



The Church of Scotland

Church and Society Council

Surveillance and Social Justice – May 2017

Section 19. Conclusion

19.1 We live in a world in which the level of surveillance has been increasing as the technology which facilitates it has become more sophisticated. Such developments, though rapid, have tended to be incremental. Thus, the considerable changes in society which they bring have tended to escape public notice.

19.2 It is vital that we reflect upon these developments, and grapple with the profound modifications they make to society. Our report is a contribution to this debate.

19.3 Surveillance from the data-centre can be immensely valuable but deeply discriminatory. Although cloaked in the seeming objectivity of computer coding, surveillance is a social phenomenon that often reflects and shapes subjective prejudices. Surveillance is frequently legitimated on the grounds of security, safety and crime prevention, and too readily absorbs and magnifies fear and suspicion.

19.4 Surveillance from the Cross offers a counter-vision that makes compassion the dominant response. We are known not as objects of information but as people enjoying a relationship of divine love. Privacy is to be protected because it is a sacred space for becoming all we can be in God. As UK citizens we have the responsibility to welcome or challenge specific surveillance strategies carried out in our name. As Christians we are called upon to embody Christ's love by solidarity with those for whom surveillance diminishes dignity.

O Lord, we are being searched and known...Such knowledge is too unnerving for us.

O Lord, we are searching and knowing...Such knowledge is too tempting for us.

O Lord, you have searched us and known us...Such knowledge is too wonderful for us.

[See full report](#)