

# United Free Church of Scotland

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Scottish Charity No: SC008167  
A Designated Religious Charity



18<sup>th</sup> April 2012

Margo Macdonald MSP  
Room MG.02  
Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

Dear Ms MacDonald,

## **Response to the Assisted Suicide (Scotland) Bill**

I am writing on behalf of the Church & Society Committee of the United Free Church of Scotland and we thank you for giving us the opportunity of responding to your Assisted Suicide (Scotland) Bill.

In the foreword you state that: "There was a wide-ranging and also very specific consultation on the last Bill. Many of the moral and philosophical points that emerged during debate are unchanged. I do not intend to consult further on these general issues,..." We do not accept that there is no need to consult further on these issues as for us the ethical issues remain unchanged as does the basis of our objection to your new Bill. One of the fundamental tenants of the Christian Faith is that we are made in the image of God<sup>1</sup> making our lives dignified, uniquely precious and a gift from God. We are part of the human community, joined to each other and we understand that our actions affect other people; so when we act autonomously we must do so with great care and responsibility. The Christian and Hebrew Scriptures teach us the sanctity of life by commanding us on two occasions: "You shall not murder."<sup>2,3</sup> The only exceptions that the Law allows to these commandments is fighting for our country, defending ourselves and others from life threatening attacks. So we affirm the absolute sanctity of all human life and its creation by God as a gift which is in our care. As creatures made in the image and likeness of God we recognize our responsibility for ourselves and to enhance the lives of our fellow human beings, especially in circumstances of suffering, through the exercise of love which is ultimately of God.

We believe that all the resources now available through modern palliative care together with the love, care and support of family, friends and professional carers allows people to die with dignity if they are prepared to accept such care and is sufficient to negate the need to legalise assisted suicide in your Bill.

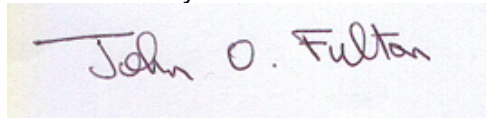
We are deeply concerned that your proposed legislation may set a dangerous precedent. Legalising assisted suicide indicates that it has become a routine procedure to end life which has the approval of both state and society. Although you state in the foreword of the consultation that "The proposed Bill would enable not compel." We are of the opinion that this statement is flawed as the Bill would allow loop holes in the Law which could result in abuse. Legalisation of assisted suicide could turn it into an ordinary and established part of medical and clinical practice. There are two observations that support our concerns. One comes from the figures that you quote from Oregon where assisted suicide is practised and Holland where euthanasia is practised. In the report from

Oregon that you quote there is a graph which shows that in 1998 there were 16 deaths from assisted suicide but in 2011 there were 71 deaths from assisted suicide; a four fold increase over 14 years <sup>4</sup>. The Churches on the continent have observed from the Dutch figures that in 2006 there were 1900 deaths due to euthanasia whereas in 2010, four years later, the number of deaths due to euthanasia had increased to 3100, a rise of 63%<sup>5</sup>. These figures give us cause for great concern as they indicate that your proposed Bill of Assisted Suicide can not be safely regulated by Government legislation.

Your proposed Bill is problematic for us. It is not only incompatible with our belief in humans being fashioned in the image of God therefore they should be treated with the utmost dignity and respect but there is also a common moral position held by many in our society, some who are not religious, that it is wrong to take an innocent life and that we have a duty to protect life particularly when it is vulnerable and frail.

We, therefore, oppose the Assisted Suicide (Scotland) Bill for the reasons given above.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John O. Fulton". The signature is written in a cursive style and is centered on a white rectangular background.

John O Fulton  
General Secretary

1. Genesis chapter 1 verse 26
2. Exodus Chapter 20 verse 13
3. Deuteronomy chapter verse 17
4. <http://public.health.oregon.gov/ProviderPartnerResources/EvaluationResearch/DeathwithDignityAct/Pages/ar-index.aspx>
5. [http://www.atimetolive.eu/?page\\_id=165](http://www.atimetolive.eu/?page_id=165)