

FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

**REPORTS OF
STANDING
COMMITTEES
OF SYNOD**

Submitted to Synod in May 2008

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REPORT OF THE RELIGION AND MORALS COMMITTEE

Convener: Rev. W. Weale

INTRODUCTION

IN Ezekiel chapter 8 we are told of the vision the prophet was given of abominations being committed in Jerusalem and how after seeing several of these he was told, "Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations". So it is in our nation. We imagine things cannot get much worse but, alas, each year we see "greater abominations".

The following report is presented with a prayerful concern for sinners in the evil day in which we live, particularly for young people. Morally, as the report brings out, we are sinking deeper and deeper into sin, but behind this is the "uncertain sound" coming from the vast majority of so-called Reformed pulpits. It ought to be no surprise to us then that not only are we witnessing increasing moral decay but also the steady advance of such evils as Romanism and Atheistic and Islamic Fundamentalism.

What need we have to humble ourselves before God and cry out with Habakkuk: "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy."

RELIGION

Our intention is to provide information on the trends that affect the religious life of our nation and the witness of the visible church in Britain. We believe that this Report will be of interest to our own people, at home and abroad (that which affects the churches at home, will affect those abroad, more or less), to others who desire to "prove all things" and "hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21), and to those who love the Reformed testimony of the Church in Scotland. In presenting this Report we are mindful of our own low state and that "every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (1 Corinthians 3:13).

ATHEISTIC FUNDAMENTALISM

Anthony Frew, for many decades an atheist philosopher, recently professed a belief in the existence of God. In spite of his example (or, because of it), books on atheism and evolution seem to have increased. Commenting on this, one writer said, "these books by intellectuals are highly emotional and often shrill", then asks, "Why are intelligent people so angry about Someone they don't believe exists?"

Professor R. Dawkins's book, *The God Delusion*, has sold many more copies than its little worth deserves. Professor A. McGrath has written a reply to Dawkin's book called *The Dawkins Delusion* and it is subtitled *Atheist*

fundamentalism and the denial of the divine. We cannot agree with everything that McGrath says in his book, yet, as a fellow professor at Oxford University, he is, academically, well positioned to expose the weaknesses in Dawkins's "Delusion". Dawkins has, in the words of McGrath, treated "the accurate rendition of religion as an inconvenient impediment to his chief agenda". Some of the points that emerge from reading McGrath's book are as follows. Dawkins is a scientist, not a theologian and theology is outwith the area of competency for scientific research. By his training, he is no more equipped to deal with theological questions than a theologian, by his training, is equipped to deal with scientific questions. Those familiar with both science and theology, as McGrath is, point out how *The God Delusion* is both poor science as well as poor theology. One of the most telling criticisms of Dawkins's book is from Michael Ruse, Professor of Philosophy, Florida State University, who says: "*The God Delusion* makes me embarrassed to be an atheist." The testimony of God is: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalm 14:1).

ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM

Islam is a false religion which denies fundamental doctrines in the biblical testimony regarding Christ. If we hold the Bible to be true then we must hold Islam to be false. It is also a cruel religion. Many Muslims will say that their laws are peaceable too and they might quote, "Let there be no compulsion in religion", from the Koran. Others, a small but dangerous minority, will justify violence against the adherents of other religions by citing, "Fight and slay the pagans wherever you find them", from the same source (translations are from Patrick Sookhdeo in his book *A Christian's Pocket Guide to Islam*). Patrick Sookhdeo reminds us of "tragic examples of large-scale forced conversions to Islam in recent history. In the early 20th century, 1.5 million Armenian and other eastern Christians were massacred by Turks. In the early 21st century many thousands of Indonesian Christians have been forced to convert to Islam by 'jihad warriors' of many nationalities. Any who refused were killed" (pages 57 and 58).

It was reported in November 2007 that teenagers as young as 15 were being recruited by terrorist groups in Britain, swelling the number of people suspected of being involved in terrorism to 4,000 and that the number of terrorist suspects had more than doubled in 12 months. *The Times* reported that youngsters are being turned into extremists. "Terrorists are methodically and intentionally targeting young people and children in this country. . . . They are radicalising, indoctrinating and grooming young, vulnerable people to carry out acts of terrorism." An interpretation of the law of God that results in unjust or cruel conduct dishonours God. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:10).

Dr. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, has recommended that parts of Islamic Shariah law should be accommodated in Britain. It is very strange that a man professing to be a teacher in the Church of Christ, argues,

as he is reported to have done, that because Christian churches have ecclesiastical courts to deal with spiritual things, Muslims in Britain should have Islamic courts to deal with civil things. The scope of the controversy was widened by a spokesman for the Prime Minister who is reported to have said that Mr. Brown believed that all religious law should be subject to civil law.

“They know not nor will understand;
In darkness they walk on:
All the foundations of the earth,
Out of their course are gone.”
(Psalm 82:5, metrical version).

THE PAPACY

The Pope (Joseph Ratzinger), and the Vatican Press rightly criticised a Harry Potter book (in this instance, the Vatican shows more discernment than the *Free Church Monthly Record*, which comments favourably on Harry Potter). It is described as “a subtle seduction, which has deeply unnoticed and direct effects in undermining the soul of Christianity”. While we don’t think the Harry Potter books are as “deeply” subtle as this criticism suggests, we would agree generally with these sentiments.

However, the stern fact is that nothing has undermined Christianity so much as the baneful influence of Popery, whether one thinks of its cruelty in the past – the blood it shed, attempting to quench the flame of the Reformation – or of the present proliferation of incidents of lurid sexual abuses by priests, upon many young people in its trust. The sad thing is that outsiders see the Roman church as a part of the true Church of Christ, not realising that churches once highly favoured (Romans 1:7) may become so degenerated as to be no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan (Revelation 2:9).

As Paul protested against the withered branch of Judaism, saying, “the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you” (Romans 2:24), so we protest against the withered branch of Romanism. We do so, not with the invented or human authority of the Pope, but with the ecclesiastical legitimacy and authority of a court of the Church of Christ, in the name of her one, only and divine Head, met, in accordance with the form and pattern of the Word of God.

It has been common in recent decades for the Roman Catholic church to call other churches “separated brethren”. In the eyes of the present Pope this is a statement which concedes too much. From the dizzy heights of that species of audacity known only to popery, Mr. Ratzinger released a decree on 10th July 2007 which spoke about Protestant churches being no real churches. In it he stated that, “Christian communities born out of the Reformation of the sixteenth century” which “do not enjoy apostolic succession in the sacrament of Orders, and are, therefore, deprived of a constitutive element of the Church”, cannot be called “Churches in the proper sense”. One is reminded of one of the first audacious demands made by the elevated presbyter in Rome

who excommunicated the Eastern Churches for not recognising his (dubious) authority to settle the day designated for Easter! According to Wylie, that was “the first peal of those thunders which were, in after times, to roll so often and so terribly from the Seven Hills (of Rome)”.

For a man perpetuating the office of the arch enemy of Christ, bearing those marks of the imperious Antichrist, presiding over a religious organisation whose huge mass is tottering on its foundation because of the public disgrace occasioned by the exposure of its unclean priesthood, this is gall unsurpassed. Is it really imagined by that dry and withered branch of Christianity that all the branches of the visible church should be grafted into a religious system which publicly, repeatedly and shamelessly breaks the law of God? Veneration of Mary, prayers to saints, its idolatrous worship, its blasphemous mass and Sabbath desecration, are only some of her habitual sins.

Undoubtedly, what we see in this document is the Pope positioning himself, or whoever will hold his office after him, to be the one, only and official, religious head of a Roman Catholic European Union. If this is permitted to succeed then the faithful Protestant Reformed Churches will, shortly thereafter, not be tolerated at all.

“He lion-like, lurks in his den;
He waits the poor to take;
And when he draws him in his net,
His prey he doth him make.
Himself he humbleth very low,
He croucheth down withal,
That so a multitude of poor
May by his strong ones fall.”
(Psalm 10:9-10, metrical version)

In a book called *Papal Rome and the European Union*, by R. Bennet and M. de Semlyen, we are informed that the EU flag, “with a design of twelve stars in a circle derives from the twelve stars that in [Roman] Catholic tradition are the halo around the head of the virgin Mary”. According to the EU publication, *Europe’s Star Choice*, “the flag has its roots in Romanism, takes its symbolism from Romanism, and represents the Roman Catholic ideal”.

The terrifying imagery of the enemy of Christ in Revelation 17, represented as a woman riding on a beast (verse 3), is very similar to one of the icons used by the EU. Outside the Strasburg EU Parliament, for example, is a sculpture of a woman riding on a beast. The same image appears on some Euro coins.

Whatever the ambitions of Romanism are, God is reigning. Whatever decrees are made in the courts of the Vatican concerning the Church of Christ, there is an authoritative divine decree made in the court of heaven concerning him “who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (2 Thessalonians 2:4). And that solemn and irrevocable decree

is: “Then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming” (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

THE WANING WITNESS AGAINST THE PAPACY

In his witness against popery, Knox wrote: “All worshipping, honouring or service invented by the brain of man in the religion of God, without His own express commandment, is Idolatry. The Mass is invented by the brain of man, without any commandment of God. Therefore it is Idolatry.” The National Covenant of 1581 is equally robust: “We detest and refuse the usurped authority of that Roman Antichrist upon the Scriptures of God, upon the Kirk, the Civil Magistrate and the consciences of men.” The Solemn League and Covenant gave the same clear note in 1643, when those who subscribed to it solemnly resolved that they would, by the grace of God, “without respect of persons, endeavour the extirpation of Popery”. The witness of the Protestant Churches in the UK against Roman Catholicism is, however, now become an “uncertain sound”.

The Catholic Church, what is it?

It is now common to hear professing Protestants, even Presbyterians, speak of the Papacy as “the Catholic Church” and its members as “Catholics”. The historic and consistent profession of the Reformers and their successors, regarding the catholicity of the Church is expressed in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 25, sections 1 and 2:

The catholick or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. The visible church, which is also catholick or universal under the gospel, (not confined to one nation, as before under the law,) consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children; and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.

This statement clearly shows that we cannot, on the one hand, subscribe to the reformed doctrine of the Church and on the other, call the Roman Church “the Catholic Church”. The only catholicity that the papacy has is a Roman catholicity, consisting of all those throughout the world that profess the Roman Catholic religion, which is the kingdom of antichrist, the house and family of the Pope, the head thereof, within which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.

All One in Christ Jesus?

An event (which included the singing of Christmas carols!) which took place in Balivanich School, North Uist, reported in the *Stornoway Gazette*, is an

indication of the uncertain sound coming from the Church in Scotland today. It was led by the Free Church minister, a Roman Catholic priest and a Church of Scotland minister. The correspondent informs us that it was “a gracious gathering, all one in Christ Jesus”.

The uncertain sound of the same broken trumpet sounded again when a writer in the *Monthly Record* of the Free Church of Scotland, giving an account of a Presbyterian ordination, expressed sadness that the Roman Catholic priest attending the service had to listen to ordination vows wherein the tenets of the papacy are declared execrable. On account of the supposed offensiveness of the vows, he thought it better if they were taken in private meetings of Presbytery.

If this is representative of the present attitude of the Free Church to the Reformation principles, how pale and sickly is the Free Church become!

THE CHRISTIAN AND ENTERTAINMENT

“The Christian is *in* the world but not *of* the world.” This is a statement generally acceptable to all in the Church. The conclusions drawn from it, however, create two opposing camps.

One camp says “We have nothing to do with the world in respect of its entertainments for we are not *of* the world”. Those who hold this view believe that going to the theatre, the cinema, recreational drinking of alcohol, listening to worldly music, reading worthless novels or going to the football terraces, and such like, are inconsistent with the prohibitions of Scripture, such as: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1 John 2:15-16). We believe it is true to say that the more the Holy Spirit has been working in the churches, the more their members have held this view. It would be wrong to conclude that a person who holds this view of entertainment does not appreciate artistic qualities. It would be difficult to argue that they who can sing so beautifully in public and private worship, do not recognise and value that which has aesthetic merit.

The other camp says that entertainment is theirs to enjoy, for though they be not *of* the world they are *in* the world. They celebrate the idea that they have so much in common with the lost world, in that they have a mutual delight in cultural things. They will base their arguments, such as they are, on portions like 1 Corinthians 3:21: “For all things are yours.”

At some point in the spectrum between the extremes of these two views we all lie. In the present low state of religion in our land, we are afraid that the unambiguous position held by our spiritual fathers, in regard to worldly entertainment, is now viewed by some as old fashioned and extreme and that there is a love of the world in our midst, which they would not have recognised as consistent with the true profession of religion.

This is nowhere more tragically glaring than in the new position in the Free Church. Having spent (for the most part) the years of its existence in the camp

of those who feared the baleful influence of “the world”, the *Free Church Record* indicates that she has now passed from the one camp into the other. By a truly bewildering metamorphosis, before the astonished public gaze, the Free Church is encouraged, as it were, to fly upon the prey and divide the spoil of worldly entertainments, under the notion of God “giving us all things richly to enjoy”. Expounding his views, the Editor recommends, under the notion of things “pronounced clean by God”, drinking with friends, watching films and joining the godless hoards at football matches, regardless of the swearing and blaspheming that often takes place there. Censuring a consistent, holy and wise view of this controversy, the Editor rebukes those within his own church, and beyond, who disagree with his view of Christian liberty.

THE REGULATIVE PRINCIPLE OF WORSHIP

The Regulative Principle of Worship requires that our worship should be regulated by the Word of God. With regard to any element of God’s worship, this principle asks the question, “Do the Scriptures require this in the worship of God?”. Confusion arises in this discussion when people apply rules which belonged to the temple worship to the New Testament worship, with the result that they allow instrumental music. The New Testament Church was based on the synagogue worship, not the temple worship.

The Normative Principle, on the other hand asks, “Where do the Scriptures forbid this element in the worship of God?”.

If God showed His displeasure against those who carried the ark from the house of Abinadab, in a way contrary to that required in Scripture, then we should take this question seriously. Ask David, mourning at Perezuzzah, if the things belonging to God’s worship should be “regulated” by the Word of God, or can men do as they please? See again the sin of Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin. He devised the worship of God “according to His own heart”. “So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense” (1 Kings 12:33). Adopting the Normative Principle has opened the door not only for instrumental music, hymns of human composition, mime, drama, etc., in the worship of God’s house, but the observance of Pagan/Popish holy days such as Christmas.

Though, sadly, there are many examples in the Christian Church in Scotland today of ignoring, forgetting or departing from the Regulative Principle, we will mention only a few which indicate the present trend.

For some time now, the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster has made up a part of the ecclesiastical scene, not only in the Province but in Scotland, the rest of the United Kingdom and abroad. Contrary to the Regulative Principle of worship, this branch of the Church will use instrumental accompaniment in public worship. It uses hymns of human composition in its public praise and it is said, by those who are familiar with it, to be generally hostile to exclusive psalmody. The FPC of Ulster has had soloists and groups playing and singing

during the worship services. While its office bearers subscribe to the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, they also have their own, qualifying, statements. It encourages women to pray in public services as well as “give their testimonies”. Many of their ministers make use of the appeal system or “altar call” to produce conversions.

The Website for St. Vincent Free Church of Scotland in Glasgow has a link to what is called a “sister-church” in the States. The website of that sister-church shows pictures of its premises with Christmas decorations. Oddly, it claims, at the same time, to hold the Regulative Principle.

The Editor of the *Monthly Record* of the Free Church of Scotland says nothing to discourage the observance of Christmas. He greets his readers with a “Happy Christmas” and adds, “The fact is that the vast majority of us do celebrate the midwinter Festival”. He makes further comment to the effect that it is an opportunity to preach the Gospel.

This was not the view of our Reformers. The *First Book of Discipline* states that Christmas should not be observed. George Gillespie, one of the Scottish commissioners at the Westminster Assembly, wrote: “The festivities of Christmas hath hitherto served more to . . . lasciviousness than to the remembrance of the birth of Christ.” Again: “The controverted ceremonies pertain not to the conservation of religion but contrariwise to the hurt and prejudice of the same. O what a doleful decay have they drawn with them in this land.” Furthermore, one of the critical points in the history of the Church in Scotland (whose witness the Free Church professes to maintain) was in 1617, when James VI tried to impose the *Five Articles of Perth* on the Church of Scotland. These articles required the Church, with other things, to observe Christmas. This was opposed by true hearted ministers of Christ because, as Thomas McCrie explains, the “institution of Christmas was an imitation of the idolatrous Saturnalia of the Romans, to coincide with which [the speculative date of the nativity] was changed by the Roman Church to the 25th of December”.

The departure of the Free Church of Scotland from the Reformed Standards of religion is now quite marked. Perhaps there is no clearer indication of this than the discussions taking place with respect to the relations of the Free Church with the Church of Scotland, or some section of it.

CONCLUSION

Though repentance is the speedy way to turn away God’s wrath on Britain, we do not hear our present leaders resort to it, nor the people cry out for it. In 1643 the ministers of the Church and State, noblemen and others, made the following grave confession of sins:

Because these kingdoms are guilty of many sins and provocations against God, and His Son Jesus Christ, as is too manifest by our present distresses and dangers, the fruit thereof; we profess and declare, before God and the world, our unfeigned desire to be humbled

for our sins and for the sins of these kingdoms: especially, that we have not as we ought valued the inestimable benefit of the gospel; that we have not laboured for the purity and power; and that we have not endeavoured to receive Christ in our hearts, nor to walk worthy of Him in our lives; which are the causes of other sins and transgressions so much abounding amongst us: and our true and unfeigned purpose, desire, and endeavour for ourselves, and all other under our power and charge, both in public and private, in all duties we owe to God and man, to amend our lives and each one to go before another in the example of a real reformation; that the Lord may turn away His wrath and heavy indignation, and establish these churches and kingdoms in truth and peace (Solemn League and Covenant, paragraph 8).

The time is ripe that we, their unworthy successors, should humbly and heartily acknowledge our many sins, confessing that we have not served the Lord as we ought, with a full purpose of and endeavour after new obedience, beseeching the Lord to turn to us again, for the sake of Him whose Name He delights to honour.

“Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee” (Revelation 3:3).

MORALS

ABORTION

“Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34). Nationally this once great Christian country respected all God’s commandments and the legislation of the land was in accordance with the divinely-inspired Word of God. In recent years laws have been passed which are totally contrary to revealed truth, and nowhere is this more evident than in the passing of the Abortion Act on 27th October 1967 – this past year having seen the 40th anniversary of this piece of legislation which came into force on 27th April 1968.

Since its inception this legislation has sanctioned the death of some 7,000,000 unborn children and in the past year the figure passed 200,000 for the first time in England and Wales, with 193,737 resident women and 7,436 non-residents. Britain has the most liberal Abortion Act in Europe, allowing pregnancies to be terminated up to 24 weeks, well past the halfway stage of a normal pregnancy. There is a degree of unease among politicians about the UK Government’s barbaric approach to human life. The recent survival of baby Amilla Sonja Taylor, born after 22 weeks, underlined the barbarianism of terminating pregnancies up to 24 weeks.

As if things were not bad enough as they now are, the report of the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee, published on 31st October 2007, concludes: (1) there is no scientific basis to reduce the 24 upper limit for

abortion; (2) the requirement for two doctors' signatures, before an abortion can be carried out, should be removed; (3) nurses and midwives should be allowed to carry out early abortions; (4) foetal pain is not relevant to the question of abortion law.

When the Committee was set up, its terms of reference were flawed from day one (they excluded ethical and moral considerations), so that its findings were always vulnerable to flawed and inhumane conclusions. The UK's organisation of Christian doctors expressed concern that the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) failed to give full information to the above Committee on current scientific evidence for lowering the upper limit of 24 weeks. The RCOG have constantly denied that foetuses can feel pain earlier than 24 weeks. This view was challenged by Channel 4's *Dispatches* programme which highlighted opposing views, including that of a leading academic and clinician, K. J. Anand, Professor of Paediatrics, Anaesthesiology, Pharmacology and Neurobiology at the University of Arkansas, USA, who is a world authority on neonatal pain and published a major review paper on foetal pain in November 2007.

Also Dr. Vincent Argent, "one of Britain's most respected obstetricians", in a submission to the Committee, argues that the limit should be reduced by eight weeks to 16 weeks, although he himself favours abortion. While reduction would be a step in the right direction, what is required is that the killing of unborn babies for so-called social reasons would be totally abandoned. Politicians and others point out that the UK is rapidly developing an ageing population with a great decrease in those of working age. This problem would not have occurred if the Abortion Act had not come into force, as half of the 7,000,000 aborted foetuses would now have obtained working age.

MURDER

This sin is now so common that many hardly rate a few lines in the newspaper, only those who engage in a killing spree getting the headlines. There were two serial murderers sentenced to life imprisonment at the end of February 2008 – (1) Steve Wright who murdered five prostitutes in Ipswich in a six-week period at the end of 2006 – the killings only ceasing when he was arrested. He was convicted by a jury at Ipswich Crown Court, the Judge saying he should never be eligible for parole. (There are now 36 murderers in that category in prison in England and Wales.) (2) Simon Bellfield, who was found guilty of murdering two young women, and the attempted murder of a third, in London. The Judge told him that he would not be considered for parole and must serve his whole life in prison. He is suspected of having committed a further twenty attacks, including the murder of a schoolgirl, Millie Dowler.

Relatives of those bereaved demanded the return of the death penalty but that call is unlikely to be heeded in the present political climate. God's law declares, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" (Genesis 9:6).

In the first few weeks of the New Year, twelve young men were stabbed to death in separate incidents in London. Most of these were linked to the over-consumption of alcohol or being high on drugs.

The past year has seen a rising level of street violence, especially in Scotland, on Friday and Saturday nights. This is six times higher than the officially recorded number by the police.

The Chief Medical Officer for Scotland, Dr. Harry Burns, said hospitals dealt with up to 40,000 stabbings, shootings and serious assaults a year. He said tens of thousands of drunken attacks are not being reported because victims fear reprisals, are criminals themselves, or planned to take revenge.

Self-murder or suicide is also very common throughout the whole of the UK. In the Bridgend area of South Wales, 17 young people have killed themselves in the past 12 months. To date no common factor has been found to link them to one another.

It is reported by the police that there are 167 gangs in the Strathclyde area, with many young people being involved in inter-gang warfare, leading to severe injuries and even death.

ALCOHOL MISUSE

Nearly half of all young people now admit drinking alcohol before they are 13, many with the sole intention of getting drunk. The Justice Secretary, Mr. Kenneth MacAskill, said recently that getting drunk had almost become “a national sport”. In a national survey, half of 10- to 19-years-olds admitted they had been involved in fighting or aggressive behaviour as a result of drunkenness, and a quarter had been in trouble with the police. Girls confessed to greater sexual irresponsibility, and young males said they were involved in higher levels of vandalism when drunk.

Grampian Police showed, on TV news, a film that they had compiled from closed circuit cameras, showing street violence in Aberdeen on Friday and Saturday nights. The film showed extreme violence between young men, kicking each other, and even endangering life by jumping on fallen individuals or kicking their heads. It also showed young drunken girls exhibiting violent behaviour, including hair pulling and kicking. The purpose of the film was to discourage licensing authorities from issuing any more licences as it was said there were already too many licensed premises in the city.

ADULTERY

This is another sin now so common that breaches of the seventh commandment are regarded as normal practice, and God’s ordinance of marriage is being ignored, with almost 50% of couples living together in the unmarried state. A booklet issued by Aberdeen City Council, called *Behind the Granite (Aberdeen City Facts 2007/2008)*, shows that 47% of live births were to unmarried parents, with 53% to married parents.

In a press article, on 8th February 2008, it was reported that more than 1,000 sex offences were committed each year in the north-east of Scotland as police

endeavour to battle soaring levels of prostitution, rape and underage sex. Grampian Police's sexual offences dossier features every indecent crime committed in the north-east in the five years 2003-2007. Some 297 sex offences have been committed, with 295 people on the area's Sex Offenders Register. In Aberdeenshire there have been 127 rapes, figures described as disturbing by a local MSP who has raised concerns about the role alcohol abuse may play in these offences.

Prostitution offences are causing concern in Aberdeen with 30 brothels being uncovered since 2002. There have been 21 cases of human trafficking for sexual purposes. This usually involves evil men promising young girls from Eastern Europe jobs in the UK, smuggling them in illegally and, when they do arrive, forcing them into prostitution. This is particularly sad in a year when the two hundredth anniversary of the abolition of slavery is being celebrated, having been piloted through parliament by William Wilberforce in 1807. It is estimated that some 5,000 women and girls were smuggled or trafficked into the UK each year on the promise of a job, and then compelled to work in the sex "industry" as prostitutes.

The inevitable outcome of these breaches of the law of God is that there has been a marked increase in sexually transmitted infections (STI) among young UK adults, despite public health efforts. Recently released statistics for 2006 show a total of 376,508 new infections diagnosed, an increase of 2% on 2005. The Health Protection Agency found that young people aged 16-24 are disproportionately affected, despite healthcare warnings. It is estimated that 73,000 UK adults are now living with HIV, and that a third of these are unaware they have the virus. "Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard" (Proverbs 13:15).

DIVORCE

The divorce rate for England and Wales is lower than for 22 years, and currently stands at just over 12 per 1,000 marriages. Divorce is higher for people in their late twenties, but there are a growing number divorcing who are over 60. The drop in the number of divorces is a reflection of a long-term decline in the number of marriages. Last year there were 132,562 married couples divorced. However, the lower divorce rate is probably disguising the true picture of family breakdown, because the statistics do not show the high number of cohabiters who split up. Last year 125,000 children under 16 experienced their parents divorcing. A similar number of children experienced their cohabitating parents going their separate ways. In Scotland there was a near 20% surge in the number of divorce cases. This increase could be the result of a sharp cut in the required separation period that came into effect in May 2007.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION REGULATIONS

In June 2007 the Christian Institute, and several evangelical churches, went to Belfast High Court to challenge the Sexual Orientation Regulations. A judicial

review was held, lasting 6 days, and on the 11th September Mr. Justice Wetherup gave his judgment. It was not as good as we would have liked but much better than it might have been.

Thankfully the “harassment” provisions, which would have seriously restricted freedom of speech and conscience, have been struck down. The judge said that, as framed, the provisions could involve infringements of both freedom of speech and the right to manifest a religious belief. As a result of his ruling, a Christian cannot now be prosecuted for expressing opposition to homosexual practice, and we welcome this protection of our right to write, preach and speak on this issue. Regrettably, however, the provisions which ban businesses from denying goods or services to persons on grounds of their sexual orientation will remain in operation. This means, for example, that although a Christian guest house owner can express opposition to the practice of homosexuality, he/she cannot turn away a couple because of their sexual orientation.

GAMBLING

More than 200,000 people in the UK are classed as problem gamblers, and it could be as high as 378,000, with 6% of the population now using online gambling, which was non-existent eight years ago.

A newspaper report of 20th September 2007 revealed that a Head Teacher hanged himself after running up thousands of pounds of debt gambling on the internet; the mother of two of his children only discovered the extent of his debts when bailiffs came to seize the family home.

YOUTH INDISCIPLINE

This is clearly seen in the numbers of exclusions from schools. Latest figures show that the number of pupils in Scotland being excluded for bad behaviour has risen by more than 6,000 since 2002 to 44,794. One editor writes: “It is clearly not the fault of teachers. They are faced with having to deal with the children of parents who cannot, or will not, instil any self-discipline in their offspring. These are the children who are allowed to behave in any way they wish at home and in public. Once they reach the classroom it is futile expecting them suddenly to become model pupils.”

Outside of school these children are set on a life of crime. In one police area a four-year-old child was detained for house breaking, a five-year-old for shoplifting, and six-year-olds detained for breaches of the peace. Police recorded 10,943 crimes committed by 3,780 youngsters in one police force area last year. The news comes from a Freedom of Information request, revealing that in 2006, 132 children (including one just two years old) were involved in cases ranging from fire-raising and theft to possession of drugs, vandalism and breach of peace. The youngest offender, aged just two, was caught in Strathclyde for an unspecified offence.

Paul Martin MSP, Labour’s Shadow Minister for Community Safety, was quoted as saying, “These figures are astonishing and represent parental neglect on a truly shocking scale”.

This is a fruit of doing away with any form of corporal punishment over the past thirty years. What a need to go back to “Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).

POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

As mentioned in last year’s report, Exeter University Christian Union (CU) were suspended from the official list of student societies, had its student union bank account frozen, and were banned from use of Student Guild premises, or advertising events within Guild facilities, because the Student Guild claimed the CU constitution and activities did not conform to its recently introduced Equal Opportunities Policies.

The CU having threatened legal action, there followed detailed negotiations between the CU, the Guild and the University, and also between the National Union of Students, the Universities and College Christian Unions (UCCU). The CU has now secured an active Student Bank Account, re-listing in the Guild’s official list of societies, permission to use and advertise CU events on Guild/Campus premises, and the right to restrict membership of the CU and its leadership to those able to sign up to a statement of faith (although as always has been the case, all events will be open to any student to attend).

BANNING OF CHASTITY RING IN SCHOOL

Lydia Playfoot (16), a pupil at Millais School in Horsham, West Sussex, was banned from wearing a chastity ring in school. She took her case to the High Court, claiming discrimination against her because Muslim girls were allowed to wear head scarves and Sikh students to wear bangles. The school claims that the ring contravenes its uniform policy, and denies discrimination on the grounds that the ring is not an integral part of the Christian faith. Her action was unsuccessful.

CONCLUSION

Much more could be included in this report, but sufficient is listed to show the continuing downward path of the morals of the nation. What Britain needs is a return to God in faith and penitence. “Return unto me and I will return unto you,” God said to His backsliding people in the days of the prophet Malachi, and that is what we as a nation should do. May the Lord in His infinite mercy pour forth His spirit upon us as a people, that all over the nation there may be a revival of His cause, and many witnesses raised up to serve Him in this dark and cloudy day.

SABBATH OBSERVANCE COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. J. MacDonald

THE function of the Committee is to keep before our fellow sinners that which God commands of them, as well as of us as individuals and as a Church, to keep the Sabbath day holy. Times have changed, opinions have changed but the Law of God has not. The fourth commandment is, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work" (Exodus 20:9). We need not take up time proving that the first day of the week is the Christian Sabbath and has been so recognised since the beginning of the New Testament Church. Still some, and some that should know better, cavil at the use of the word "Sabbath".

During another year we have sought to testify to God's claim on His own day and have sought to remonstrate in as scriptural a way as possible to the many who announce in newspapers their plans for Sabbath desecration. Most of our letters are being ignored, not because they are rashly or rudely worded but because those who receive them are saying to the Lord, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways" (Job 21:14).

Members of Synod and all who read this report know only too well how our nation, from the Sovereign downwards, has turned its back on God's Commandments. This is to be seen constantly, not only in the large towns or cities but also in our most distant parts. The so-called "Highland Games", which for many years have been a feature of life in the Highlands on Saturdays, have now spilled over into the Sabbath. Many thousands are drawn together on Sabbath to see "highlights" of these events without any thought of what is required of us all on the Sabbath. In addition roads are busier, causing much inconvenience to lawful users of the roads. The name Highland Games is a misnomer. The events seem calculated to draw the biggest crowds. It is particularly sad to see so many children caught up in such activities on the Lord's day. In the case of these games it is often difficult to discover who is responsible for the event, making it almost impossible for us to remonstrate with the organisation and, when we do, we rarely receive a satisfactory reply from those to whom we did write.

The range of people and activities covered is quite broad, stretching from Buckingham Palace to the House of Commons, to various Departments of State, to the Scottish Parliament and Edinburgh City Council. We do not consider it appropriate to give the names of private persons to whom we wrote. In this category also replies were small in number.

We wrote to the Ministry of Justice to protest against the "proposal to have voting in General Elections at the weekends". We did receive a reply to our protest in this case, promising: "*The Department will consult with local authorities and others on the merits of moving the voting day from Thursday to the weekend.*" It also promises that, "*The consultation will take into account the needs of religious groups to ensure that those with religious objections to voting on Sunday will have an opportunity to vote in a way*

that is consistent with their beliefs". No mention is made of God's Commandment.

The replies from Downing Street, Clarence House and Buckingham Palace have been curt and polite. We cannot but wonder if our letters ever passed the first line of defence – the Private Secretary did say: "*The Prime Minister will be informed of your views.*" The First Minister of the Scottish Parliament takes the same line. One example will suffice:

*Dear Mr. Macdonald,
Thank you for your letter of 21st August to the First Minister, The Rt. Honourable Alex Salmond M.P. M.S.P. I have been asked to respond on his behalf. Your comments have been noted.*

The reply from the City of Edinburgh Council was somewhat more expansive. The last paragraph will suffice to show what their attitude is:

I note your comments on events taking place on Sundays and would assure you that the Council works hard with event organisers to minimise any disruption to church services. However the Council also has a duty to promote events in the city for the benefits of its citizens, especially events that encourage people to take part in physical activity and so lead healthier lives.

This letter is signed by the Lord Provost.

Speaking generally, we find ourselves practically alone among all the churches and denominations in Scotland. This, in our opinion, is reflected in how little response we get to our letters. It is sad to detect the feeling that many do not have the same strict regard to Sabbath Observance as previous generations had. It is not high on their list of priorities. One wonders if our pulpits are laying the same emphasis on Sabbath keeping as in the past. In a holiday town like Dornoch it is difficult to mark any difference between the Lord's day and other days. The constant traffic on the A9, which passes feet away from our church in Evelix, is as heavy as on weekdays. We long for the time when the Lord will look on us in mercy and restore to us the Sabbath we used to enjoy.

In the Western Isles the question of Sabbath ferries rumbles on. Looking at it as dispassionately as possible, neither Ullapool nor Stornoway needs a Sabbath ferry. The route was never so well served. We feel that local people who are not slow to speak to any media that contacts them are not motivated by the best interests of the people they purport to serve, but are like those who were saying in Old Testament times, "Let us asunder break their bands and cast their cords from us". The days should be past when people in the Highlands are dictated to by their "masters" from the South. If the people of Lewis do not wake up to what is happening, what is left of the "Lewis Sabbath" will be lost. We are not speaking of culture or community, we are declaring to all who will hear that God has said and is saying still: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

We cannot speak as if we were spectators. Where in our own midst is the Sabbath sanctified as it was forty years ago? The Committee would be glad to see the Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland speaking out boldly on the side of Sabbath keeping. If we are to retain our integrity we must speak boldly, not only as a Synod but as congregations, Kirk Sessions and individuals.

It has been brought to our attention that the Committee's work may seem somewhat negative because our protests are largely to people who are not acquainted with biblical Sabbath observance. It has been suggested that the Church should have representatives speaking on the Sabbath in different communities where our Church is represented. These meetings could be held in public halls or possibly in schools. The Committee feel that the Church should consider providing tracts, leaflets and booklets aimed at the non church going public. After discussion, the Committee recommend to the Synod that Rev. Angus Smith be appointed as the Church's representative speaker.

We as individuals and as a Church have enjoyed great privileges in the past, not least in hearing sermons on Sabbath keeping and having living examples of those who treasured the Lord's day. It is a solemn consideration that we are in danger of letting standards slip. Let us hold fast in the hope of attaining to the promise: "Them that honour me I will honour." "Even the youths shall faint and be weary; and the young men shall utterly fall, but they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up on wings as eagles: they shall run and not be weary: they shall walk and not faint."

JEWISH AND FOREIGN MISSIONS COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. J. MacLeod

General

Over the course of another year the Jewish and Foreign Missions Committee has, to the best of its ability, attended to the duties laid upon it by the Synod. It may be said that it has not been an easy year in the experience of those who so valiantly and unostentatiously perform their duties on the front line of our mission fields abroad. In Zimbabwe and Kenya the fraught political situation has added to the difficulties which they are accustomed to meet with day by day and increased the burdens which they have to bear. In Israel the situation is exacerbated by the constant exposure of that land to rocket and terrorist bomb attacks. But whatever the difficulties, our Mission stations and all who labour on them have been safely preserved and the work has continued unimpeded. Again, we have to acknowledge the generosity of our friends in Holland who have recently greatly increased their quarterly financial contributions. As has often been pointed out, without their help our work in

Kenya and Zimbabwe would have to be drastically scaled down. We are grateful to them and also to our own Church people who continue to contribute according to their ability.

Zimbabwe

The Rev. Alasdair MacLean was ordained and inducted at Ingwenya in July 2007. The Convener and Clerk were present on the occasion. Notwithstanding the difficulty of obtaining petrol to keep vehicles on the roads, many were present from other locations on the mission and the church was almost full to capacity. As far as food was concerned, the ladies of the congregation prepared what was more than ample to satisfy all that were present. We hope Mr. MacLean's ministry will be crowned with success. The Rev. Z. Mazwabo continues to perform his duties in Mashonaland, as does the Rev. S. Khumalo in Bulawayo and Rev. M. Mloyi in Zenka and Mbuma. We are glad that they have been sustained in health over another year and as they will be submitting their own Reports, it is not necessary to enlarge on their work in this one. We are glad to know that the Rev. Petros Mzamo, though now retired, is still able to help from time to time. As a result of not obtaining a visa in order to pursue his studies in this country, Mr. Nopel Sibanda, Divinity student, was sent to Kenya to study under the supervision of the Rev. K. M. Watkins, the material for study being supplied by the Rev. H. M. Cartwright. Mr. Zikhali, the Mission Administrator, is coming up to the date of retirement and we have to thank him for his labours and wish him well in the future. As an office-bearer, we are sure that his usefulness to the mission will not come to an end on leaving the Administrator's chair and we hope the Lord will prolong his days to serve Him in this role. The Thembeiso Children's Home continues to provide a refuge for deprived, abandoned, parentless children. Under its roof they are cared for in a loving, friendly environment. Petra Beukers (restored to health, we are glad to report) is now a member of the nursing staff there. We are grateful to Oikonomos for the building works which they funded and supervised the construction of in the past and for their continuing interest as they tie up all loose ends. In the heart of Bulawayo, the Bookshop, we are glad to report, continues to function as an outlet of much-needed Christian literature.

The Committee is grateful for having the expertise of Mr. Hugh MacKenzie at its disposal. He has drawn up a Mission Plan which sets out in orderly manner the development – the Lord willing – of our mission activities in Zimbabwe into the foreseeable future. The resources available to us are now allocated in as fair and appropriate a way as possible in order to establish and extend our work, the main aim of which is to bring the Gospel to as many ears as possible, young and old. It is intended to raise the status of the John Tallach Secondary School from that of a Fourth Form to that of a Sixth Form academy. Pupils will then be able to proceed directly from the school to university. This rise in status will require the provision of an additional building and suitable teachers. The plan has been brought to the attention of the Mbuma Zending

Board members and they have indicated their willingness to lend their generous support. It will also mean the laying of additional burdens on the shoulders of the School Head, Mr. Bonakele Ncube, and his indefatigable deputy, Miss Norma MacLean. The latter is due to return home on a really well-earned furlough in March and we are indebted to Miss Rhoda MacKay for undertaking her duties over that period.

The Ndebele New Testament, as revised by the team led by Mr. Teus Benschop and Miss K. M. MacAulay, has now been printed and is in the hands of our people in Zimbabwe. Miss MacAulay, who has served the Mission well for over fifty years, returned home in June, semi-retired, but still in touch with the translation team and from Breasclote, by email, making her own contribution to the work. She returned to Zimbabwe in February and will continue to help in completing the revision of the Old Testament for a period of time. It goes without saying that the Committee and the Church in general owe her a great debt of gratitude. The Master, we are assured, is not forgetful of such work and labour of love. The Trinitarian Bible Society's role in bringing the revised New Testament to fruition is hereby acknowledged and our gratitude expressed. The revision of the Old Testament is continuing apace and we hope that before long the whole revised Bible will soon be available. This will be a major achievement.

At Mbumba, under the capable superintendence of Dr. A. Snoek, the Hospital continues to provide much needed medical facilities and her own Report will reveal that there is a constant stream of sick people arriving to avail themselves of them. Some depart in restored health; others end their days within the Hospital's precincts. All who come, however, are brought into contact with the Gospel and there is always the hope that the seed sown will bring forth fruit in due time. All scriptural means are used in the endeavour to enlighten their minds in the knowledge of Christ and the dedication of all concerned is altogether commendable. The nursing sisters, Willie Geurtsen, Erica van Breda, Gilia Wijngaarden and Celia Rennes, are all of Dutch nationality and we are grateful to them for answering the call to help staff the Hospital. Working in this remote location far from their homes and families involves much self-denial on their part and we would like to assure them that it is not taken for granted. They, of course, return to Holland on furlough in regular order.

The Zimbabwean economy still remains in a perilous state, but in these difficult times it has, again, to be said that our mission staff have coped admirably and they are to be commended for their resourcefulness as well as for their zeal and perseverance in the performing of their duties from day to day.

Kenya

Our mission work in Kenya continues, the expense involved being met by the Mbumba Zending. We are glad that Ds. Tj. de Jong, the Chairman, together with Mr. D. v.d. Sluis and Mr. A. B. den Breejen, were able to pay a visit to Sengera

towards the end of the year and that they brought back a very good and encouraging report of the work there. On the administrative side, Mr. Watkins now has the assistance of Mr. Andre Ploeg and, by all accounts, he has settled down well and is an asset to the Mission. Additional to his normal workload, Mr. Watkins has had to bear the burden of tutoring the Zimbabwean divinity student. We are glad that he and his wife (whose valuable and voluntary work is not forgotten) have enjoyed in the main good health and for that we would desire to be thankful to the Most High. The political turmoil which followed the disputed Presidential election was widespread throughout Kenya, but we are glad and thankful that the extreme violence did not quite extend as far as Sengera. It was, however, an anxious time in the experience of those living within the mission compound, who, in other ways, were affected by the unrest and their courage and fortitude is to be commended. It is to be hoped that these inter-tribal troubles have now come to an end. As the Rev. K. M. Watkins will be presenting his own Report and giving a full account of their experiences, it is not necessary to enlarge on them here. We hope that Mr. and Mrs. Watkins will be sustained in health of body and mind and, above all, that souls will be enlightened by the Spirit of God in Sengera as a result of our presence there. The Omorembe Clinic continues to provide all the help possible to those in need of medical attention and care.

Israel

The Rev. John Goldby continues to exploit every avenue that might give him the opportunity of speaking to the Jews. At present there are no regular services being held. In Israel, as in the African countries where we are engaged in mission work, the political situation gives rise to concern. We are glad that the range of the rockets which Israel's enemies daily rain down on certain parts of the land does not extend to Jerusalem. Mr. Goldby is to be commended for his perseverance and we hope that he shall be preserved in health to continue, encouraged by the command and promise: "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not."

Conclusion

Again we would commend to our people the performance of the duty of remembering those men and women who so diligently and self-denyingly labour on our mission fields. We are encouraged to turn His promises into petitions for He "will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them". "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

JEWISH REPORT

Rev. J. Goldby

It is a privilege to have the opportunity to work here in Israel among the Jewish, Arab and Christian population, endeavouring to make known the Gospel of Christ. The Jewish people were the Church of the Old Testament (Acts 7:38) and when the "Lord turned again the captivity of Zion" (Psalm 126:1), it was said among the nations, "The Lord hath done great things for them" (Psalm 126:2). Greater things are yet to be done for them (Romans 11:26) and the effect of these "greater things" upon the whole world will be wonderful (Romans 11:12). We look forward and pray with expectation for these days, for "If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us" (1 John 5:14).

Church Services

Between May and the end of June 2007 the usual pattern of services was maintained in the YMCA chapel on the Lord's day morning and evening. Bible studies were held each week in our flat. Our regular congregation, however, was reduced, being mainly composed of workers from abroad who shared our views in general but who eventually returned to their own countries. One great difficulty in establishing a regular Church in Israel is that the Christian Sabbath is a working day. We pray that the day will soon come when this will not be the case.

Six weeks of furlough were spent in Scotland from the beginning of July and I returned to Israel in mid August. My wife remained in Scotland so that our youngest daughter could finish her education at Gairloch High School. Since returning to Israel, weekly services had to be suspended, there being no regular congregation. Occasional services have been held and Bible studies, when there were people to attend. Some services were held on Saturday evenings but no new regular adherents were attracted. Notices of services are posted up in the YMCA. This Sabbath, 23rd March, there is to be a service in the YMCA, God willing. Our Church services are being advertised at the Christian Information Centre in the Old City and this brings some into contact with us. Last year a service held in a Jewish house church in Nahariya was conducted with translation into Russian and Hungarian. The children of this home were taught the Shorter Catechism by their parents. These children are now grown with families of their own. One plays a useful part in a congregation in Haifa and another is the wife of a pastor in Arad, where the congregation have suffered much and at times violent harassment from the Hasidic community.

On Sabbath 16th March a service was held and the ordinance of Baptism administered in Herzliya, a little to the north of Tel Aviv. I had been contacted by David Zadok, an elder in the Reformed Baptist Congregation of Rev. Baruch Maoz. A father of six children, Lt. Col. D. Duke, of the US Marine Corps, is one of the US Embassy Staff in Tel Aviv. He is a member in good

standing in the Presbyterian Church of America and was seeking baptism for his youngest child. The family attend the Congregation of Baruch Maoz. David Zadok assured me that the parents were God fearing and exercised Christians and I agreed therefore to meet with them. Lt. Col. Duke called on me first here in Jerusalem and I was satisfied that he was a sincere God fearing man whose children should be baptised. The elder appointed by the Southern Presbytery, Mr. Roy Middleton, was in agreement and the Baptism duly went ahead. A congregation of around forty persons gathered in the open air, including a family from Inverness with Free Church connections, members of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of America, two Roman Catholics and one Muslim. Rev. Baruch Maoz and his elder David Zadok were also present. Lt. Col. Duke did the presenting himself, singing from Psalms 98, 51 and 78. I took as my text words from Luke 18:16, "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God". First of all pointing to the need of little children and all men to be saved from the bondage of sin and iniquity. Secondly, of the mind and ability of Christ to receive them as well as adults, thirdly of the warning not to hinder, by any means, their coming to Christ and, lastly, of our need of humility and some remarks on the kingdom of God.

Security situation

The security situation has deteriorated considerably in recent times, with much tension all around. Sin manifests itself in continued hatred and bloodshed. The Israeli pull-out from Gaza, so much applauded by the international community, has actually made the situation worse rather than better. The Gaza people voted for Hamas, an extreme Islamic terrorist organisation committed to the destruction of Israel. Northern Gaza then became a launching platform for rocket attacks against Israel, with a thousand rockets being fired at the small Israeli town of Sderot between January and February this year. Earlier many Palestinians died in the fighting between Hamas and Fatah factions. More have died from Israeli attacks against the rocket teams operating from among the civilian population and weapons have flowed into Gaza through Egypt. Nevertheless, Israel continues to supply 70% of Gaza's electricity and allows in medical supplies but otherwise the Israel Gaza border is closed, bringing much misery to the ordinary people. Had Israel remained in Gaza many Gazans who have died in these conflicts would still be alive and a measure of calm maintained. World leaders have much need to be seeking wisdom from above. One sad event last year was the brutal murder of the Arab Christian Manager of the Gaza Bible Bookshop by Muslim extremists. In recent days an Arab youth entered a Jewish Yeshiva (religious college) and murdered eight students with an automatic weapon. Many others were injured, some very seriously. The terrorist came from Jabel Mukhaber, an Israeli Arab village about a mile from our flat in Jerusalem. The family are Hamas supporters and hung out Hamas flags as a "mark of respect" to the dead terrorist. The anger of certain sections of the Jewish Orthodox community

eventually vented itself and a large crowd besieged Jabel Mukhaber, breaking through the police and army lines protecting the Arab village. On Friday, 21st March, a Messianic Jewish Pastor's home in Ariel was also targeted by extremists. A Purim gift basket was sent, as is customary at this time of year, but the parcel contained a bomb which exploded when the Pastor's 16-year-old son opened it. The boy sustained very serious injuries and is in a critical condition. The police say they are keeping an open mind as to whether the perpetrators were Jewish or Muslim extremists. Information coming from the Messianic community is that this is the work of Jewish Orthodox extremists. The renowned Dr. Alfred Edersheim, who became a Christian through Rabbi Duncan's Scottish Mission in Buda-Pesth, said of Pharisaic practice of the first century that whilst "a tailor might not carry a needle in his dress on the Sabbath", it was deemed lawful "to leave a Gentile to perish un-helped in a place of danger". In the case of an apostate or heretical Jew it was deemed lawful even "to remove the means of escape". So it is that today in Modern Israel the Christian Jew suffers more persecution than the Christian Gentile.

God is working

Yet, amidst all this, God is working among Jews and Arabs. At the time of writing this report Israel is celebrating "Purim", when the Jews remember their deliverance from annihilation in the days of Esther. I heard Albert Yacoub (an Arab colleague of the murdered Gaza Bible bookshop manager) praying at a meeting in English. Among other things He plead, "Lord as Thou hast delivered the Jewish people from Haman in the past, so now may Israel be delivered from Hamas". Many Messianic congregations have Arabs among their membership. This is all the more remarkable in the light of a recent poll by an Arab pollster who, having interviewed 1,270 PA Arabs, found that 84% supported the recent murder of the eight Yeshiva students.

Language study

Formal Modern Hebrew studies were resumed in Ulpan Morasha for two months from mid September until the Synod which met in November. Good progress was made in a fast moving class. The acquisition of as much Modern Hebrew as possible is vital to the work here. It is important to communicate and relate to the people in their own tongue. The study of Hebrew ideally requires total full time commitment. This is not always possible for me with other duties to perform at home and abroad. I am also necessarily absent one day a week because the Class also studies on the Lord's day. The College understands my concerns and allows me to join in with classes as and when I am able. The College once again has proved to be a good forum for witness to fellow students. Many discussions took place, with one Orthodox student in particular. Together we practised speaking in Hebrew with discussion of biblical topics and visits to each other's homes. Since November last year I have not been able to return to full time Hebrew classes but I continue to learn day by day. More recently I have been seeking to arrange visits with elderly

Jewish people, which should be a useful means of making progress in conversational Hebrew.

Orthodox Jews

Contact has been maintained throughout the year with the local Synagogue people, including visits to some Jewish Orthodox homes. Rabbi Mordecai held study sessions in his and other homes to which I also was invited. I am permitted to contribute to the discussions. I try to make reference in particular to pertinent passages from the Old Testament. On a recent occasion the difference between Christianity and Judaism was mentioned and the Christian belief that Jesus is the promised Messiah. The Rabbi, in answer to one of his people, said something to the effect that he was not infallible and what would they say, if, when they entered the eternal world they discovered that the Christians were right after all and that Jesus is indeed the Messiah? This, understandably, produced an astonished reaction among the company. On another occasion in the same home I was asked how it was that Christians had three Gods. I replied, first, by quoting the Shorter Catechism answer to the question, "What is God?". The Rabbi found no fault with the definition, "God is a spirit", etc. We went on to show that Christian belief, first of all, embraces the unity and oneness of the Godhead found in many Scriptures such as, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). (In the New Testament one of the Scribes asked Jesus which is the first commandment of all and He answered by quoting Deuteronomy 6:4-5.) This doctrine is a central pillar of Judaism. We went on to say, secondly, that although there is no division in the Divine Essence of the Godhead, nevertheless we find a discourse taking place within the Godhead in the plural: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). As one reads through the Word of God the mystery of Persons within the One God is more clearly revealed so that it is not a doctrine of Christianity that there are three Gods. No one replied to these comments.

Literature and Translation Work

Various items of Christian literature, such as the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, FP Church Magazines, Bibles, and books such as the *Life of Rabbi Duncan* and the modern version of *Mission of Enquiry to the Jews 1839*, *Sermons of Rev. D. MacFarlane*, *Memoir and Remains of Rev. D. MacDonald* and copies of *The Tree of Promise*, by Alexander Stewart, have been given to selected individuals and organisations. Psalm books and Psalm CDs have also been given and some Psalters loaned. One Jewish friend in the north of Israel showed *The Tree of Promise* to friends from America who were very impressed by it and desire to obtain a copy for themselves.

The translation of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* into modern Hebrew was interrupted by the Second Lebanon War and other matters. Translation is now in progress. The first chapter has been translated by Rev. Baruch Maoz

and is currently being proof read by a Jewish Christian scholar. The issue of the proof texts has involved us in months of searching for a suitable Delitzsch Hebrew NT in digital format so that we could append the proof texts to the translation. The Trinitarian Bible Society do not possess a Delitzsch text in digital format. With this objective in view we have been in constant communication with the TBS and other concerned parties, as well as scholars, printers and publishers in Israel.

The Delitzsch Hebrew NT was originally translated from the Critical Greek Text and later revised (to some extent) to conform to the Textus Receptus. There are at least 16 editions of Delitzsch and a number of what we might call sub editions. Dr. Gershon Nerel, a serious Jewish Christian scholar, made a revision of Delitzsch in 2003 called the “Negev” edition. Some important words have completely changed their meaning, so he has replaced words like “sarsur”, which used to mean “mediator”, with “mtavech”, which is the correct word for “mediator” in Modern Hebrew. The Negev version, whilst correcting such things, lacks the revisions of the TBS who have, over the years, altered the Delitzsch text to be more in conformity with the Greek of the Textus Receptus. At the same time the TBS Delitzsch does not have the kind of revisions that Dr. Nerel has made. Many Delitzsch editions, which have seen some revision, still have serious errors, e.g., the word “mediator” is missing altogether from some Hebrews 8:6 texts and in 1 Timothy 2:5 the word “mediator” in Greek has been rendered “one who stands between” – an altogether insufficient translation. It is felt, therefore, that a complete check of the Delitzsch Hebrew NT against the Textus Receptus is required, in addition to a correction of some words which have changed their meaning. Preliminary meetings have, therefore, been arranged between scholars and publishers here and the TBS and ourselves to consider the viability of such a revision. Some helpful technical advice on computers and programmes has been given by Mr. David Clemence and Mr. Kenneth Metcalfe and I now have in my computer a Delitzsch Hebrew NT in digital format. This text can be amended both as to the Hebrew consonants and vowel pointing and we now know how and what is possible from a technical point of view.

A beneficial side effect of these labours has been that the issues of text and translation have brought us into contact with a wide range of Jewish Christians, scholars, printers and publishers and these issues have become a matter of discussion and debate. Very few have even a basic knowledge of textual matters and we are all benefiting by giving further attention to these things. Before we even begin to assess the quality of the translation work we must give consideration to which Greek Text is being used and to face the fact that there are some 6,000 differences between the Critical Greek Text and the Textus Receptus. Many of these changes are minor but the TBS publish a list of the more important omissions and changes entitled *A Textual Key to the New Testament*. By the time of the Synod in May we should be in a position to report on the result of the preliminary meeting with Mr. Rowland of the TBS and other scholars and publishers here.

A local Jewish Christian scholar, Dr. Gershon Nerel, is researching missionary work in Palestine during the British Mandate period (from after WW1 until the State of Israel was formed in 1948) with a view to publication. I supplied him with the Synod Reports by Rev. Donald Urquhart re his labours in this land. Dr. Nerel was extremely pleased to receive this material. If anyone in the Church has more information about the Rev. Donald Urquhart's labours on the Jewish Mission field, please contact me – my email address here is <mailto:jgoldfpc@netvision.net.il>, jgoldfpc@netvision.net.il or in Scotland j.goldby@sky.com. If anyone has surplus old magazines which contain the original reports we would also be pleased to hear from them. We are grateful to those who are bringing our work here before the Lord at a Throne of Grace and hope that they will continue to remember us. We trust that He who is the Hearer and Answerer of prayer will lead us in the way that we should go.

INGWENYA MISSION REPORT

Rev. A. B. MacLean

AFTER my ordination and induction here on 13th July 2007 I entered into the pastoral responsibilities of this congregation and mission station.

There are six parts to the congregation. Ingwenya is the main station where the manse is located. In addition to the congregation, services are attended by approximately 600 boarding pupils at John Tallach Secondary School. On Thursday mornings at the prayer meeting the primary school pupils and staff also attend. This will mean a congregation of 1,000, most of whom are children. Generally to the west of Ingwenya are the two stations of Matapa and Nyati. These are small congregations and primarily Xhosa people. Services at Matapa are conducted at the kraal of the only male member of the congregation. At Nyati services are held in the church. Generally to the east are the three other stations: Cameron, Gadadi and Insisa. The former two both have church buildings and a church is currently being built at Insisa. Gadadi consists mostly of Ndebele people. Cameron and Insisa are mainly Xhosa people. There are three elders at Ingwenya; two at Nyati; one at Cameron and one at Insisa. There is also a deacon at Insisa.

The communities in which the congregation is based have large populations in proportion to the numbers attending our services. There are many other churches, including Anglican, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Southern African Presbyterian, Pentecostalist, Radasa and other African churches, some of which would be heathen. The Seventh Day Adventists are probably the strongest sect in the area and in the country. The numbers attending these organisations is not known.

Usually a four-week Sabbath preaching cycle is operated. This means holding in the first week the services at Ingwenya followed by on the second week taking services at Matapa and Nyati. On the third week services are held

again at Ingwenya, followed by on the fourth week taking services at Cameron, Gadadi and Insiza. During term time a service is held on Sabbath evening for the boarding school pupils. My thanks are due to all the elders of the congregation who, in the absence of ministerial supply, take the services.

The economic condition of the country is well reported and there is no indication of any improvement. Basic commodities taken for granted in other countries are not available or too expensive when available. Inflation was recently announced to be over 50,000 per cent. This has meant that a large number of people have emigrated from Zimbabwe either legally or illegally. Those that remain behind get support from the people that have gone abroad. In addition to the economic catastrophe, the rains failed in the last rainy season. This has meant that the people are largely dependent on aid organisations for food. At the time of writing this report, in late February 2008, although there has been early rain, a hot dry spell has resulted in some crops having failed already. One feature of the people is that they suffer in silence. This can give, to a stranger, the false impression that things are not so bad as they seem. However, from time to time, the real position becomes clear. Without the aid organisations there would be deaths from hunger. Food has been obtained by the church with difficulty from time to time and distributed amongst the congregation.

There is no evidence of awakening and converting grace amongst any of the stations as far as man can tell. The congregations are in the main attentive in listening to the preaching. But the great need here, as at home, is the work of the Holy Spirit. This, alone, will bring lasting fruit to the glory of the love of Christ. "Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you" (2 Thessalonians 3:1). "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory" (Psalm 102:16).

JOHN TALLACH SECONDARY SCHOOL REPORT

Miss Norma B. MacLean

THE past year has not been an easy one, with the worsening economic situation in Zimbabwe and the consequent anxieties and burdens which fall on the school administration. Prices change literally daily; many goods are in short supply or impossible to source; teachers are leaving in large numbers. Planning is impossible: we seem to be in a situation of crisis management more or less constantly. Yet in the midst of all these difficulties we are still completely unrestricted in our teaching the truth of Holy Scripture to the children, and as long as that remains all the effort is worthwhile.

Staffing

During terms 1 and 2 of 2007 we had a full staff complement with our long-serving staff still in post. However, the exodus of well qualified teachers, which had been affecting other schools for several years and had gained momentum during 2006, eventually began to affect us during term 3 of 2007, when three of our teachers left to work outside Zimbabwe and we had a recurring vacancy in the Mathematics department. At that time it was relatively easy for us to replace the staff concerned with suitable temporary teachers. The situation, however, rapidly deteriorated at the beginning of 2008, when we started the new school session in January – in the first few weeks of term, ten vacancies arose for different reasons in our total staff complement of 26, which is over 30 per cent depletion. Most of these vacancies occurred after only 24 hours' notice being given, and as it takes much longer than that to find suitable replacements, the result has been that many classes remained untaught for considerable periods of time.

At the time of writing, eight of these vacancies have been filled: two with trained teachers and six with temporary, that is, unqualified, staff, and the school timetable had to be reorganised in an attempt to redistribute the examination classes among the remaining experienced staff. It has to be stressed that this is a national problem and not peculiar to John Tallach School; in fact our situation is better than that which exists in many other schools. Sadly one of the vacancies has occurred due to the serious illness of Mr. Mhlanga, head of the Science Department, who is presently on sick leave in South Africa while receiving treatment there.

The situation nationally with regard to headmasters is even more serious. In the large province of Matabeleland North, where we are situated, only five of the secondary schools have headmasters in post, so we are thankful that Mr. Ncube has remained with us. In circumstances such as these, the assistance of expatriate staff is especially valuable, both to fill gaps in the school staffing and to help in other areas of the work of the mission. In the absence of expatriate staff, who traditionally cover the Sabbath school classes because local staff have the opportunity of joining their families at the weekends, Mr. N. Khumalo, from the Bulawayo congregation, has diligently returned to the mission every Saturday to help in the Sabbath School.

We renew the appeal for any suitably qualified people to consider offering a term of service to the work of John Tallach School. We teach in a very disciplined environment and have around us a crowd of mostly delightful youngsters who are a pleasure to teach and, despite so many reports to the contrary, Zimbabwe is a very peaceful place in which to live and work.

Pupil enrolment

Enrolment remains steady at around 590, with approximately 70 children attending on a daily basis and 520 boarding at school, all from a wide variety of backgrounds and different religious affiliations. We have one blind girl at school and also one albino girl who suffers from impaired eyesight.

O Level results

The O Level results for 2007 have not yet been published so no figures are available.

In June 2007, at the annual Awards Ceremony, hosted by the Ministry of Education in Hwange for the O Level results for 2006 for Matabeleland North, the school yet again received many trophies and certificates. This time certificates for best performance in each subject were given to all schools which scored a pass rate of 75% or over. Our best performances were in Religious Studies, English Language, Literature in English, Ndebele, Biology, Integrated Science, Physical Science, Accounts, and Woodwork.

The school also received, for the second year in a row, the trophy for “Best O Level Results” in the province, and we had the highest number of pupils with five A grades or more in the O Level examinations.

No information was issued about the national league tables for the O Level results for 2006.

Finance

Inflation has reached astonishing levels, with obvious effect on school fees. In term 1 of 2006, boarding fees were set at \$260,000; this rose to \$2,420,000 in term 2, and by term 3 the amount required was \$12,480,000. In January 2008, boarding fees had to be set at \$360,000,000 – which is 1,385 times higher than the figure in January 2007.

Developments

The school has recently received a new Mazda double cab pickup: it is a great relief to no longer have to rely on the Toyota Venture minibus. Although it gave us good service over the years, repairs had become expensive and the safety of the vehicle was doubtful. It had been intended to replace the Mazda T35 bus early in 2008 but this model is no longer in production.

Communication continues to be difficult – the telephone landline is completely unreliable as we cannot receive incoming calls and can make outgoing calls only occasionally. We, therefore, rely on mobile phones, which receive signals via antennae but, even then, the quality of the signal varies and the networks are often congested.

Security was improved with the installation of two new alarm systems. One covers the administration block at the school and the other covers the two boys’ dormitories which are most vulnerable to break-ins. The alarm which already existed in the computer laboratory was extended to cover the sewing room and woodwork room stores which house expensive equipment.

The programme of painting and decorating continued and the following places were painted: the interior of the boarding master’s house; the interior of one Form 2 dormitory; one Form 3 dormitory and the Form 4 boys’ dormitories; the interior of the Form 1 dormitory; one Form 2 dormitory; and the Form 3 girls’ dormitories.

Replacement of defective ceilings began in April – it is intended that this will be an ongoing programme. In 2007 it was possible to replace all the bad ceilings in one of the Form 2 and Form 3 boys' dormitories.

New mattresses were purchased for the Form 2 boys' beds and the best of the old ones were recovered for the Form 1 boys' beds – which means that all the mattresses are now of a satisfactory standard.

The extension to the Form 4 boys' dormitory was very successful. One large unpopular bedroom was divided into two smaller rooms and a further two bedrooms were added. An additional bathroom was constructed but due to lack of materials it is only being completed at the time of writing and should soon be in use. The bedrooms have been in use since school opened for the new session in January and the whole development is very popular with the boys because crowding in the bedrooms has been significantly reduced – the present group of Form 4 boys is, however, a much smaller group than normal. The extension was planned with the present Form 3 boys in mind as they are a larger group.

Another construction project which began in 2007 is a new 3 bedroom teacher's cottage – good progress was being made until the cement ran out in November but work resumed in February 2008 and there is now sufficient cement on site with which to complete the building. At present two sitting rooms in teachers' cottages are being used as bedrooms but when this new cottage is complete, all teachers' cottages will be able to have dedicated sitting rooms.

Improvements in the school kitchen premises have come to a standstill due to spiralling costs, although it was possible to install a stainless steel sink with tiled surrounds in the butchery area.

One of the more innovative developments was the introduction of pigs! Disposal of the waste from the school kitchen was both an ethical and environmental problem for us until the Headmaster had the clever idea of "recycling" the waste to fatten pigs for the pot.

Conclusion

In these difficult times, the support of friends, known and unknown, is especially appreciated. We are very thankful for all the donations which come our way, enabling us either to supplement the budget or to consider making some unexpected purchases. The continued generous support of the Jewish and Foreign Mission Committee and Mbumba Zending is overwhelming and we record our thanks again.

Above all we wish to acknowledge the faithfulness of the Most High. "He is faithful that promised." We crave the prayers of all those who have an interest in John Tallach Secondary School that, in relation to the work here, we may be experiencing the fulfilment of that most wonderful of promises: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

ZENKA MISSION REPORT

Rev. M. Mloyi

WE have seen the New Year rising to its height as the “path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day”. The work of the Lord is carried out in the preaching stations here at Zenka, though it is not by our might but by the strength and the Spirit of grace enabling us to do so. Without the Lord’s help we can do nothing. I visit the preaching stations at weekday prayer meetings and on Sabbath, alternating with Mbuma and Nkayi stations.

The workload is great to preach to all the poor, needy souls and I pray for strength from the Lord to bear this duty. It’s a solemn duty which needs to be cast upon the Chief Shepherd in order to obtain spiritual strengthening but we have His wonderful promise, “lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”. As I visit Nkayi or Mbuma as intimated, the elders remain to help at the Zenka stations.

The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was dispensed twice at Zenka as usual and also the sacrament of Baptism was administered to two young men. It is a great encouragement to see the youth turning to God as they remember their Creator in the days of their youth (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

The local clinic is still willing to have us and we visit for worship on Wednesdays and Fridays, when the elders help if I am not available.

We try to maintain sound doctrine amongst our fellow men as there is now a growing influx of different sects around the Mission. Sadly, some drift off to these sects, attracted by carnal interest, where their souls will be ruined through deceitful preaching. If only the holy God would pour down the Holy Spirit and convince many of their folly and vain worship and cause them to know the truth. Thus we pray.

The voice of death sounds wide and loud and is a solemn preaching amongst us. Many are warned of their careless lives and we give exhortation at funerals for such to seek the Lord lest they perish in their sins.

Drought has been so severe here, as in other parts of the country and, consequently, food is quite scarce. Very little could be obtained this year from GMB. A few individuals might obtain maize or mealie-meal but the prices are very high. NGOs have tried to alleviate the situation but can’t feed all. If the rains continue until the ripening stage of the crops we should be very thankful.

The new manse at Zenka has been finally completed for which we are thankful. This development was begun in May.

NKAYI MISSION REPORT

Rev. M. Mloyi

BY the great Lord's good providence the doors to all preaching stations have been kept open at weekday prayer meetings and Sabbaths. I have visited these places, as enabled by the Lord. We hope and pray that one day, the Lord willing, Nkayi will have a resident pastor to nurture it. The elders are a great help in my absence as they shepherd the flock of God. Mr. James B. Mpofu's sight is now failing. He can, however, read a little of the Word of God, though a whole chapter would be slow going, so two elders, Mr. Lwandle Ndlovu, of Manomano, and Mr. Ben Mpofu, of Nkayi, have been added to help.

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was dispensed twice here, in January and in June, and once at Donsa Dam congregation in May.

The solemn voice of sickness and death took its course here as elsewhere, when mourners are exhorted to seek Christ for refuge. Sadly many of the youth are taken away, some without hope.

As in other places, Nkayi and Donsa Dam have experienced severe drought and to source food is difficult. We pray to the mighty God to intervene in this trying condition of food shortage, that He would give us plenteous rains to alleviate our distress. Without the help of God we can do nothing. At the time of writing there is welcome help from the World Vision in Food Aid and we are thankful for their sympathy shown to us.

Because of the shortage of building materials, the deacon's court have failed to complete the church building at Nkuba. There is, especially, a shortage of cement nationwide and it is very expensive. Financial constraints have added to the delay to pursue the desire of the deacon's court to build this structure.

ZVISHAVANE MISSION REPORT

Rev. Z. Mazvabo

ANOTHER year has just gone by, a dramatic and remarkable one, the events of which are worthy of a place in the history of our country. Both the Church and the State were participants, be it actively or passively. We have all been tossed through it like a ship going through the sea in extremely bad weather. But we should all be thankful to the Most High that finally we have passed through it all. It is indeed of God's mercy that after all this burning we are not consumed. Again the Lord has been longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

The most outstanding phenomenon is the continuing famine. This should not be under estimated. It is so destructive and real that our people's way of life has been turned upside-down. Those who used to work hard to provide for their children now look to others to provide for them. There is nothing to buy, worse still there is no money to buy with. It is actually a desperate situation.

As a people we are ashamed and at the same time confounded. The rain season started very well with heavy downfalls, so heavy, in fact, that records were broken as far back as one hundred and twenty years. But as a result of the heavy rains, many crops failed because of water-logging. Pools of water would be noticed all over the fields resulting in the soil being too wet to support crops. As we came to the end of January the rain suddenly stopped and the remaining crops were scorched by the sun and, in short, we are plunged into another famine worse than the former. Because a famine commenced the season, we go from famine to famine.

The question begins to arise in every heart as it is in the Word of God, “. . . and if thou say in thine heart, Wherefore come these things upon me?”, the answer is supplied, “For the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts discovered, and thy heels made bare” (Jeremiah 13:22) and in verse 25, “. . . this is thy lot, the portion of thy measures from me, saith the Lord; because thou hast forgotten me, and trusted in falsehood”.

For some time our movements around the different congregations were restricted by the rains, swelling rivers and streams, when difficult, muddy and slippery roads were the order of the day. One day we were actually caught in a storm between Zvishavane and Chiedza, and feared we would never make it out. We are grateful to the Lord for taking us through, even though the clutch of the car was affected by the heavy use of gears which had to be applied for a long distance to pull though the red soil. Happily we managed to get to Munaka at last. To get there we cross the Runde river from Chiedza on a long, narrow and low causeway built by the Roman Catholics to join their two missions, Matibi and Berejena. For this we thank them. Looking at the situation from the bank of the river it gave a picture of a wide pool of water. But there were people in front of us, already on the causeway, and we could see that the water was only ankle high. When we finally touched the water with our wheels, our nostrils were met by the freshness and acceptable smell which God has given to water only. We enjoyed the slow glide across the river. By the way, this is the place where the pioneer column is supposed to have crossed the Runde river more than a century ago.

We happily arrived at the church just in time for the service at 12 noon and preached from Revelation 2:14-15. During greetings we heard that two families had suffered bereavements, one through illness and the other by a car accident. It was very sad. In this congregation there is a young man who teaches at a nearby school and has shown interest in and attended upon our church services regularly for sometime now. We pray that the Lord will open his heart. The second service was at 12 noon in all our congregations, except for New Canaan and Chiedza where the first service starts at 9 a.m. and the second at 11 a.m.

On the previous Sabbath I had failed to go to Ingezi because the descent into the river was badly damaged by rains. Ingezi has a low causeway built by the National Railways of Zimbabwe. The causeway itself is in good order but the passage leading to it is desperately in need of repair as it is not only rugged but

has heaps of sand deposited onto it. The road to Maware is bad but with caution one can drive through. The fields on the sides of the road to Maware have a story to tell of how the rains have treated them. The crops are yellow and tall, promising little to the sower. Obviously the rain was too much but grass is growing well and cattle are grazing normally.

Once every month the congregation of Gwen'ombe and that of Maware come together for the minister's visits. There are quite a few young people in both these congregations but their knowledge of the catechism and even their singing is not great. The Sabbath school has not been kept regularly, partly because there is no room to teach the children. It is extremely needful that a way of reaching the children in this congregation be found. The last communion at New Canaan was only attended by the congregations of Ebenezer, Makovere and New Canaan – other congregations could not afford the ever-escalating transport costs. It is not only the cost of transport that has gone beyond reach – a 20kg tin of maize grain is now going for a hundred million dollars today. Basic foodstuffs are both expensive and very scarce. Wherever one goes, people are making enquiries about maize grain and maize meal and telling each other how long they have been without a proper meal.

With all these difficulties, the death of the Lord was remembered amongst us. Listening attentively to the people of the Lord, as they ascend to the table of the Lord praising Him, the voices of the rest of the congregation were drowned out, and one could only hear the voices of the communicants singing to the tune *Laira*. On such an occasion one is taken aback. There were just about forty communicants on this occasion. The old lady Makazva is still spared and I could not help noticing that she was carrying a small stick to help herself, and stopping to rest after every few steps. Her voice, now hoarse, joined in praising the Lord. The time is not far off when the people of the Lord will gather by themselves to sing a new song which no man can learn. The communion soon seemed to come to an end.

Even though Makovere congregation has not grown very big, it is stable. Death has taken some of them away. Mr. Makaza continues to grow old and has a limp – he is better riding his bicycle than walking. Whenever his bicycle is not in order, this old man of Mozambican origin still takes it to church – not to ride it but to lean and balance himself upon it.

The common feature in all our places is vandalism. Every building has been vandalised in one way or another, or the keys have been removed. This is common except where there is a watchman. In fact this is a common feature in every place on the railway line – telephone wires are being removed and on public roads signposts and fences are also removed. This is a result of the desperation countrywide. The fear of the Lord is not in their hearts.

“Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit” (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

MBUMA MISSION REPORT

Rev. M. Mloyi

“SMITE the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones” (Zechariah 13:7). It was as if the Mbuma pastor was smitten when he took his retirement from this charge. However, the hand of the Most High God is still upon the little ones and the doors are open for weekday prayer meetings and Sabbaths at all the Mbuma preaching stations.

Providentially, I have managed to visit each station at least once a month throughout the year. When I visit Mbuma on the Sabbath I go to another station for the second service. The elders work tirelessly in my absence, spreading the Gospel of Christ, attending funerals and visiting the bedridden. We pray for strengthening grace to do this work as the harvest is great but the labourers are few.

The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was dispensed twice as usual and once at Somakantana. There was also the sacrament of Baptism administered to an infant at Somakantana.

The deacon’s court has worked tirelessly to collect funds from the congregations to buy fuel for my visits to the Mbuma stations, for communion expenses and also for visits to Binga. In November, two elders, Messrs. M. Dube and L. Ndlovu, visited Binga but for the congregation to continue it needs someone to stay among them. They need to be catechised, sound doctrine to be instilled into them, church practice to be maintained and even singing of the Psalms taught. Whenever visited, the elders go with spiritual tracts and clothing. But Binga is without a shepherd to nourish their souls, though the Mbuma elders do what they can every three months – this is so because of financial constraints. We pray and desire that Binga will one day have a resident bishop to shepherd their souls.

Sickness and death prevails here and many have passed away, both young and old. Drought has hit the country, though the non-governmental organisations have taken a keen interest in sustaining human life. At GMB little could be bought as the whole district flocks to it for survival. We earnestly pray that good rains would be given this year so that the severe famine would be alleviated.

For spiritual edification, the Mbuma flock needs a resident pastor and our prayers and desires may be expressed by the saying of the Lord: “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).

MBUMA MISSION HOSPITAL REPORT

Dr. A. Snoek

IN 1946, speaking about Mbuma, James Fraser said: “. . . But there are still thousands of people who are in heathen darkness, living under the power of witchcraft, drunkenness and immorality, and they are most pathetic figures. There is a cry from Africa going out to us here . . . and the cry – a cry for help – is none the less real or urgent because it is not articulate. I have stood on one of the hills of the Shangani Reserve and have looked forth on, I believe, hundreds of square miles of forest and grassland, with the smoke of African villages rising in the evening air here and there among the trees, and I have felt almost overpowered by a realization of the enormity of our task as a missionary body. And yet when we think of the almighty power of God and the prayers of a sympathetic Church at home, we feel that we can go on in the strength of God the Lord. . . .”

More than 60 years later the cry for help is still there, urgent although still not articulated. It comes from orphans left behind, babies dying because of AIDS, the people suffering under the burden of illnesses, sorrowing because of deaths, and having to endure unbelievable economic hardships. And, above all, there is their spiritual plight, so much misery on account of sin and so many souls caught in the power of darkness.

But the Lord is still the same. “For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.” He has enabled us to continue the work in Mbuma. He has made so many people willing to contribute royally to our temporal needs and to remember us in their prayers. It is on account of His goodness that we are able to report that the vacancy of catechist at Mbuma has been filled by the appointment of Mr. G. Nkiwane, a former primary school teacher at Mbuma. How encouraging it will be to have his presence here when he begins his work in January 2008. May his work be blessed and be of great benefit to the patients and others.

Daily worship continues to be held with the help of elders and members. On Sabbath mornings Bible classes were held with the patients in the Isolation Unit and with the pregnant ladies in the Waiting Mothers Dormitory. In the afternoons we have a Bible class for the nursing staff, when we discuss the *Shorter Catechism*. On Thursday afternoons the Bible class for the workmen is studying the Book of Genesis. The Bible class for children is attended by approximately 25 boys and girls every Saturday afternoon.

ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

In the past, one of the nurses, assisted by a clerk, had the duty, in addition to her daily nursing duties, of administration and ordering of medicines and materials. However, the difficult economic situation and the non-availability of trustworthy qualified clerks have made the administration and ordering a full time job for one of the European staff. This, and the increasing number of

patients, forced us to look at the hospital management structure. We benefit very much from the help and advice of Mr. Hugh Mackenzie in reorganising our management. Besides the posts of Medical Superintendent and the Matron, filled by Dr. Snoek and Sister Willie respectively, the posts of Project and Financial Manager (PFM) and Management and Information System Officer (MIS) were added to the staff structure of the hospital. The task of PFM has been taken up by Sister Erica during the past year. The post of MIS is still vacant, but has been advertised.

Thanks to the regular monthly remittance of funds from overseas, we were able to purchase most of the drugs and materials we needed for the hospital during the year. Our situation is therefore good, especially when we compare it with that of the nearby government hospital where there was hardly any activity due to lack of resources. However, the scarcity of all products in Zimbabwe forced us to cross the border and purchase our goods in Botswana, South Africa and Holland.

BUILDINGS, MAINTENANCE AND TRANSPORT

Repairs and painting

During the year the usual maintenance and painting was done by our workers. The upgrading of the hospital got a huge boost with the coming of a group of volunteers from Holland in August. Five women and six men were prepared to spend their holiday in Mbumba. Not only did they pay their own fares but also brought a large amount of money for the purchase of materials and tools. The entire Outpatients Department, the Opportunistic Infections Clinic, and Ward 1 were repaired where necessary and painted. The large quantity of tools and materials they bought needed proper storage, so two storerooms were upgraded and secured for this purpose.

New building

Never-ending cracks in buildings are a known problem in Mbumba. Therefore this year a prefabricated wooden house was built. Not only did it alleviate the shortage of accommodation for expatriates but also it will not be subject to structural cracks as brick buildings are. The house was purchased in South Africa, erected by a South African builder, and was finished in only three weeks. This makes this type of building an interesting possibility for the future, although it is more expensive and obviously not useful for dormitories.

Electricity and water

As well as doing repairs and painting, the workgroup also began the renovation of the hospital electricity system which was old and therefore in a deplorable condition. This part of the project could not be completed within their August holiday period, so in December three men came back and, with the help of Mr. Van den Berg and three other men from South Africa, they succeeded in finishing the renovation, including connecting the renewed

system to a new switchboard and overhauled generators. At the moment we have electricity for 15 hours a day from the generators and lighting at night from solar charged lights.

The water supply from our two boreholes has been very unreliable this year due to continuous mechanical breakdowns and difficulties in getting spare parts. A thorough investigation and overhaul of the whole system is needed and this has been planned for next year.

Transport

During the course of the year we got two secondhand vehicles: a car for the Home Based Care Unit (HBCU) and a tractor for collecting firewood (as a replacement for the old former ambulance which was used for this purpose). After having some problems at first, the HBCU car, although old, turned out to be a suitable car for visiting patients in the community. The tractor, however, started falling apart after a few weeks and will need to be replaced during 2008. The Nissan lorry and the Toyota for the expatriate staff were both used nearly continuously for transporting goods and staff between Bulawayo and Mbumba because of lack of any other transport. The new ambulance is in good condition, even though it accidentally went off the road and sustained some damage to the windows and coach work at the end of December.

STAFFING

We started the year 2007 with four expatriates: Sister Celia, Sister Gilia, Sister Erica and Dr Snoek. Sister Willie did her maternity training in Bulawayo, but often came to Mbumba during her days off. She graduated as a midwife in May and even received two prizes. After this Sister Willie went on furlough in May and June, Sister Erica went in July, August and September, Sister Celia in October and November, and Sister Gilia in December.

Our Zimbabwean qualified personnel increased with the addition of Sister Mathema, a Nurse/Midwife, and two Primary Care Nurses (PCN). One of the PCNs moved to another clinic during the year, so the total number of qualified nurses is six Registered General Nurses (RGN) and seven PCNs.

Two nurse-aids went for training in counselling, two clerks went for clerical training and two nurse-aids went for laboratory training. During their practical training periods they worked in Mbumba, and they are expected to come back after finishing their full training.

Although we are not a training hospital, we were asked to look after some student PCNs because of the miserable situation in government hospitals. Therefore four student PCNs were attached for some months to obtain practical experience.

Our carpenter, M. Mpofu, had a serious traffic accident in May and was bedridden during the rest of the year. He needed several operations, but is recovering now.

One of our workers was dismissed because of theft. One nurse-aid and two male workers left for greener pastures.

HOSPITAL

When we look back upon the year 2007 and consider the statistics below there can be only one comment: AIDS is still defeating thousands and thousands.

This year again we saw an increasing number of inpatients – more and more people from outside our catchment area are coming to our hospital, mainly because of our present resources. The sharp rise in the bed occupancy rate shows that a lot of patients are admitted for a longer time with AIDS related illnesses. Where in the past the very ill patients died or went home to die, they now more often continue under treatment in the hospital. HIV-positive patients with chronic meningitis, for example, have been treated successfully during the past year.

The AIDS Clinic, which started in December 2006, was supposed to support 90 new patients during the past year, but it was not until September that the government was able to supply us with AIDS medication. Only 47 patients therefore got the medication, and 39 of these patients still survive. At the moment more than 600 adult patients in our area have been prescribed Antiretroviral drugs (ARVs). To help the growing number of “AIDS orphans” our two projects, funded by overseas donors, were continued. The project, “A Door for a Child”, provides transport to Bulawayo for HIV-positive children to receive proper treatment, funds for which were raised by various primary schools in Holland. The “Orphans-care” project provided family and school support for orphans, funds for which came from collections from two congregations and mission presentations in Holland.

Among the deaths at the hospital, two were maternity cases. One woman passed away because of sepsis after a criminal abortion; the other died because of meningitis after delivering her baby.

In theatre 33 caesarean sections were performed besides quite a number of inguinal hernia repairs and hydrocoelelectomies, some orthopaedic operations and other smaller procedures. Laparotomies were done for ovarian carcinoma, traumatic rupture of the colon and some ectopic pregnancies.

The increasing number of attendances at the Antenatal Clinic and the Child Welfare Clinic are again most likely due to the lack of clinics in surrounding government medical institutions. Although it is straining our resources and staff it also gives us more opportunities to reach the people with sound biblical teaching and health education.

STATISTICS FOR 2007

	2006	2007
<i>Admissions</i>	2,211	2,423
General.....	1,125	1,223
Paediatrics	459	521
Maternity	627	679

Bed Occupancy Rate	43%	72%
General.....	50%	94%
Paediatrics.....	40%	54%
Maternity	31%	35%
Deaths	206	195
General.....	154	139
Paediatrics.....	49	54
Maternity	3	2
Outpatients	27,332	26,122
New.....	20,768	14,696
Repeats.....	6,564	11,426
Births	618	727
Live births.....	610	716
Still births	8	11
Theatre/Outpatients Clinic	593	650
Major cases.....	105	176
Minor cases.....	488	474
Dental Services		
Number of patients	316	334
Number of procedures	179	222
Radiology services		
Number of films	1,100	1,221
Pharmacy		
Number of attendances		19,810
Laboratory services	5,107	5,182
Number of lab tests	3,625	3,637
Number of HIV tests	1,482	1,545
OIC (Opportunistic Infections Clinic = AIDS Clinic)		
Number of patients started on ARVs.....	–	47
Number of patients alive to date	–	39
Number of patients who died while on ARVs.....	–	6
Number of patients transferred.....	–	2
ANC (Antenatal Clinic) attendances	2,921	3,451
CWC (Child Welfare Clinic) attendances	4,410	5,275
Ambulance		
Number of transferrals.....	–	36

BULAWAYO MISSION REPORT

Rev. S. Khumalo

“THE heavens are thine, the earth also is thine, as for the world and the fullness thereof, thou hast founded them” (Psalm 89:11). God, the great Creator of all things, doth uphold, direct, dispose and govern all creatures, and all things from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence according to His infallible foreknowledge and the free and immutable counsel of His own will, to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy. It is therefore by God’s providence that we have been enabled to see another year in time. So many things happened among us as individuals, families, a congregation and a nation. It all confirms that the Lord rules.

As I reflect about the past year I have reason to be thankful to the Lord for His goodness to us. Certainly it was a difficult year economically, and the country went through drought and shortages of basic commodities. We were not spared hearing the voice of death, nor from having sickness among the congregation and family members. The Psalmist had to say: “Thou hast showed thy people hard things, thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment” (Psalm 60:3). Because it is the will of the Lord we have to submit to it. “Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.” Our encouragement and comfort should be in the Word of God and from what is written: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”

Above all I am thankful that the work of the Gospel has not been disturbed and that it continues even to the present time. The Word of God is spread among young and old and those who are sick; and at funeral gatherings no effort is spared in seeking to draw sinners to Christ as “the Saviour of the world”, and especially of those that believe in Him. It is our prayer that by the grace of God we be kept in the truth of the Word of God and standing unmoveable on the teachings we have received from those who went before us and from others yet present with us. “For he established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel which he commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children. That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children. That they might set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments” (Psalm 78:5-7).

In May last year, I and my wife were invited by Mbumba Zending to Holland to be present at their mission day gathering. It was a really touching experience to see the interest that people in that country have in the work of our missions in Africa. Above all it was good to see the wonderful doing of the Lord in putting into their hearts the grace of giving to the cause of the Gospel. We are very thankful to our friends in Holland and to our Church people in Scotland and other parts of the world for their generous giving to the work of spreading

the Gospel and to other aspects of the work on the mission field. Oh! Africa, where much is given, much shall be required of thee!

As I have said, despite all the difficulties, the work of the Gospel continues without interruption. During the course of the year we witnessed the ordination and induction of Rev. A. B. MacLean to Ingwenya congregation, for which we are very thankful to the Most High. On that occasion we had among us Rev. J. MacLeod and Rev. J. R. Tallach, and their being present was very much appreciated. Rev. J. MacLeod administered the sacrament of baptism to two adults and two children at our congregation in Nkulumane. It is most pleasing to see young families and young people who were born in the church continuing in the way of faith they were taught by their parents. "The promise is unto you and to your children and to all that are afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39).

We had our communion seasons as usual in June and December, at which the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was dispensed, and which were well attended. One person in June, and two people in December, were added to the communion roll. Also in December, a young man from a church family, who had just finished his Ordinary Level course at John Tallach Secondary School, was received for the sacrament of baptism. A child also was baptised.

Services continue at our stations at Lobengula, Nkulumane and Mguza on Sabbaths. I am thankful to Rev. Mzamo, who has been of great help since his taking up residence in Bulawayo following his retirement from Mbumba. He takes the services when I am away at communion seasons or preaching at other stations. I also thank the elders who help in taking services whenever they are asked to do so. Prayer meetings are held at all our preaching stations and Thembiso Children's Home – on Tuesday at 9 a.m. at Thembiso, on Wednesday at Nkulumane, on Thursday at Mguza and on Friday at Lobengula.

Our congregation, as well as others, is not spared from blanks being made by the moving of our young people to other places, such as Harare, where we have no place of worship. Some migrate to other countries. It is their spiritual welfare which is a great concern to us but we just need to commit all things to the Lord. Also we should remind one another that life is not money, food and drink, but that we have a soul, and that whatever we shall attain to in this world we shall all appear before the final judgement. "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul." This is food for thought for old people and, most of all, for our young people as they go out into the world.

We witnessed heavy rains in the first half of the rainy season, which was a relief to Bulawayo which had almost run dry, but now there is enough water in the dams. With regard to harvest, we are not sure how much it shall be as some people were unable to plant because of excessive early rains and thereafter there has been a long dry spell which has been a concern to many. It shows how much we need the after rains as well as the former rains.

When we see these hardships, how much we should see the spiritual barrenness around us. We need the power of the Holy Spirit to accompany the

Word so that there would be the fruit of the Gospel in gathering a people to the Saviour, and that there would be spiritual prosperity as promised by God.

“He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish” (Psalm 72:6-7).

NDEBELE BIBLE TRANSLATION AND LITERATURE REPORT

Mr. T. Benschop and Miss C. M. Macaulay

IN December 2007 we received the good news from the Trinitarian Bible Society that the printing of the revised New Testament in Ndebele was completed. Now we have received the first part of the consignment – a thousand copies to be sold by the Reformed Bookroom, which is run by the Free Presbyterian Church in Zimbabwe.

We are very grateful to the TBS who have donated 8,500 copies which are to be distributed free throughout our congregations. An order has been placed for more copies to be printed for regular sale. We pray for the Lord’s blessing on this new edition of the New Testament in Ndebele.

In October, the Zimbabwe Presbytery appointed a Publications Committee to oversee the work of the Translation team.

In June, Miss C. M. Macaulay went on leave. She has now retired from regular Mission employment overseas in Zimbabwe but continues to assist in the checking of the scripts of the Old Testament Ndebele translation. The rest of the team are as in the previous year. Mr. Benschop and family were on leave during August and September; Mr. N. Mpfu, Mr. B. Mziya and Mr. D. Mhlanga continued work on the translation of *Line Upon Line* Part 2 during that period.

We were happy to receive 1,000 printed copies of the Ndebele version of *The Holy War*, by John Bunyan, from the Baptist Publishing Press; this had been paid for by a donation from Holland. Some copies were given out to the Mbumba Mission Staff at New Year.

There was a reprint of 4,000 copies of the *Mother’s Catechism* in Ndebele. The Gospel of John was printed as a separate booklet and the Gospel of Mark has now been submitted to the printers for printing. (Some of these will be for sale and some for free distribution.) An order has been placed for a reprint of 2,000 copies of *Izihlabelelo zikaDavida* (Psalms of David in metre). These had been printed in 2004 but the reprint entailed checking and correction of mistakes. The headings of the Psalms were also inserted.

We have had good service from our printers but they are now facing problems due to the economic situation in this country. We are awaiting the delivery of books – *Line Upon Line* Part 1 and the *Confession of Faith* (with references included) which are partly done but awaiting binding. *Line Upon*

Line Part 2 in Ndebele has been translated and is being checked in preparation for printing. Work continues on the preparation of the Psalms in metre in Shona by Rev. Z. Mazvabo and his helpers.

The five Primary Schools which are under the Mission umbrella will be issued with some of these books mentioned – Ndebele New Testaments; *Mother's Catechism*; *Line Upon Line* (Parts 1 and 2).

The regular daily work of the translation team is the translation of the Old Testament. We have covered Genesis to Job chapter 3, along with the prose Psalm 1 to 105. There is still much work to be done. There is need that we be guided by the Lord continually (Isaiah 58:11).

EBENEZER SCRIPTURE MISSION AND THEMBISO CHILDREN'S HOME REPORT

S. B. Mpofu

WE are thankful to the Most High that the work of Ebenezer Scripture Mission has been sustained through another year. If one thinks of how to fend for a small family and then compares this with such a family as Thembiso has, you really wonder how things were managed. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10). This is my wish for the occupants of Thembiso and the staff of Ebenezer Scripture Mission that they know the Holy One.

Thembiso Children's Home

Our children ranged between 49 and 53 throughout the year. We continued receiving children who were on places of safety and later re-united with relatives. Our children's health this past year gave us more problems than before. We lost one baby boy, Dennis Mandla, on 10th October 2007. Presently their health has improved as we now have a resident nurse, Sister P. Beukers, who joined us on 1st January 2008. We, however, have a girl aged 10 years who is still on and off. She is HIV positive and has also liver and heart problems. Much money is used on medication these days as government grants are not available. The health of the children is now better monitored by having a qualified nurse. She makes sure medications are correctly taken at home and even those admitted at hospitals.

Staff

Mr. J. Tshuma, a watchman, is on sick leave. His health has been of great concern to me as I saw him deteriorate rapidly. Mrs. B. Lipofu retired at the end of January 2008. Because of staff shortage on Thursdays we use some temporary staff to reinforce the permanent staff. It becomes more difficult when there are children to be taken to hospital or clinic on Thursdays. We hope

to send some ladies, who will meet the criteria, for house-mothership training in preparation for houses when the Thembiso conversion is over.

Bible classes/Sabbath school

Last year, 2007, saw us continuing with the 3 classes in Sabbath School. These were grouped as secondary schoolchildren, grades 4 to 7 and grade 3 down to non school-going children. With Sister Petra with us, we are now able to use our own church members. Sister Petra takes the secondary school children, I take grades 4 to 7 children and Mrs. Mhlanga the lower group. Mrs. Mhlanga also takes a Bible class on Friday afternoon and we now hold catechism classes on Sabbath afternoon – Rev. S. Khumalo takes one group whilst the other group is taken by an elder. We hope this arrangement will help the children greatly.

Children's tours/visits

These have again been maintained. We normally take the children in two groups according to their ages. During the August school holidays children were taken to Tshabalala Game Park and Chipangali Wildlife Orphanage respectively. During the December holidays they were taken to Hwange National Park and Chipangali. We hope to take them to Victoria Falls during the April school holidays, D.V. Compositions written after these trips are very interesting to read as they help the children express themselves.

Problems met

Power cuts have not spared us but we were donated a small standby generator by some friends in Germany which has still to be installed. We would be using a small washing machine donated by a Chinese group but cannot daily use it because of these power cuts.

Formerly, when we met water cuts, our borehole supplied us but the supply was not sufficient this year. The borehole has to cater for the garden which is using drip-water irrigation. It is rarely that we have tap water for more than three successive days. When the tap water recently went off, it returned after some days with a very unusual colour and was unfit for drinking. Due to this we once had an outbreak of diarrhoea.

Food supplies became another problem. We are now making trips monthly to Botswana to buy some commodities, thanks to the Mission general treasurer who pays for these in foreign currency. Our meat supply now comes from outside the city because meat is now very scarce locally. We are finding problems with repairs that need cement which is not available in the country. If in providence one comes across cement, it is at a very unreasonable price of about \$145,000,000-\$160,000,000 per bag.

Bookroom

This has continued to sell both religious books and school books. When Miss Macaulay left, we got the services of Rev. A. B. Maclean to help in the

ordering of religious books. T. Benschop also assists in quick orders needed. The Bookroom occasionally runs at a loss when books get spoiled by leaking water from upstairs. We appealed to our landlord on this issue. Our rents have gone so high that it becomes difficult for the Bookroom sales to make reasonable money for new orders.

ZIMBABWE MISSION ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

E. B. Zikhali

The year 2007 was one of the most difficult in the history of Zimbabwe Mission. It was a year that one wishes not to remember. There was hunger, and shops were empty caused by huge price rises. People had nothing to buy and eat. Some who had money had to cross the border to buy commodities in neighbouring countries. Most of the skilled manpower had to leave the country to work at the neighbouring countries like South Africa, Botswana and Namibia – teachers and doctors took the lead in this migration. Some schools were left without any teachers at all. However, we were pleased, as a church, that services were conducted at all preaching stations weekly and on weekdays without any disturbances. The political situation was quietened to allow all the Mission activities to go on, so we are indeed very thankful about that development. But although the atmosphere appeared calm, it looked like a time bomb because there was nothing going on well in the country – inflation rose above 62,787.8% and monies were eroded in banking accounts. There was every need that the regular Mission remittance was to be used up as soon as it arrived in order to avoid this.

However, the whole Mission is now running on the new accounting system introduced by Mr. H. Mackenzie, the Mission co-ordinator. The introduction of the development plan allowed every head of department to spend on the budget only allocated to it during that financial year. It meant that all the payments by the General Treasurer were to be approved by one person in Zimbabwe – the Administrator. The Sub-Committee, for the time first time, was authorised by the JFMC and approved by it to meet monthly and the Administrator was responsible for presenting monthly bank statements, balances and expenditure for each head of department. This worked very well for the HOD and the General Treasurer and this allowed each head of department to spend within the budget at a given time.

Mbumba Primary School and Mission Hospital

The hospital was for the first time completely renovated by the Dutch volunteer group which visited Zimbabwe last year, whose purpose was to do voluntary service at the hospital. This group comprised engineers, painters, carpenters, electricians and surveyors.

Much improvement was realised. We are indeed very thankful for that great service by both the group and the churches in Holland who were involved in this service. The whole mission in Zimbabwe is thankful. Sad to mention, the Grade 7 result was lower than last year at only 33% pass rate.

Zenka Mission

The new manse was completed and the resident minister is presently using it. A water-drawn well was dug at the vegetable garden site to avoid congestion at the water points by school children. Teachers' houses are still looking good as well as the school buildings and the church. The Grade 7 results were the best in the district with a pass rate of 87.84%.

Lutsha Primary School

This is one of our primary schools in the remote area of Nkayi district. The 2007 pass rate was also low at only 23% pass rate for Grade 7 results. The teacher's houses as well as classrooms are in good condition.

Ingwenya Mission Primary School

This school is adjacent to the John Tallach Secondary School. There is remarkable progress going on at both institutions. The buildings in the development plan going on are the boys' dormitory and the teachers' house. The John Tallach Secondary School continues to produce good results at ordinary level and they excel in the district. The hard work by the head, the deputy and the staff is commendable. The Grade 7 results at Ingwenya Primary school this year were greatly improved at a 65% pass rate.

Themviso Primary School

This school has always done well at Grade 7 results during past years, although it was surpassed by Zenka Primary this year. The staff is composed of very devoted teachers. The Grade 7 pass rate was 84%. The arrival of the resident nurse at Themviso Children's Home was a great relief to both the matron and the superintendent. We hope the situation will improve both medically and spiritually.

Secondhand clothes

It is greatly appreciated that Holland still sends secondhand clothes to Zimbabwe. We are very thankful for the gesture and wish the Lord's blessings upon them for this.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I profoundly thank the Jewish and Foreign Missions Committee, the Netherlands congregations and communities, the Zimbabwe Field Committee and the General Treasurer for the support they gave me during the period I was in office as Administrator. I wish them all the Lord's blessing. "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (2 Peter 3:14).

BUILDING AND TRANSPORT REPORT

Philani Mzamo

IN the providence of the Most High, I started working in the Mission on the 2nd January 2007 on probation for a period of one year. There were two things to do before concentrating on my job – obtain a driving licence and learn how to operate computers. I obtained the driving licence in August, and also managed to have four passes in computing examinations. I am studying three more computing subjects but because of the workload it has been difficult to complete the whole course. However, I hope to finish it very soon, God willing.

BUILDING PROJECTS

Administration Head Office renovations

The renovations decided on for the Zimbabwe Mission Headquarters are intended to make a more efficient layout of the offices and to separate the living quarters completely from the office accommodation. Plans were drawn up at the beginning of 2007, sent to the Local Authority for approval, and were finally approved in June. But work was not scheduled to begin until November or December in order not to hinder ongoing works at Zenka, Mbuma and Ingwenya respectively. By the end of December the foundation trenches were dug, the foundations laid, and construction done up to floor slab level. The work is ongoing.

Bulawayo

Plans of the Lobengula manse were drawn up in 2007 and were to be submitted to the Local Authority in early 2008 for approval. It is hoped that construction will be completed in 2008, D.V.

Ingwenya

Two projects were all but completed at Ingwenya during the course of 2007, that is, first, the construction of additional bedrooms and bathrooms in the Form 4 boys' dormitory (only the unavailability of a urinal component delayed the finishing of the project), and secondly, the construction of the three bedroom teachers' cottages, but because of the general shortage of cement the project was delayed for a time. We do not forget to mention the Project Officer for these projects, Miss N. B. Maclean, who is always busy with the school work and other Mission work but who is giving much help. This and other projects have been carried through to 2008.

Mbuma

A new house for expatriates, which included equipment and furnishing, was purchased from National and Overseas Modular Timber Construction in South Africa. This building, of lighter weight, is a pilot project for Mbuma Mission

Hospital. The Mbumba subsoil is not good for the construction of brick houses because under their weight subsidence occurs, structures develop cracks and eventually have to be demolished.

In the event, the South African supplier failed to come to Zimbabwe to erect the house, as was initially arranged, but they offered us three options:

1. Cancellation of the contract, in which case monies paid to them were to be refunded.
2. To erect the house ourselves. They offered the Mission a discount and undertook to supply us with all the drawings and instructions for erecting the house.
3. To wait until the new year to see if the political situation would improve.

Option 2 was approved by the Field Committee sub-committee in August, subject to satisfactory arrangements being made with the supplier. The discount of 35,000 Rand (£2,500) offered was accepted, and with the assistance of an experienced builder from South Africa the structure was completed by 19th October, apart from the installation of electricity works and plumbing works.

The project has been carried forward to 2008 for the completion of plumbing and electrical works.

The expatriate staff at Mbumba have been generous in giving assistance in the implementing of the building projects.

Translation Office

No projects done here – only the maintenance of the carport has begun and is carried on into 2008.

Thembiso Children's Home

No projects done – just general maintenance carried out.

Zenka

Construction of a new manse started at Zenka Mission on the 30th May 2007, foundation trenches were dug and foundations laid next day, the building was at roof level by the 11th July, and the roof was completed on 3rd August. Thereafter floors and plastering were done, plumbing installed, Kelly Electrical Contractors did their part, and the carpenter completed the ceilings. Painting was done from mid-November, and by December it was only the built-in wardrobes which were not complete due to shortage of materials – and all within budget.

Zvishavane

In October, a 2,000 litre storage tank was installed at the rear of the Zvishavane manse and connected to the Council water supply. This was done since there has been the usual shortages of water from the other system in town and this has several times caused much inconvenience at local communion seasons.

Chiedza

A borehole was drilled at Chiedza station in October for the benefit of guests at communion seasons. The borehole is 45 metres deep with plenty of water starting at 37 metres, and with a yield of water of 20 litres per second. The project will be completed when there is the installation of underground pipes, electric pump, water storage tank and plumbing of the building.

General Water Supply – without water all our Mission would fail to operate Ingwenya

The water supply has been alright during 2007 because the underground water levels did not drop as they used to do in the past. Ingwenya has a potential source of water from the roofs of its buildings if there is a more than average rainfall and if the water would be piped into reservoirs, but this is a long-term planning item.

Bulawayo

The water supply situation in this city has been poor. At one stage the taps went dry because the municipality could no longer pump water from its dams, and our Mission infrastructure within the area was affected. It would be good to consider possible local solutions to this problem for the future.

Mbumba

There is plenty water underground and problems occur only when the engines and water pumps do not work properly.

TRANSPORT

Head Office

The Head Office had three vehicles – a Mazda B1800 Pickup for the Administrator, a Mazda B1800 for the Transport and Building Projects Manager, and a Mazda B2200 Drifter for office use. At the beginning of the year the two Mazda B1800s were in good condition but the Mazda Drifter was well-worn and consuming a lot of oil and fuel. Towards the end of the year the Drifter was involved in an accident and was a write-off, with the result that the plan to procure a new vehicle for the Transport and Building Projects Manager was brought forward. The replacement for the Drifter – a 1991 model Mazda B2200 – is used by the transport and building projects department, and the Mazda B1800, which the Transport and Building Projects Manager used, has been taken over by the administration office. The Administrator's Mazda B1800 pickup remains in good condition, but the other two vehicles will soon need to be replaced.

Bulawayo

At Lobengula there are two vehicles: the Toyota Hilux used by the minister in his ministerial duties, and a Mitsubishi Triton vehicle, which is the old bus

from Ingwenya and is used for ferrying people to church on Sabbath. The Toyota Hilux is still in good condition but the bus is often in the garage for repairs and is showing signs of getting to the end of its useful life.

Ingwenya

There are five vehicles at Ingwenya Mission: the Nissan Pickup for the minister for his ministerial duties, another Nissan Pickup for the Mission staff for their use, the Toyota Venture Minibus for the Headmaster for his school duties, the Leyland Lorry for all Mission work throughout all the Mission stations in the country, and one large Bus and one smaller one for transporting school pupils. The two Nissan Pickups are still new, the Toyota Venture was supposed to have been replaced by end of last year but it has been retained into 2008. The Leyland Lorry also is not in good condition after 12 years of service to the Zimbabwe Mission and is wearing out badly. The small bus is to be replaced in 2008, God willing, but the big bus is still running well, although there is some difficulty in getting spare parts.

Mbuma

There are five vehicles in use at Mbuma Mission : a Toyota Land Cruiser used as an ambulance, a Toyota Hilux used used by the mission staff, another Toyota Hilux which is a 1988 model bought during 2007 and used by the hospital as a vehicle for Home Based Care, a Nissan UD Lorry used for transporting Hospital supplies, and a Tractor used for hauling firewood. The ambulance is the only vehicle in good condition at Mbuma Hospital but towards the end of the year it was involved in an accident when it was travelling from Bulawayo after taking patients to Mpilo Central Hospital. Both Toyota Hilux models (the twin cab and the pickup) are not performing well, and the tractor is in a worse condition and has been returned to the seller for rectification.

Translation Office

This has one vehicle – a small Mazda Demio which is still in good condition.

Themiso Children's Home

There are two vehicles based here: a Toyota Pickup and a Toyota Kombi Minibus. Both are still in good condition and are used by the institute for fetching supplies and ferrying the children. The Pickup is used by the superintendent.

Zenka Mission

The one vehicle here is used by the minister for his ministerial duties.

Fuel

The Mission transport fleet, water pumping engines, and electrical generators consumed the following amounts of fuel in 2007: petrol 28,500 litres, diesel

61,020 litres. The total balance of fuel remaining at the end of the year was 28,706 litres of petrol and 21,595 litres of diesel.

Lastly, we think of what Paul said to the Philippians: “Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Philippians 4:5-6).

KENYA MISSION REPORT

Rev. K. M. Watkins

THE years 2007/08 will be remembered in Kenya for the troubles following the elections at the turn of the year. Although there was no violence in our immediate area, for a while it was more difficult for us to operate – some supplies were in scarce supply, and our movement was curtailed. Prices remain high for fuel and other commodities. There is now a form of peace, but few seemed to have heard the Lord’s voice in so signal a judgment on the land. Many Kenyans claim to be Christians, but in so many cases it is a form of Christianity that needs to be repented of. What the country desperately needs is the true Gospel of Christ applied to sinners’ hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit. As a distinctively Reformed mission, our main aim for another year has been to set forth a full-orbed testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus.

A new and interesting opportunity arose during the year to do just that. In September, contact was made with a group of “pastors” based throughout Kisiiland, all Pentecostals of one shade or another. A series of eleven Saturday meetings have been held with a nucleus of some fifteen men, in which we have covered the basics of the Reformed faith, the cessation of the charismatic gifts, and the unbiblical nature of much of today’s evangelism. They seem to have understood the evils of Arminian easy-believism and are looking for the right way to preach the Gospel. They seem eager to know the way of the Lord more perfectly. One wrote recently: “I thank God because of the teachings. . . . This is what I have been trusting God for.” A number have expressed similar sentiments. Most never had any formal teaching at all before starting to preach. A few went to some form of Bible college, but say that they now realise that they were taught the traditions of men, not the teachings of Scripture.

At a recent meeting they insisted that they had changed their methods of preaching and were no longer leading people to man-made decisions. They acknowledge that the churches are full of professing people who are not really saved. Time will tell how genuine they are, and how willing to embrace the full Reformed faith. Meanwhile we make the most of this open door for the Gospel. Paul’s instruction to Timothy is very clear: “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2). A full week’s

course of classes in Theology, Church History, Old Testament, New Testament and Pastoral Theology has been planned for the beginning of April.

Another new Gospel activity at the Kenya mission was involvement in the tutoring of Mr. Nopel Sibanda, the Divinity Student from Zimbabwe. When Mr. Sibanda was unable to obtain a visa for Britain, it was decided that he would do his first year studies in Kenya. It has been a pleasure to work with him, going through the New Testament course set by the Tutor, Rev. H. M. Cartwright, and we wish Mr. Sibanda well in his exit examinations and his remaining studies.

Meanwhile, the usual services and Gospel endeavours have continued as in previous years. Every Sabbath day on the Sengera compound has seen an adult catechism class, two preaching services, and the five children's Sabbath School classes. Mission workers begin their working day with worship, during which the first ten chapters of the Gospel according to John have been expounded, as well as other parts of God's Word.

It had been planned for the assessor elders from Zimbabwe to come at the beginning of February so that the Kirk Session could meet with applicants for baptism, but that had to be cancelled because of the unsafe situation in Kenya. It has been good to have Mr. Sibanda's assistance in pulpit supply, which has enabled us to hold Sabbath services (and catechism classes) in our three outstations. Previously, the Friday meetings had continued. During my furlough, Rev. A. B. MacLean and Mr. Buthi Mziya from Zimbabwe kindly supplied the Sengera pulpit and undertook various pastoral duties among the people, and I am indebted to them both.

In translation, an enlarged psalm book was issued in May 2007, containing 68 psalms or parts of psalms. Since then, a few more psalms are ready for inclusion in the next book. Thousands of Bible calendars from the Trinitarian Bible Society were again distributed at the beginning of the year.

In August 2007, we were privileged to have a visit from deputies of Mbuma-Zending Committee: Ds. de Jong, and Messrs. van der Sluis and den Breejen. After all the financial and prayerful support that Mbuma-Zending has rendered to the Kenya Mission, this was their first official visit and it went very well indeed. It was good to enjoy Gospel fellowship with these men whose hearts are so much set on our Church's mission endeavours in Africa. They were introduced to all aspects of the mission work and visited the outstations. Ds. de Jong took a number of the morning worships with the workers, and taught a catechism class and a Sabbath School. He helped also in pastoral visiting. It was a most encouraging visit from these brethren.

In the mission office, furlough time was covered by Mr. James MacLeod, whose able and willing labours we acknowledge with thankfulness. In August, Mr. Andre Ploeg from the Netherlands began work in the capacity of the mission's treasurer. We are grateful for his labours. I must also record the willing help of my wife throughout, without whose constant efforts the mission would never have run as smoothly. Among the African staff, there have again been disappointments with a number of dismissals, but we truly

value the contributions of the faithful ones. We wish for all the mission workers the covenant blessings of the God whom this mission seeks to glorify.

On security, there were a number of break-ins, and consequently the mission compound's perimeter has been upgraded to a brick wall all the way around, and work to put an electric fence on top of the wall is in progress. Work has begun on building the replacement classrooms at Rianyakwara Primary School. A new ambulance has just been purchased and the old pickup sold.

The Poor Fund committee continued its work of identifying and helping cases of need among the congregations. It is not an easy work, but it is part of the Church's duties. Donations in recent months are reduced from previous years. If this continues, we will not be able to help as much as in the past.

Our passage in this morning's worship with the workers included the words: "And many resorted unto Him" (John 10:41). We told them that the prayerful supporters of this mission longed for the day when they would hear a similar report from Kenya, that many sinners were resorting to Christ. May such a blessing come soon.

KENYA MISSION CLINIC REPORT

Rev. K. M. Watkins

WE are thankful that the clinic has continued well for another year under the capable oversight of the in-charge, Mrs. Gladys Asande, and the hard work of her staff. The complement comprises: 5 qualified nurses (including one seconded by and paid for by the Ministry of Health); 2 part time laboratory technicians; 5 support staff; 1 clerk; 2 part-time cleaners; and 1 voluntary community health worker.

In 2007 the clinic undertook a number of new initiatives but was also faced with a number of new challenges. The Ministry of Health introduced free maternity services in Government hospitals, together with an increased range of free medicines in out-patient departments and a minimal consultation fee (about 15 pence). By contrast we charge about £5 for a straightforward delivery, and an initial out-patient consultation fee is about 75p. In a poor rural community with little cash to hand, it was inevitable, for a while, that the numbers attending the clinic dropped. This was seen throughout Kenya in all faith-based medical providers. The Christian Health Association of Kenya (CHAK) with whom we are affiliated, produced a lengthy report in which it described the very real sustainability crisis the MOH changes had caused in faith-based health facilities.

However, at the time of writing this report, the numbers in both maternity and outpatients have greatly recovered as the local people have compared the two different standards of care offered. It seems that on many occasions the supposedly free government delivery proved more expensive than our own

modest delivery charge, as the free delivery packs were often out of stock and the mother was faced with buying all the necessary commodities for the delivery of her baby from the hospital or local pharmacies. If a mother needed referring to the District hospital in Kisii, she first had to fuel the Government ambulance!

Following the badly handled Government recruitment of nurses from faith-based facilities in the Autumn of 2006, CHAK were able to secure a Government-paid nurse for us to replace one of the two qualified nurses we lost. We would not have been able to cover our duty rota without this help.

The outpatients department has been running as usual. As well as accident and other emergency-type cases, a number of patients are under our continual care and supervision. These include TB and HIV/Aids patients, who come regularly for free routine drugs, blood tests and support and advice. As a result of the post election violence at the end of 2007, many thousands of people were displaced throughout Kenya and were forced to return to their own tribal areas. Some of these people were in the middle of antiretroviral and TB treatments. Some inevitably arrived at our clinic without their medication. Where they were on different treatment regimes than is usual in our district, the nursing staff did a commendable work in providing these patients with continuation of treatment.

The child welfare clinic on Mondays and Tuesdays continues and is very busy. A short time of worship is held with the mothers and their infants. A health talk is also given and from the middle of the year dried blood samples have been collected from infants whose mothers are HIV-positive. These are sent to Kisumu for testing for HIV, so that any infected infant can be properly cared for as soon as possible.

The ante-natal clinic also continues to be very well attended with approximately 20 new clients each week. One of our nurses has been trained in the new focussed antenatal care initiative and this is now practised in the facility. All our qualified staff (including laboratory staff) have been trained in Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (of HIV) and we continue to be highly commended by MOH and CHAK for our work in this area.

The sexually-transmitted diseases programme continues, although we no longer receive free medicines from MOH as the donor funding came to an end. Patients are now charged for their treatment.

In November 2007, we were able to start Voluntary Counselling and Testing for HIV/Aids. Two staff had been trained in VCT some time ago but we had not started the programme, because in some areas we needed to deviate somewhat from the National Guidelines because of Christian principle. This needed the consent of MOH. The Kenya Field Committee Meeting in November 2005 decided that I should take the matter up with MOH. This was done, and after negotiation and discussion we were registered as able to offer VCT services on our own terms. A good number of clients have availed themselves of this new service which we offer 3 days a week.

In the Autumn of 2007 a support group for HIV-positive patients was initiated. The group is well attended and a demonstration garden has been planted on the mission compound in an endeavour to encourage the patients to grow more nutritional vegetables at home to supplement their traditional, staple food. The patients tend the garden at their monthly meeting. Recently, the Aids Fund has been re-started and each HIV-positive patient on the clinic books is given free extra-nutritional flour, from which they make a daily porridge. One packet costs less than 20 pence and lasts a patient 7 days. I speak to and pray with the Group when they meet and at one meeting we had a profitable discussion on the biblical purity of worship maintained by the Free Presbyterian Church. The group wanted to know why our worship was so different from the other churches. Last time we spoke on the centrality of Christ. Many in Kenya speak of having “faith in God”, not realising that it is the Lord Jesus Christ – and Him crucified – who must be believed in for salvation.

The voluntary community health worker (CHW) is a vital link between the clinic and the community. He gives much support to the follow-up of TB and HIV patients. When blood samples are taken at the clinic for CD4 Count, he takes the blood direct to Kisii and collects the results. Previously, samples were being spoiled as they lay in Ogembo waiting transfer to Kisii. The CHW also arranges for TB patients to come to give sputum samples and these he takes for testing and collects the results, for a number of our patients are too weak to go themselves. The CHW also arranges and presents talks on malaria.

School Education and de-worming initiatives were undertaken as opportunity allowed. Having been under-staffed for part of the year, due to two nurses leaving, and with one nurse on maternity leave, we have not been able to do as much in these areas as we would have liked. For the same reasons, reluctantly we had to turn down a number of training opportunities and seminars for the qualified staff.

Mr. Andre Ploeg took over responsibility for the pharmacy from my wife in the Autumn of 2007, although she is on hand when necessary and still covers Sabbaths and when he is away. A number of new drugs have been introduced throughout the year. We are having a problem in getting the first line treatment for malaria (coartem) which used to be supplied freely to us via MEDS. Again, donor funding has diminished and it is a few months since we have received any supplies. We have been informed that, following pressure on MOH by CHAK, supplies should soon be available again. The post-election violence caused us some difficulties in getting medicines as the transport system was in chaos with very little security, even when under police escort. Vehicles were being burned, roads were closed and bridges had been destroyed. Even security firms were not sending their vehicles outside Nairobi. I was able to bring part of a MEDS order by plane from Nairobi and we managed by making some local, but costly, purchases and by the nurses using alternative medicines which were still in the pharmacy.

In October my wife was asked by MOH to join a 12 member strategic planning team which met for a week in Kisii town to prepare a detailed strategic plan and budget to reduce childhood illness in our district. Kenya is falling behind the 2015 millennium development goals. The forum was headed by national MOH with provincial support. Our involvement gave valuable insight into the role our clinic is expected to play in health care provision for children under five. Twenty easily achievable household practices are to be encouraged among the community. We were especially pleased that female circumcision – which is still practised by the majority of the Kisii tribe – was not only given the condemnation it deserves, but was highlighted as one of the cultural practices particularly needing to be eliminated.

So the ministry of the Kenya Mission to the community's health has continued for another year. Our prayerful desire is that the clinic would yet be used to lead some to seek the saving health of their never-dying souls.

DEPUTATION VISIT TO ZIMBABWE REPORT

Rev. J. R. Tallach

BETWEEN 11th-14th July 2007, at the invitation of the Zimbabwe Presbytery and request of the Foreign Missions Committee, I was in Zimbabwe to attend the ordination and induction of Rev. A. B. MacLean to the mission charge of Ingwenya. Arriving on Wednesday I had the Thursday morning weekly prayer meeting and later that day the Rev. J. MacLeod arrived safely from London. The next day, the day of Mr. MacLean's induction, Rev. J. MacLeod preached on Acts 26:22-23, "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day . . .", to a congregation of about 800 – 600 of whom were pupils. Forty members had signed the call and 41 adherents had concurred. After ordination and induction to the ministry of the Word and the charge at Ingwenya I addressed Mr. MacLean on the basis of the words of 2 Corinthians 5:14: "The love of Christ constraineth us . . .". Rev. P. Mzamo addressed the congregation. No doubt a fuller account of the day will be given by the Presbytery.

The next day I travelled to Mbumba and kept the services there on Sabbath. There were about 150 present at both services and a Bible study, held on the veranda of the Hospital after the second service, was attended by about 20 Hospital staff. This meeting is kept by Mr. Gloat Nkiwane, a teacher at the local primary school. Mr. Nkiwane has been appointed Hospital evangelist and is due to take up this post in December, DV. On Monday I had a conducted tour of the Hospital with Dr. Snoek. With the relentless advance of AIDS a large amount of medical effort has to be directed towards the community. I was glad to hear that the OI (Opportunistic Infections) Unit, recently built and forming the hospital base of the community work, has finally been approved by the

Government. Passing from the hospital to the school I met Mr. Mthandazelwa Dube, the headmaster and an elder of the church, who related some of the difficulties and expectations of the school. The Government have introduced pre-school classes. At the moment these meet under a tree in the school grounds but it is hoped to renovate an old classroom for their use. Mr. Dube introduced me to his Grade 7 class and I asked them questions based on John 3:16.

On Tuesday I returned to Ingwenya and on Thursday Mr. MacLeod left for Scotland and the Cameron communion began. Cameron is named after the late Rev. Neil Cameron, Glasgow, and is situated in the Fingo location a few miles from Ingwenya. The Fingos are one of the seven tribes which make up the kingdom of the Xhosa people. A preaching station was opened at Cameron a few years before a primary school was set up in 1938. Mrs Mzamo, a communicant member, aged 93 and the widow of Rev. P. Mzamo's brother, attended all the services. Mrs Mzamo can recall the distress caused by the death of Rev. J. B. Radasi at Bembesi Railway Siding on 4th November 1924. Readers will remember that Mr. Radasi had gone to Bembesi to welcome the Rev. J. Tallach, just arriving from Scotland, when he fell under the incoming train. Mrs. Mzamo also has a clear memory of sermons preached and communions held under ministers and missionaries over the intervening decades. Attendance ranged from 25 to 60 adults and a number of children and there was a degree of attention to the Word. The Day will declare it.

On 25th of July I returned safely home and would record my thanks to Mission staff and members of the indigenous church, all of whom made me feel very welcome throughout. We are indebted to the Lord for all travelling mercies and for every expression of the unity of the Spirit and bond of peace.

DOMINIONS AND OVERSEAS COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. A. Ross

IT is cause for thankfulness to the Most High that we were in a position to send a number of ministers as Church deputies to overseas congregations during the past synodical year. Your committee and the congregations abroad are grateful to Presbyteries for giving leave of absence to these ministers to visit our people in several countries and preach the Gospel to them.

One difficulty for some deputies is having to spend a long time away from their own congregations when they visit New Zealand, Australia and Singapore. Rev. Kenneth Macleod kindly undertook to spend eight weeks in these countries and was able to visit all the congregations. His labour in the Gospel was enjoyed by the ministers and congregations there.

Rev. John MacLeod visited the Singapore congregation for a number of Sabbaths but had to return early because of his wife's sudden illness. His visit was much valued by the congregation.

We may add that the passing away of Rev. John Macleod's wife has saddened the whole Church, as has the death of Rev. Hugh Cartwright's wife, and our deep sympathy goes out to both ministers in their great loss.

Rev. Roderick MacLeod, who has replaced Rev. G. G. Hutton as the interim moderator for the Kirk Session of our Chesley congregation in Canada, agreed to go to Chesley on behalf of the Committee and report on the work there. However, while there and shortly before the communion season in the congregation, Mr. MacLeod became ill. The Chesley Kirk Session asked Rev. Barry Whear to go out at very short notice to help, which he kindly did. The congregation appreciated the visits of both these ministers.

The Chesley Kirk Session is also responsible for overseeing what remains of what was once a thriving congregation in Vancouver. The church building there has now been sold and the proceeds held in reserve in the hope that perhaps in the not too distant future some suitable work may be engaged in for the furtherance of the Gospel in that great city. We are much indebted to Mr. John MacLeod, the deacon in Vancouver, for all the hard work he has done in disposing of the congregation's property. It has grieved him and others in Vancouver, as well as ourselves, that our witness as a Church there became so weak as to necessitate such a sad step. May the Lord arise yet again to plead His cause and enable us as a branch of His Church to be re-established there.

Rev. Neil Ross continues to be the interim moderator for the Kirk Session of the Santa Fe congregation in Texas. He reports that the congregation there, which has grown during the past year, has purchased and settled into their fine new place of worship and that they continue to enjoy the privileges of the everlasting Gospel. Rev. Bruce Jardine went to Santa Fe as Church deputy at the end of October, and the congregation is grateful for his labours there. He will present his own report of his visit. Our Texas congregation is, of course, the congregation from which Mr. Lyle Smith, probationer, and Mr. Jett Smith, student, set out to engage in preparation for the work of the ministry.

We are indebted to Mr. Ross and all other interim moderators, as are the various congregations, for undertaking cheerfully and ably their added responsibility of overseeing the work of the Gospel in those places, and we wish to see it prosper above our asking and thinking.

Our two ministers in the antipodes, Rev. Edward Rayner and Rev. Johannes van Dorp have submitted reports of their work for the past year. They, by the grace of God, remain faithful to the principles of the Word of God, and we are thankful that they have had a reasonable measure of health to continue their great calling of preaching Christ to lost sinners and feeding the Lord's people. Their work also takes them to the pastorless congregations in their Presbytery, including the one in Singapore, in their capacity as interim moderators for these. All the congregations there are also deeply indebted to the elders, without whom there would be no way of regularly maintaining church services

on Sabbath and mid-week, and the congregations which are without ministers pray for the day when the Lord will provide them with pastors “after his own heart”. Auckland, being the largest of these congregations, has a considerable number of young people. There are also pastorless congregations in Sydney, Wellington and Tauranga, and a very small group in Hastings. In Hastings the few people listen to recorded sermons because there is no elder in the area to conduct services. The Singapore congregation is also part of the Australia and New Zealand Presbytery and is under the interim moderatorship of Rev. E. Rayner, while Mr. B. Jong, who is the resident elder there, has the burden of keeping regular services and catechism classes. The congregation is growing slowly which is cause for rejoicing, and more so when we are sadly conscious of congregations diminishing in other parts of the Church.

The group of worshippers in Fornaci de Barga in Italy continues to gather each Sabbath but is still of no fixed abode as far as belonging to one denomination is concerned. However, Lucio Strata from our London congregation visited them in August and conducted the services one Sabbath, and this was much appreciated by our friends there.

The Eastern Europe Mission is also under the oversight of the Dominions and Overseas Committee, but a separate report about its work will be presented. This mission is not funded by the Dominions and Overseas Fund but by the Eastern Europe Fund, and we are very thankful to say that the fund has continued in credit until the present time. The fund is entirely for the work of the Gospel in Eastern Europe, and the main expenditure at the moment is the building of a Mission House in Odessa, incorporating a place of worship, literature storage and distribution facilities, and two flats. This project is not without its problems but there is cause for wonder at the great kindness of the Most High in making provision for us. We received not only the kind contributions of many friends but also two legacies which have helped greatly in meeting costs. Our prayer is that the new mission building will serve as a well-known centre for the spread of the Gospel in the Ukraine and elsewhere in Eastern Europe.

“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which you have shewed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister” (Hebrews 6:10).

AUSTRALIAN REPORT

Rev. E. A. Rayner

AT the time of writing we expect the visit of Rev. K. D. Macleod, God willing, during early New Year. We look forward to his return to this part of our Church and pray that the Lord will bless his visit to the encouragement of our congregations.

While his visit, which takes in all congregations of the Presbytery, is appreciated, some have expressed again the great need of a deputy to concentrate on the vacant sanctioned charges of Auckland and Sydney – as I reported last year. It would be very much appreciated here if divinity students, when they finish their theological courses, and before they are settled in pastoral charges, could visit our Presbytery. Not only would these vacant congregations have pulpit supply but also our people would become familiar with new additions to the ministry. This would also help new ministers to know the needs of our congregations better, even if they would not be led to minister permanently in this Presbytery. The importance of such deputation visits is emphasised again in view of the fact that the ages of our two ministers makes it increasingly difficult for them to continue travelling the long distances they have travelled in the past.

Thankfully the services in Grafton have continued to be well attended. There has been the addition of two new babies, both boys, to two of our young married couples. One baby has been baptised but the other was born only recently. We trust that the Lord will raise up another generation that will continue to hold fast the form of sound words.

It was also an encouragement to have two new members in full communion. May their feet be kept from falling and their eyes from tears – as Rev. William MacLean often prayed for new members in his own days here. We pray that the Lord will “stablish, strengthen, settle” them. Only as we are saved and kept by the power of God will there be the evidence of our being a holy and sanctified people who glory not in their shame but in God who does for His people more than they can ask or think.

Attendance in the Sydney congregation has continued as usual. The children of the young families are quickly growing up. The communion was held on the first Sabbath of September but there were no new communicants. The elders continue to conduct the services in a competent manner, and I supply the congregation from time to time as convenient. The people of the congregation faithfully attend the services, and it would be a great encouragement to them to have a Church deputy to give them pulpit supply for a few weeks – but, of course, it would be a still greater encouragement for them to have a minister settled over them.

We continue to pray that the Lord would raise up labourers for our vacant congregations and to assist in our widespread Australia and New Zealand Presbytery. May the Lord give the increase till “the little one becomes a thousand” and His praise is in all the earth.

NEW ZEALAND REPORT

Rev. J. A. T. van Dorp

THE secularisation of New Zealand almost became complete in the early months of 2007 when there was a move in the New Zealand Parliament to remove the prayer that is offered up by the Speaker of the House at the commencement of each sitting. The endeavour began in the previous December when a Dr. Anthony Hochberg and nine others presented a petition to Parliament asking for the wording of the prayer to be changed so that it would no longer be specifically Christian.

The prayer is as follows: "Almighty God, humbly acknowledging our need for Thy guidance in all things, and laying aside all private and personal interests, we beseech Thee to grant that we may conduct the affairs of this House and of our country to the glory of Thy holy name, the maintenance of true religion and justice, the honour of the Queen, and the public welfare, peace, and tranquillity of New Zealand, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

The Speaker of the House, Margaret Wilson, wrote to the members to obtain their views and asked for an indication of whether they thought the prayer should be scrapped or changed, perhaps removing the reference to Jesus Christ. The controversy came to a height when the Prime Minister, Helen Clark, was attending an Asia-Pacific Interfaith conference at Waitangi in May 2007. Bishop Brian Tamaki of the Destiny Church and about 3,000 followers staged a peaceful protest at the venue of the conference, the Copthorne Hotel, where he delivered a stirring address. In this speech he questioned moves "to allow foreign religions and foreign beliefs and other philosophies to proliferate in our country and begin to defile the very soil of this land". The initiative of the Speaker of the House in seeking the views of members resulted in a response of 88, of whom the majority, 84 per cent, declared themselves in favour of keeping the prayer as it was. While this decision pleased most of their constituents it is feared that on the part of the politicians it was largely of a political nature.

Consequently we are not able to report that Christianity in this nation is in a healthy condition. Regrettably, this has its effects on our congregations. The Day of Humiliation and Prayer appointed annually by our Synod is needed in this country as much as it is in Britain.

It is evident that our communities also bear the marks of a defiant opposition to God's revealed will so that there is much need to implore the God of heaven to return in the power of His Spirit to these long desolations. One aspect of the prevailing need is the number of vacant pulpits; there is not only a famine of hearing the Word of God but also a widespread dearth of labourers.

At the same time we should be thankful that the services in the four localities where our denomination is represented have been maintained throughout the year in the two sanctioned charges, Auckland and Gisborne, the one church extension charge, Wellington, and the one preaching station, Tauranga. In this situation I am much indebted to the office bearers, that

is, eight elders and one deacon, who are able to help me in continuing the services regularly.

It is also a matter for gratitude that the Dominion and Overseas committee were able to arrange the visit of Rev. K. D. Macleod to the congregations of our Presbytery for a period of eight Sabbaths in the beginning of this year. This time frame was sufficient for him to visit each congregation and spend a Sabbath in it, and two Sabbaths in Singapore. I am particularly appreciative of the help he gave at the Auckland communion and in the meeting of Presbytery. The double allocation for Singapore made welcome allowance for the Deputy to have a stop-off after a long flight from Britain and again on the return journey from Sydney.

On 20th December, Gisborne was struck by an earthquake measuring 6.8 on the Richter scale, the epicentre of which was under the sea at a depth of 40 km and at a distance of 50 km offshore to the southeast. The violent shaking of the earth's crust for 30 seconds was the cause of much fear and the voluntary evacuation of hundreds who took flight to higher ground in the surrounding hills to escape a possible tsunami. The only death which occurred was after the earthquake and as the result of a heart attack, and there were only a few minor injuries. However, a state of emergency, which lasted several days, had to be introduced as there was a considerable amount of damage to buildings in the central business district, the repair bill for which is expected to amount to many millions of dollars. With an earthquake of that magnitude it is a matter for great thankfulness to our gracious God that there were no severe injuries nor many deaths, but I did not see any public acknowledgment of these mercies. Rather, our society seems to be characterised by an atheistic attitude of "let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die".

Another indication of this prevailing spirit was the bringing in of the New Year in Gisborne by hosting the Rhythm and Vines music extravaganza, which attracted about 15,000 visitors to this city and featured many bands from all over the world. Before the event one local newspaper reported, "Rhythm and Vines is all go, despite Thursday's earthquake". Its organiser said, "Let's show the world that we can rock it bigger than the earthquake" – whatever she meant by that.

May the days be hastened when the final worldwide revival will gather in the vast multitudes who shall be gathered in, for the earth shall be "filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14). Then the situation will be remarkably changed and the big gatherings will be Gospel gatherings to the glory of the triune God. "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them" (Psalm 68:18).

SINGAPORE REPORT

Rev. E. A. Rayner

THE usual services are conducted twice each Sabbath and at the prayer meeting every Wednesday evening, and the witness of our Church continues to be maintained in this large cosmopolitan city. The present location for the services has proved very suitable and the meeting hall is most satisfactory. The responsibility for conducting the services falls on Mr. Bernard Yong, the local elder, who has a heavy business schedule and is often abroad, but he continues his duties in the congregation week by week.

The congregation is encouraged by the visits of those of our ministers who are able to give them pulpit supply from time to time. Rev. John MacLeod, London, kindly preached on two Sabbaths, and at the time of writing, Rev. K. D. Macleod, South Harris, hopes to spend two Sabbaths in the congregation on his Church deputation visit to our Presbytery shortly, DV. I managed to supply the pulpit on two Sabbaths in May and also preached there at the time of their communion season.

The importance of giving the congregation ministerial supply must be stressed, in view of the comparatively recent founding of the congregation, and in order that it may be “stablished, strengthened and settled” in the distinctive principles of the Church. This would be helpful not only to Mr. Yong who, as the only resident elder, has a heavy burden of duties resting on him, but also to those who seek to understand our position better before committing themselves to being members in full communion.

The congregation, which has increased and become better established in more recent years, represents the Free Presbyterian Church well in its witness. Morning services have around 35 people in attendance, and it is a pleasure to enjoy their fellowship.

The Lord’s Supper was dispensed on the first Sabbath of December. Three new communicants were added to the communion roll, and this again encourages the witness of those who are in full agreement with the scriptural principles of our Church. There are now two male communicants besides the elder, and this I trust, with the Lord’s blessing, will prove a strengthening to Mr. Yong’s hand. We also had the baptism of an infant girl, a recent addition to the congregation. The Session was helped during the communion season by the addition of the elder, Mr. Geoff Kidd, Grafton.

We hope and pray that the Lord will raise up from their midst one who would be suitable for the ministry among them. The congregation covets your prayers and is appreciative of the help given to it.

EASTERN EUROPE MISSION REPORT

Rev. D. A. Ross

WE are conscious that each year's report to the Synod has a certain sameness; but we wish to stress that the important work of spreading the Gospel proceeds steadily by our distributing Bibles and literature over a wide field in Eastern Europe. We are thankful that in God's providence it is possible for us to carry on this work by His providing money and manpower.

The main activities of the Mission during the past year were as follows:

Distribution of Bibles and literature

The flow of requests sent to our Odessa address continues unabated, and Mr. Igor Zadoroshniy diligently perseveres with the work, sending out by post numerous Bibles (at least 100 per month) and many pieces of Christian literature. There is, as far as we can judge, genuine appreciation on the part of the recipients of these Bibles and literature, and many of them send donations. In fact, the amount received in donations in recent times is more than the postage expenses for each month. A separate report has been given by Mr Zadoroshniy on his work.

Bible distribution from our Glasgow office still goes on in response to requests which come directly to us. This task is done by Miss Norma Morrison and others, to whom we are indebted. However, we do not receive as many requests as we did some years ago.

The Trinitarian Bible Society has yet again been very generous in providing Bibles and Scripture calendars. Also, a friend in Canada continues to donate a number of Russian Bibles each year for distribution.

Through the endeavours of missions world wide there are now a considerable number of reformed books translated into Russian and published in Eastern Europe. Many professing Christians, once steeped in Arminian teaching and confronted with the correct teaching of the Word of God, have embraced these teachings. We as a Church have contributed only a small number of such publications, but we are encouraged that through, for example, our Russian edition of the *Shorter Catechism*, a number have gladly received its Biblical teachings, as have some pastors who teach these doctrines to their congregations.

Our own church members in Odessa, for example, were once Baptist and Arminian in outlook but came in contact with the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and, through the grace of God, wholeheartedly embraced the teachings of Scripture so ably summarised there.

Translation work

We are disappointed that the translation and printing of reformed literature has been hindered over the last two years because of our preoccupation with the building of our new centre for our mission work. The Russian translation of

Sermons by Rev. Donald MacFarlane was our last production – a title that is proving popular among Baptists.

At the moment we are reprinting our set of Gospel tracts, and this will be followed shortly by a reprint of our series of pamphlets exposing the heresies of such sects as the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Seventh Day Adventists, and our leaflet entitled *Which Church?*.

The translation of the Book of Psalms into metre by Mrs. Inna Levytskiyy has slowed down because of her other commitments, but soon we will have 50 Psalms fully translated, each one with its own suitable tune or tunes. She continues the work but will now have the help of her mother and a gentleman in the congregation.

Also, we expect that the new translation of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* will be in print in a few months time, God willing. The translation is being done by Mrs. Natasha Hopkins, while the translation of Robert Shaw's *Exposition of the Westminster Confession* is being completed by Mrs. Tanya Ball. These translations have been double checked by a number of editors, and Mrs. Hopkins and Mrs. Ball will edit each other's work to ensure that they are in harmony.

We are grateful to both Mr. Dmytro Levytskiyy and Mr. Igor Zadoroshniy for the valuable help they give in translating literature and editing some other translations.

It is our objective to also provide more teaching material for older children and young people, in the form of explanations of the doctrines of the Reformed faith, each chapter concluding with a number of questions. A considerable number of people continue asking for such Scripture material for their children. Despite the longstanding teaching of communism in the schools of Ukraine, it is evident that the communists have not succeeded in wiping out religion. The schools are teeming with children from several religious backgrounds and therefore what need there is that our Mission would do more for bringing them to a sound knowledge of the truth of Scripture, which alone is the "word of salvation".

New building for the Mission

We have been very busy during the past year in connection with the building of our new mission centre in Odessa. It is hoped that it will be completed in June or July, God willing. The cost of the building has escalated, due largely to 17 per cent inflation, and also to synod committees halting the work until they had considered certain matters about the project. Consequently the contractor had to be paid for increases in his costs. The building is now being finished internally, and also the high security wall is being built around the whole perimeter.

The building is handsome and well constructed. The walls are of red semi-glazed facing bricks externally with an inner leaf of insulating stone from local quarries. The windows are double glazed and well spaced, letting in ample light. In the basement, where the central heating boiler is located, there are also

three large storage rooms for Bibles, literature, and humanitarian aid. On the ground floor there is the meeting room for public worship, as well as an office and garage. The first floor consists of living quarters, and above that there is a large attic which, hopefully, can be put to good use at a later date. We commend the builders for their skills but we are especially grateful to Mr. Dmytro Levytskiyy, who used to be in the building trade, and to Mr. Igor Zadoroshniy, both of whom are attending to many matters during the construction process. We are also grateful to have the invaluable advice of Mr. Levytskiyy's uncle, who himself is a building contractor.

We hope that the completed building, which is situated in a prominent location at the edge of the old city, will prove to be a Bethel to many, and a centre from which "the word of the truth of the gospel" will radiate throughout Eastern Europe.

Church services

Since Mr. Dmytro Levytskiyy has begun studying in preparation for the ministry, he does not assist in taking services meantime. These are conducted by Mr. Igor Zadoroshniy, who reads a sermon or exposition twice on Sabbath and at the mid-week prayer meeting service. The services are held in the public worship room at Mr. Zadoroshniy's home (for which permission was given by the City Council some years ago). A few more people have begun to attend the services and we hope that in the providence of the Most High other people will more readily attend when the place of worship will change from a private address to that of the new mission building.

We had a communion season in February, when Rev. Neil Ross assisted with the services, but the attendances were slightly less than last year. There was one new male member, an elderly man who has vivid memories of the dreadful persecution his parents had to endure because of their Christian beliefs and the fact that they were Jews. Mr. Igor Zadoroshniy has spent considerable time with him teaching the doctrines of the Shorter Catechism. We hope he will be very useful to the cause of Christ in Odessa and especially in helping Mrs. Inna Levytskiyy with the translation of the Psalms into metre, since he is gifted in poetry.

Humanitarian aid

We have made two runs to transport humanitarian aid, one undertaken by Messrs. Edward Ross and Christopher Lamont to Odessa Children's Hospital. Most of the aid was of a medical nature, the bulk of which was received as surplus from Raigmore Hospital. (We also took Ukrainian Bibles which were given to Mr. Igor Zadoroshniy to increase his stock for distribution.)

In Romania, the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Central Eastern Europe expresses its deep thankfulness to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland for the humanitarian aid delivered in October and especially for the Bibles and literature gifted to it (the load included more than 1,000 Bibles, 8,000 calendars, 600 Gospels of John, and various Christian books).

As has been already noted in one of the reports in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, friends in Holland have kindly provided a truck, and other friends designed and fitted out the living quarters in it. The value of all this amounts to a considerable sum of money and we are much indebted to these friends.

Conclusion

The deeply appreciated support of many friends is the human means whereby the work of the Mission continues in Eastern Europe. And were it not for the large legacies left to the Mission last year, the new building would not be at the stage it is at present. But praise and thanks is to be given above all to the gracious God of eternity who has richly provided for us.

It is remarkable and further reason for praise to the Most High that after many years of persecuting communism and a ban on religious freedom, it is now comparatively easy to spread the Word of God in the Ukraine and Romania as well as to meet for public worship.

Undoubtedly there are difficulties, and we know that especially in connection with building the mission centre, not least in dealing with the complexities of Ukrainian law in securing a completely watertight ownership title. However, we are following the advised path of what is called "joint ownership" as the best way forward until the time comes when the building can be made over to the congregation.

While we are not worthy to have a part in any work pertaining to the Kingdom of Heaven, we are constrained to do what we can, while we can, in Eastern Europe. May God, who has opened doors for us, continue with us in His great mercy and prosper His Gospel by turning many sinners to "behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

REPORT ON ODESSA MISSION WORK DONE BY MR. IGOR ZADOROSHNIY

Rev. D. A. Ross

THIS Report is a summary of the work being done in the Ukraine by Mr. Igor Zadoroshniy, the Administrator of our Mission in Odessa. It is written on his behalf and is based on his reports (kindly translated for us by Mr. Dmytro Levyitskiyy) which he submitted to the Field Committee of the Mission.

Mr Zadoroshniy's work of Bible and literature distribution is done throughout the Ukraine and in a number of other countries. When it becomes known in certain places that we distribute Bibles and Christian literature free of charge, people are attracted to request these. The policy behind free distribution has been, and still is, that many people who genuinely cannot afford to purchase a Bible or literature are not deprived of the opportunity to obtain them. Also, should we resort to selling we would be involved in what is

beyond our capabilities at present – an enormous burden of extra work because of tax laws and other regulations. Distribution is done in regions outwith Odessa as Mr. Zadoroshniy feels that until we are established in a permanent place of public worship it is not wise to advertise our activities too much in the city. As it is, Mr. Zadoroshniy thought it prudent 11 years ago to obtain permission from the city council to hold public worship in his house, and thus to obviate problems that might arise as a result of any neighbour complaining to the authorities about his home being used for such a purpose.

Most Bibles and literature have been distributed by parcel post – a total of 729 parcels were made up and posted by Mr. Zadoroshniy during the past year. A typical literature parcel contains the *Shorter Catechism*, the *Mother's Catechism*, the *Apostolic Church*, Gospel tracts and a large selection of leaflets exposing the dangers of the cults – of which there are many in the Ukraine. Larger books sent out were Russian and Ukrainian Bibles (a total of 937) and the *Westminster Confession of Faith* in Russian (a total of 401); the *Confession* is sent to those who show a deeper interest in the Bible.

As was noted in an earlier report, it was the Trinitarian Bible Society which, with the generous help of a friend, gave a grant of 12,000 Ukrainian Kulish Bibles to our Mission in Odessa. Presently there are less than 700 of these in stock for distribution. We pray that the way will be open for the continued provision of the Kulish Bible which is very popular in Central Ukraine.

With each parcel is sent a request for a donation towards postage expenses (which amounted to £512 in 2007). The positive responses are numerous, in some cases people sending more than the cost of the postage, with the result that for the first time the donations have covered postage costs for the whole year. During our visit in February one request for Bibles came to hand from a country Primary School and the letter contained 70 grivnas (about £7) to cover postage.

The fact that Mr. Zadoroshniy was once a journalist no doubt stands him in good stead in handling a large volume of correspondence. Not only does he place adverts in numerous regional newspapers throughout the Ukraine, but also replies to each person who sends a letter of request – thus he has written at least 729 such letters last year. Many of these requests are accompanied by queries of a religious nature, to which Mr. Zadoroshniy seeks to give clear Scriptural answers. He also frequently answers queries by email and on website message boards.

On several occasions he has travelled around the Odessa District visiting small groups of believers who profess to accept Calvinistic doctrine and who have come out from Arminian churches. He seeks to help them by giving advice and supplying literature.

Another of his tasks is the distribution of Scripture calendars. Once again we are indebted to the Trinitarian Bible Society for providing *Words of Life* calendars, 10,000 of which were distributed by Mr. Igor Zadoroshniy in Odessa and throughout the Ukraine.

The journalistic expertise of Mr. Zadoroshniy is also useful to the mission in maintaining a good standard of Russian in our translation work. From

time to time he publishes articles in Christian newspapers which have a circulation in the Ukraine, Russia, USA and Germany. For example, one of his more recent articles showed the unscripturalness of observing the Feast of Saint Valentine (one of the so-called saints venerated in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church).

Some other activities he engaged in on behalf of the Mission were: participating in a Christian Book Exhibition in the Odessa City Council chambers, attending sessions of the City Council by invitation to speak about religious and charity work issues when these were on the agenda, and presenting and reading to the Council a petition for forwarding to the President requesting that a weekday and not the Lord's day be used for government elections.

Opportunities also arose for him to give a lecture on Calvinism to students at the International Christian University, Odessa, and to distribute 250 *Shorter Catechisms* among them. He also gave a lecture on the moral law to students in the Odessa Technological Academy. It was interesting that the Professor of Philosophy in the University attended two of the services of our communion season in February and talked with us afterward. Mr Zadoroshniy is also contributing to an internet religious forum discussion on Calvinism, and on the doctrine of election in particular, and is using the *Confession of Faith* to present the Reformed view.

This, then, is some of the work done by our Mission in Odessa through Mr. Zadoroshniy, but like any work done on behalf of the Church of God, it will be fruitless without God's blessing. We crave, therefore, the Lord's gracious intervention to multiply the seed sown (2 Corinthians 9:10). It is exceedingly heartening that He has promised, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: 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).

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO SINGAPORE

Rev. J. MacLeod

MY visit to Singapore began on my arrival there at Changi Airport on Friday, 24th August 2007. Mr. Bernard Yong was there to meet and welcome me in his own kind, generous way. The following two Sabbaths I took the services in the Metropolitan YMCA building, morning and evening, as well as the prayer meetings. The intention was that I should be there for three Sabbaths altogether, but before the final Sabbath came I was informed that my wife was seriously ill in San Francisco and I had to leave Singapore immediately to be at her side.

This brief report places on record that I found the Singapore congregation in a very healthy state. It was a great privilege to be among them again and

find so many worshipping together under the auspices of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland and doing so strictly adhering to the form of worship practised in our Church from its inception.

They showed me “no little kindness” over the period of my sojourning among them, and I shall always feel indebted to them for that. Especially would I desire to record my gratitude to Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Yong and their family, not only for their great kindness to me over my stay, but also for their help in facilitating my sad, hurried departure on 8th September.

It is fitting that I should render thanks to Him who took me from destination to destination in safety. I returned to the United Kingdom on 24th September 2007. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.”

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO TEXAS

Rev. J. B. Jardine

I LEFT Stornoway bound for Texas via Glasgow and London on Monday, 22nd October. I arrived safely in Houston, Texas, on Tuesday, 23rd October, and was met at the airport by Mr. Carl Smith, one of the deacons of our congregation in Santa Fe. On the way from the airport we passed countless church buildings of many denominations, reflecting the religious diversity of Texas.

I stayed with Mr. Carl Smith and his family on Tuesday night and then with another of the deacons, Mr. Joseph Smith, for the remainder of my visit. Even though Mr. Joseph Smith and his family had just arrived home from the Chesley communion, after a drive of well over 24 hours, Mrs. Smith had everything well prepared for us when we arrived. Mr. Alasdair MacPherson, from Stonehaven, an assessor elder for the congregation, arrived on Wednesday afternoon, and that evening we had 20 present at the prayer meeting, three of whom were young children.

Perhaps the best way show the size of the congregation and its level of commitment is to give the numbers of those attending the communion season services. These began on Thursday morning when 17 attended. Messrs. David Kuiper and Gilbert Zekveld, assessor elders from Chesley, arrived for the evening service, at which 20 people were present. The fellowship meeting on Friday morning was attended by 16 people, eight of whom (two elders, two deacons, and four communicants) were called to speak. Twenty-seven people, including a family of six who had travelled from Richmond, attended the evening service. Another assessor elder, Mr. Calum Finlayson, formerly of the Perth congregation and currently working in New Orleans, arrived for the Saturday morning service, at which 23 were present. The Kirk Session, which met afterward, did not receive any new communicants but it decided to have

morning prayer meetings in addition to the other communion prayer meetings, in line with the practice of the home Church. On Sabbath, when the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered, 32 were present in the morning and 30 in the evening. Twenty-four attended the Monday thanksgiving service.

At the conclusion of the thanksgiving service, a congregational meeting was held at which the first steps were taken for the calling of a minister to be their pastor. There are presently 18 communicants on the communion roll, 16 of whom are residing in the Santa Fe area.

The congregation still worships in a rented building, but it is in the process of purchasing an existing church building in Santa Fe. On Saturday afternoon I was taken to view it and saw that it is suitable for use as both a church and manse.

During the following week I had the opportunity of meeting most of the Smith family in an informal setting on Tuesday, when I visited Mr. Ernie Smith and his wife Terry. On Wednesday, twelve people attended the evening prayer meeting. I was taken on Thursday by Mrs. Terry Smith and her son Samuel to San Antonio to see the ruins of the Alamo, a former mission and fortress compound. It was at the Alamo, in 1836, that nearly 200 Texans were massacred after a siege of 13 days. Their sacrifice was one of the main elements which resulted in the Texas Declaration of Independence from Mexico that year and ensured the religious and civil liberties of Texans today. Previous to independence, colonists were required to pledge their acceptance of Roman Catholicism and to pay a tithe to the Roman Catholic Church. On Friday I was taken to see the City of Galveston and the NASA mission control at Houston, and then visited the homes Mr. and Mrs. Caleb Hembd and Mr. and Mrs. Ernie Smith.

On the second and last Sabbath of my visit we had 23 attending the morning service and 21 in the evening. One man and his daughter had driven for four hours from Dallas to join us in our worship. On Monday afternoon Mr. David Elliot of the congregation drove me to the airport, and next evening I arrived home safely.

I am most thankful for the warm kindness and generous hospitality that was shown to me by the people of the congregation during my time among them, and I must acknowledge the great goodness of God in helping me to perform my duties there and in giving me travelling mercies.

In the event of a pastor being settled in Santa Fe, the potential for growth is almost limitless. The area around Santa Fe is one of the most densely populated in America. There is also a mission field opening up with the ever-increasing number of immigrants from Central and South America. "A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time" (Isaiah 60:22).

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO THE AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND PRESBYTERY

Rev. K. D. Macleod

MY visit as deputy to the Australia and New Zealand Presbytery in the early part of this year took place almost 10 years from the time when my previous visit was coming to an end. I left home on 16th January and, having spent the night in Glasgow, flew the next day to London's Heathrow Airport. My flight to Singapore was seriously delayed, as one runway was out of action after a British Airways flight had landed just short of the runway earlier in the day. However, we reached Singapore safely on the evening of the following day, local time.

We had no congregation in Singapore at the time of my previous visit to Australia and New Zealand, so it is a matter of thankfulness to find around 35 people gathering for public worship on Sabbath mornings, though attendances are lower in the evenings.

On the Monday evening I left for Sydney, arriving the next morning, and from there I flew to Auckland. The next evening I conducted the prayer meeting before the communion season in the congregation there and I took my share of the services on that occasion. On the Friday afternoon I took part in the meeting of the Australia and New Zealand Presbytery.

I remained in Auckland to take the prayer meeting the following Wednesday, and the next day I set out for Gisborne, where I took the services on the following Sabbath, the first in February. That week I preached in Havelock North and in Eketahuna. On the next Sabbath I took the two services in Wellington, and the prayer meeting the following Wednesday. The final Sabbath of my time in New Zealand was spent in Tauranga. On the Monday I flew to Auckland and took the prayer meeting there that evening.

The next day I flew to Sydney and conducted the prayer meeting there that evening – and also the services the following Sabbath, the last in February, and the prayer meeting on the Tuesday of the next week. I then visited our other Australian congregation, in Grafton, where I took a prayer meeting and the Sabbath services. The following Tuesday brought me back to Sydney, where I again conducted a prayer meeting before returning to Singapore. I arrived there late on the Wednesday evening and took a prayer meeting on the Thursday. On my return I found that the congregation had bought a second vehicle to bring people to the Sabbath services; one vehicle operates from the east of the city and the other from the west. Having this second vehicle will result in a significant saving in time, compared with one driver picking up people from opposite ends of the city. Both sides of each vehicle indicate that it belongs to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland (Singapore) and carry the further words, "Reformed in Doctrine, Worship and Practice". I spent my final Sabbath away from home in Singapore and arrived back in Glasgow Airport near midnight on Monday, 10th March.

I have great reason for thankfulness to the Most High after being taken safely, and in good health, all the thousands of miles from Leverburgh to Wellington and back again, over a period of eight weeks. But I must also acknowledge the great kindness which I received wherever I went – both from those with whom I stayed and others who entertained me in other ways. It was all much appreciated.

It was clear that the people in all the various places mentioned value a visit from a deputy. There is an obvious need for such visits to congregations where there is no minister. But I also believe that, in the interests of maintaining contact with the church in Scotland, it is important for deputies to visit congregations which have had a pastor set over them. I was also much struck during my time in Australia and New Zealand with the fact that both Rev. E. A. Rayner and Rev. J. A. T. van Dorp, while able to continue to carry out the duties of the ministry, are becoming older. I do hope that, in the Lord's kindness, they will be granted continued health and strength for years to come. It should, however, be a matter of concern, and earnest prayer, that other men would be raised up to go out as ambassadors for Christ within the bounds, in particular, of the Australian and New Zealand Presbytery. God's Word was proclaimed in each part of the Presbytery during this visit; may He give the increase!

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO CANADA

Rev. R. MacLeod

IN the home of one of our families in the Chesley congregation hangs a neatly written quote from a Puritan writer who understood the difference between the religion of the Covenant of Works and that of the Covenant of Grace. The late Mr. Gerrit Schuit had been so impressed with the appropriateness of the sentiments that he had it neatly copied and distributed at the church door, recommending it to all. It is as follows: "As in wars, the chief strength of the soldiers lieth in their Captain, so in spiritual conflicts, all a Christian's strength is in Christ and from Him. For, before our conversion, we were of no strength: and since our conversion, we are not sufficient of ourselves to think a good thought. And, to work out from the saints all self-confidence, God by their falls, teaches them to rejoice in the Lord Jesus, and to have no confidence in the flesh."

By these principles Mr. Schuit pursued that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord, and earnestly desired that others would do so also.

It used to be the case that when the standard bearer fell in battle there were others whose duty it was to raise the standard again. Mr. Schuit, a great standard bearer in Chesley for many years, has laid down his burden in the Church militant and others must come forward to take the strain of hoisting the standard in their own generation. There being no minister yet settled over the congregation, this burden naturally falls on the remaining elders.

There are many throughout the church who have a prayerful interest in our Church's witness in Chesley. We might mention some things to encourage them so that, if they get near to God at the Throne of Grace, they would continue to remember our congregation there.

In the grace and providence of God, where there is a work to be continued, the Chief Shepherd, the Head of the Church, will be preparing men to be standard bearers in their own day. Such is the case in Chesley.

There are people in the congregation, like Aaron and Hur, who will hold up the hands of their elders, even "until the going down of the sun" and we hope that they will be able, in the goodness of God, to say, as Moses and Israel did, "Jehovah Nissi".

One hears of several people in North America, disillusioned with their own churches, seeking to identify themselves with the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. This must be due in a large measure to the manner in which our friends in Chesley commend the Gospel. Their homes are warm and welcoming Christian homes. There is a keen desire to frame their lives according to the Word of God. There is a good understanding and strong attachment to the founding principles of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

Numerically the congregation is stronger than some in Scotland. The numbers are between 30 and 40 each Sabbath. A large proportion of the congregation attends the prayer meetings. There are 5 young families. Since I was last there in 2004, several new faces have appeared. One family, which has recently moved from Holland, seems attracted to the congregation. The family of the late Mr. Stephen Smith are in Chesley for as long as the immigration authorities will allow them.

It can be said that the testimony of the Free Presbyterian Church is respected in other parts of Ontario. At a Free Presbyterian service arranged and advertised to be held in Mt. Elgin (which is two hours travel south of Chesley) more than 100 people, with no formal attachment to our Church, turned out. We should be so thankful, when there are so many detractors at home, that we have friends abroad.

One of the greatest needs in Chesley is that of a minister of Christ to administer to them the mysteries of God. Deputies receive a warm welcome. I was very comfortably accommodated with Rick and Inez Bouman on their farm. While I was in Chesley, I became unwell. I wish to record my gratitude to Rev. Barry Whear for coming, at very short notice, to conduct those communion and other services which I was not able to take. I am most grateful for the untiring kindness, especially during my sickness, of Mr. and Mrs. Bouman and their family. On the morning of the day on which I left Chesley, I had visits from several in the congregation, some of whom I had not been able to visit. It was very enjoyable and profitable for me. David and Erica Schuit kindly took me to the airport for my flight home. Regarding all our friends in Canada, we say, "We in the name of God the Lord do wish you to be blessed".

TRAINING OF THE MINISTRY COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. J. R. Tallach

THREE of our students, Dr. A. W. MacColl, Mr. G. B. MacDonald and Mr. J. Smith started their studies in New Testament and related subjects under Rev. H. Cartwright in September 2007. Mr. Nopel Sibanda passed the Divinity entrance exam in August and the Committee are indebted to Rev. P. Mzamo and Rev. A. MacLean for their help in preparing Mr. Sibanda for this exam. The Lord willing, Dr. MacColl will be ready for licensing this year.

Mr. Sibanda also required a visa from the British Government to enter the country and begin his studies in Edinburgh with the other students. First the courses run by the Church had to be recognised by the Government and the Church put in a list of recognised Providers of Education in Britain. This first requirement was met and the Church is now on the Required List. The entrance visa was refused and it was arranged that Mr. Sibanda go to Sengera to study under Rev. K. Watkins, who himself was provided with a very full out-line of the course for that year by Rev. H. Cartwright. The Committee wish to thank Mr. Watkins for shouldering this considerable extra burden at very little notice. Though studying in Kenya, Mr. Sibanda is expected to sit the same class exams and exit exams as his fellow students in Edinburgh. Despite the disturbed state of Kenya at present, tuition has continued at Sengera.

The problem of the registration of the Church mentioned above has not gone away as the Government has changed the legislation and we will have to go through the process again under the new conditions. A fresh application for a visa for Mr. Sibanda will also have to be made. Mr. Julian Turnbull, a lawyer in London, has been of great assistance in dealing with the Immigration authorities on our behalf.

Mr. D. Levytsky has not made the progress in his studies we would like, despite sitting the Cambridge Advanced English exam in June 2007 and re-sitting in December. As reported last year, Mr. Levytsky is due to sit the Divinity Entrance Exam in August this year, DV.

The Theology Conference in Glasgow in December was fairly well attended and lively discussion followed each paper – usually a good indicator of interest both in the subject chosen and the paper delivered. The schedule for this year's Conference in Inverness has not been fully settled but papers and speakers have been agreed on "D. L. Moody", "the History of Justification", "Regeneration", "James Fraser, Alness", and "the Fatherhood of God". The Committee would encourage conference attendees to read round these subjects and thus make the Conference not only a well attended but also a well informed occasion.

"All thy children shall be taught of the Lord and great shall be the peace of thy children."

THEOLOGICAL TUTOR'S REPORT

Rev. H. M. Cartwright

THIS report is written early in the third term of the theological session. The classes have been taken in Edinburgh by Dr. A. MacColl (third year), Mr. G. MacDonald (second year) and Mr. J. Smith (first year), and by Mr. N. Sibanda (first year) in Kenya under the supervision of Rev. K. W. Watkins. We were all disappointed, for his sake and for our own, that Mr. Sibanda was unable to join his fellow students. Mr. Watkins has readily undertaken the extra burden. We have endeavoured to supply Mr. Sibanda with all the written material provided to the students here and he has been taking the same examinations as the other students. The students have all applied themselves with diligence to the work of the classes and have done well in the examinations hitherto. Discussions in class have been sustained and, we trust, profitable.

The classes have basically followed the pattern of previous years and have endeavoured to consolidate a grasp of the following subjects in which, we trust, each makes its own contribution to preparation for the work of the ministry.

Greek and New Testament studies

The aim of the class was to consolidate a working knowledge of the basics of the language through revision of J. W. Wenham's *The Elements of New Testament Greek* and reference, when appropriate, to other works of a comparable standard, hopefully providing some basis for lifelong personal study and for moving on to the attainment of something akin to professional proficiency. The Greek Text for regular reading and translation in class, with discussion of grammatical, exegetical and theological points, was the *Gospel according to Mark*. This was interspersed with some representative passages from other parts of the New Testament. In view of the exhortation of 2 Timothy 2:15 ("Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"), the students presented exegetical papers from time to time and some consideration was given to the principles of Grammatical, Historical and Theological Interpretation.

A survey of *Textual Criticism and the Canon of the New Testament* was conducted in connection with the study of Chapter 1 of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, using some of the various limited resources. This is an area where little material wholly in accord with our Biblical and Confessional position is readily available.

In *New Testament Introduction and Theology* an effort was made to study the authorship, background, theme, outline and specially significant aspects of each of the New Testament books, drawing upon the better of the various more conservative *Introductions*, each of which has its own strengths and weaknesses.

English Bible

Students privately read the entire New Testament in English for the purposes of the Course and were given time limits and assessed by occasional examinations. The Church is entitled to expect a high level of competence in the knowledge of the English Bible from her prospective ministers.

Catechetics

This course began with a brief survey of the history and use of Creeds and Confessions and the origins of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. The entire *Confession* was systematically studied throughout the Session with the aid of such volumes as *The Confession of Faith: A Handbook of Christian Doctrine expounding the Westminster Confession*, by A. A. Hodge, and the *Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith*, by Robert Shaw, supplemented by reference to other commentators on the *Confession* and to other theologians as various points arose.

Church polity and practice

This course began with discussion of what the Church is and what its functions are in the world, basically using Chapters XXV to XXIX of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the relevant parts of John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book IV*, James Bannerman's *The Church of Christ* and William Cunningham's *Historical Theology*. Consideration was given to the biblical principles of Presbyterianism and it and other forms of Church Government were subjected to scrutiny, account being taken of Chapters XXX and XXXI of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the Westminster Assembly's *The Form of Presbyterial Church Government*, Thomas Witherow's *The Apostolic Church: Which is It?* and the relevant parts of the above works of James Bannerman and William Cunningham. There was also some discussion of the principles set out in the "four books of the Reformation" – *The Scots Confession, The Book of Common Order and The First and Second Books of Discipline*. For the study of the practice of Presbyterian principles in the various courts of the Church, the basic text book was *A Manual of the Practice of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland* (Second Edition, 1999), the aim being that men entering upon the ministry would be acquainted with the basic principles of Church Government and Discipline and be able to find their way around the *Manual* and around the courts of the Church.

As agreed by the Training of the Ministry Committee, it is expected that before the end of the third term advice will be given to the students by Mrs. Sheena Campbell on the use and care of the voice. This assistance, voluntarily given, is much appreciated.

I appreciate having been favoured with the opportunity to, perhaps, be of a little assistance to some who have been sent to preach the Gospel. We believe that there is biblical warrant for the training of the rising ministry by those

who are already ministers. The Old Testament dispensation had its schools of the prophets. The first preachers of the Gospel in New Testament times spent three years under the constant personal tuition of Christ in the days of His flesh. Paul's inspired counsel to Timothy indicates what was to be the practice for uninspired men in the future who were to be ordained to the ministry: "And the things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2). If the man who thinks, even at the end of his days, that he is adequately equipped for the work of the ministry, is under a delusion, much more so the novice in these solemn matters. The Lord's ministers, who were known and ordained by Him as such before they had their being, feel at the end as well as at the beginning of their ministry, and generally even more so, as Jeremiah did when he said: "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child" (Jeremiah 1:6). If it were not that the Lord sent them and that they are speaking what He commanded them and that He is with them they would not be able to continue in the work, whatever natural ability they might have. The sent messenger, who has God's commission, and equipment from God Himself, and who is most dependent upon God, is the very one who will feel most in need of whatever help he can receive from those who were in Christ and in the ministry before him. The man who is apt to teach will be anxious to be taught. Our students have shown themselves apt and anxious to learn.

Let us pray that the Lord may continue to constrain men to present themselves as candidates for the ministry who are deeply exercised with regard to the hidden evils of their heart and with regard to effectual calling and its fruits and who have those special degrees and experiences of grace which are required in a faithful minister of Christ and in which we find ourselves so deficient.

WELFARE OF YOUTH COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Rev. D. A. Ross

THE Scottish Agricultural College, Auchincruive, situated a few miles to the east of Ayr, was chosen as the venue for this year's Youth Conference, scheduled for Tuesday, 1st April, to the following Thursday. It is a particularly suitable location since the district is full of historical places connected with those who in bygone days gave their lives for the cause of Christ. We were disappointed that this year the school holiday periods in some areas were at different dates to those in others – some holiday periods were ending when others were beginning – thus preventing a number of young people from attending.

There was a decision by the Australia and New Zealand Presbytery to investigate the feasibility of a Conference in Sydney for their young people, and it is hoped that it will go ahead.

Last year's conference, in Edinburgh, had the best attendance ever, and judging by the relaxed atmosphere among speakers and listeners it was a happy event. The young people were very orderly and co-operative, and their attention and questions during lecture time seemed to show their genuine interest in the subjects. This is very encouraging for the speakers, whose concern it is to give interesting, profitable and easily understood papers.

Who can tell what good this work among our youth has done over the years? We have heard on more than one occasion of some young people obtaining spiritual blessings. In looking over the titles of the papers for the last few years we see that a great variety of spiritual topics has been covered. We do aim to have on our conference programmes what we think would be most profitable for our young friends and what we hope will be used by God to show them their great need of the Saviour and to lead them to believe in Him.

We make sure that at each conference there is a paper dealing with a Bible character, for such are set before us in the Scriptures for our imitation. Paul wrote: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith . . ." (Hebrews 12:1-2). We hope and pray that our conferences would be thus blessed to our young friends.

These are the speakers and papers which were chosen for this year's Conference:

1. *The Church of Rome – A Different Religion from Biblical Christianity* – Rev. D. W. B. Somerset
2. *Effectual Calling – The Holy Spirit Drawing Sinners to Christ* – Rev. John MacLeod
3. *From Genesis to Revelation – An Overview of the Bible* – Rev. K. D. Macleod
4. *Some Ayrshire Covenanters – A Historical Tour* – Rev. Roderick MacLeod
5. *The Mission in Zimbabwe – How Has It Developed?* – Mr. Hugh Mackenzie
6. *Samson – A Dedicated Life* – Rev. J. B. Jardine.

As always we are indebted to those who so willingly give of their time and gifts to prepare papers for the conference. We believe they deem it another opportunity and privilege, in the providence of God, to do what they can to instill the truths of Scripture in the minds and hearts of our young people. We thank too the house mothers at the Youth Conference, who generously made use of their holiday time to attend the conference. They did their work well and were respected by the young folk who looked to them for care and guidance.

We are again very grateful to the ladies who graciously continue providing and correcting the Scripture and Catechism Exercises. Their contribution, as is

evident from the responses, is appreciated beyond the shores of Britain. We only wish that many more would do the Exercises.

We have met a number of people who acknowledged that it was only in later life that they came to appreciate their upbringing under the Word of God and the *Shorter Catechism*. We trust therefore that our young people who continue to do the Exercises will yet be blessed and be found acknowledging, “How good it was that I was so taught in my younger days!”. We have met others who had no Christian upbringing and who in later life came to a saving knowledge of Christ but who were grieved that they knew so little of the Word of God and had to begin at the beginning, as it were, to find out about eternal issues. May our ladies continue this good work in the sure knowledge that their contribution is a valuable one which will prove, no doubt, to be a great blessing to some in later years – and maybe to others in their early years.

We know that parents among us who care for the spiritual wellbeing of their children do appreciate this teaching work on the part of the Church. It is for the want of such teaching that there is a lack of proper direction among multitudes of young people and that they are going further and further astray from biblical moral standards. It is an interesting fact that in countries where communism used to ban children from being taught the Bible there is now a cry from many parents for Christian literature to give to their children. May we hear much of that cry from parents in our own country and beyond.

It is the Forsyth Legacy, of course, which provides the main monetary support for the conference, and this amounted to £4,881 in 2006. We are thankful that the Finance Committee ensures that this support is forthcoming each year. The conference members contribute £18 in the case of students and £36 in the case of those who are in employment. We thank the Most High especially for providing for us and enabling us to fulfil the different tasks allotted to us for the spiritual welfare of our young people. May He attend those efforts with His blessing. “The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it” (Proverbs 10:22).

**BALLIFEARY RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME
COMMITTEE'S REPORT
Convener: Rev. J. R. Tallach**

DUE to better general health and greater longevity and as a result also of the widespread use of abortion as practised under the 1967 Abortion Act, we have in Britain an ever increasing responsibility to care for the elderly dependent among us. The Homes run by the Church not only provide care of a high order but an atmosphere in which God and His Word are honoured.

Ballifeary has been fully occupied throughout the year with more residents than usual requiring a high level of care. One care assistant has been in training for SVQ2 in Social Care. With a low turn-over of staff and a full complement through the year the quality of care has been consistent.

The Home received a favourable Care Commission report during the past year. A new emphasis on certain criteria by the Care Commission starts this year. The Home will be graded on the basis of four criteria – Life, Environment, Staffing and Management. Local Authority support will be dependent on other, more practical, criteria.

Various repairs and maintenance projects have been completed, including an upgrade of the fire alarm system. In a rather sad commentary on the society we have become, we were advised to set up CCTV around the Home and this has been done. While we are thankful to report that the Home maintains a comfortable financial balance this is no more than the times require. The authorities may quite abruptly require changes in areas such as fire protection or facilities for residents which would call for the immediate expenditure of substantial sums of money. Failure to comply might well risk closure. In this financial provision we see the kindness of the Lord in whose hand are all things.

We record with sadness, during 2007, the passing away of Alice MacLeod on 16th February, Margaret Swan on 10th April, and Duncan MacKenzie on 6th May.

The Committee again wish to thank our two auditors, John Fraser and Kenneth MacLean, together with all those who contribute to the Gospel atmosphere of the Home.

“Our sure and all sufficient help
Is in Jehovah's name;
His name who did the heaven create,
And who the earth did frame.

**LEVERBURGH CARE HOME
COMMITTEE'S REPORT
Convener: Rev. D. Macdonald**

OUR Care Home in Harris has continued to operate for the last twenty years. It was in February 1988 that the Home was opened. In that time there have been over 100 admissions; last year the 105th resident came in. This provision by the church has proved successful, not just in the service that it provides for our elderly people, which is its main function, but the Home also provides employment for a number of people from the local community. Being a Church Home there is also a Gospel provision; the Home has a firm Christian ethos in its operations and the services and midweek meetings are relayed to the Home. All this is in the goodness of God and we hope and pray that this provision will prove a blessing to many for many years to come.

Fortunately the Home had been operating to full capacity for several years until last year, when some rooms became vacant due to the lack of those requiring care. This is partly due to the fact that it is more economical to care for such in their own homes with a suitable package from the Local Authority. There is also Government legislation that may discourage elderly people from going into Homes; unless a person's home has been willed for a period of more than five years, it can be sold to finance their remaining period of lives in a Care Home. The Committee is presently considering how to raise the profile of the Home.

There has been a number of deaths over the past year; Mr. Neil MacCuish, Horgabost, Mr. Norman J. Macleod, Finsbay, Miss Christina M. Macleod, Rodel, Mrs. Mary Mackay, Seilabost, Mrs. Morag McGighon, Scalpay, Christine Drake, Stornoway, and, more recently, Miss Katie Ann Ross, Geocrab. We extend our sympathies to their families. There were five permanent admissions and four respite residents who came in for a short period of time.

The building remains in a good structural and decorative order. New windows have been installed in most of the building, also bedrooms and sitting rooms have been refurbished. The Home has also continued to achieve very commendable reports from the inspecting bodies and has endeavoured to meet all the requirements as stipulated by the Care Commission, including the Fire Officer's recommendations.

The Committee wish to thank the Officer in Charge, Mrs. Marion MacSween, and all her staff for their hard work and professionalism in the running of the Leverburgh Care Home. Mrs. MacSween is tendering her resignation in June of this year. We also wish to thank Mrs. Margaret Macleod in particular for the administration of the Home's affairs and her competent handling of the finances. We would also thank the local community for their support of the Home. Various external services visit the home from time to time.

Above all we would wish to acknowledge the Lord's kindness to us over the past year. He has been mindful of us and we believe He will bless us still.

OUTREACH COMMITTEE REPORT

Rev. D. A. Ross

IN the good providence of the Most High the Committee's plan to engage in colporteur work has succeeded. Mr. Allan Boyd, from North Uist, kindly agreed to do this work in his spare time and we are much indebted to him for doing so. He did not receive remuneration for his work but we hope he will yet be employed on a more permanent basis. Over a period of months, with our small vehicle filled with books, he has visited most homes in Benbecula and other dwellings in North and South Uist. In North Uist there was a good reception and a considerable number of books were sold. There was also a Gospel tract left at every home, with the exception of the very few who refused. Where it was possible, Mr. Boyd engaged in conversation about the Gospel. In South Uist it was somewhat different, where little of our literature was sold, but a Gospel tract was left at each home. One lady was a distant relative of Rev. Donald MacFarlane and bought the book of his sermons. We also intended to do work in Harris and Lewis but the way not opening up, hopefully a start will be made in spring. We hope also to operate in Skye and the mainland.

The expenses involved in the work are considerable, especially because of vehicle maintenance, the large amounts of fuel needed in covering these wide areas, and the inevitable damage to books due to long distances travelled, sometimes on indifferent roads. Certainly there is no monetary profit from such work. This, of course, we do not expect, but our hope and prayer is that there would be spiritual profit for time and eternity for those who receive Bibles and literature. The question of the Saviour is, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?". Hence, one sinner brought by this work to seek and find Christ will be of great profit, for that one sinner and for us who engage in the work.

At the Black Isle Agricultural Show in August we had one of our best visits since our first appearing there seven years ago. We had more visitors to our stand than on previous occasions and while some of these came only to look at our books, we ensured, as much as we could, that they did not leave without taking a few Gospel tracts. Others bought Bibles and literature, but in most cases just small pieces of literature. I got the impression from a number of them that they lead busy lives and that our presence there is an opportunity for them to browse and purchase literature, which we hope will be read by them and blessed to their eternal good. Some folk who visited us simply came to give us a call, were glad to see us once again at the event, would speak words of encouragement, and in some cases give a donation.

Instead of using our Bibles and books from the colporteur van to stock our stand at the show, we received supplies from the Church Bookroom in Glasgow. This proved successful and was less damaging to books. We are indebted to Mr. Kenneth Hutton, the Bookroom manager, for not only transporting the stock but also helping with manning our stand and attending to customers. We are grateful too, that the Bookroom Committee released him for the work. We hope he will be able to do so again this year.

I trust that indeed we are making some small contribution to the promotion of the Christian religion in a society which more and more slips deeper into the ever widening morass of godlessness. While we have the inevitable frowns of disapproval from a few passers-by, we have cause for deep thankfulness that in Scotland we are still at liberty to make this much needed witness on the side of Christ. If our lot were cast in certain Islamic or communist countries there is no way in which we would be permitted to distribute the Word of God. Now that some little sowing has been done in a field of labour hitherto not much engaged in by our Church, we need to be ever seeking that the quickening Spirit of God would apply the Word to sinners and bring them to flee from the wrath to come and close in with the Saviour.

Last autumn we were preparing to attend the Portree Agricultural Show, having booked the usual site, when we received a message telling us to cancel our visit because foot and mouth disease had broken out in parts of England, and that the law required that the venue be closed. It is a much smaller venue than the Black Isle Agricultural Show, but we are grateful to the organisers that our entry to it has been free because of our charity status. On the other hand, the cost of our stand at the Black Isle Show is expensive, even at the reduced rate for which it is sold to us.

It is more than a little disturbing to be surrounded by worldly activities and amusements at such events. Paul too must have been surrounded by all kinds of heathen activities when he went every day to the market place in Athens and spoke to the people about the truth of God and “preached unto them Jesus”. This is precisely what the Gospel demands, that we go into the highways and byways and constrain sinners to come to Christ Jesus the true Saviour. May the Lord establish our small witness in the minds and hearts of those with whom we come in contact.

Another outlet for our witness as a Church is the internet or worldwide web. The Synod appointed Rev. D. Somerset as editor and Mr. James MacLeod as webmaster for our Church website – www.fpchurch.org.uk. We are only one of many churches which use the internet, but one difference between us and many others is that while we do not despise the smallest attempts to propagate the Scriptures, we advertise a more reformed position than others in the country. Church principles based fully on the Word of God and beautifully summarised in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* are not cherished by many. It is good, therefore, that through the internet we are able to set before as many as care to search, this witness to God’s holy Word in its entirety.

It is good too that the powerful tool of the internet is not left entirely to the use of the world. No doubt the world would exclude the Word of God from the internet if it could. This is what has largely happened in the Press and other sections of the media in Britain, where there are those in power to whom the authoritative voice of Scripture is totally unacceptable.

The internet also brings our witness into lands where the Gospel is banned. It is said in one mission book that the beaming of Gospel messages into communist countries during the era of the Iron Curtain gave encouragement to many believers in these countries and added to their number. Communist and Islamic countries in some instances spent vast sums of money to prevent the Word of God coming over the media. So, likewise, attempts are made by some foreign governments to block the Christian faith from the internet. Many devices are being used to prevent the truth of God being presented to lost sinners, "but the word of God is not bound". When God intends to send and bless His Word there is no power in hell or earth can prevent that. Contacts are being made with persons throughout the world. We not only communicate with them over the internet but also send religious literature where it is thought proper in the circumstances.

The production and distribution of Gospel tracts continues and lately we have changed them to a larger and more easily-read format. We continue to advertise them in the *Evangelical Times* and the *British Church Newspaper* and, therefore, tracts are not left in storage for long. We still intend to do a reprint of some tracts in Nepalese. There is also a cry from indigenous missions in a number of countries to come over and help in their work, and we hope that, perhaps, at some time in the future we can help by producing tracts in the languages of some of these peoples. Also all our tracts are printed in German and some in Dutch and French. At the moment we are endeavouring to get quantities of tracts into Germany where these will be distributed.

We are indebted to all those who in any way helped in our outreach work, not least to those who gave financial support, without which the work could not go on. We are encouraged by the promise, "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days" (Ecclesiastes 11:1), and are convinced therefore that our "labour is not in vain in the Lord".

MAGAZINES REPORT

Rev. K. D. Macleod, Editor

FOR another year, *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* and *The Young People's Magazine* have gone out month by month as usual, and the *Gaelic Supplement* every three months. An effort is made to provide a variety of material, old and new, that will, by God's blessing, affect both the head and heart of readers.

Costs for printing and postage of the Magazines have again increased in the last 12 months, but the Committee decided that there was no need to increase prices. Again in 2007 the Magazines Fund has shown a surplus and there has been no need for a grant from the Forsyth Bequest Fund, except that the cost of the *Gaelic Supplement* is financed entirely from that source. The circulation of each magazine has dropped by between 20 and 30 per month.

The Committee arranged to offer an electronic subscription for the magazines; *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* and *The Young People's Magazine* are sent out by email at the same time as printed copies are available, at a lesser cost. However, the uptake has been small.

I would once again thank all who have given help in various ways over the past year. I am especially grateful to all who have sent in articles and, in particular, to members of the Editorial Board of *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* for their help throughout the year. I would again specifically mention Dr. J. Mitchell for his continued help in checking the copy for both Magazines month by month.

The purpose of producing these magazines is to benefit readers spiritually and also to influence their thinking in a scriptural direction on moral issues. In a day of continued spiritual and moral darkness we should be particularly conscious of the need of the Holy Spirit to bless all such efforts. May He then apply the contents of our magazines to those who read them.

PUBLICATIONS AND BOOKROOM COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. K. D. Macleod

Publications

Regrettably no books were issued during 2007. However, we expect that a number of new titles will become available this year. First is Rev. Keith M. Watkins's articles on the Book of Ruth which appeared over a period of several years in *The Young People's Magazine*. These have been published as a substantial volume with the title: *Ruth: Her Story for Today*. The life of Miss Jean Nicolson, entitled *A Heart for Africa*, by Miss Dolina MacCuish, is now at the printers and we expect that the result will be an attractive, well-illustrated volume.

Turning to reprints, we expect to have Volume 10 of *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* available about the time of the Synod. Some progress has been made with John Colquhoun of Leith's valuable book on *Saving Faith* and we do hope that it will be available before too long.

Sales of Free Presbyterian Publications books in 2007 were a little lower than in 2006, but this is, no doubt, due to the fact that no books were

printed during the course of the year. We trust, however, that the new books being published this year will, God willing, bring about a significant increase in sales.

Bookroom

We are glad to report that in 2007 sales were somewhat higher than during 2006 and the Bookroom sales figures for 2008 should benefit from the new Free Presbyterian Publications' titles which will, God willing, become available in the course of the year.

The Committee remains convinced of the importance of the Bookroom as an outlet for sound literature, both to customers who visit in person or who make contact in other ways. This includes the website (www.fpbookroom.org), which is an indispensable side to the Bookroom's work in this electronic age. We again request the prayers of the Lord's people for His rich blessing on this work of the Church.

We express our gratitude to all who have been involved in the work of the Bookroom, in particular the men who have kept the Bookroom open on Saturday mornings and during the Manager's holidays.



REPORT ON THE PETITION TO THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT ON SABBATH OBSERVANCE

Rev. H. M. Cartwright

(This Report was made to the 2007 Synod)

THE Synod in May 2005 agreed to the proposal of the Sabbath Observance Committee that the Synod submit a petition to the Scottish Parliament requesting "that the Scottish Parliament legislate in favour of a weekly day of rest from work throughout Scotland with Business and Commerce closing on that day and that the day appointed be the Christian Sabbath". Appealing to the Divine authority and perpetual obligation of the Fourth Commandment, the Christian and Protestant Constitution of our Nation, and the duty of Government to legislate for the good of the people of our land, the petition claimed that the failure to keep the first day of the week as a day of worship and rest from work according to God's appointment is causing the nation to suffer economically, socially, morally and spiritually.

Advice received from the officials of the Scottish Parliament's Public Petitions Committee was to the effect that legislation affecting employment rights and duties was reserved to the UK Parliament. In the light of their advice, the Synod in May 2006 agreed that the crave of the petition be rephrased to ask the Scottish Parliament to "debate the need for a weekly day of rest from work throughout Scotland and to encourage business and commerce to close on that day, and that the day appointed be the Christian Sabbath". It was hoped that the Scottish Parliament might be minded to recommend that the UK Parliament legislate for Scotland to that effect, as it has done with other reserved matters.

Two members of the Sabbath Observance Committee submitted this petition to the Public Petitions Committee on 15th November 2006 and were allowed to speak for a few minutes and then respond to questions and make further contributions to the discussion. It has been suggested that for the information of members of Synod regarding the line taken by their representatives in presenting the Petition the initial remarks made might be recorded here. They were as follows:

“We are grateful to the Committee for agreeing to hear the case presented in this petition on behalf of the Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

“Initially the Synod had hoped to ask the Scottish Parliament to legislate in favour of the first day of the week, the Christian Sabbath, as a weekly day of rest, in which business and commerce would close. Being advised that this is a reserved matter on which the Parliament cannot legislate the Synod agreed to petition the Parliament to debate the need for such a day and to urge business and commerce to close down on that day. We would even hope that the Parliament would be minded to recommend that the Westminster Parliament might legislate to that effect.

“We make no bones about the fact that our primary motivation is religious – our belief that the Sabbath Day is divinely ordained – that its observance is part of the moral law which is fundamental to human society – and that its observance by a constitutionally Christian nation is a recognition of the claims of God which would honour God and enjoy His blessing. But our aim is also philanthropic in the widest sense – the benefit of body, mind, human relationships, as well as soul.

“As our petition points out we recognise that there are works which are necessary every day of the week. But we believe that the observance of a day when all except those engaged in works of necessity or mercy are free at the same time from the lawful activities of other days would be highly beneficial economically, socially and morally as well as spiritually. We would suggest that one of the significant factors which contributed to the stability of family life and the social cohesion of communities in the past was the shared freedom from the routine of other days on the Sabbath. It is not a wonder to us that there are so many complaints regarding the breakdown of order and respect and morality and happiness when this particular pillar of society as created by God is so widely disregarded and disused.

“That the Christian Sabbath should be the day of rest recognised throughout the nation follows logically from the fact that it is the day appointed in the Bible, the Book which is fundamental to the Christian identity of our nation. It is also the day which is already recognised in our society as a day different from other days, even if not as a day of worship.

“We hope that the Committee and Parliament will agree that the subject is worthy of being discussed in some depth and will urge upon the Scottish Executive the desirability of doing whatever can be done to promote the recognition of this weekly day of rest.”

Those presenting the petition were given a courteous hearing by the Committee. There may have been some sympathy with the idea that a day when all are free from unnecessary work would contribute to the wellbeing of individuals, families and society, though no indication was given of acquiescence in the religious basis or character of this day. The media reports of which we are aware were on the whole fair and positive as far as they went. Opportunity to discuss the matter further was given on BBC Ulster radio and in the *Edinburgh Evening News*. The Public Petitions Committee

agreed to seek views on the petition from the Department of Trade and Industry and the Scottish Executive and then invite our comments on these responses before the petition was brought back to the Committee.

In February 2007 responses were received from the Department of Trade and Industry (Mr. Alistair Darling) and from the Scottish Executive (Mr. Stephen Orr). The letter on behalf of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry commented that workers have the right to one day off each week and have the right not to be dismissed, selected for redundancy or otherwise subjected to detrimental action for not working on the Lord's Day. This was considered as providing workers with "the necessary protection and flexibility they require, negating the need to appoint Sunday as an official day of rest". It was considered that "there is no substantial demand for change to the present regime" and that "the current situation strikes the right balance between all the interests involved". The Government have come to the view "that this is not the right time to make any changes to the current Sunday shopping laws". The letter stated that "as Sunday Trading laws are not a reserved matter this would be an issue for the Scottish Executive to consider".

The rather lengthy response from the Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department of the Scottish Executive acknowledges that while employment legislation, governing hours and conditions of work, is reserved to the UK Government, "retail trading hours in Scotland are a devolved matter for which Scottish Ministers are responsible". It is made clear, however, that "Scottish Ministers do not intend to pursue legislation to regulate retail shop opening hours in Scotland". The reasoning of the letter does not grapple with the arguments presented in support of the petition. It begins by reminding us of the "diversity of faiths in Scotland" with their different "holy days". It mentions that previous petitions from the Lord's Day Observance Society were unsuccessful and that the repealed Sunday Observance Act of 1780 was never extended to Scotland. It appeals to the allegedly detrimental effects restrictions would have on businesses, sport and leisure, transport and tourism. It triumphantly recounts that Comhairle nan Eilean had to capitulate in the 1980s to those who wished Linclate School to be available for community use seven days a week, that Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd. provide facilities on Sabbath if requested by airlines; that due to "a growing demand from customers wanting to travel to and from the Isle of Lewis at weekends" flights commenced to and from Stornoway on a Sabbath in 2002; and that "in response to pressure for the service from islanders on North Uist wishing to have a connection to Harris and Lewis" CalMac introduced "Sunday sailings on its Sound of Harris route" last year, and the Executive declined to intervene "on the grounds that it was an operational matter for CalMac which was clearly responding to demand for lifeline services".

The Petitioners were not invited to appear again at the Public Petitions Committee but were invited to make some response in writing. The following is the substance of the response forwarded to the Committee:

"1. It is noted that the letter from Mr. Darling concludes: 'The Government therefore came to the view that this is not the right time to make any changes to the current Sunday shopping laws. However, as Sunday Trading laws are not a reserved matter this would be an issue for the Scottish Executive to consider.' In his letter Mr Orr states: 'As the petitioners acknowledge at the outset, employment legislation, governing hours and conditions of work, is reserved to the UK Government and is not a matter for Scottish

ministers. That said, retail trading hours in Scotland are a devolved matter for which Scottish Ministers are responsible. However, Scottish Ministers do not intend to pursue legislation to regulate shop opening hours in Scotland. Regulation on Sunday opening in particular would be a backward step for the economy and would restrict opportunities for work and trade. Sunday opening is generally welcome by the public and is popular.' It seems to us that the crave of our petition can be granted within the remit of the Scottish Parliament and Executive: calling on 'the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Executive to consider and debate the need for a weekly day of rest from work throughout Scotland and to encourage business and commerce to close on that day and that the day appointed be the Christian Sabbath'. That the matter not only may but should be considered by the representatives of the people met in Parliament appears from the way in which the response of Mr. Orr in particular illustrates the mercenary and selfish outlook which seems to inform much of the opposition to the recognition of the first day of the week as 'a weekly day of rest from work'. That 'Scottish Ministers do not intend to pursue legislation to regulate shop opening hours in Scotland' is surely not a reason for disallowing a request for Parliament to discuss the matter so that members can consider its religious, moral, and social implications. Instead of pursuing every point in the responses we would simply reiterate the points which we think require to be considered by Parliament and the Executive.

"2. Our primary reason for seeking public recognition of the Christian Sabbath is religious – that the Sabbath Day is divinely ordained – that its observance is part of the moral law which is fundamental to human society – and that its observance by a constitutionally Christian nation is a recognition of the claims of God which would honour God and enjoy His blessing. The Constitution of our country is Christian. According to the last Census over 80% of the population stated that they were Christian. The Bible is basic to Christianity and contains the universally and permanently relevant Ten Commandments, one of which is 'Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy'.

"3. The desire for the public recognition of the Christian Sabbath as the common day of rest from work is also philanthropic. The Head of the Christian Church, the Lord Jesus Christ, said that 'the Sabbath is made for man and not man for the Sabbath'. It is for the good of human beings, spiritually, mentally and physically. The need for a weekly day of rest is admitted in the responses received by the Committee but the point seems to be missed that unless one day is commonly recognised the benefits for individuals, families and society at large is lost. The continuing neglect of this common day can only result in further deterioration in the family cohesion which marked our society in previous generations. The finding of a recent Unicef report which has ranked the UK at the bottom of 21 industrialised countries for child wellbeing no doubt is a matter of concern to MSPs, as must be the increasing lawlessness, vandalism and gang culture among children and young people. We think that consideration should be given to the contribution made to this situation by the disregard for Christian principles of conduct exemplified in the abandonment of the Sabbath day. That the economy would suffer by observance of the weekly day of rest is a controvertible assertion.

"4. It is unlikely that opposition to what we crave will come from the Jews and Muslims to whom Mr. Orr refers. If society is not further to disintegrate and lose its sense of direction we need to return to the basic principles which made our nation what it was. General Sir Richard Dannatt voiced the concerns of many when he warned that

the weakening of our Christian values and the creation of a spiritual and moral vacuum makes us a prey to determined forces which will lead us to we know not where. There can only be the integration which many are calling for where there is a strong national identity, such as finds expression in the recognition of Christian principles of conduct and the observance of a common day of rest.

“5. We respectfully appeal to the Petitions Committee to conclude that the issue is of sufficient importance to warrant discussion on the floor of the Scottish Parliament and to take whatever action is open to them to secure that this will take place. Many who may not subscribe to all the reasons for which we contend for the recognition of the Christian Sabbath have indicated in response to the previous public airing of this petition their support for the recognition of the first day of the week as a weekly day of rest and for Parliament taking account of our request.”

At the time of writing no formal communication has been received from the Public Petitions Committee but we understand that when the Committee considered the various responses at a meeting on 20th March 2007, Mr. Michael McMahon, Convener, stated that it had not got a warm reception. Mr. John Scott, Vice-Convener, added that while they respected the views of the petitioner the petition did not reflect the views of the country. The conclusion was that “they close the petition”.

If those in sympathy with our position on these and other matters were as diligent in communicating their views to the Legislators as some notorious minority pressure groups are, perhaps a little more heed would be given. However, although our Petition has not been granted we trust that the raising of the issue has stimulated thought and prayer and may have given encouragement to some to witness on behalf of the Lord and His Holy Day.

Having been charged by the Synod with presenting this Petition I would like to particularly thank the Clerk to the Sabbath Observance Committee, Mr A. MacLean, who produced the Petition and did much of the work behind the scenes and whose contribution to the discussion with the Committee was extremely helpful.