

Article 3

“As a national Church representative of the Christian Faith of the Scottish people it acknowledges its distinctive call and duty to bring the ordinances of religion to the people in every parish of Scotland through a territorial ministry.”

Can we say we are representative of the Christian Faith of the Scottish people when we only have 330,000 members in a population of five million? What is distinctive about our call and duty over and above the work and witness of other Christian Churches in Scotland? And can we sustain it, given the statistics of the last 60 years? With dwindling numbers and dwindling Churches, if we hold on to our parish/territorial system then such parishes will be very large and we cannot hope to offer the ordinances of religion to everyone as we have done in the past.

Either we re-word Article 3 accordingly to something like...

“This Church seeks to be a national Church, representing the Christian Faith to the Scottish people, and in so doing acknowledges its call to bring the ordinances of religion to the people of Scotland, where possible, through a territorial ministry.”

Or we simply leave Article 3 as it is but re-interpret it for our times:

We seek to continue to be a national Church, representing the Christian faith in Scotland. We carry out this witness acknowledging there are other Christian denominations in Scotland. Sadly we also acknowledge the seeming drifting from faith of the people of Scotland and in particular from organised religion and we seek to reconnect with people in communities throughout Scotland to share the good news of God’s love. We hope to make available, within reasonable distance for every person, opportunities to worship together in the Presbyterian tradition – though this worship itself will reform - and for every Church to seek ways in which to bear witness to the Christian faith in action within communities. We will endeavour to operate as a Church throughout the whole of Scotland but realising we now live with more limited resources we therefore cannot guarantee this. Where good work is being carried out by other trusted Christian denominations we must acknowledge this and seek to work together. With regard to funerals, we will endeavour to assist all who wish a Christian funeral service, either through our ministers or trained members, however this can no longer be guaranteed and will depend on local circumstances and availability.