



The Church of Scotland

Communications Department

GOOD NEWS GENERAL ASSEMBLY UPDATE:

SATURDAY 21ST MAY 2011

NEW MODERATOR SWORN IN



Above: Very Reverend John Christie hands over the Moderator's ring to Right Reverend David Arnott

RIGHT Reverend David Arnott was sworn in as the new Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland at the opening ceremony on the Mound.

Very Reverend John Christie paid tribute to his colleague, and also spoke of the importance of reconciliation to commissioners in his opening speech.

The Lord High Commissioner, Lord Wilson of Tillyorn, addressed the Assembly on the theme of pilgrimage and spiritual renewal amidst the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible (continued on page 2).

PRAISE FOR GREYFRIARS WOODWORK PROJECT



(continued from page one) This morning's opening session gave a first sight of the new playpen area to commissioners, thanks to the sterling work of the Greyfriars Recycling of Wood (GROW) project.

Wood for the new layout came from the old General Assembly playpen and old pews from Tranent Parish Church.

Assembly Arrangement Committee convener Reverend Janet Mathieson said the increased space would allow for greater use of the Assembly Hall during the year, thus giving the Church a greater income.

The new Moderator praised the GROW project for its contribution to the Assembly, saying it was a "high standard of workmanship".

Referring to a previous visit to the workshop in Edinburgh, Right Reverend David Arnott said he saw "pleasure and pride, delight in a task, beginning of self-belief, and not just fashioning of wood but the reshaping of lives".

Based at Greyfriars Kirk, GROW works with the homeless and vulnerable to make furniture out of recycled church pews.

ASSEMBLY “SHOULD SPEND MORE TIME SEEKING GOD”



Above: Reverend Dr Abi Ngunga

THE Assembly Arrangements Committee is to consider how future General Assemblies may spend less time on formal business and more time focused on seeking the will of God for the Church.

Reverend Dr Abi Ngunga, minister of Peterhead St Andrew's, said he had seen many commissioners coming home "tired, exhausted and worried" from last year's Assembly and that the Church must do more to inspire people in its highest court.

Dr Ngunga welcomed the Roll Away the Stone event, which will showcase the best of the Church of Scotland in Edinburgh's Princes Street Gardens tomorrow, and said it was a "bold attempt" to reverse declining numbers.

Assembly Arrangements convener Reverend Janet Mathieson said the committee would continue to keep before it "ways in which we might help to invigorate the life of the Church and be a living witness to the Gospel".

SPOKESMANSHIP “KEY ISSUE FOR MODERATOR”

COMMISSIONERS heard that nominations for the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland should consider the important issue of spokespersonship.

Reverend Andrew Anderson, minister at Greenside in Edinburgh, said that the Church of Scotland was quickly becoming “invisible” compared to the public figureheads of other Christian churches.

During the report of the Legal Questions Committee Mr Anderson said: “It is a person the public know. When the Moderator speaks, the Moderator is listened to.

“I’ve had people say to me that the national Church is invisible, and that we have leadership from other denominations, but not our own.

“I would encourage the committee to look at the opportunities of spokespersonship, and we must take advantage of it.”

Mr Anderson conceded that the structures of the Church were “quite restricting” but that a prominent Moderator could be “an enormous resource”.



Above: Reverend Dr Robert Anderson

Earlier in the Legal Questions Committee debate, Reverend Dr Robert Anderson tabled an amendment calling for “means to ensure that Moderators are elected on merit”, arguing that previous elections were made “on familiarity”

Dr Anderson said: “There are many people who have made extraordinary contributions to the life of the Church of Scotland who don’t become Moderator because they’re not well enough known. This [amendment] would be a very helpful part of the review.”

Reverend Gordon Kennedy described the motion as “utterly unnecessary” and “shameful”, and Legal Questions convener Carole Hope said it was already implicit in what the Church was trying to do. The Assembly voted unanimously against the amendment.

YOUTH DELEGATES “NEED VOTE”



Above: Robert Scott

YOUTH delegates should be allowed to vote at the General Assembly, commissioners heard this afternoon.

Robert Scott, elder at Gorgie Parish Church in Edinburgh and former National Youth Assembly member, said that the youth representatives “needed a vote to go with their voice”.

Principal Clerk Reverend John Chalmers said that he would take the matter to the Legal Questions Committee to consider, and that any such change may need to go under the Barrier Act.

Currently youth delegates are allowed to speak in the Assembly, but not vote, similar to overseas delegate and corresponding members.

TOMORROW’S BUSINESS:

10am service at St Giles’ Cathedral

12.30pm Gaelic service at Greyfriars Tolbooth Kirk

1-6pm Roll Away the Stone event in Princes Street Gardens