

# place for hope

reconciliation

*beyond*

referendum

prayers and resources

for positive dialogue

for the people of Scotland



## Stories for Reconciliation

As the story of our islands unfolds, what resources do we have for this next phase? How will our society, our communities, churches and families respond recognising the depth of engagement that has taken place throughout Scotland and beyond?

In the days and months ahead the challenge and the opportunity for our churches and our peacemakers is to be agents of reconciliation (see 2 Corinthians 5 v18 - 19).

The goal of reconciliation is to heal the rifts caused by division, restoring broken relationships and bringing together those who feel alienated and separated. This could be as simple as offering the hand of friendship, one person having the courage to take the first step towards the other, able to listen compassionately to their concerns. It might be offering safe space for a community to come together, to recognise hurts and loss, looking to restore relationships and create a community again.

**In Place for Hope** our work is rooted in a belief that reconciliation is the desire of all people of goodwill. And so we offer this pack as a resource for prayer, reflection, dialogue and gracious conversation.

Whether around the kitchen table, alone or in company, in church or in the market place, at work or at leisure, our hope is that these resources may inspire, console and ignite conversations across our land for the good of all.

For more information about the work of **Place for Hope**, or to contact us, please turn to the back page.



## Setting the scene for a gracious conversation

- Choose a venue that is warm and welcoming
- Offer hospitality as people arrive
- Sitting in a circle makes it easier to see each other—maybe two concentric circles if you are a large group
- Sometimes a ‘speaking object’, like a shell or a feather, can help as it is something for the speaker to hold to indicate that all others are listening
- A brief silence after each speaker can allow space to consider what has been said
- Agree ‘ways of working’ with the group before you begin (see page 4)

*Loving God, in the silence of this place,  
hold us gently as we listen graciously  
to each other's stories of hopes and fears  
for ourselves and our country.*

*Help us hear the sincerity in the voices  
of those with whom we have disagreed  
over these past weeks and months,  
and to listen for what draws us together,  
not what divides us.*

*Give us the grace not to judge, criticise or condemn,  
but to hold the spoken fears with compassion  
alongside the hopes and aspirations.*

*Help us hear, reflected all around us,  
the gentle echoes of your love.*

*Be with us as we open ourselves  
to discerning the way forward, together.*

*Amen*

## Some ways of working: 'We agree to...'

- ...listen to those with differing views
- ...listen to one voice at a time
- ...respect the views of each other
- ...seek to understand with our whole hearts
- ...hold what we hear in confidence
- ...speak our own 'truth'
- ...acknowledge hurt and loss
- ...avoid assumptions
- ...search for common ground

## Some questions for conversation starters

### Immediately after the referendum...

- What are you feeling now that the vote is over?
- What does the result of the referendum vote mean to you?
- Is it possible to view your differences as two sides of the same coin? If so, what unites them? What is the coin?
- What role might the churches have in a post-referendum Scotland?

### As we move beyond the referendum...

- What is a story you tell about your national identity.
- How do you know that you're back at home after a trip away?
- Have you lived away from home? What are some of the stories of this? Did you find yourself viewing your homeland differently during or after a period away?
- When do you feel most alive?
- What is an important conversation that you had to have that went well? What helped it go well? How did you decide that it had gone well?

## The art of conversation

- \* **Ask questions in new ways:** Make sure that you have questions that you wish to ask that are neither traps nor questions that you have already decided you know the answer to. So, ask questions about things that you don't understand, with an openness to hearing new information.
- \* **Cultivate curiosity:** When hearing something new, cultivate wonder, and curiosity. Often, when we hear something new, its tempting to move toward defence, come-back or correction. Hearing stories with wonder and curiosity is something that will deepen relationships.
- \* **Avoid either/or categories:** Find ways to introduce pluralities and perspectives in your words : "I wonder if everybody thinks the same as I do..." or "People who voted zyzy presumably had many different reasons for doing so"
- \* **Tend to tone as well as to content:** It's OK to use strong words or say strong things, but make sure you are making your points in a way that they can be heard. It's harder to speak carefully than it is to speak lazily. But it's worth it.

### Really Listening

Uh huh - I nod my head

Yes I am really listening to what you have to say

No, I am not looking to butt in with my own opinions

I am taking time to try to understand your point of view

Uh huh - I smile in a genuine and, I hope, open way.

I really want to appreciate where you are coming from.

Could you explain that again ...?

Did I get you right in what you said right there ...?

Correct me if I am wrong ... ?

Well, I've got to say my opinions are different from yours but I can understand what you say ... thank you!

## A Post Referendum Meditation

The cases were made, the arguments honed  
with anger, commitment, emotion, enthusiasm, passion, reason ...

Promises and threats:  
the body personal and politic pummelled, enervated, engaged,  
strained by social and inner divisions and stretched by honest differences.

The people of Scotland have voted: we have voted. I have voted.  
For our own many reasons we placed our crosses in one box not another  
For my reasons I placed my cross in one box not another.

Some of us came to our decision with ease, some only `after long struggle.

Reasons constitutional, emotional, historical, moral, political, religious, social  
Crosses placed angrily, economically, enthusiastically, fearfully, generously,  
hopefully, patriotically, rationally, regretfully ....

... and here we are today, tomorrow,  
living in the light and shade of this decision that we have made  
and others are witnessing.

People have watched on as the votes were cast and counted, result delivered

We are taking stock of *our* decision,

We are responding emotionally, politically, personally, as individuals,  
families, neighbourhoods, nations, countries.

We are feeling .....

We are thinking ...

And now? What next?

We have voted

Where do we go from here?





## Resources

### **'Cool Tools for Hot**

**Topics'** by Ron Kraybill and Evelyn Wright

### **'Creative Listening'**

by Rachel Pinney

### **'Making Questions Work'**

by Dorothy Strachan

## Web-sites

**www.placeforhope.org.uk** Place for Hope, building peace and reconciliation from a Scottish context

**www.conversationcafe.org** good toolkit for large group conversations

**www.acts-scotland.org** prayers and ideas for worship services

**www.sacredspace.ie** prayers and resources from Jesuit community

**www.theshorelineconsultancy.co.uk** rooted in RC church in UK, but working worldwide on 'the art of graceful conversation'

**www.listenwellscotland.org.uk** good resources for listening

**www.churchofscotland.org.uk** article by the Moderator, John Chalmers, on post referendum Scotland

**www.aoh-scotland.org** The Art of Hosting

**www.congregationalconsulting.org** "Trusted Congregational Consultants"

**www.springfieldcdr.com** Center for Diversity and Reconciliation

**www.stethelburgas.org** St. Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace

**www.workthatreconnects.org/spiral/** Work that Reconnects

**www.collaborativescotland.org** Collaborative Scotland: fostering a Commitment to Respectful Dialogue

God of many stories  
You are the story we tell  
about the stories that we live.

We hold our stories now,  
knowing that some of them are sheltering  
and some of them are shadowing.

May we tell our stories  
to ourselves, each other, and you,  
and be brought out of shadows  
into light with each other,

because you are the one who calls all things  
into the fullness of being.

Amen

### **With thanks to...**

Roy Henderson, Pádraig Ó Tuama, Nerys Jones, Fr. Willie McFadden, Russell McLarty, Fyfe Blair, Nancy Adams, Hugh Donald, Fiona Bennett, Ruth Harvey

### **Contact us**

Place for Hope works across all the churches in Scotland, funded by the Church of Scotland. We offer conflict transformation, mediation, training and equipping of individuals and groups. Please contact us for more information. We treat all enquiries confidentially.

# place for hope

[www.placeforhope.org.uk](http://www.placeforhope.org.uk) • 0131 240 2258 • [info@placeforhope.org.uk](mailto:info@placeforhope.org.uk)