



# The Church of Scotland

The Church of Scotland  
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Convener, Public Petitions Committee  
The Scottish Parliament

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Monday 2 June 2014

Dear Mr Stewart and members of the committee,  
Our attention has been brought to petition PE01514 – Time for Reflection

The Church of Scotland wishes to share with the committee an alternative view of Time for Reflection to that expressed in the background to petition PE01514, Time for Reflection.

The Church of Scotland greatly appreciates the occasions it has been given to take Time for Reflection in the Scottish Parliament and is supportive of the opportunities that Scotland's other faith communities, civic institutions and members of civil society have been given to do likewise, highlighting the Scottish Parliament's commitment to celebrating Scotland's rich religious and civic heritage.

While the Church is indeed aware that 36.7% of the population registered as having no religion in the most recent Census, we would question whether this number is representative of an opposition to religion in the public sphere. Indeed, high church attendance at Christmas and Easter, along with projects such as foodbanks, job clubs and community cafes, suggest that the Church of Scotland still plays an important role in community life even if some individual members do not profess a faith.

As you are no doubt aware, since 2011 the Church of Scotland has had the privilege of taking Time for Reflection 38 times, a number that is broadly in line with recent census figures. By contrast the 2011 census shows only 0.5% of the population described themselves as atheist, while only 15 individuals, 0.0003% of all respondents, registered themselves as secularist. These numbers clearly show that even if the census numbers were our only measure on this matter the proposed 25% would be grossly disproportionate.

It is our belief that Time for Reflection presents a unique opportunity for institutions and individuals to share with Parliament ethical, moral and spiritual observations drawn from their experiences of engaging with Scotland's communities, particularly with its most vulnerable members. We therefore feel that time would be better spent enabling the many faith communities, civic groups and individuals who are doing this work the opportunity to share their insights, rather than in the imposition restrictive quotas for that sharing.



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Kind regards,

**Sally Foster Fulton** (Convener, Church of Scotland Church and Society Council)



**Colin Sinclair** (Convener, Church of Scotland Mission and Discipleship Council)