

**Church of Norway-Church of Scotland-Scottish Episcopal Church Consultation  
25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> August, 2014.**

**Summary and recommendations for further work**

**Delegation:**

Church of Norway's delegation were:

Bishop Helga Haugland Byfuglien, Presiding Bishop of Church of Norway,

Bishop Erling Pettersen, Bishop of Stavanger, Moderator of the Council on Ecumenical and International relations

Revd Jens-Petter Johnsen, Director of the Church of Norway National Council

Ms Berit Hagen Agøy, General Secretary of the Council on Ecumenical and International Relations

Ms. Beate Fagerli, Senior Adviser to the Council on Ecumenical and International Relations

**Introduction**

**Aberdeen:**

The Norwegian delegation arrived in Aberdeen – three from Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> August and two from Monday 25<sup>th</sup>. They joined in morning worship in St Machar's and Evensong in the St Andrew's Cathedral. In the afternoon they saw something of Deeside, including an interesting country church at Mitvie, St. John the Evangelist and the neighbouring mosque. . There were meetings with the Scottish Episcopal Church dean of Aberdeen, introductions to the Church of Scotland's presbytery, a visit to the Oil Chapel, a Church of Scotland sheltered housing project. The varied programme gave an interesting view of the two churches' parish work in Aberdeen, as well as church planting projects, local inter-religious dialogue and diaconal projects.

An idea to develop friendships relations between the dioceses of Aberdeen and Stavanger was launched.

**Edinburgh:**

Tuesday and Wednesday were spent with the Church of Scotland and Scottish Episcopal delegations in the Church of Scotland Offices and the Offices of the General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church. Each morning began with a service of Holy Communion in St Giles and St Mary's Cathedral respectively. The programme also included a guided tour of the Scottish Parliament.

The Programme of the meeting focussed on church governance, church-state relations and ecumenical relations. The aim was to deepen our understanding of one another and to identify possible areas for continued co-operation and mutual sharing. All agreed that the meeting had been successful. Areas of common concern were highlighted and other areas were identified where sharing of resources would be helpful, and we could learn from each other. Where the churches were working in sensitive areas e.g. on Israel Palestine, it was reassuring to find similarities, which gives courage to continue ecumenical friendship relations. There was also a feeling that this kind of ecumenical encounter creates something that is immeasurable.

In the sharing of information it became clear that there were also areas where the CofS and the SEC could do more collaborative work. What follows is a summary of the areas identified for further consideration.

### **Nurturing the faith**

1. A distinction was drawn between a focus on membership and one on discipleship. There was a desire to talk more about this.
2. The Study Document on the WCC Unity Statement produced by the Scottish delegates might be taken up in Norway. There was scope to share more in relation to our responses to WCC and other ecumenical documents, and in how the documents can be shaped for local use in encouraging people to move from membership to discipleship.
3. The CoN material on the faith training for young people from early years to 18 was of great interest, and the possibility of sending someone to Norway to examine the material and its use more closely should be considered.
4. There was great interest in the CoN's description of change coming through either 'insight or pain' and the value of the former over the latter in holding the church together.
5. There was scope for a discussion around the question: what would something closer to visible unity look like?
6. Another question was about the role of the church in staying close to society without being assimilated into it e.g. on same-sex relations.

### **Church Order**

7. There is interest in following the way in which the CoN develops its Church Order and related issues.

### **Church and State**

8. The way in which the CoS handles political issues, was of interest to the CoN as it continues its disestablishment transition.
9. The CoN was also interested to learn more about the role of the Parliamentary Officer and 'ministry in the Parliament'.
10. Should Scotland vote Yes in the referendum, there will be much that can be learnt from Norway about the shaping of a constitution.

### **Inter Faith Relations**

11. The Norwegian inclusion of "Life Stance Communities" as partners alongside other faith communities was something that would be helpful in Scotland particularly in developing dialogue with secular humanists.
12. Sharing of the CoN resources on anti-Semitism, islamophobia and hatred of Roma etc. would be welcomed.
13. The Inter Faith scene in Norway has much to teach us in Scotland. It would be good to develop the Scottish scene with the help and advice of those in Norway.

### **Local Relations**

14. It would be good to target groups – e.g. pastors or young people - to visit specific work in dioceses and parishes: e.g. advantage could be taken of occasions when young people gather.
15. There is an open question about whether church ties between Aberdeen and Stavanger should be strengthened to mirror the close ties within industry, not least the oil industry.

### **Closer Co-operation in Scotland**

16. The SEC expressed an interest in working more closely with the CoS on Israel Palestine.
17. The SEC also expressed a willingness to open up a discussion on territoriality with a view to being more intentional in sharing ministries.