

FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

**REPORTS OF
STANDING
COMMITTEES
OF SYNOD**

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REPORT OF THE RELIGION AND MORALS COMMITTEE

Convener: Mr. F. R. Daubney

1. INTRODUCTION

THE following report is presented with a prayerful concern for sinners and for the honour of Christ's Cause in this evil day. Our people, especially the young, are under pressure from the world to adopt more and more lax views regarding biblical truths and moral standards. The laws enacted encourage secular and atheistical attitudes and are framed in such a way that protesting voices are silenced with threats of legal consequences. We imagine that things cannot get much worse but each year we find that we are sinking deeper into sin.

We were pleased to see that the Supreme Court has ruled that some of the proposals around information sharing in the Scottish Government's Named Person Scheme breached the right to privacy and family life. (The Named Person Scheme was the subject of a protest by the 2016 Synod.) The Scottish Government is therefore having a fundamental re-think before introducing a modified scheme. In June 2016 they said that they expected to roll out a modified scheme by the end of that year. When that did not happen the date was moved forward to August 2017. Details have not been forthcoming and it looks as though plans to re-introduce the scheme are presently in disarray.

Islam and the murderous behaviour of its more extreme followers is a continuing concern in this land and abroad. We should offer up our thanks to the Lord for the vigilance of the security forces, and pray for their continued success in rooting out and thwarting all attempts to terrorise those who differ from them.

Despite our own sinfulness and just deserts, and the grieving of the Lord's people, the day will come when the nations of the world will say, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths:" (Isaiah 2:3).

2. RELIGION

The Scottish Churches

The Scottish churches, both national and professedly reformed, continue their downward trend as they backslide from scriptural teaching and reformation attainments across doctrine, worship and practice. Numerous churches are apparently vying with each other to make themselves more acceptable to the world under the guise of modernizing worship. At the same time, old errors in doctrine are spreading across the churches.

Doctrine

What this means in reality is that Arminianism is making strong headway in many professedly reformed churches. Many pulpits, including those of the Free Church are awash with a presentation of the gospel to sinners where the first lesson is that God loves them and that He requires love from them in return. The subtle way in which much of this teaching is presented means that perhaps no obviously heretical statement is made. Yet what is omitted regarding God's holiness and justice, man's inability, the Covenant of Grace, the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit and the necessity of the atonement, makes for an imbalance in the presentation of the truth which amounts to Arminianism.

Spiritual blindness and an obvious lack of regard to the Divine Head of the Church are displayed in the affection which many Scottish churches show to the Church of Rome. A previous Free Church Moderator has openly praised the current Pope and the attitude which seems to prevail among many in the membership of that church and others is that the Church of Rome is truly Christian.

Worship

Not only in the Church of Scotland but also in the Free Church and the Reformed Presbyterian Church there is an increasingly modern element found in the divine worship. This is reflected initially in modern versions of the Psalms, the introduction of hymns, and then the inevitable trend which follows towards songs of praise and choruses. These praise materials are increasingly accompanied by musical instruments introducing a rock music style effect into the Divine worship.

Practice

Lax admission to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, unscriptural views of what a true saving change is, and failure to administer discipline to those who fall into open worldliness and sin have all had a detrimental effect on the spiritual health of the churches in proportion as these trends have prevailed. The teaching of "easy-believism" and the lack of spiritual discernment in dealing with professed new converts is clearly deluding many poor souls with a false hope for eternity whose lives make manifest that they never were called out of the world and delivered from the reigning power of sin.

The most prominent downgrade in this field in recent times is the acceptance of homosexuals into church membership and even into the ministry by the Church of Scotland and the Scottish Anglican Church. Some churches are making the false distinction between homosexual behaviour and homosexual orientation as if the latter were not sin. It is obvious that a spirit of judicial blindness is coming over the churches of Scotland: "Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, he hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them" (John 12:39-40).

Within our own church we have reason to fear that worldliness has been making inroads and these little foxes have been destroying the vine. The example of the apostatising churches of Scotland ought surely to give sufficient warning as to where such a compromising and worldly attitude will lead.

Secular Humanism

The Bible gives a moral framework which is perfectly adapted to the nature of mankind as responsible and accountable beings. Humanism aims to replace God's law. It teaches a way of thinking which is designed to eliminate the influence of the Bible on the morals of this generation. Twentieth century Humanist manifestos can be described as rebellion against the august authority of heaven and atheism in respect of both the being and the will of God. Some humanists think of Humanism as a religion without God. It glorifies what is natural and denies what is supernatural.

Secular Humanism is the most influential school of atheistic thought in our day. It is characterised by opposition to the idea of moral absolutes. Like the serpent who ensnared Eve, it encourages religious skepticism. It rejects any but an evolutionary view of creation. It affirms that man is capable of being moral, not only without God but without religion. The place of God, revelation and religion are replaced by reason and science. It advocates "education" to further its alternative moral framework. By demanding what it defines as justice and fairness, it will eliminate what it regards as inequality, discrimination and intolerance. Secular Atheism has "educated" this generation to think that it is outrageously immoral for us to claim that biblical axioms of right and wrong are non-negotiable Divine absolutes. It elevates human reason to a throne, where it is the judge of all things, including God. "Man is the measure of all things".

But this is an old deceiver in a change of clothing. The set of ideas which we call Secular Humanism has been around for a long time. It first emerged when Satan tempted Eve. He promised freedom from the shackles of God's restrictive laws, informing her that this was possible by discarding God's moral framework for man. Faith in God, he claimed, was below her dignity as a rational being (Genesis 3:1-5).

Solomon denounces the idea which claims that man's happiness and progress demands the rejection of all other than that which is "under the sun". He sees "vanity of vanity" in the rejection of the fear of God (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

To refuse the Bible as the moral framework for lost mankind is, in the language of the New Testament to "change the truth of God into a lie, and worship and serve the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen" (Romans 1:25). "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Romans 1:22) when they "changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man" (Romans 1:23a). The folly of Secular Humanism is that it maintains that man is everything and that God is nothing.

Many examples of the vicious effect of this philosophy on the morals of our generation could be cited. We will mention only two. Biblical morality gives us marriage between one man and one woman and regular family life as the cornerstone of society. But Secular Humanism, under the lure of fairness and equality is “educating” this generation.

This “education” explains the gradual acceptance by the general public of homosexuality. It explains how this popular softening of opinion with regard to what was once regarded as abhorrent, has opened the way for the protection of immoral practice by laws. It explains the increasingly bold defiance of God’s law by law makers and law enforcers. By the cumulative effect of this “education” a generation has been indoctrinated with the view that when Christians refuse to support, e.g. same sex marriage, they need to be “educated” and catch up with society. This clamorous imperious force now insists that our children must be “educated” in the idea that a homosexual relationship is a legitimate alternative to biblical marriage.

Biblical morality insists that the life of an unborn child is sacrosanct. But this atheistic framework of morals, by spurious claims in respect of liberty, has invited and encouraged us to decide what value an unborn child has. Under the reign of Secular Humanism, the life in the womb can be terminated, even on the whim of an inconvenienced parent. The doleful disregard respecting the termination of the lives of millions of unborn children in our generation is explained by the fact that our generation has been “educated” to think in Secular Humanistic terms.

Humanism has sat at the head of the meetings of governments, shaping the way our laws are framed. It has criminalised God, His Word and His people. But for a few exceptions, its principles have been successful in permeating intellectual disciplines in schools and universities. Its representatives are welcome on powerful international committees. It is a danger to humanity and a threat to Christians.

Freedom and persecution in the UK

There have been various attempts to use the law either to compel or punish Christians in relation to the exercise of their beliefs. The most obvious of these was the Asher’s Bakery Case. The Government appears to support the idea of an “Equality Oath” or “British Values Oath” for everyone who holds public office. This could include school governors, civil servants, people working in the NHS and councillors. Communities Secretary Sajid Javid has supported the oath. He believes those who do not accept the Government’s narrow definition of these values will “struggle to play a positive role in British life”. It was recommended by Dame Louise Casey’s report on integration and extremism. Some people have recalled how such tests and oaths were used to persecute the Covenanters as well as excluding non-conformists from public roles in England and Ireland.

A particular issue of concern relates to government plans to introduce Extremism Disruption Orders (EDOs). EDOs would cover “spreading,

inciting, promoting or justifying hatred on the grounds of disability, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation and/or transgender identity”. EDOs would be triggered by “harmful activities of extremist individuals who spread hate but do not break laws”. Banning orders will not only relate to individuals but also be used to “tackle those venues and facilitators that help extremists to continue their activities”.

An EDO might involve banning someone from speaking in public including on social media; taking a position of authority, such as a school governor; or even restricting who they can associate with. When she was Home Secretary, Theresa May said that the “anti-extremism” strategy involves promoting “acceptance of different faiths”. This development is particularly concerning because the application of the hate crime legislation seems to target Christians in particular.

Muslims who convert to Christianity in the UK can experience persecution and violence. Channel 4’s *Dispatches* related the case of Nissar Hussain, who received death threats after he became a Christian. He was rejected by his parents and siblings, had his house and property repeatedly vandalised, and his family were intimidated. Muslim women who become Christians in the UK are often pressured to leave Christianity. Some are made to attend mosque instead of church, physically abused, or threatened with divorce and having their children taken away.

“Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also” (John 15:20)

Popery (Roman Catholicism)

Popery, that pre-eminent anti-Christian sect (which was abhorred and detested by the Scottish Reformers), purposely chose a known Jesuit (a member of the notorious Society of Jesus and adept at casuistry) as its Pope in 2014. The Jesuits are infamous for their avowed determination (by any means) to extirpate true Protestantism world-wide, and more implicitly enslave all mankind under the guise of an inter-faith union. Pope Francis, though a Jesuit, is a liberal papist endeavouring to implement a looser approach to that organisation’s dogma and practice; for example, by directing priests to be more accommodating when hearing confession and forgiving sin. This has led to tension in that body, with the conservative faction of the Vatican curia opposing him, contending vigorously for more traditional tenets against abortion, sodomy and pornography, and for a generally stricter testimony.

The Reformation greatly weakened Popery, and since then it has been steadily declining. Its former ensnarement of South America seems to be rapidly crumbling. Also, a recent papist expedition to Georgia in September, 2016, was strongly opposed by Georgian Orthodox fundamentalists. At one rally opposing the visit there were banners that declared, “Pope, arch-heretic, you are not welcome in Orthodox Georgia”, “Antichrist stay away from Georgia” and “Death of Popery”. The open air mass held in connection with

the visit was attended by a mere 3,000 people in a venue capable of holding 27,000. Furthermore, it is deeply concerned about a very substantial decline in the number of priests and nuns world-wide, which is a trend that has continued unabated for decades. In seeming desperation it has in more recent years been pursuing a global inter-faith strategy. It has been making overtures to other false religions, such as Mohammedanism (Islam), Judaism, Eastern Orthodoxy and false Protestantism. The Pope has publicly stated that “Christians and Muslims are brothers and sisters”, and he has produced a video featuring a Buddhist priest, a Jewish Rabbi, a Popish priest and an Islamic leader, all declaring their faith in their gods: with him implying that each of their statements are equally valid, and that they all were “seeking God or meeting God in different ways”. The papacy is bent upon the utter destruction of true Protestantism and, conversely, the establishment of a one world government and church, dominated by itself.

Despite the malicious, immense and extensive efforts of the papacy to destroy true Protestantism over many hundreds of years, it remains (effected and kept by the Holy Ghost), and shall soon flourish through the faithful and powerful preaching of the gospel, when “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9a), to the initial torment of that anti-Christian sect, and its eventual destruction: “And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into the fire burning with brimstone” (Revelation 19:20).

3. MORALS

Islamic terrorism

Islamic terrorism has been defined as, “any terrorist act, set of acts or campaign committed by groups or individuals who profess Islamic or Islamist motivations or goals” (Columbia University Press). Islamic terrorists justify their actions by applying their own interpretation of the Quran in a way that suits their own purposes.

The UK counter intelligence agency, MI5, on the other hand, has said, “far from being religious zealots, a large number of those involved in terrorism do not practise their faith regularly. Many lack religious literacy and could actually be regarded as religious novices. There is a higher than average number of converts.” It would also seem that a well established religious identity actually protects against violent radicalisation.

France has suffered greatly in recent times from the violence of the Islamists. The large majority of French jihadists are second generation Muslims who, unlike their parents, speak French. They have grown up with little or no contact with mosques or Muslim organisations, and before their

conversion drank, took drugs and had girlfriends. They are estranged from their parents and don't know where to fit in. They are disenchanting and because of their Muslim background are easily radicalised.

There is a portion of the Quran which reads, "But when these months prohibited (for fighting), are over, slay the idolaters where so ever you find them, and take them captive or besiege them, and lie in wait for them at every likely place. But if they repent and fulfil their devotional obligations and pay zakat, then let them go their way, for God is forgiving and kind." (Zakat means that which purifies. It is a form of almsgiving which, by Quranic ranking, is next in importance to prayer.)

Donald Holbrook, at the Centre of the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence, notes that the Islamists cherry pick the first part, "slay the idolaters", but fail to quote and discuss the limiting factors, "but if they repent", and in so doing are shamelessly selective in order to serve their propaganda objectives. Osama bin Laden made use of this verse in the same way for his own purposes. However, it should be noted that there are other verses in the Quran which quite clearly encourage violence against the "infidel".

Islamists argue that Western policies and society are actively anti-Islamic, equivalent to waging a war against Islam. They argue that this is aggression and justifies "defensive jihad", which is an obligation on all Muslims. Using the word "defensive" makes Islamists appear the victim rather than the aggressor. As a consequence, the struggle has a high priority for all devout Muslims.

Martin Kramer, an American-Israeli scholar, has said with regard to suicide terrorism, "the only way to apply a brake to suicide terrorism is to undermine its moral logic by encouraging Muslims to see its incompatibility with their own values". That may have some truth in it, but it is a secular view. The gospel of Christ is the only real and lasting way of stopping such dreadful violence.

With Daesh (ISIS) now on the retreat in the Middle East there is the real fear that its supporters will disperse across Europe and elsewhere. They have already begun a campaign in India against the Hindus. In recent months Paris, Brussels, Berlin and Istanbul, have all suffered atrocities at the hands of Daesh. This perverse "holy" war is set to come to the UK where it is expected that they will attempt to regroup.

The dreadful treatment by Daesh of those who profess the name of Christ is well known to us all and has been highlighted in previous annual Reports. This persecution continues wherever Daesh casts its evil net.

We pray that the Lord will cause the downfall of all who would seek to perpetuate such wicked violence. "For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter" (Romans 8:36).

Brexit

Much anxiety, debate and feverish speculation has accompanied the Brexit process thus far. Brexit has also exposed the fragility of the European project. Those who have hailed the EU as a miracle of political determination and

human achievement are in despair. Their vision of a superstate seems an impossible dream. Brexit has punctured the belief that so-called progressive politics will prevail and that nations and cultures must merge to ensure a future of global peace and prosperity. With European national elections expected this year there is much in Europe that looks particularly precarious. Some commentators predict the collapse of the EU itself. Whether or not that will be the case, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that, not just across Europe but across the Middle East, we are in a time of breaking of nations and institutions (Jeremiah 51:20). The Lord is calling powerfully in His Providence to look to Him alone and not the arm of flesh, yet none seem to be heeding the call.

During the referendum campaign, it was interesting to find a number of references to the Reformation's break with the Roman Catholic political and ecclesiastical system. Even Roman Catholic commentators have noted that the EU project belongs to the same era as Vatican II. Both were part of a Romanist globalisation agenda which is now being further adapted by the current papacy. We are thankful for the deliverance from the yoke of the European Union, which this church has consistently protested against as a threat to our Protestant constitution and biblical morality.

We hear of many different types of Brexit which signal different visions of a future Britain. Yet we never hear of a solution which will seek to glorify God and honour His Word first and foremost. Until we pursue such a course, even our very blessings and claimed victories will fail. "Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it" (Haggai 1:9).

Blurring of gender distinctions

Gender was the first distinguishing characteristic of our race. Confusing it, as many actively do today, is to attempt to overthrow the wisdom of God. In this age of practical atheism, plausible human wisdom prevails in public policy and education. It is argued by "liberal" propagandists that as some children are born gender-confused, they must have inalienable rights to persist in that state. A very, very small percentage of people are indeed born with a gender abnormality, having both male and female parts (hermaphrodite). The cause of this and all confusion in the world is that sin has entered in. Historically these children have been brought up as male or female, according to the decision of their parents. This is undoubtedly a sensitive and difficult subject, but not more so than a large number of other medical conditions, genetic and otherwise, that some parents have to deal with. Moreover, modern science and medicine help parents in such cases to make the best choice.

The majority of present-day gender confusion, however, arises, not for biological reasons, but through immorality, whereby a "transgender" person chooses to change their birth sex. Sometimes they seek medical help to effect their choice. Usually they obtain help from governments in some way or other to further their desires. Government agents seem increasingly willing to help

in their ever more militant zeal to defy the “bigots” that reprove immoral behaviour. What was once abnormal and abhorrent behaviour is now not only accepted but actively encouraged and promoted – there is no moral compass, desires are considered paramount; and O how awfully foolish and God-provoking are those desires! Gender theory has become the exploration of what man can create in defiance of God, and the consequence, as might be expected, is ever increasing confusion and darkness.

In some places there has been a fight back. In some US states, legislators have moved to reassert biological fact in law, requiring authorities to limit public bathroom facilities to birth gender. But in all too many other places there is only increasing confusion. For example, Glasgow council require all new primary school facilities to have shared unisex toilet facilities. A Council manager was reported in the *Glasgow Herald* as saying this “assists in the LGBT agenda”.

The root of this horrible development, like many other evils such as Nazism, is the infidelity and rationalism of the 19th century which undermined biblical teaching. One consequence of this was the movement for women’s rights. Although the first fruits of this movement were reasonable – such as the provision of universal female education, and granting of the vote – the long-term fruit has been the development of the perverse “equality” movement. With considerable prescience R. L. Dabney foresaw, as far back as 1872, some of the ill consequences. He wrote: “It may be inferred again that the present movement for women’s rights will certainly prevail from the history of its only opponent, Northern conservatism. This is a party which never conserves anything. Its history has been that it demurs to each aggression of the progressive party, and aims to save its credit by a respectable amount of growling, but always acquiesces at last in the innovation. What was the resisted novelty of yesterday is today one of the accepted principles of conservatism; it is now conservative only in effecting to resist the next innovation, which will tomorrow be forced upon its timidity. . . .” He went on to write of the ultimate absurdities that this “rights” process would inevitably give rise to. Well, today we have the absurdity of gender theory as the fruit of this movement. If American conservatives have allowed it to happen by compromising with the progressive ideology, today they are virtually the only powerful political entity which offers any resistance at all to the LGBT agenda. Their counterparts in Britain and other western countries have fully embraced it. In Britain the BBC seems to be the chief instrument in promoting this sad state of affairs, by virtue of all too pervasive influence.

Historically the equality agenda was energised by the just emancipation of slaves and other social improvements during the 19th century. As is his usual practice, Satan stirred up men to go from righteous beginnings to unrighteous extremes, in this case through the equality agenda. There now exists a danger of the pendulum, having moved so far to one extreme, being driven hard by Satan to another extreme through the ascendancy of reactionary forces on the far right against political correctness. Some of these groups have no more

regard for the Word of God or moral compass than their opponents, and may end up having even less tolerance for their opponents.

Whatever happens in the world, the church's whole duty in regard to gender is to hold fast to the teaching of Scripture. In so doing we will be kept from the confusions of the world. There is a real risk of compromising over time with the ideology of the world, just as the compromising political conservative has enabled the equality agenda. There are a number of ways in which we might be drifting away from sound biblical practice.

We ought to maintain a clear distinction between men and women in appearance. One of the main ways that gender has been confounded is the blurring of distinctiveness in dress between men and women. This is happening concurrently with an ever increasing licentiousness in dress, particularly amongst young women. At the other extreme, some Islamic sects are requiring women to be entirely veiled. These extremes are ferociously defended by progressive ideology as the right of freedom of expression. Veiled women are in fact a serious departure from the biblical and reasonable requirement of maintaining gender distinction and modesty. Let us not be promoters of that which God hates by compromise with it.

We ought also to maintain gender distinction in functional roles in society. The issue of vocational choice amongst young people is more difficult to determine from Scripture, and one that we are not inclined to be overly prescriptive about. However, the competition between men and women for the same jobs manifestly serves to weaken the principle of gender distinction, and therefore we ought to encourage young men and women into different roles as far as possible, guided by biblical example. The increasingly prevalent practice of mothers of young children going out to work to further their careers is contrary to Scripture.

Men, in general, ought to exercise rule. This is commanded both in the Church and in the family; and in regards to the State and the workplace there is no biblical basis to argue that the same rule ought not to apply. It may be that in times when the cause of God is very low that women are raised up to rule; as indeed in recent times we have had two female Prime Ministers in the UK who have seemed as fit as any of their male colleagues to rule, but we should be very wary of normalising these exceptions by making this our own accustomed practice. It is not the natural ability of men and women to undertake a vocation, but what God requires of us, that ought to be our main consideration.

Another biblical principle concerning gender is that women ought not to be oppressed by men as, for example, they are in some cultures, particularly in Muslim countries, where they are often physically oppressed and denied rightful privileges. Let us bear in mind that it was past denial of the rightful privileges of African slaves that gave rise to the equality movement; and if we are careful to avoid unbiblical denial of rights, we are opposing the unbiblical extremes and confusion that we are faced with in our generation. The right balance between extremes is exactly the scriptural position.

Are our standards indeed slipping in regard to biblical principles of gender distinction? If we would measure ourselves relative to the world today, we might take comfort that the answer is No. If, however, we consider our standards in comparison to previous generations of godly men and women, then Yes they are slipping. Even if our practice is only where the world was fifty or even one hundred years ago, if we are heading in the same direction, we are in danger of an unbiblical practice of blurring gender distinction.

Marriage

“Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matthew 19:4-6).

This is the divine mandate for marriage but in the last 60 years God’s institution has been under attack, especially by way of legislation. It was discovered that two people living together in an unmarried state could both claim tax relief on their mortgage, while married couples could not. As a result some, for financial reasons, choose not to marry.

Also, in cases where one partner in a marriage owns the home and, even after a short period of time, the couple divorce, legislation allows the other partner to claim half the value of the property. This gives some a further reason not to marry.

Because of declining morals in the 1960s and 1970s many couples were divorced, Parliament having passed legislation to make it easier and quicker to break up the marriage. This trend has continued with more couples living together in an unmarried state or living together with possibly a marriage to follow at a later date. It is quite common to see in death notices “A – – – , partner of B – – – ”, with even children’s names listed thereafter.

If this wasn’t bad enough for the morals of the nation, rulers have now passed laws allowing same sex couples to “marry”, which is totally contrary to Scripture.

“Shall of iniquity the throne
Have fellowship with Thee,
Which mischief, cunningly contriv’d
Doth by a law decree?”
(Psalm 94:20)

The breakdown of family life

Couples not being married or being divorced are, of course, major factors in the breakdown of family life.

Another reason is both parents going out to work full-time and for long hours leaving children in the care of others or without adequate supervision, contrary to Scripture which teaches that it is a mother’s duty and privilege to

raise up her own children. The most stable families are those where the mother is at home devotedly looking after the children.

Another cause of breakdown is family violence, often fuelled by the drinking of alcohol. Other families are troubled by drug addiction in one or both parents or even in the children. In days gone by families would eat together and enter into profitable discussions but now much time is spent watching the TV or using laptop computers in their bedrooms.

Families also used to go to church together and have family worship morning and evening; sadly these practices have been largely forsaken.

These are just some examples of the reasons behind family breakdown in our day; there are many others. We believe things will not improve until there is a return to the Scriptures and a true revival of religion nationwide. What a need there is for praying without ceasing to the God of our fathers.

“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear” (Isaiah 59:1).

Sport, the new religion?

The human obsession with sport dates back to Roman times, if not earlier. One Roman writer said that his compatriots were interested in only two things: bread and circuses (i.e. sport). The main chariot-racing arena in Rome, the Circus Maximus, could seat a quarter of a million people at a time when the entire population of the city was only about a million; and by the reign of the Emperor Claudius, 93 days in the year were public holidays devoted to chariot racing.

In Britain, the rise of professional sport dates from the urbanization and wealth of the nineteenth century. Professional sport rapidly became commercialized, and the process steadily advanced during the twentieth century. The first UK Minister of Sport was appointed in 1962, and the current UK sports budget is £350 million. In 2012 the cost of the London Olympic Games was £9 billion and the majority of people in the country considered the money to have been well spent. Of recent years the London Marathon (which, like most of these races, is always run on the Sabbath) has attracted nearly forty thousand participants, while the “Great Scottish Run” in Glasgow has involved nearly thirty thousand.

A great variety of professional sports are now presented to the public who follow them either in person at the stadium or via radio and television. The atmosphere at these sporting events is the very essence of worldliness, whether it is horse racing at Ascot, tennis at Wimbledon, or the numerous professional rugby and football matches across the country each week. It is customary for drunkenness, revelling, foul language and aggressive and violent behaviour to accompany these events. Football especially is an idol to many who follow their teams with the fervour of religious devotees, with many fans travelling for hours to spectate for an hour and a half at the matches each week. The individual players are also idolised and, in effect, are given the adulation and adoration which belongs to God alone. Those who follow these sports on radio

or television, though not by personal attendance at the stadium, are just as caught up in the worldliness and fervour of those who are present. Over the years more and more of the major events across many of these sports are being held on Sabbath, so that they contribute in no little way to the increased Sabbath desecration and desertion of church-going in our land. In addition, there is an increasing tendency for people to engage in non-professional sports in an obsessive way, whereby too much of their free time and energy are channelled into these pastimes, some of which may well be lawful in moderation. Some would argue that Paul's references to the ancient Olympics show scriptural support for professional sport. Clearly, Paul draws his illustrations from the whole field of common life without giving any support to these practices themselves. Indeed it is known from early Church history that the Christian church studiously avoided the sports and spectacles of the Roman amphitheatre. When the Apostle Paul became a man, he "put away childish things" (1 Corinthians 13:11), but there is no sign at present of the adults in Britain putting away their childish preoccupation with sport.

4. CONCLUSION

The Committee has been kept busy during the past year revising the "Statement of Differences". Our thanks are again due to Reverend D. W. B. Somerset for the work that he has put into producing this document for presentation to Synod 2017. Thanks are also due to those who contributed comments.

The Convener wrote a letter of protest to the Rev. Kelvin Holdsworth, of St. Mary's Episcopal Cathedral in Glasgow, following the reading of a portion from the Quran during the public worship of God. What aggravated the situation was that the portion read specifically denied the divinity of the Saviour. As far as the Convener is aware no apology was ever made by Mr. Holdsworth for this blasphemous desecration of the Lord's worship in His own house, and certainly no reply to the letter of protest was received.

There is a move to bring in "Time For Inclusive Education" (TIE) to schools in Scotland. The purpose of TIE is to introduce homosexual, bisexual and transgender teaching under the pretext of stopping the bullying of some pupils. Their aim is that homosexuality would be taught along with other relationships contrary to the Word of God. It is expected that it will be brought forward under a private member's bill. The Committee intends to be proactive in countering it, and encourages the people of the Church in Scotland to write to their MSP.

Our generation is in great need of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit to bring us to repentance. May this report give some indication of how great our need is of praying the Most High, "To these long desolations / Thy feet lift, do not tarry" (Psalm 74:3, metrical).

SABBATH OBSERVANCE COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. J. B. Jardine

BEARING in mind the importance of maintaining the Fourth Commandment of God's holy law as preserved for us in Exodus 20:8-11, we, as a Synod-appointed Committee, would crave the prayerful support of the Church as a whole in bearing witness to the importance of Sabbath observance. This is never more important than in these latter days in which we see such a disregard for the Lord's Day right across the board of public life, including in the majority of the visible Church itself. Sabbath breaking has long since ceased to be construed as being a sin, while "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Romans 8:22).

The Sabbath Observance Committee continues to monitor unnecessary Sabbath activity and, again, a number of organisations and individuals in the public arena have been contacted regarding the matter. As usual, in the vast majority of cases, the response cannot be described as being in any way encouraging, as testified by the following items of correspondence during the past year:

Royalty

The following members of the Royal Household were written to regarding breaches in Sabbath observance having taken place during the year 2016. Replies, from their respective representatives, although courteous, were short and generally indifferent.

The Queen	Reply received
The Prince of Wales	Reply received
The Duke & Duchess of Cambridge	Reply received
Prince Harry	Reply received
The Duke of Kent.....	Reply received
Princess Alexandra	Reply received
The Princess Royal.....	No response
The Duke of York.....	No response
The Earl & Countess of Wessex.....	No response

In the reply received from the Queen, it was stated that the Committee's letter was being forwarded to the Archbishop of Canterbury so that he be made aware of our approach to Her Majesty concerning Sabbath observance or the absence thereof. Needless to say, no communication was ever received from the Archbishop.

Her Majesty was, in her reply, most appreciative of the good wishes expressed to her on the occasion of her ninetieth birthday last year.

Sport

The England and Wales Cricket Board	No response
British Cycling	No response

British Darts Organisation.....	No response
Professional Darts Corporation Ltd.	No response
The Royal and Ancient Golf Club	No response
England Hockey	No response
Gaelic Athletic Association	No response
The Royal Caledonian Curling Club.....	Reply received
MSVR.....	No response
Melrose RFC (Melrose 7s).....	No response
The All England Jumping Course	No response
World Snooker.....	No response
British Swimming.....	No response

A total of 22 rugby clubs were written to regarding fixtures having taken place on Sabbath. Glasgow Warriors, in conjunction with Scottish Rugby Union plc, was the only club or organisation from whom a reply or acknowledgement was received. As expected, that one reply, although polite, was indifferent to Sabbath observance. The Stakeholder Manager of Scottish Rugby stated that “our game is open to those who have a faith or religion and to those who do not. Respect, one of our key values, is extended to everyone involved in our game, so while we respect your position, it is not something that we can actively promulgate for the reasons I have outlined.” The following rugby clubs were contacted:

Glasgow Warriors/Scottish Rugby Union plc	Reply received (see above)
Doncaster Knights	No response
London Welsh.....	No response
London Irish	No response
Wasps.....	No response
Leicester Tigers	No response
Gloucester Kingsholm.....	No response
Bedford Blues	No response
Newcastle Falcons.....	No response
Batley Bulldogs	No response
Bristol Rugby Club.....	No response
Exeter Chiefs	No response
Harlequins.....	No response
Rotherham Titans	No response
Leinster	No response
Bath Rugby Ltd	No response
St. Albans Centurions.....	No response
Felixstove Rugby.....	No response

Halifax Rugby League	No response
London Sevens	No response

Shipping

An acknowledgement of a reasonably positive nature was received from Alexander D. Macleod, Chief Executive, Stornoway Port Authority, in response to a communication from the Committee concerning planned cruise-ship activity during the summer season.

Agricultural Shows and Highland Games

Royal Highland Association.....	No response
Lorne Highland Games	No response
Gordon Castle Highland Games & Country Fair.....	No response
Bridge of Allan Highland Games.....	No response
St. Andrews Highland Games	No response
Strathmore Highland Games	No response
Carmunnock Highland Games	No response

British Telecom

An apologetic letter was received from “Openreach Complaints Management” after it was reported to the Committee that fibre-optic cable-laying activity had been taking place on Sabbath in both Tolsta and Ness during 2016.

Festivals

Shetland Accordion and Fiddle Club	No response
Wigtown Book Festival.....	No response
Glasgow International Jazz Festival.....	No response
Newcastleon Traditional Music Festival.....	No response
Scottish Traditional Boat Festival	No response
Orkney Folk Festival.....	No response
Shetland Folk Festival Society.....	No response
Fifesing	No response
Scottish Game Fair	No response
St. Magnus International Festival	No response
Borders Book Festival.....	No response
East Neuk Festival.....	Reply received
West End Festival.....	No response
Artisan Cheese Fair	No response
Great British Food Festivals.....	No response
Whittingham Beer and Sausage Festival	No response
Sandon Spring Fair.....	No response

Liverpool Food and Drink Festival No response
 Exeter Food and Drink Festival No response
 North Leeds Charity Beer Festival..... No response
 Loch Lomond Shores No response
 Scottish Food & Drink No response
 Drummossie Wedding Fair..... Reply received

Sabbath Trading

A positive acknowledgement was received from Mr. Angus B. MacNeil, MP, regarding the proposal to extend Sabbath trading hours in England. He wrote to the Committee to confirm that he would be voting against such a plan.



It goes without saying that due to limited resources and manpower within the branch of the visible Church to which we belong, it is far from possible for the Sabbath Observance Committee to respond to all events, etc., which take place on Sabbath. We would, therefore be grateful if Kirk Sessions, Presbyteries and individuals themselves would notify the Committee of unnecessary Sabbath activity taking place in their own respective localities.

**JEWISH AND FOREIGN MISSIONS
 COMMITTEE’S REPORT
 Convener: Rev. J. MacLeod**

Zimbabwe

One of the events that will leave memorable the year covered by this report was the arrival of a January storm at Ingwenya, which, before it passed on, caused much damage to some of the buildings. The cost of repairing them is estimated to be around \$30,000. The school session having not yet begun, the risk of anyone in the compound being injured was greatly reduced and we are glad to report that, in fact, no one was. The damage was repaired to the extent that it was possible to resume teaching on time, on the date appointed for the start of the new session. The John Tallach High School continues to be ranked among the top schools in Zimbabwe and this is largely to be attributed to the skill and dedication of the Headmaster, Mr. Bonakele Mpofu, and his Deputy Miss Norma B. MacLean. In general, throughout the mission the week-day and Sabbath duties were regularly attended to. Reports submitted by ministers and heads of departments, being “on the front line”, will hopefully provide more detailed information of what has transpired within their allotted spheres of labour. For our part, we long to hear of the conversion of souls and of the

field-sown seed bearing fruit. Alas, this year also we have to report that in African congregations, as indeed throughout all our church congregations at home and abroad, there appears to be no evidence that the time of the Lord's coming to revive His own work has yet arrived. We, however, cherish the hope that the seed undevoured by the fowls of the air and which lies dormant in the hearts of hearers will yet sprout – when His time comes – and that an abundant harvest will follow. Our present duty remains clear: “In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both be alike good.”

Most of what follows was provided by Mr. Hugh MacKenzie, the Mission Co-ordinator, who, in that role, visits Zimbabwe a few times in the year and is thus able to provide first-hand knowledge of the situation in all parts of the mission. The writer of this report is greatly indebted to him for the help provided.

“The fundamental purpose of our presence as a Mission in Zimbabwe is for the preaching of the Gospel and the maintenance of Gospel ordinances. All other activities are incidental and can only be regarded as ‘handmaids’ to the Gospel or ‘doors’ of Gospel opportunities. Our involvement in education, health services and child-care falls into the latter category. Each of these areas are labour intensive and consequently require a regular provision of finance for salaries and infrastructure maintenance and investment. Over recent years a concerted effort has been made to reduce revenue (running costs) expenditure by implementing a programme of restructuring and retrenchment, which initially required additional funding, to meet the cost of reorganisation and redundancy/retrenchment gratuities. The year 2016 saw the completion of the final implementation phase of this approach, where running costs have gradually been stabilised to a manageable level.

“According to financial forecasters and Mission staff experience on the ground, challenging times are in view, due to the impoverished economic and commercial situation in the country. Banks are running out of hard currency, i.e. US dollars, resulting in limited withdrawals of \$20 per day for individual account holders and \$200 for organisations such as our Mission. The Mission Administrator may have to make several visits to the bank before he can be given the statutory amount. It follows that, managing the day-to-day affairs of the Mission is becoming increasingly difficult, while the general population endure even greater hardships in struggling to meet basic living necessities.

“The Mission is the Responsible Authority for five Primary Schools in Zimbabwe. These are located at Thembiso, Ingwenya, Zenka, Lutsha and Mbuma. The Mission faces challenges with these schools, mainly in identifying and employing Church adherent or member teachers, recruiting Heads and Assistant Heads, improving academic performance, teaching Bible knowledge and maintenance of properties.

“During the year, despite financial restrictions, the recruitment of Bible Knowledge teachers for each of our five Primary Schools was made possible by diverting funds previously allocated to the Schools' general funds. Syllabus

expansion, training and learning material development is currently under way, with full implementation of the timetable due at the start of the new academic year in January 2017.

“The main task of these teachers is to deliver our Bible Knowledge syllabus, which is grounded on Church doctrine, worship and practice; the main reference sources being the Bible, the *Shorter Catechism* and the *Mother’s Catechism*. They help the children to memorise the Catechism, recite Scripture verses and practice psalm singing in metre. They also teach Sabbath School classes or assist Sabbath school teachers.

“At Ingwenya, the John Tallach Secondary School began offering Form 6 subjects in 2013 and is now formally established as a 6th Form High School, under the title John Tallach High School (JTHS). The principal aim of extending the educational offering from Form 4 to Form 6, was to ‘ensure that young people continue under the influence of the Gospel for a longer period of their formative years and secondary education’. That continues to be the corner-stone objective under-pinning all activities at the school. The Gospel work of teaching and learning at JTHS is organised around the general subject of Bible Knowledge. The curriculum template for this Scripture based and disciplined form of progressive teaching and assessment, is ready to be introduced at all our Primary Schools in January 2017 (DV).

“Rev. A. B. Maclean, the Ingwenya Mission pastor, preaches to a packed church, Sabbath and week-day prayer meetings, where over 600 souls gather to worship. He writes in the school magazine, addressing in particular those leaving at the end of the year. He reminds them that they may be leaving with academic success and/or developed maturity but also the knowledge of the Word of God. He adds that, regardless of that, leaving the Mission is not the important departure for any person whether a school pupil or an adult. The most important leaving is when the person leaves this world at death. He goes on to exhort the great necessity of seeking and finding the mercy of God in Christ and posing the question to each one leaving JTHS for ever, ‘What are you leaving with?’.”

At Mbuma Mission Hospital, Dr. A. Snoek, the Medical Superintendent, oversees the delivery of a high standard of medical care, alongside spiritual and social care. The resident minister, Rev. N. Sibanda, and three Catechists are on hand to support the hospital staff whenever pastoral care is necessary within the hospital, at clinics or in the surrounding catchment area. Dr. Snoek provides details of the hospital’s performance over the past year in her own report. The major area of activity currently is the planning, construction and implementation of Rural Health Clinics (RHC). The first of these at Lutsha is operating very successfully and has been instrumental in off-loading a substantial volume of work from the hospital mainly in primary and preventive care. The construction of the second clinic at Vova is complete with medical services due to begin in May of this year (DV). Two more clinics are planned; the next one at Sagonda and the last at a location yet to be decided on. One remarkable feature of the RHC project is the high degree of co-operation and

involvement of the relative communities, especially in the provision of labour and local materials, thereby reducing the overall cost considerably.

At Thembiso Children's Home the emphasis is very much on following the motto of the Home: "Train up a child in the way that he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). Bible teaching is conducted at three levels; i.e. within the family, by the mothers under the supervision of a newly appointed House Supervisor; within the Home, generally by the Superintendent; and externally, by regular visits from Rev. S. Khumalo. In a programme of continuous staff development, House staff are regularly trained in the various aspects of their work and responsibilities. (In this connection, the labours of Miss Margaret MacAskill and Miss Petra Beukers are much valued and appreciated.) A recent addition to the training programme is a module on the Fourth Commandment which is delivered by Rev. S. Khumalo. The aim is to offer similar modules for the other Commandments, time and resources permitting. The achievement of the Thembiso Primary School is praiseworthy and both teachers and pupils are to be commended as this extract from the minute of the meeting of the Thembiso Board on 20th January indicates: "Mr. M. A. Mpofu stated that the schools had reopened on 10th January 2017. He was pleased to report that in the 2016 Grade 7 exams, Thembiso Primary School had come second in the Khami District with a pass rate of 92%. With approximately 25 schools in the District, it was considered a remarkable achievement by both staff and pupils. . . ."

"The Mission Head Office is managed by Mr. M. A. Mpofu, the Mission Administrator. He is assisted with day-to-day operational issues by a clerk/receptionist and a gateman/driver. Mr. Mpofu is essentially taken up with governance issues in his role as Chair of all three Institution Boards of Governors. Boards meet every month whereby local management is accountable to the JFMC. He also acts as the Mission Education Officer and Chair of the Primary Schools Development Committee, as Chair of the Mbema Health Centre Committee and as project manager of the Vova Rural Health Centre construction. More importantly, he is an elder in the Zenka congregation where he and his fellow elders support Rev. M. Mloyi in congregational duties.

"At Zvishavane the Shona Translation Team continues to be staffed by Mr. Teus Benschop, manager; Mr. Trycot Mwedzi, main translator; Mrs. Kerin Mapiye, assistant translator."

Mr. Benschop writes:

During the past year the following Books were translated: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Isaiah, and at the time of writing the report in October, Jeremiah 1-40 were completed. Careful comparisons were made with the original languages and other reliable Bibles like the Statenbijbel, the King James Bible, and the already translated Ndebele Bible, to be sure the translation is accurate and

reliable. Several people, members of the Church, were given portions of the translated books for proof-reading. The team praises God for prospering the work.

Looking to 2017, under the providence of God, the plans are to complete the remainder of the Old Testament, and to a second and third check of the entire Old Testament, and to insert cross references just like the Ndebele Bible has. A lot of work is to be done for that. Attention is to be paid to details. A considerable portion consists of poetry, which is more difficult to translate. Other parts are narratives, which are easier to translate.

The team looks to the Lord for help during this year.

We are very sorry that the Rev. A. B. Maclean, who came home on furlough on 29th November 2016, has not been able to return as yet due to illness. We hope and pray that all means used to restore him to health and usefulness will be blessed, and that he will, in the Lord's good time, return to his charge at Ingwenya. His sister, Norma, has been granted compassionate leave and at the time of writing this report is at home in Beaulieu.

Finally, the generous financial help given by the Mbumba Zending Board in Holland is acknowledged. This has been forthcoming for over fifty years now and is much appreciated and acknowledged in every JFMC annual report. The Committee's Convener and Clerk, accompanied by the General Treasurer and Mission Co-ordinator, met with members of the Board in January when the terms of the 2017 budget were discussed. This was done in a warm, fraternal atmosphere and the assurance was given that financial help would continue to be granted, but within the limits of their ability to do so.

INGWENYA MISSION REPORT

Rev. A. B. MacLean

THE year under review – 2016 – was for many in Zimbabwe, a time of great hardship. The rains of 2015/2016 failed. This left many without adequate supplies of food. An attempt was made to assist people connected to the congregation with food from time to time. The source was from private donation and the Jewish and Foreign Mission Committee. Our thanks are due to all who helped. Regretfully there was no indication of repentance under this judgement of God.

A regular supply of services was made at Ingwenya and all its stations. The usual four communions were held throughout the year. Two are at Ingwenya, one at Cameron and one at Nyathi. At Nyathi, an elderly lady was accepted as a communicant. May the Lord give the blessing.

The previously reported group, called sikamanthandas, eventually left the area, after fleecing many of the people with their superstitious and threatening ways. The reception they received, despite their obvious deceit and their complete contrariness to the Word, shows how far a common understanding of the Word of God is from many of the people in the community. It also indicates their preference for these ways of lies. There is a clear general trend in the nation to forsake whatever was known of the Word of God and follow, more and more, seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. Instruction from the Scripture has no effect but is rejected for these vain lies.

The children at the school have the benefits of the Word both in school and congregation. The prayer is that the Holy Spirit would bless them with the saving knowledge of Christ. The seed sown may yet, in the Lord's time, bear fruit upwards.

In April 2016 I was invited to address the Mbumba Zending annual meeting. I endeavoured to do so from Psalm 115:12. I enjoyed the occasion and was given kind hospitality by Mr. Bart and Mr. Van Haften during my stay in Holland. I was glad to meet the godly of Holland who have been such a great support to our mission over many years.

My thanks are due to Revs. Khumalo and Mloyi who assisted at the Ingwenya communion. My thanks are also due to the elders and deacon of the congregation who assisted in their various duties throughout the year. But thanks are due to the Most High for His upholding and forbearance throughout the year.

“Who hath despised the day of small things?” (Zechariah 4:10).

JOHN TALLACH HIGH SCHOOL REPORT

Miss Norma B. MacLean

IN the Lord's kind Providence, the work at John Tallach School, both Gospel work and academic work, has continued as in previous years. In this materialistic and increasingly anti-Christian age, it is still a source of wonder that there are no restrictions on Scripture teaching at the school and there is still freedom to instruct the pupils in the *Shorter Catechism* and the *Westminster Confession of Faith*.

There are signs, however, that Scripture teaching no longer holds the same favoured place in the curriculum as it did in the past in Zimbabwe. A new curriculum was introduced in January 2017 and syllabi were not available until the opening of Term 1. It was very disappointing and disturbing to discover that the Scripture content had been completely removed from the new Religious Studies syllabus and had been replaced with comparative religion, to be presented with an uncritical approach. Thankfully this component of the new curriculum is not compulsory, so the school is still free to continue with

its own Scripture teaching programme. This programme unashamedly emphasises the words in Psalm 86:8:

“Lord, there is none among the gods
That may with Thee compare;
And like the works which Thou hast done,
Not any work is there.”

Pupils

Now that it is possible to accommodate two full groups in the Commercial and Science “A” Level classes, the school roll is 657 pupils with 332 girls and 325 boys. There are 36 day pupils on the roll. Two pupils benefit from the services of the specialist teacher in the Resource Unit for visual impairment: one boy in Form 2 and a girl in Form 1 who suffers from albinism, both with low vision.

“O” Level Results

There was considerable success again in public examinations in 2016. The ZIMSEC “O” Level pass rate rose to 98.46% with the school retaining first position in Matabeleland North. National league tables are no longer published.

ZIMSEC (Zimbabwe Examinations Council)

Individual subject results were as follows:

Accounts	100.0%	Geography	93.8%
Additional Mathematics	100.0%	History	98.4%
Agriculture	100.0%	Integrated Science	98.4%
Bible Knowledge	96.1%	Literature in English	100.0%
Biology.....	100.0%	Mathematics.....	83.8%
Business Studies	100.0%	Ndebele	98.4%
Chemistry.....	96.9%	Physics.....	96.9%
English Language	97.6%	Statistics	100.0%
Fashion and Fabrics	91.6%	Woodwork	90.9%

For the first time a group of 5 pupils presented for 12 “O” Levels. The overall quality of results was very good. There were 130 candidates:

12 x “A” passes	– 2 pupils
11 x “A” passes	– 6 pupils
10 x “A” passes	– 7 pupils
9 x “A” passes	– 14 pupils
% with 5 or more “A” passes	– 60% (78 pupils)

CIE (Cambridge International Examinations)

The school was approved as an independent Cambridge Examinations Centre in time for the registration process for the November 2016 examinations. This meant that it was possible to reduce the cost of the Examinations and so encourage more pupils to register.

Additional Mathematics.....	100%	Literature in English	86%
Biology.....	100%	Mathematics.....	94%
Business Studies	90%	Physics	100%
Chemistry.....	100%	Principles of Accounts.....	90%
Combined Science	100%	Religious Studies	66%
English Language	97%	Statistics.....	50%
Geography.....	88%		

“A” Level Results

ZIMSEC

An overall pass rate of 100% was recorded for the 4th year in a row. This was the first year in which the school presented Commercial candidates so the total number of candidates increased to 31.

Accounting.....	90%	Economics	100%
Biology.....	100%	Further Mathematics.....	100%
Business Studies	100%	Mathematics.....	100%
Chemistry.....	100%	Physics.....	100%

Of the 31 candidates: 1 passed with 24 points – 4 “A”s, 1 “B”
2 passed with 20 points – 4 “A”s
2 passed with 19 points – 3 “A”s, 1 “B”
1 passed with 18 points
1 passed with 17 points
3 passed with 16 points
4 passed with 15 points

CIE

The cost of each “A” Level was reduced from \$145 in 2015 to \$85 in 2016, which resulted in an increase in the number of candidates from 3 to 11.

All of the 11 candidates passed all their subjects with one boy scoring an A* in Chemistry.

Finance

No increase in school fees was effected in 2016 so expenditure continued to be strictly controlled. There was a small surplus of \$3,787 over the year. The school fees budget funds the running expenses of the school including: tuition

and boarding, examinations, sports, vehicles, electricity, wages of all ancillary staff, repairs, and maintenance of buildings. Other developments are generally financed from Mission funds.

Developments

1. Solar Installation

This was undoubtedly the major development of 2016. Eighty panels were installed in a grid tie system. It is anticipated that this installation will result in significant savings on the electricity bill and that it will also improve the reliability of power.

2. Final phase of building Form 6 boys' dormitory

A grant of £32,000 was received from the Beit Trust to complete the final phase of building the Form 6 boys' dormitory. This building work is still ongoing.

3. Renovations to Forms 2 and 3 boys' dormitory bathrooms

These are old dormitory blocks and the existing bathrooms are no longer in line with current health regulations. Work on the renovations is still in progress.

4. Renovations to bathrooms in teachers' cottages

The bathrooms in several teachers' cottages had not been renovated in over 25 years so were desperately in need of improvements. This work is nearing completion.

5. Visitor shower facilities

Male and female showers were constructed, particularly for the use of visitors from other congregations at the Ingwenya communions.

Conclusion

We would like to record our sincere thanks to all who continue to support the work so generously. Above all we crave the prayers of all friends and supporters in these troublous and uncertain times when the Gospel appears to be being set aside, that the Lord will continue His work at the school to the salvation of all who come in contact with His Word.

ZENKA MISSION REPORT

Rev. M. Mloyi

THE words of the Saviour are shown to be true when we notice how people behave towards the gospel preached to them. They value the world's riches more than the Word of God. In Matthew 16:25-26 the Lord said: "For

whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" All the work of man shall be brought to judgement, as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement.

Year 2017 has dawned and 2016 set, no more to come. We have come through the year in the guidance of the great and wonderful God. The Psalmist says in Psalm 8:4: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" It is His loving kindness that was shown to us. The Lord is therefore worthy to be praised and worshipped for His goodness. We are poor wretched sinners who deserve His wrath due to our sins.

In the mercy of God the work of the gospel has been carried on to our enabled ability. How much we desire that our people would be zealous of good work in praising God and giving to the Cause. It is our prayer and desire that our people be saved from the wrath to come.

The doors were kept open at all the preaching stations on the Lord's Day and weekday Prayer Meetings. The Lord's Supper was dispensed twice, in February and August. The outreach places were visited fortnightly. Because of the heavy rains it is now difficult to reach the farms. Being muddy and slippery it makes it hard to drive through these roads. If the rains will subside it will be workable.

At Zenka, as well as at Nkayi, church contributions have been very low. We always encourage our people every time to do their best by showing a keen interest in giving for the Cause of Christ. It is the Deacons' court's desire to set a target for this cause as all is vested upon our shoulders as a congregation. We are to pray for the spirit of giving and grow in it for the good of the church.

It is our desire that our youth learn to contribute as they are lagging behind on this point. We are thankful for the provision of the motorbike and office bearers use it for Sabbath supply. The apostle says how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things!

NKAYI MISSION REPORT

Rev. M. Mloyi

A PRAYER of Moses the man of God in Psalm 90:12: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." He looked at how man passes on to eternity unaware and not prepared. Man therefore needs wisdom from above to remember his Creator while there is time.

The year 2016 has passed quickly and many have been taken to eternity, some to life eternal and others to a lost eternity. At Nkayi congregation two members have passed away and we hope they are at a better place as they had professed Christ Jesus as their Saviour. One of the two who passed away at

Nkayi was Mr. Ben B. Mporfu, an elder. Both had long illnesses, and experienced much discomfort until their death. The work of the gospel was done to our utmost ability, enabled by the Most High God. We are thankful that doors were kept open at all the six preaching stations at Nkayi. One of our elders helping us at Manomano is not well so the Kirk Session has asked Mr. S. B. Mporfu to help.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was dispensed twice at Nkayi in January and June and once at Donsa Dam congregation. An old lady was baptised at Manomano congregation. We experience a low income on church collections. It is a real struggle to gather funds for any activity projects and preparing for communions. In order for us to go through, preparations must start early.

The rainy season started at the end of December and there was such a heavy downpour till February. The Lord is providing for His creatures in a wonderful way. The Lord God is worthy to be praised as in Psalm 148:7-13. We pray for the downpouring of the Holy Spirit too in our lands that many may turn to God for the salvation of their souls.

As some office bearers pass away we pray that Almighty God would send more labourers, as the harvest is plenteous but labourers are few. It is our great desire that our people will grow in the knowledge of the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, and grow also in the spirit of giving for the Cause of Christ. We encourage even our youth to give for the Cause.

ZVISHAVANE MISSION REPORT

Rev. S. Khumalo

IT has been one of the worst years in terms of famine and shortage of cash. It affected not only the daily life but even the running of the congregation expenses. Despite all those problems, the preaching of the gospel was not hindered, for which we are very thankful to the Most High.

We should be thankful that in all our pulpits the trumpet of the gospel is sounded every Sabbath and at the weekday prayer meeting. Sinners are warned to flee for their life and hide under the blood of Christ. Having said this, it is encouraging to note that there are those who have remained loyal in their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the F.P. witness in the Zvishavane congregations, despite the fact that some have been swept away by floods of false teachers and their doctrines.

There are nine preaching stations and six communions in a year: 2 in Chiedza, 1 at New Canaan, in Zvishavane town, Maware and Munaka. Death did not spare us as we lost an elder, Mr. Tasara of Munaka congregation. It is in the rainy season that problems have been encountered. Due to the heavy rains that have fallen, some places of worship were inaccessible; despite that, we are thankful to the Lord that there was no incident involving any of our

members being drowned, swept away or marooned by flooded rivers. For the first time in many years, Zvishavane and Mberengwa areas received above normal rainfall this year.

It was encouraging when one member of the Zvishavane congregation, Mr. T. Mwedzi, was accepted as a Divinity student to study for the Ministry. I am very thankful to the elders and professing men, who have kept the doors open every Sabbath and weekday prayer meetings.

We are also thankful to the JFMC for the assistance given on famine relief and for the prayers of the brethren. "Arise, O God, plead thine own cause" (Psalm 74:22).

MBUMA MISSION REPORT

Rev. N. Sibanda

THE year 2016 was a difficult year for the people in the Tshangani Forest area, with the severe drought and shortage of food and water for both man and beast. 2017 promises to be a good year as the rains have been falling since November 2016. We pray for the pouring of the Spirit of grace, the better food for the soul.

The fifteen stations were supplied by the minister at least once a month for those this side of the Tshangani River. The stations across Tshangani River were visited in the second half of the year when conditions were dry and the roads negotiable. Two communions were held at Mbuma. We would like to thank Rev. M. Mloyi and Rev. A. B. MacLean for assisting during the April and October communions respectively. The communion at Somakantana was held in August. The communion roll stood at 132. Two adults and two infants were baptised.

A meeting between the older youth of the congregation and the minister was introduced at the beginning of the year. This arose after realising that these young people were asking a lot of questions regarding the doctrines and teachings of the church. The platform was found to be interesting and generated a lot of discussions. The study of the *Shorter Catechism* with these young people has effected a revision of basic doctrines. The meeting which was held every second Sabbath of the month (after services) is set to continue, DV. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word" (Psalm 119:9). Sabbath school classes continued to be held throughout the stations. Friends from Holland, with a teaching background, trained our Sabbath school teachers on how to deliver a lesson. This was indeed valuable training. Our Sabbath school teachers' activities are co-ordinated by one of the catechists. Catechists also conduct Bible study classes for the different categories of staff both in the school and hospital.

The church within the mission compound underwent some repairs and received a new coat of paint. We received a grant from the main account in order to carry out this work, and are most thankful.

MBUMA MISSION HOSPITAL REPORT

Dr. A. Snoek

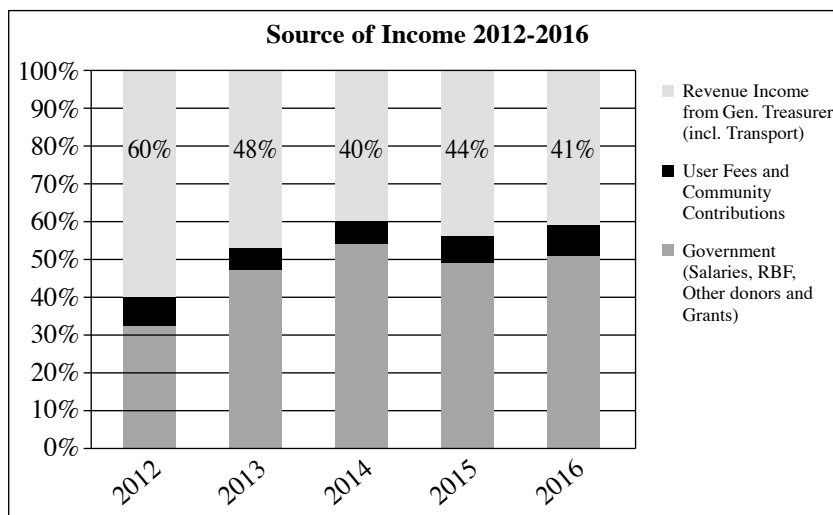
ANOTHER year in which we were enabled to seek the physical and spiritual well-being of our community lies behind us. To the Lord be all glory.

Lutsha Rural Health Centre established its name as a well-functioning clinic and is much appreciated by its community.

The first brick of Vova Rural Health Centre was laid in June 2016, marking another milestone in the history of Mbuma.

Administration

The dependence on overseas donation is slowly, but surely decreasing, mainly by relocation of staff from Mission to Government payroll and increased local sources of funds. To enhance the latter, a Community Insurance plan was launched with the help of CALM International, a local Insurance company. The uptake however has been meagre so far and will need more commitment of Insurance company, local leadership and community.



The Mbuma Board of Governors met 10 times and safeguarded the proper running of Mbuma, Lutsha and Zenka Mission. The HCC¹ of the hospital met 4 times and gave its valuable input towards quality of care, while in Lutsha it met every month.

Assessments of the entire hospital were done by Provincial Health teams within the context of Result Based Financing and resulted in scores of 82-85%. Assessments of Lutsha clinic were done by District teams and varied from 67% in the 1st quarter to 87% in the 3rd quarter.

Maintenance and Capital Projects

Buildings

To improve the disposal of waste in Nkayi district, RBF² demanded from all hospitals and clinics to ensure functional incinerator facilities. The incinerator present at Mbumba no longer satisfied the requirements, wherefore a new type was built, together with a protective wall around the extended incinerator area.

The patient wards at Mbumba are too small for the number of beds needed for the admitted patients. The problem often was solved by reducing the space for the nurses to do their clerical and preparatory work, leading to impaired quality of certain duties. Nursing stations were therefore built in each ward to ensure proper ward administration.

The toilets and showers for the female ward were upgraded and domestic storerooms created.

Four new patient toilets were built and the area around it paved for easy access even by wheelchair.

Equipment

In January Johan Verhaar came to give his very helpful IT and electronic support. Beside installing an organised cupboard for the wire labyrinth of the server, he performed the usual maintenance of the X-ray and hospital computers.

Our old X-ray machine, which was still partly functional, was lent to Tsholotsho District Hospital, since this hospital did not have any X-ray facilities anymore, and yet Tsholotsho is one of the districts with a high TB burden.

Transport

A new ambulance (Ford Ranger with a high body) was added to our fleet in June. This car replaced the old ambulance, which in turn is now used for outreaches and home visits instead of the worn out Home Based Care car. The condition of the old ambulance however was not good either, with serious breakdowns at most inconvenient times and places. Its ailment was not yet fixed at the end of the year and it therefore will need an overhaul in 2017.

The Nissan UD 70 lorry needed an increasing number of visits to the garage as well and the motorbike was out of order the biggest part of the year, and the latter mainly impaired environmental health activities.

Electricity and generators

Greatly easing the running of day-to-day activities in the hospital has been the reconnection to the national electricity grid in October 2016. Grateful we are to the members of the President's office of Nkayi, who initiated and arranged the reconnection.

Together with the reconnection, ZESA³ installed pre-paid meters in all staff houses. The staff houses then were disconnected from the generator supply.

For the management houses a start was made with the installation of solar for fridges.

The storms and heavy rains in the rainy season caused the usual frequent power cuts. Really glad we were therefore when we received a Deutz engine from Mr. Van de Kamp from South Africa, which replaced our increasingly unreliable Fawde engine. Three volunteers from South Africa came in December to install the engine, which since then has been doing an excellent job.

Lutsha Rural Health Centre

With the help of the community and funds from RBF an extra staff dorm was built at Lutsha to accommodate the staff members who temporarily were lodging in houses belonging to Lutsha Primary School.

Two years having passed since the building of Lutsha Rural Health Centre, Mr. Mlume, the headman for Lutsha area, decided to use his powers to execute justice. All able community members who had not assisted in the building of the clinic, but who eagerly make use of its services, were charged a certain amount in cash or kind. We are thankful for such leadership, which continues to strengthen the community ownership of the clinic.

Vova Rural Health Centre

With great leadership and expertise Mr. M. A. Mpofu, the Mission Administrator, accomplished the building of the second Rural Health Centre at Vova. Smoothly dealing with the usual incidents of non-co-operating individuals and villages, he made people build themselves towards a healthier future. While the mission provided the basic building materials only, the major contribution came from the joint effort of the 6 surrounding villages, which made local labour available to build the entire clinic. From the start of the building activities, daily worship was held with the help of local elders and church members, to demonstrate the importance of care for souls. After furnishing the clinic, the opening is expected in May 2017, the Lord willing.

Staffing

In the course of 2016 4 faithful staff members reached the age of 65 years and retired. Mr. T. Moyo and Mr. S. Moyo, worked with us for over 9 and 7 years respectively. Besides tirelessly working as drivers and braving challenging bad roads and stormy weather, they assisted during outreaches and home visits by leading worships.

Mrs. J. Ngwenya was employed as General Hand for over 20 years. Beside her domestic work, she compassionately looked after bereaved families in the hospital and was a Sabbath school teacher for many years. Mr. R. Dlamini worked with us as Gardener, General Hand and Gateman for nearly 18 years. He often assisted during worships in the hospital.

In November we said goodbye to two of our expatriate staff members as well. Sr. Gilia van Wijngaarden, after prayerful consideration, decided to return to Holland. She worked in Africa for 15 years, of which over 11 years

were spent in Zimbabwe. Beside her work as a caring midwife, she added value to the Christian ethos in our hospital by distributing reading-worthy leaflets and information to patients and staff, setting up and managing the library and assisting in the Sabbath school and Bible classes.

Dr. Janlouis Bezemer returned to Holland to further train and specialize as a surgeon, after serving the Mbuma community for 2 years. With his going we lose a diligent, thoughtful and skilled colleague, beside the enjoyable companionship of his wife Linda and the children.

We are, however, thankful for the time the Lord enabled them all to work and stay with us.

The Rehabilitation Technician who was deployed returned to Nkayi for further training.

Support in the form of extra staff was received from ZACH⁴ and Global Fund. Via ZACH 4 staff members were employed: 2 Primary Care Nurses and 2 Primary Care Counsellors. Global Fund continued to pay 2 Data Clerks, who started working with us in 2015, besides 1 Primary Care Counsellor. The last one however transferred to ZACH.

Delighted we were when in October we received communication that 11 Government posts were re-opened for filling. 6 Staff members transferred from the Mission to the Government payroll, while 5 staff members were newly employed. It resulted in a major change of 18%.

	Government/Donor payroll	Mission payroll
2015	66 (69%)	29 (31%)
2016	80 (87%)	12 (13%)

We continued to receive voluntary services from Red Cross nurses, Domestic workers and Community Security at Mbuma as well as in Lutsha, which were greatly appreciated.

In the course of 2016 relatives of Dr. Snoek, Dr. and Mrs Bezemer and Sr. Gilia paid a visit to Mbuma. Beside this, Mirriam Francke and Marieke Verloop (student Midwives), Laura Boer and Claudy Jansen (student Nurses) and Elsbeth de Koning and Ellen Lohuis (student Nutritionists) came for attachments during the first months of the year. The students were motivated and adaptive and both staff and students had an edifying time. The nutrition students performed a research on “Diet for Diabetes Type 2 Patients in Zimbabwe”, which proved to be very useful.

During these attachments, the parents of Ellen and the fathers of Claudy and Laura came for a holiday to Zimbabwe and passed by the hospital. The fathers stayed with us for 2 days and repaired outstanding defects of hospital furniture.

In August and September Fred and Gonneke Strik, a couple from Holland, assisted Mr. S. Ncube and his team during the Holiday Bible days, which were held in all Sabbath schools around Mbuma. After that they helped in the cleaning up of the maintenance store and did other chores.

In September and December Willem Nap, Harm van de Kamp and Cornelius Jonker, technically gifted men from South Africa, came and repaired a generator, cars and other faults, on top of the installation of a new engine already mentioned earlier. Beside this they brought a donation of very useful hospital consumables.

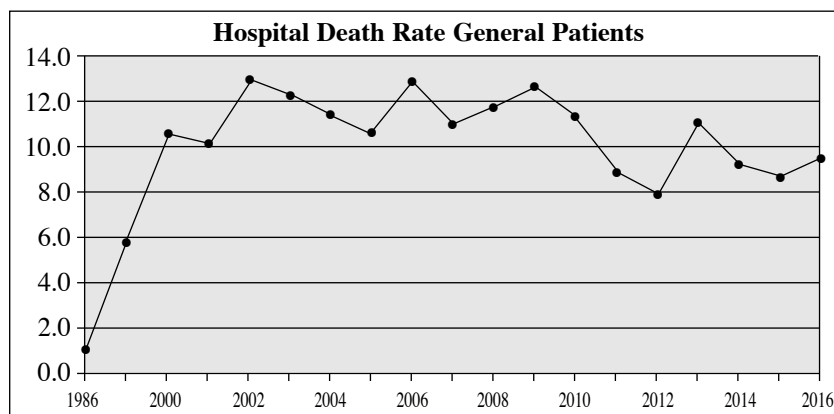
Hospital services

Thankfully the decline in the number of AIDS and TB cases continues, resulting in a lower morbidity and mortality rate and a lower number of admissions.

	2015	2016
Admissions	2,294	2,055
General	992	906
Paediatrics	337	277
Maternity	899	806
Neonatal	66	66
Bed occupancy rate		
General	57.3%	59.1%
Paediatrics	64.0%	60.2%
Maternity	85.8%	77.1%
Neonatal	48.6%	36.6%
Deaths	133	120
General	115	104
Paediatrics	7	9
Maternity	–	1
Early/Late Neonatal	11	7

However, among the fewer admitted patients the number with serious co-morbidities like Hepatic or Renal failure, Diabetes and Cardiovascular diseases is increasing.

Although the actual number of hospital deaths went down, the percentage did not. Our limited laboratory facilities might be a contributing factor to these deaths.

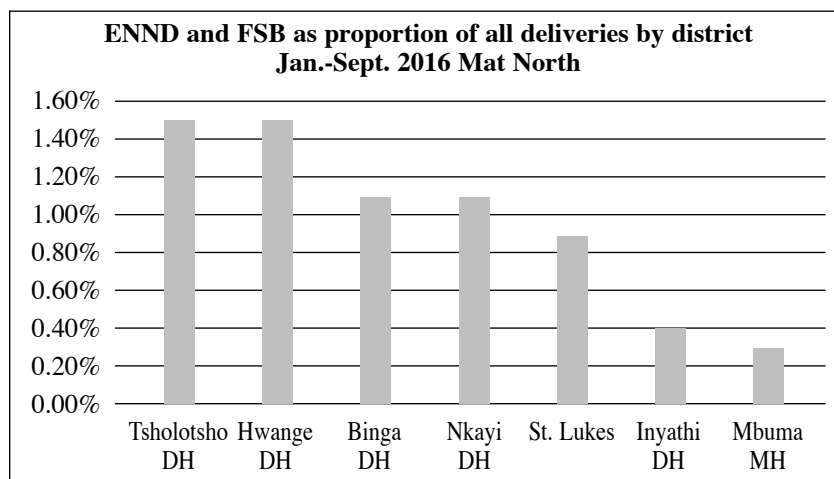


The number of deliveries went down by 5%. This might be due to the presence of an extra Doctor and Clinical Officer in the District Hospital, as well as due to the country-wide reduction of deliveries.

Sadly, we had 2 Maternal deaths. The first patient died 4 days post-delivery due to complications of a severe pneumonia in HIV. The second patient died at home due to haemorrhage in a retained placenta, despite being instructed to come to the hospital. Vigorous health education helped to keep the hospital home delivery rate as low as 4%. While it was expected that the clinic would give increased access to services like safe deliveries, strangely the home delivery rate for Lutsha was 14%. The absence of a decent waiting mothers' shelter in Lutsha might contribute.

	2015 Mbuma	2015 Lutsha	2016 Mbuma	2016 Lutsha
Total Births				
Live births	824	35	783	32
Still births	16	–	12	–

2016	Still births			Early Neonatal Death (ENND)			Maternal Death		
	Fresh (FSB)	Mace-rated	Total	<2.5kg	>2.5kg	Total	Hospital	Home	Total
	3	9	12	5	2	7	1	1	2



Peri-natal care at Mbuma continued to be commendable compared with other hospitals in the Province, especially when considering the fact that we transferred the lowest number of patients to a higher level of care.

The Caesarean section rate remained below the expected 15%. Due to Dr. Bezemer being a capable surgeon, the number of other operations increased by 48%.

Theatre/Labour ward	2015	2016
Caesarean section	107	112
Other major operations	88	131
Assisted deliveries (Vacuum extractions and Symphysiotomies)	133	128

Preventive services were delivered as usual, an increasing number of clients attending in Lutsha RHC.

Preventive services	2015 Mbuma	2016 Mbuma	2015 Lutsha	2016 Lutsha
ANC + PNC (Antenatal/Postnatal Clinic) attendances	3,129	2,931	675	952
CWC (Child Welfare Clinic) attendances	6,771	5,872	1,174	1,758

In the hospital per year 8,980 new OPD visits are expected, but only 2,994 patients (32%) were seen as new patients. The most likely causes that patients do not come to the hospital for (minor) ailments are the hospital fees and

distance. This is demonstrated in Lutsha RHC where the yearly new patients attendants rate is 82%, because in the clinic no fees are charged and distances are reduced.

If comparing 2015 with 2016, the presence of the clinic resulted in a 24% increase of OPD attendance rate for the combined catchment area of Mbuma and Lutsha.

To address the financial barrier in the hospital a Community Insurance programme has been launched as mentioned above.

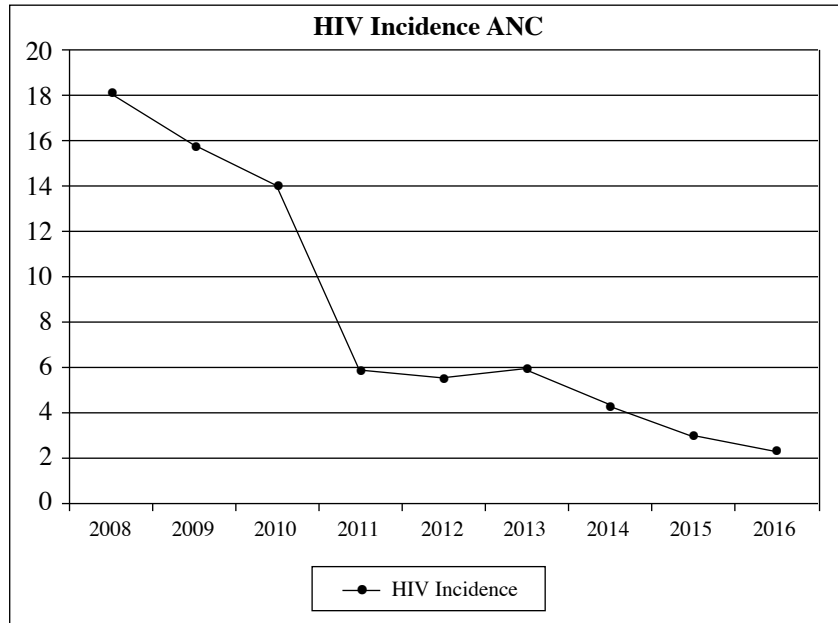
Out Patients Department	2015 Mbuma	2015 Lutsha	2016 Mbuma	2016 Lutsha
New Clients	3,701	1,447	2,994	3,307
Repeat visit/Chronic Clients	3,520	219	2,812	1,931
Total	7,221	1,666	5,806	5,238

The number of laboratory tests increased again. A new CD4/HB machine was received, beside a Chemistry Analyzer. The last one however was not yet operational due to unavailability of reagents.

	2015	2016
Radiology services		
Number of X-rays taken	2,367	2,761
Number of Ultrasound Scans taken	571	767
Laboratory services		
Number of lab tests	7,703	10,788
Number of HIV tests (excluding ANC)	1,155	2,481
Number of HIV tests in ANC	375	363
HIV incidence in ANC	3.4%	2.5%
Vertical transmission rate for HIV infection (= % of children who get HIV)	2.9%	1.5%

Thanks to the unceasing effort of Nurses and Counsellors, the HIV incidence⁵ in ANC⁶ and the Vertical transmission rate continued to decrease.

That Behaviour Change lessons however continue to be needed, is shown by the high number of Syphilis patients in the catchment area of Lutsha clinic. After discussions with community workers and local leadership it was realised that the main source were night disco parties organised by shopkeepers in the Gwampa valley.



The total number of OIC patients increased, while the number of OIC visits decreased due to 3 monthly instead of 2 monthly visits. This allowed the nurses and counsellors to improve the quality of care per visit.

Our retention rate (number of patients alive and continuing on ART after 1 year) is 91%, which is in line with the expected >90%.

Among HIV positive patients, teenagers and adolescents form a vulnerable group, due to their social circumstances and peer pressure which they experience at school and in the villages. In May therefore among our children and adolescents with HIV, 11 teenagers were identified and trained as Peer Educators. Following the training, they have been actively involved in counselling and discussions with peers and children who are in the AIDS programme. Beside this, they assisted in teaching youth at schools.

The Orphans Care project was continued. The programme included 60 orphans, who were helped to attend either Primary School, Secondary School, Advanced level or Vocational training. During holiday lessons in April, 5 subjects as well as Bible lessons and counselling were offered to 41 pupils.

OIC (Opportunistic Infections Clinic = HIV/AIDS Clinic)	2015 Mbuma	2015 Lutsha	2016 Mbuma	2016 Lutsha
No. of OIC visits	11,107	2,853	7,767	1,724
No. of patients started on ARVs till date	2,981	–	3,166	53
No. of patients who died while on ARVs till date	406	–	472	4
No. of patients transferred out or lost to follow-up	1,393	–	1,562	14
No. of patients continuing on treatment till date	1,182	322	1,231	423

TB infection remains distinctively present among patients presenting at our hospital, whereby the majority (69%) are coming from outside our catchment area. Especially patients who have extra-pulmonary or sputum negative TB are often missed in other surrounding health facilities. Our cure rate went up to 77%, although we did not yet reach the expected 90%, due to the late presentation of many.

Joined effort of District and Province has greatly reduced the malaria incidence in Nkayi district (from 98 cases in 2011 to 9 cases in 2016), whereby in-door spraying has been the most effective intervention.

Environmental Health Department	2015	2016
Number of newly diagnosed TB cases	392	421
Number of sputum +ve	45	53
Number of sputum –ve	334	366
Cure rate	60%	77%
<i>Multi-Drug Resistant TB</i>	3	2
TB patients who are HIV positive	68%	64%
Number of malaria cases (test positive)	9	1

Despite intensive Health Education on sanitation during the past years, the toilet coverage in our catchment area and Nkayi district at large remained very low. To assist people, a programme had been set up whereby the hospital bought cement, which community members then could buy, since they indicated that transport from town was a problem. Over the years the coverage however increased from 10 to 20% only.

In 2016 a new concept was introduced, which was borrowed from MSF⁷, which had been implementing it already 15 years ago in Tsholotsho district. This new concept is called the “Pole and Dagga pit latrine” and is using local materials only. It became a great success and is still ongoing. Chief Sikobokobo himself addressed the community during meetings and indicated

that since there is now no reason anymore not to have a toilet, everybody without a latrine will be charged.

Water, sanitation and hygiene programme	2015	2016
Number of toilets built	33	438

	Households	Households with toilets	% coverage	
			2015	2016
Ward 13	431	169	20	62
Ward 14	1013	598	24	59

Beside the care for physical ailments, Biblical counselling and teaching continued to be delivered by Catechists and other Church members in the Wards, during Worship times, on Outreaches, in the Bible classes and during Sabbath schools.

Although it might be hard in this particular area to easily measure the success or lack of it, the levels of participation and even outright questioning are encouraging. One very encouraging sign is the number of people in communities who now choose to challenge an age-old custom of respecting the traditional day of rest, to honour the day which they consider the biblical day of the Lord. Although, of course, many rest on a Saturday, it is hoped that the Lord will still bless this departure from the day of the spirits of the ancestors.

Tom Wells, in *A Vision for Missions*, writes: “. . . May God help us not to hesitate. If we love our Saviour let us seek to make Him known. Let us carry His character, His person, to ‘the regions beyond’. Let us work the works of Him who sends us while it is day. Let us say on His behalf, ‘Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else’! If we have but small confidence in ourselves, that is good. That is good indeed. And if we have other fears we will look them in the face knowing that God is greater than them all. The cause of God must prevail. . . .”

NOTES:

¹ HCC = Health Centre Committee is composed of Community, Church and Hospital representatives.

² RBF = Result Based Financing.

³ ZESA = Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority.

⁴ ZACH = Zimbabwe Association of Church related Hospitals.

⁵ HIV incidence in pregnant ladies is regarded as a reliable indicator for the extent of the HIV epidemic.

⁶ ANC = AnteNatal Clinic.

⁷ MSF = Médecins sans Frontières, Doctors without borders.

BULAWAYO MISSION REPORT

Rev. S. Khumalo

IT has been a difficult year, which was mainly compounded by economic and famine issues. Despite all that, the preaching of the gospel was not hindered, as at all our stations people gathered to hear the Word of God, for which we are very thankful to the Most High.

As Bulawayo is more central, a number of church activities were held during the course of the year, such as the men's Theological Conference and the Youth Conference. This happened in spite of all the difficulties we went through. It was encouraging to note the zeal that the people have in wanting to know the truth, especially for young people to know what the Church stands for and its witness. It is a privilege for our people to have such privileges availed to them at their doorstep. We pray that they would remember what the Word of God says: "to whom much is given, much shall be required of them."

In Bulawayo there are 4 preaching stations which are namely: Lobengula, Nkulumane, Mahatshula and Umguza. In all these stations, services are held every Sabbath. Weekday prayer meetings are held at Lobengula, Umguza and Thembiso Children's Home Primary School during the school term and within the Home during school holidays. All teachers, schoolchildren, all within the boundaries of Thembiso and some from outside attend.

It is a rare opportunity to be under the true gospel of Jesus Christ. I use the term rare because not all schools enjoy these privileges and not all the Children's Homes have these priorities pertaining to the Word of God. Two services are held on Sabbath at Lobengula, Nkulumane and Mahatshula, only Umguza has one service. We have two communion seasons in a year, in June and December. As in all the years, our communions are well attended even by those who do not attend services at other times. We pray that by the grace of God they will one day be caught by the net of the gospel.

In Mahatshula, the services were suspended as the private house we used for our services was no longer available and the building of the church was ongoing. We are pleased that, though partially finished, the services have resumed and we pray that more people from the community and from the surrounding suburbs will find it convenient for them to come and draw waters from the well of salvation. We are very thankful to the JFMC, our donors and the Mission administration for financial support and facilitation of the project and also for the prayers of the brethren.

Finally, like any true Church of God in this world, we cannot deny that there are encouragements and discouragements on the way. Despite all these things, our prayer is that we be enjoined with the Psalmist to say: "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed" (Psalm 57:7).

GWERU MISSION REPORT

Rev. S. Khumalo

A GROUP of about 15 or more individuals congregate on Sabbath at a Reformed Dutch Church building, which was offered free of charge for us to hold our services whenever there is someone supplying there. The past year was not a good one as there were few visits to supply there due to shortage of funds. It is hoped that the situation will improve as I have encouraged the congregation to contribute funds towards meeting the costs of supplying there. Also, Keith Mpata, a member of the Bulawayo congregation, who is studying at the University in Gweru, is helping to keep the doors open by reading sermons every Sabbath since February 2017. I am very grateful to him and to Rev. and Mrs. Watkins – as per my request – for offering to send sermons that may be read.

May the Lord of all grace bless these efforts to the glory of His holy name and blessings accrue to poor sinners that they may come to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. The call is there, “Come over into Macedonia and help us”! Also we have a duty to pray to the Lord as He saith: “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest” (Matthew 9:37-38).

THEMBISO CHILDREN’S HOME REPORT

B. Maphala, Home Superintendent

Introduction

As an institution, we have every reason to be thankful to the Jewish and Foreign Missions Committee and more so to the Almighty for the continuation of the support rendered unto us.

We are aware of the difficulties and challenges encountered along the way, but the JFMC have remained steadfast in their support. It reminds me of the apostle Paul writing to the Hebrews, chapter 6, verse 10: “For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” The responsibility lies on the children, caregivers and administrators to make use of what is at their disposal, according to God’s will as manifested in His Word.

The Home

As alluded to in the previous reports, the cornerstone of the home is the Word of God. We have a family worship schedule. Every house reads the same

portion of Scripture during worship. In the mornings they read the Old Testament. In the evenings they read the New Testament. Questions are set from both the Old and New Testament portions read, in order to gauge how the children are profiting.

The house mother/supervisor gives them weekly memory verses and questions from the Catechism to recite. On Sabbath, after services, each family unit discusses the sermons and reads Bible stories.

Scripture and Catechism exercises and the *Cheering Words* magazine exercises are done as they arrive and are posted overseas for marking. On Tuesdays either Rev. S. Khumalo or Mr. B. Maphala leads a prayer meeting, which includes the schoolchildren and teachers as well. What is uppermost in our minds, is that which is contained in the Word of God: "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). In His strength we shall always endeavour to train our children to this end.

Children

At present our enrolment stands at 40 children. There are 15 girls and 25 boys. All children are happily settled and are in good health. Most of them are attending school except for three – two small ones and one over the Thembiso age limit. Siphon Zama is progressing well at Lupane State University in his second year. Thandazani Dube is doing well in the upper sixth form at Cyrene Mission. Fikile Moyo is also doing well at John Tallach High School in Form 2 and Gugulethu Nyoni is excelling at Tennyson Hlabangana Secondary School in Form 1. These children are a testimony of the education they get from Thembiso Children's Home. We pray that the rest of the children will follow in their footsteps, DV.

Staff

Our staff establishment is 25. There are 12 caregivers, a house mother/supervisor, 6 watchmen, a gateman, a gardener, clerk, a driver and two groundsmen. We are grateful to have a co-operative staff that has remained loyal to Thembiso. They all attend upon the means of grace on Sabbath, even if off duty.

However, we are saddened that we lost one of our promising young men last year (2016), Mbonisi Nyathi. He was one of our watchmen who had served Thembiso well for eight years. Our staff is continually being kept up to date and abreast of developments in child care. Sister Petra and Sister Margaret as well as Dr. A. Snoek are a great help in this regard.

Donations

We had few donations as compared to the previous year, due to economic troubles in the country. However, we managed to remain viable thanks to the responsible authority.

Vocational Training Programme

Carpentry lessons are held twice a week, on Wednesday and Saturdays. Computer lessons are done once a week on Saturdays. At the end of the year children will be tested on how they have done. Those that perform well will be awarded certificates by a reputable college in their respective fields.

Refresher course

All caregivers underwent a refresher course led by Sister Petra Beukers and Sister Margaret Macaskill for a month. Dr. A. Snoek, Mr. B. Maphala, Mr. C. Moyo and Rev. S. Khumalo, had their input as well. Mothers showed great zeal in their work. They all participated well. A follow-up is envisaged in the near future, DV, when funds permit.

Conclusion

As all this is done we ought to be mindful that all should be done in order to glorify the Lord. The epistle of Peter had this to say: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:18). We shall try to continue the work here and and make the Word our rule.

ZIMBABWE MISSION ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mr. M. A. Mpfu

Introduction

The passage of time constantly reminds us of the truths of the Scripture which clearly describes the phenomenon in Job 7:6: "swifter than a weaver's shuttle."

It is yet again that time of the year when one has to submit a report on the year that has gone past.

Boards of Governors

The Zimbabwe Mission is now managed by three Boards of Governors: Thembiso Board, Ingwenya Board and Mbuma Board. The Boards of Governors meet once every month and affairs of the Mission are dealt with efficiently and professionally. There is also a Head Office Committee which oversees the affairs of that Office.

Staffing

Due to the huge salaries' bill the Mission has deliberately adopted a policy not to replace local staff that retire, pass on or leave employment by reason of

disciplinary action. In order to further reduce cost certain jobs are now given to contractors who are always keen to finish the job quickly and move on.

At the close of the year the Mission staff said farewell to Dr. Bezemer and Sr. Gilia van Wijngaarden who returned to Holland at the end of their contracts. The work they did at Mbuma Mission Hospital and in the Mission in general is greatly appreciated.

Finance

The General Treasurer continued to remit funds directly to the bank accounts of the Boards of Governors and that of Head Office. This arrangement is most welcome as it makes monitoring of the finances much easier and service delivery is much improved.

The audited finances for 2015 were delayed because of the devolution of management of the Mission funds to the institutional Board of Governors. These have since been completed and distributed.

Sustentation Fund

The amounts received by Head Office from congregations, being contributions to the Sustentation Fund, have remained agonizingly low. There is need to exhort all the congregations to give more liberally to the Cause of Christ. Now is the time that Africa has to stand up and sustain her ministers of the Gospel. "I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service" (2 Corinthians 11:8).

Primary Schools

The Church is the Responsible Authority to five primary schools. In the past we have been having challenges teaching Bible Knowledge lessons because the majority of the teachers deployed to the schools do not belong to the Church and hence do not understand our doctrine and practice. A recommendation was put forward that suitably qualified church members be employed to teach the subject in the five schools. This was approved and has since been implemented. A Bible Knowledge syllabus has been developed and is used in the five schools.

School statistics

School	Enrolment	Staffing	Grade 7 Results 2016	2015
Thembiso	430	15	92%	82%
Ingwenya	320	11	64%	57%
Zenka	815	22	44%	53%
Mbuma	700	19	44%	34%
Lutsha	500	15	13%	15%

Rural Health Centres (Clinics)

The second clinic is in Ward 25 at a place called Vova, 7 kilometers south of Mbumba Mission. The community has now completed the structure of the clinic. There is an outpatient block, maternity block, a three-bedroomed staff house, a waiting shed, ablution facilities, an incinerator and auto way pit. The clinic at Vova took much shorter a time to complete due to the experience which was gained at Lutsha Clinic. The site has been visited by a number of top government officials who have been very impressed with the high standard of work and the partnership between the Church and the Community. It is hoped the Clinic will be officially opened in the first half of this year (DV). The third clinic will be built at Sagonda, north east of Mbumba. It will serve people in Wards 15 and 27.

Conclusion

In conclusion may I once again thank all who have been mindful of us over the past year. Please continue to pray for us and for the Cause of Christ.

OVERSEAS COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. A. Ross

WE regret that during the current year we have not succeeded in sending ministerial deputies to our overseas congregations. That said, one intended deputy has had to defer going to the Antipodes until another year, and another minister who was prepared to go could not do so because of ill health. However, with regard to other overseas congregations, we are grateful that the Rev. John Macleod, the interim moderator of Sante Fe Kirk Session, and the Rev. R. MacLeod, the interim moderator of Chesley Kirk Session, have given reports which are included in this booklet.

There is a report from ministers of congregations in the Australia and New Zealand Presbytery (which includes Singapore). This report tells of a degree of gospel success and is pleasing to read.

When it is already the case that pastors of overseas congregations give reports to the Synod via the Overseas Committee, we believe that interim moderators of vacant congregations (including interim moderators based in the United Kingdom) should also give reports to Synod, especially in the absence of deputies. Otherwise our people throughout the Church will not be kept informed about our overseas congregations in which they continue to have a supportive and prayerful interest. We trust this will be acceptable to the Synod.

There has been some progress regarding the small group of people in Vancouver seeking admission to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. They continue to meet and Mr. Spratt reads sermons to them. Dr. Angus

Macleod, during a temporary stay in Vancouver, gave assistance by conducting services. Mr. and Mrs. Spratt attend communion services in Chesley and are now members in full communion. Several attempts have been made to contact Mr. John A. MacLeod, who over many years ably cared for the church property and zealously sought to maintain the biblical principles precious to the Free Presbyterian Church, but sadly all attempts by ministers and elders to contact him have failed.

It is encouraging that there are now a number of students preparing for the ministry of the Church, and it may be that, in the providence of the Lord and in answer to prayer, some of these will yet be led to fill vacant pastorates overseas.

It is interesting that there is a fresh development in New Zealand. Our small Wellington congregation, which meets in the town of Carterton, 50 miles from Wellington, has purchased what used to be a bank building in the town. It is being modified as a church, and the congregation hopes that by having a presence in the town centre there is a greater likelihood of attracting some of the people passing by.

Our Mission in Odessa is once again faced with the grim reality of a cruel war on its doorstep – a war that to a certain degree is forgotten by the world. We prayerfully trust that the grim experience of these hostilities will be blessed to many Ukrainians in giving them thoughts about their great burdens of personal and national sins, and moving them to bemoan their iniquities and to cast these burdens on the good Lord, who is infinitely able to supply all their need.

The Mission congregation continues its activities – and not without some interest being shown in the great issues of eternity. Other people, far away from our Mission, also show interest by at least requesting the sound biblical literature we continue to produce in their language.

The congregation had the benefit of a communion season. Mr. Edward Ross, as assessor elder, was able to attend and be present for two weeks. Rev. Dmytro Levytskyi, minister of the congregation, took all the services. There were a number of visitors. We plead with the Lord of the harvest to prosper these gospel gatherings and the ongoing work of literature distribution.

With the presence of Mr. Ross, the Field Committee was able to meet and deal with a considerable amount of business. Maintenance of the property has been done by Mr. Levytskyi himself. Due to great cost and shortage of heating gas, he installed a wood-burning stove in the living quarters. He also installed, with the help of Mr. Ross, a wood-burning stove in the church. This was no small feat, since the building is three stories high. These installations should result in significant savings.

However, one of the main concerns is the ownership of the property. At present the title of ownership is in the name of the minister, and he, of course, is carrying this weighty responsibility on behalf of the Church. This has in the past created difficulties and it was hoped this year that the title to the property would be divided, on behalf of the Church, between several persons who are

in office in the Church. But on account of further changes in Ukrainian law, there is now the requirement that should other “owners” be added to the title, each must pay £38,000 tax, plus a notary fee. Therefore, if four new owners were added to the title, this would strip us of our monetary assets. Mr. Levytskyi, who is not at all at ease with having the burden of ownership in his name, is investigating ways which may relieve him of the burden, but at the moment matters are at an impasse. His own report touches on this matter as well as others. It was planned that he and Mr. Igor Zadorozhnyi would attend this year’s Synod but Mr. Zadorozhnyi had to decline due to ill health.

In conclusion, it is with much thankfulness to the Most High that we see the biblical witness of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland extending to the ends of the earth, and that the labour of our ministers and many others is not in vain in the Lord. We often think of the great mercy of having the gospel yet continue with our congregations overseas, and must say with gratitude and wonder, “The Lord of us hath mindful been, and He will bless us still” (Psalm 115:12, metrical).

AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND AND SINGAPORE REPORT

Rev. G. B. Macdonald

Introduction

That the witness of our particular branch of the visible Church is found in Australia, New Zealand and Singapore, is a testimony to the spread of the gospel, which is ultimately to be ascribed to the exalted Christ, who is King and Head of the Church. While we may feel we have but a foothold in these nations, it is so in the providence of God. My ministerial brethren in Grafton, Auckland and Gisborne, have kindly assisted me with information for this report to Synod.

The Presbytery has continued to meet at two ordinary meetings a year and such meetings provide a welcome opportunity to enjoy fellowship, given the scattered geographical locations of our congregations. In 2016, the Presbytery sent a letter of protest to all members of the New Zealand Parliament, arguing against a proposed change in the law to legislate in favour of Euthanasia. The Auckland Kirk Session also objected to this through an opportunity given in the parliamentary consultation process. The Presbytery also sent a letter to Mr. John Key, then Prime Minister of New Zealand, in relation to Sabbath trading laws outlining the requirements of the 4th Commandment. In these small ways we seek to witness for the truth in this part of the earth.

This report will now consider the congregations within the bounds of the Presbytery.

Grafton

“Reviewing another year of the Lord’s goodness,” Rev. George Hutton writes, “the congregation in Grafton, like Samuel and Israel in the past, is able to raise its own Ebenezer, testifying, ‘Hitherto hath the Lord helped us’. While we are compelled to associate ourselves with those advised by the Saviour to acknowledge, ‘We are unprofitable servants’, nevertheless God has truly blessed us as a congregation, materially and spiritually.”

The members of the Grafton congregation continue to be consistent in their attendance upon the public means of grace, with around seventy souls now present on the Lord’s Day. Mr. Hutton notes that, “while there is always room for spiritual improvement, there appears to be evidence of some growth in grace. Attendance at the prayer-meetings is encouraging with every indication that much earnest prayer ascends in secret for the pulpit ministry.”

Changes have been experienced within the congregation in the past year. Two of the oldest communicant members, Mrs. Molly van Dorp, and Miss Heather Shaw, were removed by death. Both had reached the advanced age of ninety-five years. Mr. Hutton writes: “It is our prayer that God will raise up from the younger generations those who will be as steadfast in their adherence to the truth as they were in their generation.”

Other significant events in the congregational life have been the baptisms of four children, the admission of five additional communicants, one birth, and one wedding.

Although they are somewhat isolated geographically in Grafton, they take much encouragement from the fact that, through the medium of the congregational website and the distribution of recorded sermons, the church’s witness is reaching into different parts of Australia and even further afield. From time to time Mr. Hutton has received correspondence from isolated believers in Australia who express their appreciation for the ministry and our Church’s reformed witness.

Occasionally visitors attend the services, having travelled long distances to stay for a few days, simply to join in worship. Mr. Hutton observes that while Grafton is sadly a godless society, where Romanism is the most dominant of the religious bodies retaining any degree of influence, it is the Lord’s providential goodness that preserves their small witness within the community. He comments: “Although we cannot but yearn and plead with God that He may yet open to us the windows of heaven and pour out an even greater blessing upon us, we are most grateful and humbled in the light of what He continues to do for us.”

Sydney

Our congregation in Sydney continues to meet in the suburb of Riverstone, which is within an area that is seeing a major expansion of house building and associated infrastructure. Some in the congregation travel a significant distance from the surrounding area to be present for public worship. In 2016 we were sad to see three families leave – one to New Zealand where

they have strengthened our Wellington (Carterton) congregation, another to the Netherlands and one to worship in another church in Sydney. One sees in such things how congregations change over time and the minister ought in these things to be reminded that such as are present on any given occasion are there in the Lord's providence. Thus the number attending regularly would now be nearer 35 souls on a Sabbath morning. One child was baptised in 2016.

Very occasionally we have visitors from the local area or wider city. Sadly, one is struck with how many here, as in many places are, one fears, content to continue to live without God, little realising that to do so, is also to live without hope in the world.

We are thankful that the various households in the congregation have been blessed with employment and we find in our office-bearers and others, skills which can be put to good use in connection with maintaining the place of worship, etc.

In 2016, Mrs. Mary Shaw passed away. She had attained to the age of 93 years. She had been lovingly cared for by her son Richard for a number of years, in the family home in Hurstville, Sydney. With her late husband Alasdair Shaw, Mary provided a welcome to a number of church deputies from Scotland.

As reported last year, an opportunity arose to take a short worship service fortnightly in a local nursing home in the foothills of the Blue Mountains. Happily, this arrangement has continued and the truth has been set before some residents who attend and the occasional staff member or visitor within earshot. Some interesting conversations have been had and good fellowship has been enjoyed with Mr. Alex Neil (who, with his late mother, was very kind to Rev. William MacLean) and who kindly suggested I take on this work and still likes to attend himself.

Thus in all our labours we must remain thankful that the Lord assures us of His Word: "it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

Auckland

Rev. Jett Smith continues to labour in Auckland, the most populous city in New Zealand. He reports that 2016 marked 50 years since the Auckland congregation became a sanctioned charge. Also 50 years ago, on the 19th March 1966, three men, Ted Christensen, Donald Beaton and Ken van Kralingen were ordained to the office of the eldership in the congregation and Mr. Ian Beaton was ordained as a deacon.

The minister and congregation have been encouraged by the attendance of several Korean students, who have continued to attend and who also bring friends on occasions.

Mr. Smith reports that there was one baptism in 2016. Around seventy souls attend on a Sabbath and there are a number of small children and

young people in the congregation. Mr. Smith has continued to have a monthly manse meeting for the young people, which, we trust is very enjoyable and instructive.

Gisborne

The Rev. Caleb Hembd and his family have settled in well since his ordination and induction in 2015. He reports that, “since the writing of the last report, a family that had been attending for less than a year has left due to doctrinal disagreements, while the David Schuit family (formerly part of Chesley, Ontario, congregation), has settled in the Gisborne region. A group of three people in Hastings (150 miles south of Gisborne) have long been associated with the congregation. Their generous support of the congregation and their warm attachment to the Free Presbyterian witness is much appreciated.”

Mr. Hembd has been able to speak to a number of people in Gisborne and has formed the following general impressions: “the non-religious are friendly but largely uninterested in the truth, while the religious are heavily influenced by Charismatic, Dispensational, and Arminian teaching. The Russellites and Mormons are also very active; in fact, they have come to the manse at least six times in 18 months. The Roman Catholic Church operates a large school and therefore exerts a significant influence in the community. A number of local churches are turning to more and more entertainment to draw people into their services.”

The town of Gisborne has a sizeable Maori population. It is hoped that some will yet come to attend upon the sound of the gospel. In times past the Lord has been pleased to move mightily among them and in recent years the Trinitarian Bible Society has republished a more accurate translation of the scriptures in the Maori language.

Wellington (Carterton)

Our Wellington congregation is now located in the small town of Carterton which is within the wider Wellington region and would be around 1½ hours’ drive from Wellington city. In 2016 two families, one from Sydney and one from Auckland, moved to the area and attend regularly. Thus the congregation has been noticeably strengthened. At the time of writing, extensive works are ongoing to strengthen the church building to withstand earthquakes which are not a rare occurrence in New Zealand. The timeliness of such works, in the providence of God, was witnessed when a very large earthquake occurred in late 2016. According to the engineer overseeing the project, even the works undertaken up to that time, though not complete, saved the building from any significant damage, while other buildings were damaged.

Tauranga

Tauranga is a sizeable city on the road between Auckland and Gisborne. It is a popular location for retirees. The small congregation here remain

faithful and attentive upon the Word. The resident elder, Mr. Dick Vermeulen, has recovered from serious illness but is still somewhat ailing. He is still a bright witness on the side of Christ. In 2016, Rev. Caleb Hembd assisted the interim-moderator of the Kirk Session, Rev. Jett Smith, at the communion season. On a Sabbath morning there would be around 15 present.

Singapore

Our congregation in Singapore continues to meet on Sabbath and for a prayer meeting on Wednesday evening. It was a privilege to be with them again for their communion in November. On that occasion I was glad to have the help of Mr. Calvin MacKenzie from our Sydney congregation, who is an assessor elder for the Singapore Kirk Session. I again record my thanks to Mr. Bernard Yong, who has shouldered the heavy responsibility of the eldership and especially acknowledge his help in conducting services on a regular basis.

We are glad that the young people in the congregation are busy either with school, higher education, national service or employment. Young men in Singapore must devote two years to National Service, which is seen as an important part of the defence of the nation and as a nation-building tool.

While we would wish to see others joining the congregation, we can be thankful that the core of the congregation has remained faithful now for a number of years. They are deeply attached to the distinctive witness of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland and thankful for it.

In late 2016 we were notified of a very welcome and substantial legacy from Mr. William Fraser for the Singapore Congregational Funds. The congregation were glad to be reminded by this gift of the warmth and kindness of Mr. Fraser and his like-minded wife Joan, who had for several years, spent some time each winter in Singapore. This connection greatly encouraged the congregation. Mr. Fraser was also helpful in conducting services.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would thank my brethren for their help in providing some suggested material for this report to the Synod. As one of my fellow ministers on the Presbytery observes, what we urgently need is an outpouring of the Spirit of God, and this is true in all the nations where we have a witness:

“Turn yet again to us O Lord,
How long thus shall it be?
Let it repent thee now for those,
That servants are to thee.”

(Psalm 90:13)

We remain thankful for our attachment to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. I am sure I speak for all on the Presbytery when we say, “Brethren, pray for us” (1 Thessalonians 5:25).

EASTERN EUROPE MISSION REPORT

Rev. D. Levytskyi

ANOTHER year has passed and in the good providence of God the work of the Eastern Europe Mission of our Church has been, and thankfully still is, the preaching of the gospel in Odessa. And we also continue our gospel work in Ukraine as a whole as doors are opened. The Lord blessed the Odessa Congregation by granting us the opportunity to have a Communion season last October. Mr. Edward Ross, Lochcarron, one of our assessor elders, was able to be present to make up our Kirk Session and help in other ways. The attendance was as usual and the congregation is grateful to the Most High for the opportunity to remember the death of the Lord Jesus Christ again.

Since last May, we have one more person, called Helen, attending every Sabbath and weekday for worship. She is a retired accountant whose husband died last February. She heard about us from Mr. Zadorozhnyi about two years ago, and since she became a widow she was trying to find us, but unsuccessfully. Nevertheless, one Sabbath day, when I opened the gates before the service, she was standing there asking whether she had come to the right place where “people are praying”. She comes regularly and is reading her Bible and Thomas Watson’s work on the Lord’s Prayer which we gave to her.

Recently we had a visitor, whose name is Pavel, from a Baptist Church. He asked us for books to give him some insight into the teaching of the Reformed Faith. He is a preacher in the Baptist Church and he accepts the “five points of Calvinism”. He says there are many people like him in his congregation. It is very remarkable that a completely Arminian congregation should begin to express tolerance towards people with Calvinistic views, which was never like that before.

We had also a group of visitors from Mykolayiv, a city which is two hours’ drive south east from Odessa. They were from a congregation which separated from the Lutheran Church. They told us that they found our Confessional documents to be biblical and true and that they wanted to join us, but when we asked them about worship and practice they wanted to follow their own way. We pointed out to them that we cannot give up such principal things as our reformed practice and worship for the sake of a doubtful unity.

We have an increase in administrative work. Since July our Government has changed the law about non-commercial organisations. According to this, if we are recognised as a non-commercial organisation then we have no tax burden. In order to confirm our non-commercial status I had to spend many hours in a very slow public transport going to different departments in order to get papers that would help to confirm that status. I had to travel to Tchernomorsk, a city which is 50 miles to the south, to have a meeting with the state Registrar and our lawyer. After all the necessary changes were made I had to deliver a notice about them to the Tax Office on the opposite side of Odessa, which was another 25 miles by public transport. At present we have a confirmation from

the Tax Office that we have complied with the law and that the Congregation has a status of a non-commercial organisation.

We also made a visit to the notary and it was hoped that on this occasion the legal ownership of the Mission Centre property would be divided between several persons in Scotland who are in office in the Church, so that they would hold it in trust for the Church, in accordance with the legal advice already given to us in Ukraine. However, legislation in Ukraine has been changed since then and a new tax was introduced last year. This means that should owners with foreign residence be added to the title of a property in Ukraine, each person must pay 18% of the current valuation of the property (that is over £38,000 in the first instance), plus notary fees. At present we are still investigating ways which may relieve me of the heavy burden of being responsible for legally holding ownership on behalf of the Church.

At present we are also doing a translation into Russian of various articles for the Church's website. Mr. Zadorozhnyi continues to respond to many of the requests which are sent to the Mission, and packs and sends Bibles and literature to different parts of Ukraine. In view of the coming celebration of Reformation Day on 31st October (and because it was announced that it will be celebrated in Ukraine at State level), many people are asking for reformed literature. It is our task to give our Ukrainian people, as clearly as we can, an accurate description of the Reformed Faith as it is expressed in the Confessional documents of the Westminster Assembly. We also need to give the true history of the Reformation to our people in their own language since not many know that the Reformation was a religious reformation rather than a bourgeois revolution, as they were taught in school.

Regarding the running of the Mission Centre, we are now at the end of the winter season and can say that our change to wood as a source of heat in our worship hall has proved to be good. The hot air furnace in the hall, which was installed last October with the help and expertise of Mr. Edward Ross, is working well. The prices of electricity and natural gas are so high that many have moved away from using them. We also continue to erect extra protection on the boundary wall because of thieves.

We are indebted to Mr. Zadorozhnyi for most of the following information. During 2016, the following items were sent by post to citizens of Ukraine (most living in rural areas), to soldiers and officers of the Ukrainian army, and to ministers of different denominations: 294 large Bibles (some in Ukrainian and others in Russian); 42 copies of Rev. D MacFarlane's *Sermons*; 347 *Westminster Confession of Faith* (some in Ukrainian but most in Russian); 3,000 *Golden Thoughts* calendars and 2,400 *Words of Life* calendars (in Ukrainian and Russian); 89 copies of Shaw's *Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith*; and 416 copies of *Line Upon Line*, by F. L. Mortimer. Donations for postage from Ukrainian correspondents amounted to £96.53, which was enough to cover distribution expenses.

Military action continues in the east of the country. We hear every day about shelling of Ukrainian cities and the deaths of civilians as well as Ukrainian

soldiers. We have sent, with the assistance of army chaplains, 180 Bibles (received from the Trinitarian Bible Society) to Ukrainian soldiers.

Recently, we had a visitor, an army officer called Alexander who is a helicopter pilot and a believer. He is engaged in taking wounded soldiers to hospitals in Odessa and Dnipro. He and his colleagues were glad to receive *Words of Life* calendars from us. We also presented 200 calendars to a Baptist pastor, Mikhail Oksenenko, who is still working among refugees from the area of conflict.

We also find letters of thanks in our mail. For example, a third-year seminary student, Vyacheslav from Poltava, sent a donation and wrote: "I am very grateful for the invaluable gift you sent me by post! Your books are a great treasure. . . . In reply to my request for the *Westminster Confession of Faith* you also sent additional books, such as *Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith* by R. Shaw, the *Shorter Catechism*, and the *Mother's Catechism*, and all free of charge! May the Lord, the Heavenly Father, recompense you a hundred-fold for your kindness and responsiveness. I was especially surprised and happy with the book *Line Upon Line* by F. L. Mortimer. This book and the *Mother's Catechism* I will be reading with my daughter after I come home from work, to establish her in the faith and to form her Christian outlook. Once again I express my sincere gratitude and pray that the Lord bless you richly!"

In conclusion, we do ask our Church people to pray for peace in Ukraine and the cessation of war in the east of the country, and especially for the blessing of God on our gospel work. It is the great blessing of the Most High that He provides the necessary means for the work here through the support and cheerful giving of the people in the Church, for which we are most grateful. The Trinitarian Bible Society is also warmly thanked for their liberal provision of their popular Scripture calendars and Bibles in the Ukrainian Language.

In all these difficult circumstances in our country the Lord is helping us, and He gives us encouragement when we see that the true teaching of His Word is reaching people and is changing lives by His blessing on it.

"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain" (James 5:7).

KENYA MISSION REPORT

Rev. K. M. Watkins

THE purpose of this report is to confirm formally that on 10th May 2016, in accordance with the instructions of the Jewish and Foreign Missions Committee, the registration and assets of our former mission in Kenya under the name of "Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland – Kenya Mission" passed legally into the hands of the continuing congregation there, with the new name

of “Omorembe Presbyterian Church”. This means that the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland now has no legal presence or associated responsibilities in Kenya.

Under Kenya law, the revised constitution binds the group there to continue in the worship and doctrine of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and also to seek an arrangement with the Ministry of Health in Kenya for the continuing provision of medical services on the compound. Continued administrative support is given to the group, and it is intended to complete the metrical translation of all the Psalms into Ekegusii. We prayerfully desire the Lord’s blessing on the Church’s past mission work in Kenya, and that the remnant there will be faithful to what they have been taught.

REPORT OF VISITS TO TEXAS

Rev. J. MacLeod

BEING, at the time, the Southern Presbytery-appointed interim Moderator of the Santa Fe Kirk Session, I visited that congregation on two occasions since the last meeting of Synod. The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was administered on both occasions – in June and again in December. On the first occasion I was assisted by the Rev. Caleb Hembd and on the second by the Rev. Keith Watkins. Both in June and in December I arrived to take the services on the Sabbath before the Communion season began and Mr. Hembd and Mr. Watkins stayed over to keep the services over the week following their communion attendance. The pulpit was therefore supplied for three consecutive weeks on each occasion. I am grateful for the help given by these colleagues and it was evident that the congregation much appreciated their labours among them. We hope and pray that the administering of the sacrament and the preaching of the Word will prove to have been “not in vain in the Lord”. The attendance at the services was very good; more than 50 on occasions.

The Santa Fe congregation is one where the majority of those attending are children and the writer was at his happiest when among them. May the One who suffers little children to come to Him take them into His loving care as they grow up to maturity. The congregation needs to have a minister settled over them and we hope and pray that that need will soon be supplied by the Lord of the harvest. Meantime, the elders attend to the services on Sabbath and weekday and their dedication to duty is commendable.

I desire to thank all concerned for their kindness and hospitality. Above all, I would desire to be thankful to the Keeper of Israel for taking me safely over the many miles that I travelled.

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO CANADA

Rev. R. MacLeod

THE outward journey to Canada on Friday, 5th of May 2017, was beset with time-consuming delays, but the following 10 days were well organised, full, and busy. Mr. Douglas Spratt met me in the early hours of Saturday morning at Vancouver airport and took me to his home. A considerable part of Saturday was spent meeting some of those who regularly attend the Vancouver Reformed Church (VRC) services. I also met some other people who are showing an interest in a Free Presbyterian witness being set up in Vancouver again.

On the Lord's day we met for public worship in the hall which is used by the VRC for that purpose. As to its location, it is quiet and peaceful, and the facilities within seem very suitable. The divine worship is conducted in a manner identical in every respect to Free Presbyterian worship. The regular congregation currently consists of five people. The potential for the future might be reflected in the fact that, apart from the visitors from abroad, 17 persons from Vancouver and outlying districts were present in the morning, and 17 at night. The warm Christian hospitality in Mr. and Mrs. Spratt's home was enjoyed by several of those present at the services.

On Monday, Mr. Alex Macarie took me to Vancouver Island to see Mrs. Mary Hardy, who is a member in full communion with us. Our time with Mrs. Hardy was very pleasant and profitable.

On Tuesday, Mr. and Mrs. Spratt and I set off by plane for Toronto, on our way to the Chesley Communion. We met up with Rev. J. MacLeod (London) at Pearson International Airport in Toronto. Mr. Spratt then drove us to the Chesley manse, two and a half hours to the North. There was a prayer meeting on Wednesday evening and on Thursday morning the communion services commenced. The services were well attended. Including visitors, there were over fifty persons present at both the services on the Sabbath. The usual Sabbath attendance is 38 at the morning service and 31 at the evening service. In the kindness of God, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered once again with much solemnity in this isolated but loyal congregation. Twenty communicants sat at the Lord's table. There was one new member received, namely Mr. Douglas Spratt. Mr. Spratt had received open communion at the previous administration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Chesley. We now have three members in full communion who reside in British Columbia: Mrs. Hardy, and Mr. and Mrs. Spratt. After discussion with Mr. Spratt, who has led the VRC meetings since 2014, it was agreed by the Kirk Session to resume the services in the Vancouver preaching station. Mr. Spratt indicated a willingness to lead the worship and read suitable sermons. It was requested by the Chesley elders that a student would be sent to Canada in the summer of 2017 to preach in both Chesley and Vancouver.

As on previous visits, much kindness and courtesy were received from our people in Chesley. After the service on Monday morning, Mr. David Kuiper (Sen.) took Mr. MacLeod and I to Toronto for our flights back home.

The witness to the Truth which occasioned the formation of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, together with her adherence to the regulative principle of worship, are highly regarded in some quarters in Canada. Some in Vancouver are stretching out their hand saying, "Come over and help us". A door for furthering our witness on the side of biblical doctrine, worship, government, and practice, is opening there. Our prayer is that the Lord of the harvest would send a labourer to Canada.

"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2). "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest" (John 4:35).

TRAINING OF THE MINISTRY COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. J. R. Tallach

THERE have been no students under tuition this year but part of the duties of the Training of Ministry Committee involves Preliminary Courses (p. 169, *Manual of Practice*). There it is laid down that, "The Training of Ministry Committee shall make full enquiry into the state of the Student's education and shall decide what University Education or Higher Education Course he shall take". In pursuance of this, Messrs. J. Campbell and J. Morrison continue the courses arranged for them, and reported last year, with the Open University in History and English. Mr. R. Bartle had already begun studying for a D.Phil. in Oxford and the Committee decided that he should finish this course before beginning Theology.

Mr. T. Mwedzi from Zimbabwe is a qualified teacher with some year's experience and a member of the Translation Committee of the Zimbabwe Presbytery. To assist him in his translation work he has already studied Greek and Hebrew. He has been requested by his Presbytery to delay his theology studies until the translation of the Shona Bible is complete. It is expected that, God willing, all four students will begin the Theology Course in September 2018, subject to their passing the Entrance Examination in August.

We are indebted to the Rev. N. M. Ross for chairing the 2016 Theology Conference at short notice and for submitting a report subsequently to the Magazine.

The following topics and speakers have been arranged for this year's Conference in Glasgow on 31st October and 1st November, the Lord willing.

Early Reformation	Mr. M. Vogan
Bannerman on the Church of Christ	Rev. A. W. MacColl
Martin Luther and the Doctrine of Justification in Scotland	Rev. D. W. B. Somerset
Zwingli	Mr. F. Daubney
The Temple	Rev. B. Jardine
Chairman	Rev. J. R. Tallach

Our students deserve our support and prayers. We are a branch of the visible Church, “the pillar and ground of the truth”, and it is no small matter to be called to represent and defend such a Cause at such a time.

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Ephesians 6:13).

WELFARE OF YOUTH COMMITTEE’S REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. A. K. MacDonald

A CHURCH Committee such as the Welfare of Youth Committee is deeply interested in our young people, particularly in their spiritual wellbeing. However, with the decline of Biblical morality and the advancement of secular and atheistic philosophy, the Church’s role in society is becoming much more difficult. This is because, in our liberal society, Christian foundations are constantly under attack and are being eroded. The Bible is not only under attack, its teachings on the family are ignored which has led to a breakdown of family life. Redefinition of marriage has now passed into law and is permitted as we know, with all its attendant consequences. The Bible has little influence in the teaching of education; its authority is largely rejected now by the visible Church. The family, the State and the Church have lost their Christian culture and identity.

Apart from the huge moral issues involved, there is potentially going to be an erosion of our civil liberties. This will affect schools, hospitals, other work places and institutions. Our young people will potentially be exposed to trial and maybe hardships. In most teaching schools of our country, children are already being exposed to political correctness, and the acceptability of homosexual practice, which is contrary to the Word of God and dangerous to the morals of our young people. A Christian school is already being closed in England over their Christian ethos, which may be indicative of what is yet to come.

There were grave concerns too about the Named Persons Scheme legislation and its consequences. Although there have been challenges in the law courts which had failed, we are thankful that the appeal to the Supreme Court

succeeded in halting the potentially dangerous consequences of this legislation. We are also grateful to the Christian Institute and to the NO2NP campaign for their challenging this legislation in the Courts. It is our prayer that the Lord will arise and plead His own Cause and turn back the flood of moral evil which has come in upon us.

In the present weak and fragmented state of the Church of Christ, with winds and tides running contrary, there are no easy solutions to the challenges that we face, except by taking comfort from the fact that the Lord reigns. The Committee have written to the Directors of Education in Scotland, appealing to them for a return to teaching the biblical view of creation in Schools.

A major part of the Committee's work over the year is the organization of the Youth Conference, to obtain a suitable venue and to choose speakers and papers. The Young Peoples' Conference 2017 took place at Strathallan School, Forgandenny, Perth, from the 11th to the 13th of April 2017. The following papers were given:

Tuesday 11th April: Afternoon

The Apostle Paul: A Character Study Rev. J. R. Tallach

Evening

The Five Solas of the Reformation: Faith only, Grace only, Christ only, Scripture only, and the Glory of God only Rev. K. M. Watkins

Wednesday 6th April: Morning

Faith and Justification Rev. R. Macleod

Afternoon

Historical Tour: St. Andrews..... Rev. Douglas Somerset

Evening

Challenges to the Church: In a Godless World Atheistic and Secular..... Mr. M. Vogan

Thursday 7th April: Morning

Repentance: Encouragements and motives Rev. W. Weale

It is most pleasant to meet with our young people from time to time at communion seasons, and at our Youth conferences. It is our desire and prayer for them that they would seek the Lord in their young years.

The Committee would thank those who gave papers and to Rev. Douglas Somerset and Matthew Vogan for leading the Historical Tour and the House Mothers for all their help and hard work. We thank Strathallan School and their staff for housing our conference and the use of their facilities. We as a Committee also thank all those who set and correct the Scripture and Catechism Exercises which appear in the *Young People's Magazine*, both at

home and overseas. This they do willingly, and we appreciate their prayerful interest in our young people. We wish them all the Lord's blessing and help; may they know that their "labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

BALLIFEARY RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. J. R. Tallach

THERE is an honour, in the Word of God, given to old age and it was a foresighted and honourable decision of the fathers and brethren to set up Ballifeary for the care of the elderly among us over fifty years ago.

We are sorry to report that Matron, Mrs. Jackie Mackenzie, took ill in the latter part of the year and has only intermittently been back at work since. Matron's recovery continues and the hope is that she will be able to return to the work she has such a profound interest in and performs so faithfully.

In 2016 the following people sadly passed away: Mr. William Fraser on 3rd January; Mrs. Chrissie MacDonald on 5th February; Miss Murdina Campbell on 1st July; Mr. Duncan MacLennan on 1st August; Miss Catriona Urquhart on 5th August; and Miss Jessie MacLeod on 4th September.

The following admission took place during 2016: Mrs. Helen MacInnes on 22nd January; Miss Murdina Campbell on 25th January; Mrs. Sylvia Watt on 18th February; Mrs. Mary MacLennan on 19th August; Mr. Iain MacLean on 12th September; Mrs. Margaret MacLean on 12th September; and Miss Margaret MacBeath on 3rd October.

There were no admissions for respite during the year.

Despite sickness affecting some members of staff as well as Matron, the Home maintained a full working complement of staff throughout and they are to be commended for the manner in which they maintained the high standards of the Home, despite Matron's absences.

Staff training continued as in previous years, with courses being completed on Medication, End of Life Care, Palliative Care, Pain Control, Pain Management in Cancer Care, Diets for the Elderly and Health and Safety.

On 21st April the Home had a full Care Inspectorate inspection in Care and Support and in Staffing and received "Excellent" in both these categories.

"The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him" (Nahum 1:7).

LEVERBURGH RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Rev. D. A. K. Macdonald

OVER the past year the work of the Home continues as normal; for that we are indebted to the Officer in Charge and her staff.

The Home continues to care for up to 17 residents, with one respite bed. During the past year it has been normally full. The respite bed has been well used in the year gone by. This is reflected in the satisfactory financial outcome for 2016, which allowed us to make a payment towards the loan received from the Church for the extension to the Home last year.

I am pleased to report that our kitchen staff have retained the Eatsafe award after their recent inspection by the Environmental Health Officer.

The recent Care Commission inspections continue to be good; the Home has retained an overall grade of 5 at the recent unannounced inspection. Grade 6 is the highest, and grades are from 1-6. The categories are as follows: Care and Support, Environment, Management and leadership, and Staffing.

Now that Rev. K. D. Macleod has moved to Inverness, the Committee would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contribution he made to the work of the committee over the past 29 years.

Sadly, during the past year, we have had a number of deaths: Mrs. Edna Higgins, Stornoway, Mr. John Macleod, Rodel, Miss Katie Mary MacCuish, Inverness, Mrs. Daisy Wilcox, Bunavoneadar, Miss Annie Cunningham, Scalpay, Mrs. Irmgard Martin, Maarraig, and Miss Catherine Mackenzie, Keose. The Committee extend their sincere sympathy to all their families.

We once again acknowledge the support of the local services to the Home, and the support of the local community, together with those that hold family worship from time to time with the residents.

We wish all concerned the Lord's richest blessing for time and eternity.

OUTREACH COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. A. Ross

IT is a spiritual trial to us that our reports to the Synod are often so bleak. The majority of people we confront with the Word of God refuse to acknowledge our presence. Others are half-hearted at best. Nevertheless, it is not all bleak. There are always some people who do show what appears to be a genuine interest in the Word of God.

When we do not have a regular colporteur, our Outreach Committee work is limited to taking our Bibles, books and tracts to public places only. Also, our workers are restricted as to the time they can spend doing outreach work as they have their own work to attend to besides.

One great advantage of these public places – in our case, agricultural shows – is that many hundreds of people, over several days, pass our book stall and see evidence of our Christian work as well as the testimony of the Word of God visibly displayed. One of our workers observed a passer-by looking in the direction of the book display with a look of contempt and as if gnashing his teeth. However, the thief on the cross was worse, openly cursing Christ on the cross, but came to realise his wrong doing. So why may we not hope and pray that the Lord will use our witness to bless some poor, wretched, contemptuous passer-by?

Having the book van, we were able to add other agricultural shows to those already visited, and hope to visit yet others if we have the manpower. We have visited the agriculture shows at Wick, Dornoch, Nairn, Muir of Ord, Portree, and Fort William. While we were booked to go to Grantown-on-Spey, we were unable to keep the booking. We are deeply indebted to Messrs. Edward Ross, Christopher Lamont, Lorence Couper and other willing helpers for their assistance. Not least, there are friends who continue to give donations for this vital gospel work, and we heartily thank them. Sales of literature amounted to £186.00 – less than the previous year. However, some well-wishers who visited the tent gave donations towards the work.

On some days at these events, the rain was so intense that it sent people into our tent to take shelter, though not to buy – yet their gaze would inevitably fall on the written Word. We ought not to underestimate these providences; the Lord may use them to bring sinners to think of the solemn issues of eternity.

Generally, we are given reasonably good sites for the book van where the people continuously pass by. However, in some situations we are not far enough away from the din of amusements. But again, a passer-by going to the place of amusement may be arrested on the way; like the young lady of whom we read, about to enter some soul-destroying place of entertainment when her ear caught the cry of a street-preacher, which had such a powerful effect on her soul that she turned heel from Vanity Fair to ponder the solemn issues of her eternal wellbeing, and eventually came to profess a saving interest in Christ. May the Lord so bless our weak but persistent witness.

Regarding other work by the Committee, Rev. B. Jardine could not give as much time as hoped to door-to-door visitation in Ayrshire due to other pressing commitments. The requests to him for Bibles have slowed down but some of the people who have received Bibles appear to be solidly interested in the Word. We hope Mr. Jardine will be able to continue this important work.

Tracts and other literature produced by the Committee and distributed through the Church Bookroom in Glasgow continue to be in demand. Tract distributors come to the Bookroom from time to time to replenish their stocks. It is encouraging to know that there are those who consistently send out the message of the gospel through tract distribution. There is an ongoing advert in the *British Church Newspaper* advertising our tracts based on the AV, which over the years has been responded to by people engaged in tract distribution. At the moment, our tract stocks are good on the whole, although the following

titles need to be reprinted: *Where are you Going?*, *Repent and Believe*, *Where do you Expect to spend Eternity?*, *The Doctor's Bible*, *The New Birth*, and *Predictions of the Bible, True or False?*. We also continue to distribute our booklets and endeavour to add new titles to our stock – the most recent being the booklet, *The Highland Kitchen Maid*.

Thankfully, not all is bleak. We know from Scripture and history that there were times when the state of true religion was much more bleak than at present but, whatever the attitude of sinners, the Saviour constantly encourages His Church to go out with the gospel, engaging especially in preaching the Word: “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” We endeavour to supplement that noble work with our gospel outreach. May we “receive the blessing from the Lord” (Psalm 24:5).

PUBLICATIONS AND BOOKROOM COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. K. D. Macleod

Magazines

As in previous years, both the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* and the *Young People's Magazine* have continued to be issued each month. Sincere thanks are due to everyone who has given help over the past year in contributing articles and reviews or have suggested material that might be reprinted. The *Free Presbyterian Magazine* has continued to publish for a wider audience papers given at the Theological Conference. During the year papers on Christ the Mediator, Effectual Calling and Revival were printed. In addition, a New Year's Day lecture on Church Principles was serialised, dealing with the topic of Musical Instruments in Public Worship and explaining why their use is forbidden in the New Testament Church. As in previous years the Editor is very appreciative of the contributions provided by members of the Editorial Board of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*. The Committee is pleased to report that they have been able to keep the cover price of the Magazines at the same level for 2017.

The *Gaelic Supplement*, edited by the Rev. A. W. MacColl, continues to be issued quarterly and is sent free of charge on request. The Committee is pleased to announce formally that the *Gaelic Supplement* is now available online at the Church's website in a similar way to the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* and the *Young People's Magazine*. All the issues of the *Gaelic Supplement* for 2016 are now online.

Publications

The new publication that the Committee has issued during the year is a volume edited by Andrew Bonar titled *The Old Gospel Way*. This book has an

interesting history. John Brown of Whitburn, the eldest son of John Brown of Haddington, published in 1817 a narrative of the Marrow Controversy along with extracts from the writings of Thomas Boston, Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine and their associates. Andrew Bonar, later in the nineteenth century, then chose the very best of the extracts that John Brown had selected, along with a few additional ones, to produce *The Old Gospel Way*. This book provides in short compass the heart of the teaching associated with the Marrow Theology and its clear proclamation of the Free Offer of the Gospel. The fourth chapter is titled, "The Gospel makes the offer of salvation to every sinner without exception". Prior to its republication by the Committee it was an extremely rare book. The reprinted volume is an attractively produced paperback and has been re-typeset. A number of footnotes have been added, along with engravings of men who supported the Marrow before each chapter.

In the May 2016 Synod the Committee were asked to consider publishing one or more titles suitable for young people. Accordingly two titles are in progress in order to meet that request. The first is written by Jared B. Waterbury and titled *Advice to a Young Christian*. It was serialised in the *Young People's Magazine* between August 1999 and September 2004. Waterbury was trained at Princeton Theological Seminary under Archibald Alexander and Samuel Miller. It is the hope of the Committee that this valuable book will be both a guide and a blessing to young adults who have made a profession of saving faith in the twenty-first century as it was in the past. The second volume that the Committee are intending to produce, that is designed for a younger readership, is the *Life of King David* by the Rev. Alexander McPherson. This material was also originally serialised in the *Young People's Magazine*.

The Committee have also decided to re-print volumes 14 and 15 of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*. These are the next two volumes in its programme for re-issuing the early volumes of the Magazine in order that the rising generation in particular may have access to this valuable and historic material, much of it written by the fathers of the Free Presbyterian Church. A further volume that it is envisaged will be published during 2017 is Jonathan Ranken Anderson's book on the *Transfiguration*. This rare volume by Anderson is one of the few books that have been written on the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Bookroom

As Christian bookshops continue to close, the Free Presbyterian Bookroom is one of the few Christian bookshops in the United Kingdom that is devoted entirely to distributing the Authorised Version of the Bible and Reformed and Calvinistic literature to various parts of the world. It, therefore, deserves the support of Free Presbyterians.

Though the annual deficit was reduced in 2015 to slightly less than £400 from just below £16,000 in 2014, sadly it has increased this year to almost £6,400. An increase in the deficit was not entirely unexpected as the 2015

figures were bolstered by strong sales of the sermons of Archibald Cook and also by a £3,000 donation for library books for Zimbabwe. During the year the Bookroom Manager has continued to send out by email lists of second-hand books for sale and listings of new books that are available.

Essential new equipment that had been purchased for the Bookroom has now been installed. It is designed both to improve administration and to facilitate online purchasing from the Bookroom. Hopefully online purchasing should be available during the current year. It has been delayed due to the extensive work needed in verifying the Bookroom database and uploading the up-to-date data onto the new equipment. The Committee would again take the opportunity provided by this report to express its appreciation of the assistance given by the General Treasurer in setting up the new equipment. The verifying of the Bookroom database was an essential step to enabling the online purchasing of books from the Bookroom.

As in previous reports the Committee would call for prayer to the Lord for His blessing on every part of the Committee's work, the production of Magazines month by month and the distribution of Christian literature. Our continued desire is that the Lord would use these means for the good of never-dying souls and the advance of His kingdom in this world.

WEBSITE COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. K. M. Watkins

THE Committee has been glad to see more usage of the website. Average daily page viewings have steadily increased since the opening of the newly designed site in the summer of 2014. During 2014, the average per day was 476 pages; in 2015 it was 572 (a 20% increase); in 2016 it was 640 (a further 12% increase); and in 2017 so far it has been 775 (a further 21% increase).

Relatively few visitors to the site delve very deeply into the site to discover the scriptural principles for which the Church stands. Nevertheless, a sizeable number of sermons are accessed. As in previous years, not many people make contact with us through the website, although queries and questions do come in from time to time.

Throughout the year both of the Church's magazines have been uploaded to the site, one month after their printed publication. The Bookroom's monthly offers have been uploaded as well. Sermons from some congregations and communion seasons are uploaded when they become available, along with some historic recordings.

The Committee anticipates working with the Bookroom to have a website for online ordering and paying for books very soon. Work on converting part of the website into Chinese is also hoped to start soon – this was reported on last year.

CHURCH ARCHIVES COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. W. B. Somerset

THE remit of the Committee is to oversee the important work of preserving the Church's archives. One part of this work is the maintaining of an inventory of home and overseas records presently in the possession of the Church, including Synod, Presbytery, Kirk Session, Deacons' Court, and Committee records. The compiling of this inventory has continued in the last year, with progress on the records of congregations in Skye, and also the Zimbabwe Presbytery records. A considerable amount still remains to be done, however.

A second part of the work is the digitizing of archives. In the course of the year, the first volume of the Southern Presbytery records (1896-1901) and the first four volumes of the Northern Presbytery (1902-1976) have been scanned. The original Northern Presbytery volumes are still retained by the APC in Inverness. We are grateful to Mr. Roy Middleton and to Mr. Maarten Schouten for this work. The records of the first Presbytery from 1893-1896 have been typed up with a view to possible publication. Further material from the late Alexander MacLennan, Muir-of-Ord, has also been scanned, as has a typescript on the Book of Revelation entitled "The Time of the End" by the late Finlay Beaton. A number of items have been received from the late Dr. Duncan MacSween, Glasgow, and also the signed call from the South Harris congregation to Rev. D. J. MacAskill in 1934. Any further material of this sort would be most welcome.

The third part of the work is the permanent storage of records, both paper and electronic. In the last year, our Portree congregation has acquired a large fire-proof safe, which can be used not only for the storage of non-current congregational records but also for general materials of FP interest relating to Skye and to Harris (e.g. pictures, letters, sermon-notes, diaries). The Committee would encourage other congregations to consider buying similar fire-proof safes.

The Committee would reiterate its recommendation that all Church Courts and committees photocopy their records and store the photocopy in a separate place from the originals. It would also recommend that all non-current records of Church Courts be stored in an appropriate fire-proof safe whose location should be known both to the Court and to the Archives Committee. This would greatly reduce the danger of records being lost when there is a change of Clerk to the Court.

The Committee is grateful to all those who have helped with the various aspects of its work in the last year.

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