

OneKirk Press Release

OneKirk Working Group
24 April 2007

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A Challenge to Unity: An honest approach or waste of time?

New report on human sexuality published by the Church of Scotland

As was well intimated at the 2006 General Assembly this year's General Assembly will be presented a new report entitled "A Challenge to Unity" from the Mission and Discipleship Council. The makeup of the Working Group that produced the report is mixed and well represents the theological spectrum existing in the Church of Scotland.

The resultant report, inevitably, does not come to any outright conclusions. This is no surprise to OneKirk, neither should it be to other members of the Church. We knew last year that the Church of Scotland was not of one (or even two) views on the subject of same-sex relationships. The report confirms what was already known, and does so in great detail.

Rev Peter Johnston, Convenor of the OneKirk Working Group, said, "Some may question whether the report has been a waste of time. I do not believe OneKirk members would draw that conclusion. The report is a part of a longer process and therefore represents a fair and honest appraisal of where the Church of Scotland is at this time on the subject. The Kirk is not of one voice on same-sex relationships, and attempts to suggest it is are unhelpful at best.

"Seen in that wider context, OneKirk is encouraged by the further movement in this latest report to greater openness within the Church of Scotland. This can be seen in the wide acceptance by the writers of the report that homosexual orientation is not in any way a hindrance to being a follower of Christ. It is also found in the humble admission that the church has been insensitive towards gay and lesbian people."

OneKirk strongly supports open discussion and so welcomes the report, "A Challenge to Unity", for the contribution it makes to such a discussion. It clearly and helpfully presents the background and supporting arguments from varied viewpoints, and as such is a useful educational resource.

Rev Peter Johnston says, "What is also clear from the report's honest admission of the range of sincerely held viewpoints in the Kirk is that it would be a gross abuse for the advocates of one viewpoint to try to legislate their own viewpoint into church law, as some tried to do at the General Assembly 2006. At that Assembly a motion was brought to bar ministers from conducting blessings on those who have sought same-sex civil partnerships. It was, I believe quite correctly, rejected by the members of the Assembly."

END

OneKirk

OneKirk came into being following the 2006 General Assembly and the booklet, *Stepping Forward*, that supported the freedom of pastoral conscience of ministers. The encouragement and support received from ministers, deacons and members (131 of whom wanted to be associated by name with the booklet) prompted us to consider ways to resource and facilitate discussion within the Church of Scotland and to provide a network to encourage that process.

Recognising the important role of other groups within the church, such as Forward Together and Affirmation Scotland, OneKirk aims to provide a voice for those who seek to exercise an inclusive, affirming and progressive ministry within our church, while supporting the broad church tradition of the Church of Scotland.

A website has been developed to help facilitate this work (www.onekirk.org).

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