

Eurodiaconia  Connecting faith
and social justice
through action



The Church of Scotland

Annual Conference and General Meeting
13 – 15 March 2019
Edinburgh, Scotland, UK

Telling Truths - Changing Lives





Welcome to Edinburgh! - Fàilteachaidh do Dhùn Èideann!

Edinburgh is the capital of Scotland and it is in central eastern Scotland, near the Firth of Forth, close to the North Sea. Thanks to its spectacular rocks, rustic buildings and a huge collection of medieval and classic architecture, including numerous stone decorations, it is often considered one of the liveliest cities in Europe. Scottish people called it Auld Reekie, Edina, Athens of the North and Britain's Other Eye. Edinburgh is not only one of the most beautiful cities in Europe, it is a city with a fantastic position. The view falls on all sides – green hills, the hint of the blue sea, the silhouettes of the buildings and the red cliffs. It is a city that calls you to explore it by foot – narrow streets, passageways, stairs and hidden church yards on every step will pull you away from the main streets. Edinburgh is host to the Scottish Parliament and to many national institutions. It is also a city that preserves much of the history and tradition of Scotland, symbolised by castles, churches and culture

Yet Edinburgh is also a modern city, served by an international airport a very short distance from the city centre and well served by public transport and a direct and regular trainline from London.

The **Church of Scotland** (Scots: The Scots Kirk; Scottish Gaelic: Eaglais na h-Alba), also

known by its Scots language name, the Kirk, is the national church of Scotland.^[5] It is Presbyterian and traces its roots back to the beginnings of Christianity in Scotland, but its identity is principally shaped by the Reformation of 1560. The social justice and social services work of the Church is governed by two Church Councils – the Church and Society Council and the Social Care Council which is better known by its operating name, CrossReach.

CrossReach has been at the forefront of social care in Scotland since its establishment. In 2019 it will celebrate its 150th anniversary of providing care people can put their faith in. CrossReach provides a broad range of services across the country and engages in and with communities to ensure social care for all. **The Church and Society Council's** remit is to engage on behalf of the Church in the national, political and social issues affecting Scotland and the world today. This includes a huge range of issues including human rights, asylum, ethics, science and technology, concerns about gambling, climate change and education issues. It aims to do this through the development of theological, ethical and spiritual perspectives when formulating policy and by effectively representing the Church by offering appropriate and informed comments.



Eurodiaconia is a network of churches and Christian organisations that provide social and health care services and advocate for social justice. As a network of 47 members in 33 countries we work together for just and transformative social change across Europe, leaving no one behind.

We believe that there is hope in every situation and our shared faith requires us to identify and share that hope. Sharing hope means talking with and for those who need hope. Hope is a starting point for justice, equality and inclusion and hope is our fundamental message. But hope needs truth.

Today, there is a growing disenchantment of the general public towards public institutions and political processes at European and national levels. This is often evidenced by an increasing disengagement from traditional social actions and discourse, instead turning to populist narratives, which threaten to fragment political systems and the values underpinning our societies even further. In this context, churches, civil society organizations (CSOs) and other institutions are easily being perceived as yet another component of a system already under strain and questioning if they are causes rather than solutions to the problems faced. But we believe that we are reliable, trustworthy and most of all bring truth in all situations.

At a time when we are challenged by the phenomenon of fake news; of echo

chambers and the variance of narratives it is more important than ever to ensure that we, as organisations committed to the truth of the reality of life for the people we serve, are able to be recognized as truth tellers and truth protectors. In our advocacy work we must continue to speak truth to power but also ensure we create and give space to those who can speak of their own truths. In our social care work we should be demonstrating the truth of human dignity, rights and love in our actions as well as our words. Therefore our Annual Conference in 2019 will be organized around the theme of **'Telling Truths – Changing Lives'**.

“Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free” John 8:32



Our programme will take place over three days, each day having a particular dynamic. Our first day (Wednesday) will focus on our engagement in society at political and organizational levels as well as give space for members and partners to share their projects, plans and contribute to European level initiatives. Venue: APEX Grassmarket Hotel

Our second day (Thursday) will see everyone travel to the city of Glasgow where we will spend a day visiting projects, meeting with self-advocacy groups and learning how community and public truths are being told by those who experience social challenge and risk. We will also see how CrossReach has been providing services for 150 years and what the plans are for the next 150. It will be a day of opening our eyes to the reality of social injustice, selective narratives and grassroots empowerment alongside quality, accessible social services. Transport will be arranged by Eurodiaconia.

Our third day (Friday) will bring us together to reflect on what we have seen and what it means for Eurodiaconia. How do we ensure we are truth tellers, building our praxis, advocacy and identity work to reflect the truths we here in our daily work? How do we develop the participatory democracy of our work and ensure that voices of experience are heard?

We will also conduct the business of Eurodiaconia in this session, ensuring that

we are a well governed, well-resourced network working in partnership with our members to achieve social justice. We will be hosted on this day at the Grassmarket Community Project. GCP is an award-winning social enterprise established by the local community and particularly by Greyfriars Church of Scotland. www.grassmarket.org

We will benefit from the support of the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament will give a reception in our honor, hosted by Dr Alasdair Allan MSP. We will also enjoy Scottish hospitality with a traditional Ceilidh including dancing.

Attending our annual conference and general meeting gives you the opportunity to learn and exchange with peers from around Europe, develop new projects and ideas and discuss how our work in Diaconia can shape systemic and structural social needs in our communities.



Draft Programme

Tuesday 12 Match	
18:00 – 20:00	Registration open at APEX Grassmarket
19:00	Meeting point in the foyer of the APEX Grassmarket for those who may wish to go as a group for dinner. <i>Please note this is not a formal part of the programme and is 'self-organised'.</i>
Wednesday 13 March – APEX Grassmarket Hotel	
08:00	Registration open at APEX Grassmarket
08:30	<p>Opening Service led by Rev. Dr Richard Frazer, Convenor of the Church and Social Council of the Church of Scotland and President of the Grassmarket Community Project</p> <p>Greetings from hosts, Eurodiaconia, partners and friends</p> <p>Icebreakers and introductions</p>
09:30	Introduction to the theme “Telling Truths – Changing Lives”
09:45	Keynote Speaker (TBC)
10:45	Coffee Break
11:15	<p>Panel Discussion Who are the truth tellers in our societies today?</p> <p><i>Panelists will include diaconal actors, community and faith group leaders and representatives from academic and political life in Europe.</i> Moderated by Heather Roy, Secretary General, Eurodiaconia</p>
12:30	Lunch

13:30	<p>Lunch time drop in sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The new EU budget and funding programmes ◆ The European Elections campaign 2019 ◆ What would Jesus do about Brexit? ◆ Balancing social and economic policies through the European Semester ◆ Meet and Question the Candidates for the Supervisory Board ◆ Project fair – looking for partners to support your work (<i>participants will be invited to suggest topics in advance</i>)
14:30	Coffee break
15:00 (end around 17:00)	<p>Workshops and Seminars <i>(participants will be able to choose one from the following)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Telling Truths – the Bible as a resource for Diaconia ◆ Telling Truths – the role of academic research in bringing diaconal truths into the public square ◆ Telling Truths through culture and the arts ◆ Telling Truths - giving care ◆ Telling truths – speaking out ◆ Telling truth – the challenge of the media ◆ Telling truths – engaging and hearing voices of experience
18:30	Reception at the Scottish Parliament hosted by Dr Alasdair Allan MSP

Thursday 14 March - Glasgow

08:00	Depart by Bus to Glasgow
09:00	<p>Study tour of Glasgow</p> <p>Our morning will begin with worship led by members of the Wild Goose Resource Group (from the Iona Community).</p> <p>Then we will be meeting with some of those who have been part of the Poverty Truth Commission, an organisation which has grown up in Scotland over the last decade which brings together people with lived experience of poverty and key decision makers and leaders. The Church of Scotland has helped to develop and support this work.</p> <p>http://povertytruthcommission.blogspot.com/ https://www.faithincommunityscotland.org/poverty-truth-commission/</p> <p>After lunch we will be visiting a range of church-supported initiatives across the city before returning to Edinburgh later in the afternoon.</p>
19:00	Scottish Ceilidh at Grassmarket Community Project

Friday 15 June – Grassmarket Community Project

08:30	Morning Worship led by Apostoli, Greece
09:00	Sharing our impressions – what does Eurodiaconia need to know and do?
10:00	<p>Building a strong network - Member Discussion tables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Diversifying income – the role of membership and solidarity contributions and other sources of funds ◆ Improving communication with members ◆ Reviewing our governance – are we getting it right? ◆ Services for members – expectations and realities
11:00	<p>Annual General Meeting of Eurodiaconia Business Session including elections to the Supervisory Board.</p> <p><i>(see separate Agenda to be circulated at a later date)</i></p> <p><i>All members are entitled to attend and participate in this session. Guests are very welcome to attend as observers.</i></p>
12:30	Blessing for the Road led by led by the Right Reverend Susan Brown, Moderator of the Church of Scotland
13:00	Departures



Further information about Workshops and Seminars

Building on feedback from previous events we are offering one round of workshops and seminars but for a longer time period, therefore allowing participants to dig deeper into the topic. In each session there will be a lead expert speaker who will introduce the topic and several practical examples, where possible, on how the topic is used in practice by diaconal organisations and partners. There will then be time for debate and discussion as well as some European context development and action planning for future work on these topics

(participants will be able to choose one from the following)

A Telling Truths – the Bible as a resource for Diaconia

The Bible lays out both the origin and characteristics of diaconal service. Does it remain our guiding text for our diaconal work today? How can we rediscover the Bible as a resource for Diaconia and a reference point for the type of Diaconia needed today?

B Telling Truths – the role of academic research in bringing diaconal truths into the public square

Academic research in Diaconia is increasingly contextual with a greater willingness to close the gap between praxis and research. Academic research can uncover truths that may previously been hidden and can share the reality of both peoples lives and the impact of the work of Diaconia. How can we create greater space in our work for truth telling in partnership with academics?

C Telling Truths through culture and the arts

Poetry, theatre, music, rap, art are just some of the ways in which truths can be told in an alternative way. In this seminar we will be exploring the power of arts and culture in Diaconia to be truth tellers and hearing about existing projects that support truth telling audiences more engaged through culture and the power of such work to change lives and politics.

D Telling Truths - giving care

How do we tell truths when we provide care to people with Alzheimer's and dementia, to children in kindergartens, in rehabilitation services or in access to work programmes? What truths do we want to tell and how just our work exhibit the truths of our values and our faith?

E Telling truth – speaking out

Engaging in the public square and being prophetic voices is part of our diaconal work. How do we engage effectively in advocacy at local, national and European level and how do we ensure our truths are heard?

F Telling truth – the challenge of the media

Our truths fight for space alongside other truths as well as lies and fake news. How do we rise above the caphony of voices claiming space and ensure we engage positively with the media?

G Telling truths – engaging and hearing voices of experience

If we wish to be truth tellers, we must also ensure that those who experience those truths can speak for themselves. Developing our work on participatory democracy and the engagement of experts by experience is essential for both ensuring the rights of all we engage with and ensuring the legitimacy of our work.



Accommodation

Eurodiaconia has reserved rooms at a preferential price at the APEX Grassmarket Hotel in the Old Town of Edinburgh. This is the same venue for the first day of our conference. Information on the hotel at <https://bit.ly/2EkYsNt>. **Booking of these rooms must take place via the link below** and delegates requirements must be indicated on the registration form. **Please pay the hotel directly before the 1st February 2019.** A limited number of rooms are available and therefore participants are encouraged to register as soon as possible. If participants wish to stay elsewhere then it is delegates own responsibility to arrange this accommodation.

Link for booking a room at the APEX Grassmarket hotel <https://bit.ly/2OIMVxk>.

Travel

Edinburgh is well served by an international airport connecting Scotland with the major cities of Europe. To reach the city center travelers can use either the express airport bus or the airport tram. It would also be possible to fly to other airports such as Glasgow International Airport and transfer to Edinburgh using public transport. It would also be possible to arrive in London and travel by train to Edinburgh however please be aware that UK train tickets need to be booked well in

advance. Further information can be found at www.trainline.co.uk

Registration

Participants should register as soon as possible using the link below. Information on accommodation will be required as will registration for workshop and seminar sessions.

<https://goo.gl/forms/cevXYwKCap99x6103>

Conference Fee

Conference and General Meeting Fee: 250€ includes attendance at the conference and general meeting, all meals as specified in the programme, documentation and social events. Does not include accommodation.

A request for payment of fees will be sent by the Eurodiaconia office shortly after registration has been received and must be paid by the start of the event.

Support for Participation

Thanks to the support of the European Union E@SI programme we are able to offer reimbursement of travel and accommodation to a number of participants. This will follow the usual

Eurodiaconia policy of support participants from Central and Eastern Europe and minority church members. If you would like financial support to attend the Conference, please indicate this on the registration form.

Entry Requirements to the UK

Nationals of some European countries will require a visa to enter the United Kingdom. Information on the visa requirements can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/standard-visitor-visa>. Please indicate on your registration form if you will require a visa. The Eurodiaconia Secretariat can then support you with necessary documentation. Please note, it is participants responsibility to apply for a visa in due time.

Languages

The Conference language will be English however members who require support with other languages should contact the Eurodiaconia office to discuss options for support for an additional participant to assist with interpretation.

For any further questions please email virginia.demoulin@eurodiaconia.org or consult the conference website <https://www.eurodiaconia.org/events/conference2019/>

“The very concept of objective truth is fading out of the world. Lies will pass into history”

George Orwell

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