

**Assisted Suicide (Scotland) Bill****Crown Terrace Baptist Church**

I am writing on behalf of Crown Terrace Baptist Church in Aberdeen. We thank you for providing us with this opportunity to respond to this consultation on proposals for development of an Assisted Suicide (Scotland) Bill.

**Q1. Do you agree with the general purpose of the Bill to make it permissible, in the circumstances provided for, to assist another to commit suicide?**

We do not support the general aim of the Bill. This conflicts with our underlying view of the sanctity of life and is based primarily on what we consider to be a flawed premise of primacy of autonomy of individual choice. We affirm the 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 recognise 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. This view of life is incompatible with the 'utility' nature of life promoted by the Bill proposals.

**Q2. Do you have any views on how the provisions in this Bill compare with those from the previous End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill?**

We have no comment to offer on this part of the Bill.

**Q3. The Bill precludes any criminal and civil liability for those providing assistance, providing the processes and requirements set out in the bill have been adhered to. Do you wish to make any comment on this?**

It would be essential that in any Bill of this nature it precluded criminal and civil liability for anyone involved in the process.

**Q4. The Bill outlines a three stage declaration and request process that would be required to be followed by an individual seeking assisted suicide. Do you have any comment on the process being proposed?**

We have no comment to offer on this part of the Bill.

**Q5. Do you have any comment on the provisions requiring that the person seeking assisted suicide must have a terminal or life-shortening illness, or a progressive condition which is either terminal or life-shortening?**

Our opinion is that this is very much not an exact science so it is therefore impossible to clearly define which conditions are allowable as suitable for assisted suicide and which are not.

**Q6. Are you satisfied with the eligibility requirements as regards age, capacity, and connection with Scotland as set out in the Bill?**

The question presumes the acceptability of the concept of assisted suicide which we would challenge for the reasons outlined in our response to Q1. In the event that there were to be a Bill facilitating this process:

We do not consider it appropriate to include people of 16 and 17 within the eligibility criteria for those who may invoke the process outlined in the Bill. They are unable to vote on the legislation due to age restriction and should similarly be unable to invoke it. It is only reasonable to align eligibility with the voting age of 18.

The 'finding life intolerable' criterion is too vague and would be likely to be interpreted in a variety of different ways. There would be a need to expand upon this to bring far more clarity to the understanding of what this actually means and how it should be interpreted.

**Q7. Do you have any comment on the roles of medical practitioners and pharmacists as provided for in the Bill?**

Although it is the intent that anyone will have the right to refuse to actively participate in the processes of assisted suicide, the history of honouring such assurances on the subsequent adoption of legislation in Scotland and the UK would lead many to distrust this.

**Q8. Do you have any comment on the means by which a person would be permitted to end his/her life under the Bill?**

We have no comment to offer on this part of the Bill.

**Q9. Do you have any comment on the role of licensed facilitators as provided for in the Bill?**

The question presumes the acceptability of the concept of assisted suicide which we would challenge for the reasons outlined in our response to Q1. In the event that there were to be a Bill facilitating this process:

We understand the need for an impartial facilitator who is not connected with the person who is pursuing this course. We also consider that there should be a requirement for the presence of a "supporter" chosen by the individual. We are aware that the proposals allow for this but believe this should be strengthened to become a requirement.

**Q10. Do you have any comment on the role of the police as provided for in the Bill?**

We have no comment to offer on this part of the Bill.

**Q11. Do you have any comment to make about the Bill not already covered in your answers to the questions above?**

We do not accept that the autonomy of individual choice is an appropriate premise upon which to base all of the thinking on the issue of assisted suicide. It must be recognised that none of us is truly autonomous or exist in a vacuum – all actions and decisions have consequences for others around us. The act of suicide removes all future choices. Even with the safeguards outlined, the proposed Bill creates the potential for someone to take an extreme and irreversible action based on their feelings at the time. This could be a result of a potentially short term negative view of life and circumstances but that can never be established. A balanced view of autonomy and choice seems incompatible with the defining act of suicide.

**Crown Terrace Baptist Church**