

Moderator-designate is “excited” about her year in office

The first order of business for the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland which meets in Edinburgh tomorrow is to officially install charity head Rev Sally Foster-Fulton as the next Moderator.

She will chair proceedings from the Assembly Hall for five days until next Thursday and thereafter will act as the Church’s ambassador at home and abroad for the next 12 months.

Ministers, elders, deacons and special guests are gathering for the General Assembly and will be meeting in-person and online, making key decisions that will affect the future of the [Church](#) against the backdrop of major reforms and unprecedented challenges.

More than 400 commissioners from across Scotland and further afield will gather in the Assembly Hall on The Mound while 100 commissioners will take part online.

They will be able to participate in debates and vote on deliverances brought forward by the forums and committees of the Church.

People can watch the live proceedings on the Church website and Facebook page.



Monday October 24 2022: Moderator Designate of The Church of Scotland 2023, Rev Sally Foster Fulton. Photographed at St Cuthbert's Church in Edinburgh.

New Moderator

Mrs Foster-Fulton, 59, is taking a sabbatical from her role as the Head of Christian Aid Scotland, a position she has held since 2016.

The role will see her speaking out on issues important to the Church and its mission to follow and proclaim the example of Jesus Christ.

Speaking after she was named Moderator Designate, Mrs Foster-Fulton said: "I'm excited about what the year will bring.

"I genuinely love and am inspired by the Church of Scotland and its people.

"Over the past years of the pandemic in the face of a global

climate emergency and now a cost-of-living crisis, people across the Church have been stepping up and doing their very best to make an extraordinary impact in communities, locally, across our nation and in the world.”

Mrs Foster-Fulton succeeds Rt Rev Dr Iain Greenshields as Moderator.

The minister of St Margaret’s Parish Church in Dunfermline, Fife, he will supervise the passing of the ring and chain of office to his successor.

The Rt Hon Lord Hodge, the Deputy President of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom, has been re-appointed Lord High Commissioner.

He said he is “delighted and honoured” to have been chosen by His Majesty King Charles as his personal representative at the annual event.

A letter from King Charles III will be read out at the General Assembly tomorrow morning – the first since he ascended the throne following the death of his mother, Queen Elizabeth last September.

Over the course of General Assembly week, Lord Hodge will visit projects associated with the Church to show his support and provide encouragement on behalf of the King and address Commissioners on the closing day.

The General Assembly examines the work and witness of the Church throughout Scotland, debates critical issues that affect us all and makes decisions which will affect the future of the Church.

This year’s annual meeting comes at a time of the most significant structural changes faced by the Church in 94 years against a backdrop of falling membership, reduced minister numbers and a rapidly shifting financial picture.

The Assembly Trustees will bring forward a report that sets out the very challenging financial situation facing the Church, driven in part by a continuing reduction in congregational contributions.

They recognise that Presbytery Planning has been a “difficult, challenging and a painful experience” for many and are seeking affirmation that the total number of planning ministry posts for 2024 remains at 600 with 60 vacancies.

The Assembly Trustees say that the future of the Church, which currently has 1,247 congregations, 593 full-time parish ministers and 270,300 members, depends on inspirational and motivational ministries and leadership that reach people who are not part of the existing Church.

Presbytery and congregation projects will soon be eligible for funding from the £25 million ‘Seeds for Growth’ Fund.

Announced last year, the fund is designed to support innovative outreach with the potential to grow all kinds of worshipping communities.

It will run over the next seven years and will be open to applications from 1 June.

A wide range of topics will be discussed over the next five days.

The Theological Forum will ask Commissioners to authorise a piece of work to explore the theological perspectives of transgender identities and report to the General Assembly of 2024.

Commissioners will get a progress report from CrossReach, the operating name of the Social Care Council which runs cradle-to-the-grave services, supporting some of the most vulnerable people in Scottish society.

It notes that recruitment is a major challenge and is calling

on the Scottish Government to deliver a promise of fair pay to the social care workforce.

The General Assembly will be presented with a new report on the Church of Scotland's connections to the transatlantic slave trade.

The research reveals that some Church ministers and elders inherited wealth made on plantations from relatives and some buildings including Glasgow Cathedral have memorials to people who profited from the slave trade.

Commissioners will debate the pastorally sensitive issues around Assisted Suicide as well as the decision taken in 2012 to remain neutral on all matters around Scottish Independence.

Work carried out by congregations and CrossReach to support people with addictions will be highlighted along with a fundamental new development in deepening dialogue and understanding between Christians and Jews with the publication of a new of Jewish Christian Glossary.

The General Assembly will welcome the Chief Rabbi, Sir Ephraim Mirvis, to speak.

Other topics that will be discussed include the war in Ukraine, ongoing work to support asylum seekers and refugees and progress on work to achieve a Net Zero Church by 2030.

Church of Scotland chaplains serve alongside the men and women of Britain's armed forces and a report from the Committee on Chaplains to HM Forces sets out their contribution.

Senior Royal Navy Officer and First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Ben Key KCB, CBE, ADC, will address the General Assembly on Wednesday.