



Church and Society Council

E-Newsletter November 2009

End of Life Debates

End of Life issues are on the agenda at the Scottish Parliament this month. [Gil Paterson's](#) proposed Palliative Care Bill has gathered enough support from MSPs to be taken forward. The draft Bill can be [read here](#). The Scotsman published an interview [with Mr. Paterson](#) where he discusses his reasons for proposing the Bill. We are supportive of the principles of this Bill.

Euthanasia, Assisted Suicide & the Value of Human Life

[Margo MacDonald](#) will be presenting to Parliament a Bill in draft form to legalise assisted suicide in Scotland. She has been a [long campaigner](#) for this issue and managed to secure the necessary support to prepare the Bill in draft form. Lord Advocate the Rt Hon Lord Advocate [Elish Angiolini QC](#) stated that legal guidelines on assisted suicide will not be prepared in Scotland despite of announcements on the law south of the border. "It is important to recognise the different legal landscape in Scotland, where involvement in a suicide might amount to homicide, as well as a different system of public prosecution". She said that any change in the law should "properly be a matter for the Parliament". We are against a change in this law. We are very fortunate to have the contribution of [Dr. Calum MacKeller](#) director of research at the Scottish Council on Human Bioethics and a member of our Council to guide us through this difficult topic in a sensitive and thoughtful manner. [Read more](#)

Discussing End of Life Issues

Are you challenged about end of life issues? Do you wonder whether assisted suicide is the 'solution' it is claimed to be? This leaflet, recently developed within the Council addresses some of these issues from a Christian perspective. It also has discussion points which might be very useful for starting a discussion within congregations. The leaflet is downloadable from our website.



Ian Galloway, Convener

End of Life Theme

[Palliative Care Bill](#)

[Euthanasia, Assisted Suicide](#)

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Resources for Sunday Worship

The topic for November is "End of Life issues".

Each month will have a new topic. [Read more](#)

Church & Society Events

Religious Observance Module. [Read More](#)

Justice and Markets Conference Series. [Read More](#)

School Chaplains Training. [Read More](#)

Church & Society Resources



The Council has [a channel](#) in YouTube. We have recently uploaded parts 1 and 2 of the lecture given by Alan McFarlane at the Church & Society's Annual conference, on the reasons behind the Credit Crunch. Mr. MacFarlane is the general manager of [Walter Scott Global Investment Management](#). Alan challenged us to think about the need to have an ethical approach as part of an investment strategy.

New leaflets



Dolly the cloned sheep has become an icon for biotechnology, representing both the hopes and the fears about where embryology and genetics might lead. To most people's relief, fears of cloned humans have not yet materialised, despite a number of attempts. The Council has developed in conjunction with the SRTP project two new leaflets addressing ethical issues around cloning and adult stem cell research. All leaflets are downloadable from our [website](#). Printed copies can be requested by phoning 0131 225 5722 .



Resources for Worship

Sooner or later we will all be confronted by end of life issues . The Starters for Sunday [material for November 1](#) provides inspirational worship material on this topic.

Online Space for Education Reps

Following feedback from the Education representatives meeting in Aviemore last month the council has developed an online meeting environment where our representatives to the Local Authorities will be able to exchange information, documents and hold online discussions. The space is called [EDUREPS](#) and is available through Google groups. If you are a Local Authority Rep and wish to join this online environment, please email [A. Mullen](#).

Church & Society Blogs

Tired of lugging the Blue Book around? Log on to our blogs, where we are unpacking the main reports in the Blue Book in a friendlier fashion.

[Convener's Blog](#)

[Eco-Congregation Scotland Blog](#)

[Addicted Lifestyles Blog](#)

[End of Life Issues & Debate Blog](#)

Questionnaire

We have had really good feedback about our newsletter and some of our leaflets, however we need more information about the way you use our information resources. This information will help us tailor our information products to suit your needs. Please complete [our web questionnaire](#).

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Our Newsletter

One of the purposes of the monthly newsletter is to present the work of the Council and the work of relevant organisations. Each month the newsletter will have a theme selected for its relevance to our lives and to the Gospel. Each issue will cover news, events and hot topics relevant to the theme. There will be a permanent section for news and events sponsored by the Council, where we will welcome your presence. We want the newsletter to be relevant to your needs. Please [contact us](#) if you would like to share with us activities that are happening in your church or presbytery or have an idea for an article. Feel free to pass this newsletter to other people, or better still, encourage them to [sign up](#) for their own copy. We value your feedback. Dr. [Virginia Cano](#), Editor.

Update on RO Module

We are delighted to announce the launch of “Religious Observance, Delivery and Practice” a masters-level module accredited by the University of Glasgow. **Places are being snapped up!** The 20 credit module is the result of a partnership between The Church of Scotland, Scripture Union Scotland and Glasgow University. The module will use experiential & reflective practice to trigger learning. Practitioners in RO will be delivering the 20 credit module using a variety of teaching methods. The course commitment will consist of a 24 hr residential event in Glasgow on the 15-16 January 2010, two half day events in March and April, plus a 3000 word essay and 9 hrs Internet-based work. Fees will be heavily subsidised by the Church of Scotland. Please contact [Ewan Aitken](#) for details.

[Read More](#)

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Euthanasia, Assisted Suicide & the Value of Human Life

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In the next few weeks, Margo MacDonald MSP will be presenting her Bill to legalise euthanasia and assisted suicide in the Scottish Parliament. However, a lot of concern exists relating to this Bill because of the manner in which it may completely undermine the dignity and value of human life.

Ever since the Second World War, all the countries of the United Nations have agreed that human dignity is conferred, without exception, to all human beings and cannot be diminished or lost. This is why it is always wrong for an individual to kill a person. Indeed, the relationship between the prohibition to kill and the dignity of human life is such that if we undermine the one we automatically undermine the other.

For Christians, this inherent and incalculable dignity is demonstrated by the fact that (1) God created us in His Image and we are not, therefore, like other animals, and that (2) God gave His only Son, Jesus Christ, on the cross out of His amazing love for us which is a measure of how much He values us. We are, therefore, loved by a wonderful God who treasures every moment of our lives even when we go through difficulties and suffering. But God is also a God of compassion which means that He “suffers with” each one of us when life becomes incomprehensible and very troubled because He does not want to leave us.

In addition, it should be remembered that, in Scotland, physical suffering can be adequately alleviated in all but the rarest cases. Up to 95% of patients are able to have their pain and/or symptoms effectively relieved when treated by palliative care professionals with the relevant expertise. Moreover, even in the extremely exceptional circumstances where physical suffering does not fully respond to treatment there is now the possibility of using artificial transient or (very occasionally) total permanent sedation in patients. This seeks to sedate the patients in order to address the physical and/or mental distress.

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However, if euthanasia and assisted suicide is legalised in Scotland, it would mean that society would accept, for the first time, that some lives no longer have any meaning, value or worth and should be ended. It would also mean denying the dignity which is due to an individual in order for him or her to be legally killed.

In the same way, persons who ask for assisted dying because they consider their lives to have become worthless or believe that they have lost their dignity must also reject the worth, value and meaning that others, such as their family, friends, society and especially God are giving to their lives. It would imply that the incredible value that God gives to our lives is unimportant. That the dignity of human life is only based on subjective choices and decisions and whether it meets certain quality standards or reaches a sufficient level of happiness or pleasure. But it would also mean a return to the abuses of the past in which human dignity was not believed to be present in certain persons and that they could therefore be exploited or killed.

This is because a society that no longer believes in the value and dignity of human life is incapable of offering any real argument against murder and the destruction of a person made in the Image of God. It becomes a culture that has lost its faith in the preciousness of life and cannot comprehend why it should be endured. In short, it would be the beginning of a heartless society in which some lives are considered valuable while others are seen as meaningless or worthless and where ending these lives becomes easy. Moreover, nobody would be spared from the consequences since a "Right to Die" for an individual implies a "Right to Kill" on behalf of society, which means that all members of society will then share in the responsibility for the killing or the suicide.

To counter these trends, we should continue to affirm, instead, that all human lives are full of value, meaning and richness given by God who is our only source of real dignity. And He gives this freely to everyone, without exception, through His incredible grace and love. Even though persons may be aged, dependent on others or may have lost their autonomy we can never lose our dignity. Indeed, Christianity is all about losing control and depending on both God and others. It is also about finding love and comfort in life, through death and in the resurrection.

Legalising euthanasia and assisted suicide would contradict the most basic beliefs of the Christian Church.

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The Society, Religion and Technology Project, SRTP has launched a series of conferences to examine the ethical dimensions of economics.

What is the International Economy for? This was a one-day conference held at St. John's Church in Edinburgh on October 9th. The guest speaker was Rt. Hon. Douglas Alexander MP, Secretary of State for International Development. The conference was well attended with ample opportunity for debate. Dr Graham K. Blount, from the Centre for Theology and Public Issues has written an overview of the conference which will be available shortly.

The next conference will be on December 3rd at St George's West Church, Edinburgh. The key-note speaker will be [Mr. John Sweeney](#), Cabinet Secretary for Finance & Sustainable Growth in the Scottish Government. The topic of the conference is "**The Market Economy in Britain**". Please download the registration form [here](#) or phone 0131 225-5722.

A Privilege to Care

Dr. Murdo Macdonald, Policy Officer of the Society, Religion and Technology Project has written an article on the November issue of [Life and Work](#) entitled "A Privilege to Care" where he talks about Christian approaches to dignity at the end of life.

Prisoner's Week 15th-22nd November .

Prisoners' Week presents an opportunity to remember all in our communities affected by crime and imprisonment: prisoners and their families, victims of crime, and those who work within the Criminal Justice System. This year's theme is "Dreams for our Children". Worship material is available in [their website](#).

World AIDS Day. December 1st. The theme for this year is "**Universal Access and Human Rights**". Worship material and resources [are available here](#). For information contact [M.Clark](#), HIV/AIDS Project Coordinator in the Church of Scotland. Tel. 0131 225 5722.

Souper Sunday. 10th January. Church of Scotland HIV/AIDS Project: changing the world, one spoonful at a time! This fund raising day was endorsed by the General Assembly. Find plenty of ideas to make this a special Sunday for everyone [in this website](#).

For Everyone Born a Place at the Table. November 6th. **Why does greater income equality matter ... and how do we achieve it?** A conference jointly organised by Scottish churches and Scottish trade unions. Easter Road conference centre, Edinburgh. For more information please [follow this link](#).

Families Today: Where are we now? November 11th. A [one day conference](#) at the Macdonald Centre, Edinburgh looking at issues facing today's families in Scotland . What do we mean by 'family' today? What responses can we make to these issues? Speakers Include [Lynn Jamieson](#) and [Susan Deacon](#).

What is a person. 30th January. Looking at body and soul, genes and gender. This one day conference will be led by Thomas Torrance. Speakers include E. Storkey, J. Wyatt and Murdo Macdonald. Venue: [Cross House Linlithgow](#).

Take Action

Petition opposing the legalisation of assisted suicide. This petition declares: "We the undersigned petition the Prime Minister to retain the law that makes it a criminal offence to assist another person to commit suicide". To sign this petition please [follow this link](#).

Church Bell Ringing: December 13th. On this day churches all over the world are invited to ring their bells 350 times at 3 pm (or thereabouts) local time, to express their concern over Climate Change . This event will coincide with a big ecumenical celebration ending in the Cathedral of Copenhagen. Find out more on the World Council of Churches [website](#).

The People's G20. In November, finance ministers from the 20 richest nations in the world will meet in St Andrews to decide on solutions to the global financial and climate crises. It is important to let them hear the voices of ordinary folk, not just bankers.

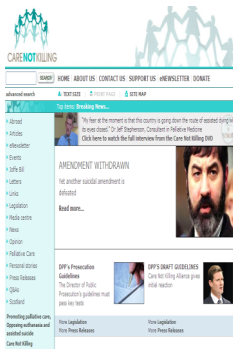
A host of [activities are being planned](#) including a [rally on the 7th on the beach](#) in St. Andrews. Speakers include [Colin Hines](#) and the [Rev. Ian Galloway](#).

Help get The Wave rolling. On Saturday 5 December 2009, ahead of the crucial UN climate summit in Copenhagen, thousands of people will flow through the streets of Glasgow to demonstrate their support for a safe climate future for all. The Wave is organised by Stop Climate Chaos Scotland. Volunteers are needed to help make this demonstration a success. There are plenty of opportunities to volunteer, from bus drivers, to community organizer. Check [their website](#) for information.

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Website of the Month



Every month we will bring to you a website which we have found worthy of visiting. This month, as our topic is End-of-Life issues we think that the **Care not Killing website** is particularly relevant. The website promotes palliative care and opposes euthanasia and assisted suicide.

The Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office

SCPO is conducting an online survey about the use of their information resources and services. The feedback from this questionnaire will allow them to target their information better to their readers. Their questionnaire is available at [this website](#).

School Chaplains Training.

This will take place in Aberdeen on the 25th of March 2010. Please contact [Agnes Mullen](#) for more information.

Stevenson Prize



Schools are invited to enter the Stevenson Prize competition. This has been established to encourage excellence in the field of Religious Observance. The competition is for work by pupils and a £500 prize will be awarded to one Primary and one Secondary school. The deadline for entries is March 25th 2010. Details and examples of work submitted can be found [following this link](#). For more information contact [A. Mullen](#) or phone 1031 240 2275. Please pass this information to teachers and schools.

Our face in Facebook

Over 100 people are following us on Facebook.

Would you like to write on our wall, tell us what you think about political and social issues that affect your life as a Christian, or receive invitations to events sponsored by the Council? Look for Church and Society Council group in Facebook.

Churches discuss End of Life issues

Thank you very much to Maureen Simpson for letting us know that at its October meeting, the Presbytery of Aberdeen devoted its Conference session to 'End of Life Issues'. After a short presentation from a local (anti-euthanasia) GP, presbyters broke into groups to discuss 'A Christian Perspective on Changing Attitudes to End of Life Issues'. Feedback was collected on paper from all the groups and collated to be issued with the minutes of the meeting. It was felt by many that the session was useful for raising awareness of the matter.

St Andrew's Parish Church was host to a number of congregations for a joint service on End of Life issues. Dr. Murdo Macdonald was there to give information on the current legal position in Scotland. [The service](#) allowed the congregations to explore their feelings concerning this sensitive subject. There was the opportunity to join a prayer group after the service which was most welcome.

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