications of his actions.
- (f) The Nil by Mouth Charter calls upon all members of society to work towards a genuine pluralism which respects all people and resists bigotry, intolerance and racism in any shape or form.
- (g) The Nil by Mouth Charter subscribes to the philosophy that if we are to go forward as a society we need to look at our own individual attitudes and the language we use to express these attitudes.

Appendix 3

The 2011 General Assembly agreed to:

- a. Note with concern the recent reported escalation in sectarianism in Scotland.
- b. Express thanks to those in the Church working so hard to engage with this complex issue.
- c. Instruct the Council, after consultation with other Councils, Committees, Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions, to report to the General Assembly of 2012 on their work in relation to sectarianism.

Appendix 4

Official Response

SUBJECT: Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Bill - call for written evidence
REQUESTED BY: Scottish Parliament Justice Committee
REFERENCE: OR-04
DATE: 25 August 2011
SUBMITTED BY: Church and Society Council of the Church of Scotland and Faith in Community Scotland

1. The Church of Scotland and Faith in Community Scotland recognise the seriousness of the problem of sectarianism in our communities today and are absolutely committed to challenging it locally and nationally. Since 2002² the Kirk has focussed on the effectiveness, and therefore the importance, of work undertaken at local level. This evidence is presented from the perspective of our local experience.
2. The Church and Society Council of the Church of Scotland and Faith in Community Scotland welcome the introduction of specific offences relating to religious hatred and sectarianism at football. However, we urge caution about proceeding with legislation ahead of designing and consulting on a wider programme of work to tackle sectarianism of which this legislation can only be one part.
3. The consultation meeting focussed on issues relating to religious hatred. The Church and Society Council of the Church of Scotland and Faith in Community Scotland would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the fact that the offence of offensive behaviour at football includes hatred based on colour, race, nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins, sexual orientation, transgender identity and disability.
4. The submission covers 3 areas:
 - Work done by churches to tackle religious hatred and sectarianism at local level;
 - potential consequences of the proposals in the Bill; and
 - other factors which should be considered when addressing sectarianism.

Work done by churches to tackle religious hatred and sectarianism at local level

5. The Church and Society Council gave oral evidence to the Justice Committee on 22 June 2011. The evidence emphasised the importance of allowing time and using transparent processes to enable communities to be an active part of discussions on how to tackle sectarianism. The Council is pleased that the First Minister listened to public opinion and extended the consultation period

² Report of the Church and Nation Committee to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 2002. Available on request from churchandsociety@cofscotland.org.uk

on the Bill. This extra time has been used to provide information on the Bill and Parliamentary process to churches and faith communities who are working to tackle religious hatred and sectarianism at a local level. We regret that the extended consultation period was still only 2 months in length rather than the usual 3 months and took place across the summer holiday period; this meant that individuals and organisations who may have wished to participate were unable to do so. Nevertheless, on 11 August the Church and Society Council and Faith and Community Scotland held a joint consultation meeting with 6 churches and community projects, and an additional written contribution was also received.

6. The consultation meeting explored the impact of participants' work on sectarianism and religious hatred and the implications of these experiences for the new offences in the Bill. In the course of the meeting participants identified a number of themes which ran through successful community projects. All of the projects are based on building personal relationships and breaking down barriers. Many projects focus on young people, including working in non-denominational and Roman Catholic Schools and arranging joint activities for the young people. One of the reported outcomes of this is the creation of a sense of identity which was about a shared place of residence and a sense of inclusion in the community. This was perceived by the group as an important contrast to formation of identity through association with some of the more negative aspects of behaviour relating to football. It is felt that there is a clear role for churches of different denominations to be seen working together in their communities and there is a strong commitment to partnership work in order to achieve this unity. Some participants are also working with other faiths to address tensions between different communities.
7. Participants discussed some of the barriers to tackling sectarianism. Many said that there are barriers within their own communities and congregations; there can often be a difference between peoples' lived experience and their wider opinions. For example a person may like their son's girlfriend who is Catholic but may still make offensive comments about Catholics in general. There may also be an unwillingness to work with certain groups, which the people involved do not perceive as a sectarian attitude – this can lead to the perception that sectarianism has decreased although relationships between communities and behaviours have not necessarily improved. One participant spoke of the fact that although relationships were regarded as positive, joint working was nonetheless viewed suspiciously. There was some concern that as "sectarianism" becomes the subject of more public debate and censure the tensions between communities and within communities would be expressed in different ways rather than be reduced. This emphasises that the long term solution requires a change of heart and a change of deep rooted belief that legislation itself cannot bring about. Building and maintaining good relationships in order to break down barriers is likely to be far more effective than legislation tackling certain aspects of public behaviour.

What are the potential consequences of the Bill as proposed?

8. The intentions of the two offences in the Bill are different. The discussion at our consultation meeting focussed on the first offence of offensive behaviour at football and explored firstly whether the possibility of being convicted for an offence which included incitement to religious hatred would be a deterrent, and secondly whether conviction for such an offence would create stigma. Participants' views were mixed. Some shared stories about individuals who behave offensively at football matches when those same individuals would never behave in that manner in their professional lives. In this scenario there was a lot of support for making a clear statement that such language and behaviour was unacceptable, and illegal, wherever it took place, and that football matches were no exception. It was suggested that most people choose to exercise self control in public and it would be beneficial to formalise the position that society expects people to exercise self control when at football matches.
9. However, for others in the group these provisions were concerning. It was suggested that in some communities where identity was related to hatred of those who were seen as different then conviction of a sectarian offence could be seen as a badge of honour. There was serious concern that labelling a person in this way would have the negative effect of pushing them further into a culture of hatred or violence rather than deter them from unacceptable behaviour. If this were to happen then incidents that are seen as unusual and shocking today could become the normal behaviour of tomorrow.
10. The experiences of people working to address issues of religious hatred and sectarian behaviour suggest that these provisions could have drastically different outcomes when applied to different social groups. It is possible that using this legislation to tackle a specific aspect of sectarian behaviour will simply displace the problem. If this happens then it is crucial that the Government puts in place other mechanisms to tackle sectarianism and religious hatred alongside this legislation. However, there was consensus that it is important to name the problem as sectarianism so that individuals are challenged to think about their own behaviour.
11. In view these different experiences we would encourage the Justice Committee to consider hate crime legislation in the UK and around the world and assess the consequences of the introduction of such legislation.
12. In her evidence to the Justice Committee the Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs acknowledged that sectarianism is not confined to football and that the Bill would be part of a wider programme of work to root out the problem. However, she reiterated that the Bill is a vital first step. We disagree. If legislative change is part of the solution then it must be seen in the context of this wider programme of work. We must understand how the Government proposes to support communities in the work they are already doing and what leadership the Government is offering; only then should decisions be taken as to what legislative support is required. This Bill goes far beyond tackling sectarian behaviour at football without addressing the real experiences of

sectarianism in other parts of society. The Bill will do nothing to reduce sectarianism unless it is part of wider work.

13. What other factors should the Government address in relation to sectarianism?

- a. The most important mechanism for reducing sectarianism is to resource work at local level and we call on the Government to make funding available for projects of the kind outlined in this response. The Church of Scotland and Faith in Community Scotland would be happy to work with the Government and with other partners in the development, delivery and evaluation of such funding.
- b. The Church of Scotland and Faith in Community Scotland³ acknowledge and have campaigned about the negative impact which excessive alcohol consumption has on Scottish society and would like to see links between anti-sectarian policy and alcohol policy strengthened.
- c. It is noted that reported incidences of domestic abuse increase on Old Firm match days and therefore would welcome the recommendation of the Joint Action Group that the Scottish Government commissions academic research into the relationship between football and domestic abuse in Scotland.

Implications for freedom of speech

14. During the initial considerations of this Bill concerns were raised about whether the threatening communications offences in the Bill would have the unintended consequence of limiting freedom of speech and religious expression. The Church and Society Council of the Church of Scotland will discuss this issue at the full meeting of the Council on 8 September 2011. A further statement may be made after that meeting.

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³ The Church of Scotland the Poverty Truth Commission (supported by Faith in Community Scotland) submitted evidence to the Health and Sport Committee on the Alcohol etc. (Scotland) Bill (SP Bill 34)