

On Tuesday the Parliament has the opportunity to debate the report published last week from the Equality and Human Rights Committee *Hidden Lives - New Beginnings: Destitution, asylum and insecure immigration status in Scotland*.

On behalf of the Church of Scotland and the Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees, I strongly welcome report. The focus and investigation of the inquiry is timely and important. The Committee makes a series of recommendations that should help to focus policy and work in this area across a range of sectors, including voluntary, community and charitable groups.

I am writing to encourage you to engage with and support the report's main principles – that everyone deserves to be treated humanely and with dignity.

The written evidence we presented to the Committee inquiry is available here:

<http://www.scpo.scot/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Equalities-and-Human-Rights-Committee-Destitution-Inquiry-response-from-Scottish-Faiths-Action-for-Refugees.docx>

The final thing I want to let you know is that last week the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland met and on Tuesday 23 May considered issues relating to asylum seekers and refugees. The Assembly agreed to *Call on the UK Government to end its policy of destitution for failed asylum seekers*. You can read the report to the Assembly here (paragraph 7.5)

http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0010/39547/Church_And_Society_Council.pdf

You can watch the recording of the debate on the question of destitution here

http://stream1.churchofscotland.org.uk/about_us/general_assembly/archive/report_of_the_church_and_society_council (from 1:28:17-1:44:10)

You might be interested to know that the speakers include the Rev Jane Howitt, who serves at St Rollox in the Springburn area of Glasgow and has a large number of refugees as members of her congregation, the Rev Aaron Stevens, the minister at St Columba's Budapest, which has been an important centre for refugee support in Hungary in recent months, the Rev Nathan McConnell who supports refugee integration in Dundee and the Rev Ian Galloway who is the Minister of Gorbals Parish Church, and has seen a transformation in his community over the past 20 years.

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