

Assisted Suicide (Scotland) Bill

Scottish Unitarian Association

In response to the recent call for written evidence on the above Bill I hereby submit the following on behalf of the Scottish Unitarian Association. Please note that we only feel able to comment on the first question of those supplied.

1. 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?

The General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches passed the following motion at its meeting in 2013:

“ASSISTED DYING (Resolution 1 2013)

That this General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, recognising the worth and dignity of all people and their freedom to believe as their consciences dictate, believes that:

1) Any individual who faces an intolerable existence because of a debilitating and/or incurable physical condition should have the right to seek support for the termination of their life in a painless and dignified manner; and

2) legislation should respect their choice and allow them compassionate assistance in achieving such a death without fear of the prosecution of anyone involved.”

It should be noted that this motion was passed after a yearlong consultation process across the Unitarian community. It was passed with the votes cast as follows: For 101, Against 40 and Abstentions 9.

St Mark's Unitarian Church, Edinburgh had a meeting to discuss the issue where Margo Macdonald MSP and Stephen Hutchison, Consultant in Palliative Medicine, Highland Hospice both spoke and responded to questions. The congregation voted in support of the motion that was later passed at the General Assembly by 37 votes to 7.

Individual Unitarians have strong feelings on both sides of the argument and have views on the other questions within the consultation but we feel that this is all that we as the representatives of Unitarian community have a mandate to say.

Rob Whiteman
Scottish Unitarian Association