**STATEMENT TO LOCHALSH PARISH CONGREGATION**

As you are all aware, I, along with many others, have been deeply unhappy about some of the decisions taken at the General Assembly last May.  In particular, the clear disregard for the authority of the Word of God which was shown in many of the debates, and also in the trajectory chosen by the Church with regard to the Ordained Ministry.

I have made clear to you that I believe with all my heart, that the General Assembly has, sadly, made a disastrous decision which will be seriously detrimental to the wellbeing of the Church in the long term.

There have been many meetings over the summer, as people have sought to come to terms with these decisions, and to respond as their own consciences dictate.

Following the Kirk Session meeting last Thursday, where we discussed the way forward for the congregation, I now have to tell you that I have informed the Clerk of Lochcarron Skye Presbytery of my intention to demit my charge and leave the Church of Scotland.

It is with the deepest sadness that I share this with you today, and I wish to thank you all for your support and loyalty over the past nine and a half years.

I am sure that my decision will come as no great surprise, as I have already made clear to you my concerns over these issues.

Obviously I will be discussing the details of the demission with the Presbytery, who  are being very supportive, and I will keep you informed of all developments. With regard to timescale, I envisage that I will be leaving around the turn of the year, although that is ultimately a decision for Presbytery to take.

I am aware that there are deeply held and sincere views on all sides of this debate,, and I appeal to you all to be understanding and loving towards one another.  This is a matter of conscience before God and in the light of Scripture, and we must all respect each other’s views and decisions. We must also allow each other freedom from any pressure as we make our own personal responses to these issues.

Although this is a very sad time for all of us, it is also an opportunity to show that as Christians we can disagree with each other in a gracious and loving way.

If anyone wishes to discuss the matter with me personally , I would be very glad to speak to them.

May God bless us and guide us all.

Rev John M Macdonald – 11th September 2011