

FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

**REPORTS OF
STANDING
COMMITTEES
OF SYNOD**

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REPORT OF THE RELIGION AND MORALS COMMITTEE

Convener: Rev. W. Weale

INTRODUCTION

OVER recent months national and indeed international news has been dominated by the banking crises and the collapse of money markets. Sadly, few make any connection between this and the virtual collapse of truth and morality and the fact that when a people favoured with the Gospel depart from God the results can only be catastrophic in every way.

The following report highlights our sad condition as a national and cannot but lead us to the inevitable conclusion that God has a controversy with us and that our only hope is to turn to Him in repentance.

The Church of Rome relentlessly pursues the extension of its false worship throughout the world, holding millions of souls in bondage, and the more we see this must increase our prayer for the fulfilment of the Word of God and hope that the day may be sooner than many anticipate when shall be heard the words, "Babylon the great is fallen"; "I the Lord will hasten it in his time". "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14).

RELIGION

This section of the Report is an attempt to identify some of the characteristics of our times in which we seek to uphold and profess the Biblical Christian religion.

1. THE RELIGION WITH WHICH THIS REPORT IS CONCERNED

The religion with which this report is concerned is Biblical Christianity which variously is called Augustinian, Calvinistic or Reformed Christianity. It is wrong to speak of traditional Scottish Calvinism as Fundamentalist. Christian Fundamentalism is a relatively modern American religious phenomenon which embraces doctrines which the Free Presbyterian Church does not endorse. For a sum of the main doctrines of Biblical Christianity and its practices, one is directed to those documents which form the Constitution of our Church. The religion with which this Report is concerned is both inward and outward. Both of these aspects arise from a saving relationship between the living God and rational man, through the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

Christianity is a spiritual religion that retires from the glare of public view. However, for good and wise reasons, outward visible ordinances and an outward visible profession of religion is required by the divine Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ. The harmony of the inward and outward aspects

of the spiritual and practical obligations of Christianity, is expressed by the Saviour when He says in Luke 10:27: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself."

The outward aspect includes the Holy Scripture, the inspired and infallible revelation of the will of God for our salvation. *The inward aspect* includes the belief of the doctrines of grace, on good grounds, in an intelligent, experimental and practical way. It is a believing which has a filial fear in respect for the threatenings of God's Word; a full purpose of and endeavour after a new obedience in respect of its commands and trust in respect of its promises.

The outward aspect includes the form of worship, *the inward aspect* includes the reverence, trust, love and obedience wrought in the heart towards the God worshipped; with a strong affection to God's people within, and an affectionate longing with regard to the happiness of those without.

The outward aspect includes the preaching of Law and Gospel: setting forth man's ruin, the need for Christ's redemptive work and the Spirit's regenerating and sanctifying work. *The inward aspect* arises out of these and includes a genuine sorrow for sin and turning from it with "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21).

The outward aspect includes the visible nature of the Church's witness as the Kingdom of Christ on earth: her teaching, practice and government, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. *The inward aspect* includes the invisible work of the Holy Spirit on the souls of men.

The outward aspect includes a call to arms against one's own sin as an enemy; *the inward aspect* can be compared to a life-long struggle in the strength and whole armour of God. *The inward aspect* is a deep reverence for the one God, subsisting in three glorious co-eternal Persons, who reveals Himself in the economy of the covenant in such a way that we love the eternal Father with a filial love; the eternal Son who became our Kinsman Redeemer, and the eternal Holy Spirit as the well-spring of our spiritual life; *the outward aspect* is a holy walk regulated by the law of God our Father, received from the hand of Christ our Mediator, pursued under the sweet constraints of the tender love of the Holy Spirit our Comforter.

Sadly, this religion, from the womb of the morning of regeneration, the fruit of Christ's eternal vigour or youth, which was admired on account of the beauty of both imparted and infused holiness, is lightly esteemed in our day. Many of the places where the goings of our God and our King were seen, felt and heard, have been invaded by other unfamiliar powers.

2. SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF OUR TIMES

1. Pantheism. Our times cannot be understood unless we appreciate that this religion is professed while all around is the mist of Pantheism. Those who follow the true religion draw light, life and comfort from the upper springs of God's transcendence. To excellent things we attribute eminence. To the best of

all things within their own class we attribute pre-eminence. To God's being and attributes we attribute transcendence: "To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like?" (Isaiah 46:5). The true religion also draws from the nether springs of God's nearness. Though God is transcendent in His Being He is very near to His creatures: "In Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). Furthermore, in a very special way, He is very near to His people spiritually: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:20).

A wrong view of God. But the pantheists deny the transcendence of God, and they have a very erroneous view of the nearness or immanence of God. The Bible makes a distinction between the Creator and the creation. Pantheism does not. The name "pantheism" is made up of the Greek words for "all" and "God". The principal idea intended by the word has been expressed in the following ways: "God is the soul of the universe"; "God is everything and everything is God"; "All that there is, is God". God is spoken of, by the Pantheist, as an impersonal "force", the "energy" in the universe.

A wrong view of man. Pantheism leads to the deifying of man. When one Pantheist was interviewed on television she informed her viewers that, "Each soul is its own God. You must never worship anyone or anything other than self, for you are God," she said.

A wrong view of the creature. Everyone who understands the mandate given to Adam to "replenish the earth, subdue it and have dominion" (Genesis 1:28) over it will own that we have a responsibility towards God's creation. That is quite a different thing to the Pantheistic veneration of "Mother Nature" or "Mother Earth" and the idea of the earth as "God's body". Treating nature as a divine entity to be venerated with religious worship, is not Christianity, it is Pantheism.

Influence of Pantheism. The Secretary General of the United Nations addressed the 1992 Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro: "To the ancients the Nile was a god to be venerated, as was the Rhine, an infinite source of European myths, or the Amazonian forest, the mother of forests. Throughout the world, nature was the abode of the divinities that gave the forest, the desert, or the mountains a personality which commanded worship or respect. The Earth had a soul. To find that soul again, to give it new life, that is the essence of Rio" (quoted in *Does God believe in Atheists?*, by John Blanchard, page 37). It is astonishing to contemplate the influence of Pantheism when men of such high office and influence publicly endorse it. Another indication of its power to influence national leaders is the amount of "Green" legislation that has been passed to conform to international treaties. Northern Ireland's Environment Minister, has articulated what many have suspected when he said that the furor about global warming was like a "hysterical pseudo-religion" disseminated by an "insidious propaganda".

In one form or another, under one name or another, dreamy Pantheists have wandered in a pagan wilderness wherein there is no way, for a long time. Paul spoke of some, "Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and

served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen” (Romans 1:25); Moses spoke of the tendency of fallen man to this idolatry, and warned Israel of the need to keep from such things as encouraged it, “lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them” (Deuteronomy 4:19).

2. Atheism. Present day religion cannot be understood unless we appreciate that it is professed while all around is the bitter frost of Atheism. The word Atheism has a Greek origin which is found in Ephesians 2:12: “That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.” The word atheism points to a person who is “without God” (for more on the subject see “Atheistic Fundamentalism” in the 2008 report).

The intellectual climate in which true religion is professed in our day is one in which men women and children, by decades of indoctrination, are strongly inclined to the notion that atheism is clever and religion is for the weak-minded. Some so-called Christians would generally agree, saying that knowledge belongs to science and not to religion, and faith and feelings is the realm in which religion is most comfortable. We would fail to understand our times if we did not recognise the deceitfulness of this claim.

We can illustrate this by a common, confused distinction that is often made by atheists (and gullible Christians): that evolutionary science is evidence based, whereas the science of those who deny evolution is faith based. The research of thousands of respected scientists, who believe in God the Creator, exists as irrefutable evidence that that statement is wrong. It would be more accurate to say that, in the one, there is an assumption that there is no Creator; in the other, there is an assumption that there truly is a Creator. The notion that the atheistic assumption is brilliantly clever and that the believing assumption is ridiculously stupid is the result, not of honest and reasonable observation but of blind prejudice and institutionalised unbelief. Despite the bluff of popular atheists some leading academics will confidently assert that the assumptions of evolution and atheism are based on a great leap of blind faith. In public debates between himself and atheists, Dr. John Lennox (Lecturer in the Philosophy of Science at Oxford University) has repeatedly challenged his protagonists with this charge. The scientist L. H. Matthews, FRS (1901-1986), writing the Introduction to an edition of Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*, seems to confirm this view: “. . . evolution is the backbone of biology, and biology is thus in the peculiar position of being a science founded on an unproved theory”. He then asks “Is it then a science or a faith?”.

Paul Ehrlich (1932-) (Professor of Biology, Stanford University) and L. Charles Birch (1918-) (Professor of Biology, University of Sydney), in an article entitled “Evolutionary History and Popular Biology”, which appeared in *Nature*, Vol. 214, 22nd April 1967, page 352, stated, “Our theory of evolution [is] outside of empirical science. . . . Ideas, either without basis or

based on a few laboratory experiments carried out in extremely simplified systems, have attained currency far beyond their validity. They have become part of an evolutionary dogma accepted by most of us as part of our training.” H. S. Lipson, FRS (1910-1991), who was Professor of Physics, University of Manchester, said: “Evolution became in a sense a scientific religion; almost all scientists have accepted it and many are prepared to ‘bend’ their observations to fit in with it.”

Though respected academics witness against the atheistic evolutionary hypothesis, the greatest testimony is that of God’s Word. The Bible says that Atheism is folly. “The fool hath said in his heart [that] there is no God” (Psalm 14:1).

Darwin’s Anniversary. It is 200 years since Darwin was born. It is 150 years since he published *The Origin of Species*. The Bible presents a Theistic explanation for the origin of life. Darwin presented an Atheistic explanation for the origin of life. Science and theology are different things but they are both from God and lead back to God. The famous Isaac Newton said that scientific discovery was like thinking God’s thoughts after Him.

Theology observes, interprets and formulates the theological principles and laws it finds in God’s revelation of Himself. Is it simplistic to suggest that if science would restrict itself to the observation, interpretation and formulation of the principles and laws it finds in nature, then the unnecessary conflict between theology and science would end? As theology has nothing to do with what is not given by revelation from God, so science should take nothing to do with what is not observable and testable in nature. In a letter written by Dr. Colin Patterson, Senior Palaeontologist at the British Museum of Natural History in London, the following is said about the hypothesis of evolution: “It is easy enough to make up stories of how one form gave rise to another, and to find reasons why the stages should be favoured by natural selection. But such stories are not part of science, for there is no way of putting them to the test.” The same sentiments are expressed in another way by another scientist who called evolution a fairy tale for grown-ups.

The evolutionary speculation – the cornerstone of modern biology – is not, in the understanding of its most famous advocate, scientific. According to Charles Darwin his theory is merely an idea – a hypothesis. Darwin, in a letter, written in 1858, to a colleague regarding his book, *The Origin of Species*, wrote, “You will be greatly disappointed [by the forthcoming book]; it will be grievously too hypothetical”.

Dr Behe, Professor of Biochemistry at Lehigh University (USA), says that he once fully accepted the theory of evolution but that he began to doubt that the evidence pointed to a gradual evolution. He came to recognise that there was evidence that life could not have evolved in the way propounded by a gradual evolutionary hypothesis. He has shown how no biological system could ever function unless all the components were present and working together, according to their design, which is impossible by the hypothesis of the slow, gradual evolution proposed by Darwin.

3. INDIFFERENCE TO THE SCRIPTURE WITHIN THE CHURCH

The inevitable eventual effect of eroding a foundation is the collapse of the building that stands on it. The Word of God is the foundation of the Christian religion. By denying the foundational importance of the Word in the Church the collapse of Christianity is inevitable.

Truth substituted by Feelings

Where there is true religion there is spiritual feeling. The Word of God, powerfully applied to the soul by the Holy Spirit, is the source of true spiritual feelings and experiences. We judge our religious experiences by God's Word. Much modern religion makes experience the benchmark of religion, not the Word the benchmark of experience.

Dr J. G. Vos (1903-1983) traces the ignorance of the letter of the Word of God among those professing the true religion to an emphasis on religious feelings, and a neglect of the teaching of the Word of God. He points out that ignorance of the Truth is not only common but that some modern Protestants despise knowledge: "He prefers to be ignorant"; "He fancies knowledge to be worthless in the sphere of religion"; "There exists today an indifference to truth, an intolerance of truth, even an antipathy to truth in large sections of the Protestant Church." This he attributes to the influence of those who made the religious consciousness of man, rather than the Bible, the source of their theology. Another author informs us of an attitude within the Church which is opposed to doctrine and the defence of the Truth: "Ours is the 'Age of Aquarius' in which rational argument is deemed not only impossible but religiously indecent."

Doctrine substituted by Values

A Creed or Confession such as the *Westminster Confession of Faith* is a sum of what a church believes to be the foundational teaching of the Bible. In many quarters the foundations of the Christian religion is expressed by Creeds which identify, not the leading doctrines of the Bible, but some vague ideas or values. The modern creed is something like, "I believe in honesty", etc. Christian values are an essential element of the Christian religion. They are of the utmost importance for a well ordered society. A shift, however, from Biblical doctrines to vague values is a shift from religion on evangelical grounds to an idea of a religion on ethical grounds. Again, values are legal and therefore weak through our weakness. Vos points out that, to say that "my religion is just: goodness, truth and beauty" does not make one true, good and beautiful. What is more, if values are not interpreted in the light of the Holy Scripture then they are not Christian values.

One example of the insidious effect of replacing doctrine with values is found in the current favourable attitude to homosexuality within society and the church. When "values" lose their Biblical context, things like homosexuality cease to be a sin in the eyes of many and begin to be a right. In *The Homosexual Agenda*, a book with the subtitle "Exposing the Principal

Threat to Religious Freedom Today”, the authors give a very alarming picture.

The homosexual agenda is to make that lifestyle which is unacceptable in Biblical terms acceptable in the terms of modern “values”. It has been very successful. Homosexuality is not only accepted as an appropriate way of life by many people but such a view is promoted in our schools. Homosexual activists present homosexuals as a subculture oppressed by the teaching of the Bible. They are portrayed as victims of oppression. They hitch a ride on the back of historic causes that have moved millions to act. Parallels are drawn between victimised homosexuals and down-trodden slaves. Decent people, motivated by so-called decent values, the majority of whom are not homosexual themselves, rally to support the “injured class”. The person who describes homosexuality as sinful is viewed as a part of a “dark force of oppression”: the modern equivalent of a supporter of slavery who has no regard for the rights of his fellow men. Those who support the “rights” of homosexuals are portrayed as the custodians of liberty: they “believe in fairness”. People are appalled when newspaper propaganda informs them that there is an “oppressed sub-culture” in the Western world. Demands are made for the special protection of “the victimised”. The result is that not only those who have no religion but those who have a religious system based on supposedly Christian values, support that conduct which the Bible condemns. Many liberal churches further the homosexual agenda. The authors of *The Homosexual Agenda* say that some churches seem to exist for no other reason than to promote homosexuality. Those who oppose them are portrayed as uneducated, while the liberal churches are enlightened and thoughtful.

When contextless “moral values” and “religious feelings”, adrift in a misty sea, take the place of the historical Biblical fact of redemption and the doctrines, practice and experience that flow from it, then the whole face of Christianity changes. One grave by-product of this situation is that the Muslim is appalled at what happens in a so-called Christian land; he scoffs at the religion that has less and less moral influence on its people; he reproves a worldly, secular, all inclusive church; and he feels justified in seeking the conversion of the world to the political and religious ideals of Islam.

4. POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

In our day, the profession of faith in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, is made in an atmosphere which makes many afraid to express their views on religious matters. If there is not yet a law against declaring the sinfulness of homosexuality, there is an intolerance of it. The tragic case of Harry Hammond, assaulted for condemning homosexuality and then charged for causing an offence (while the assailants were not charged) and later dying in hospital is known to those who have read previous reports. While some heads of Muslim states, who criminalise Christian worship in their own countries, receive state welcomes to the UK and some of those who advocate the Islamisation of the West are permitted to enter the UK, one man, who has warned about the danger posed to our religious and political freedom by Islam, has been forbidden entry.

The reason for the exclusion of Mr. Wilders from the UK was that he had articulated the fears that many have about Islamism. He was excluded because it was feared that Muslims would be offended, resulting possibly in civil unrest. He has stated that there is a direct link between the Koran and Islamic violence. His various statements present a view that as Nazism posed a threat to our freedom in the middle of the 20th century, now Islamic ideology poses a threat to our freedom in the 21st century and insists that it is most irresponsible for Governments not to address it.

Do we really live in a land which on one hand insists on the right of Jerry Springer to stage a gross and blasphemous play, though thousands of offended Christians respectfully petitioned against it, and on the other hand, one which denies entry to a man because his appeal in respect of our liberties might offend Muslims? But that is only one illustration of the utterly unbelievable madness of “political correctness”. A British Christian woman, living in the UK has been struck off the list of foster parents because a Muslim girl she cared for converted to Christianity. A child in a British school in the UK was censured for speaking about eternal realities to a Muslim school mate. Her mother, a secretary in the same school, was accused of professional misconduct when she communicated her misgivings to Christian friends.

“Britain seems to have become a country ruled by fear. A country where civil servants cancel Christmas celebrations to please Muslims . . . where Sharia Courts are part of the legal system. . . . Where a primary school cancelled a Christmas nativity play because it interfered with an Islamic festival . . . where a school removes the words Christmas and Easter from their calendar so as not to offend Muslims . . . where a teacher punishes two students for refusing to pray to Allah as part of their religious education class . . . where elected members of a town council are told not to eat during daylight hours in town hall meetings during the Ramadan” (from the text of the speech Mr. Wilders was not permitted to deliver to the House of Lords).

This Synod has repeatedly spoken against the observation of Christmas. We are at a strange pass, however, if Christmas celebrations are to be curtailed for fear of Muslims. The unavoidable frightening inference is that the fear of Islamic displeasure is a more effective deterrent than the fear of God’s displeasure is.

There is a chilling side to the paradoxical values which, in the name of toleration, expose us to the dangers of extreme ideologies and make it difficult for us to speak out freely against them. We cannot understand the state of religion in our day unless we acknowledge that it is professed in an atmosphere of a dubious freedom introduced by political correctness. We live in a time which has successfully removed the profession of true religion to the periphery of what is acceptable and has made the publication of its teaching difficult.

5. SECULARISM

Present day religion cannot be understood unless we appreciate that it is professed while all around a rapid process of secularisation is taking place.

Many writers speak of Secularism as a definable world view or philosophy. Vos: "Secularism is that view of life which regards life as a whole as non-religious. . . . God does not matter. . . . God has no meaning for the ordinary everyday life of man." Having described such a godless outlook on life, Vos makes the astonishing statement that, "Secularism is the internal dry rot of the churches". "In secularism nothing is transcendent. Secularism is concerned with the here and now. It does not speak of the unseen and eternal, only the seen and temporal. Secularism is a conscious rejection of the Christian view of life. Reason is the judge and umpire even of God and His Word. While it has to admit that religion is a part of life's fabric, it is regarded as an activity for the deluded. It is classed as a pastime, or as entertainment. At best, the churches are charities. The secular mind thinks of the Christian as one in need of enlightenment or education to deliver him from the shackles of an old superstition."

But Secularism is not just indifferent, it is intolerant of Christianity. The *Daily Telegraph* carried a piece on the marginalisation of Christianity in the UK, in which we are told that public sector workers now risk being sacked if they talk about religion in the workplace, under "equality and diversity" rules. New NHS guidelines state that doctors and nurses face harassment charges if they are accused of "preaching" to colleagues or patients, while a draft code of practice for teachers could be used by schools to discipline those who discuss their beliefs with pupils. Caroline Petrie, a community nurse was suspended without pay for two months after she offered to pray for an elderly patient. Latest figures show that courts dealt with 600 cases of workplace discrimination on religious grounds in the year to April 2008, up from 486 two years before. A relationship counsellor was sacked after he refused to give therapy to homosexual couples. Both have been unsuccessful in their claims for unfair dismissal. A correspondent in the same newspaper observed how a totalitarian ideology "obliterates the distinction between areas of private judgment and of public control" (*Daily Telegraph*, 18th February 2009).

One is frequently shocked by the illiberal almost totalitarian accent with which our secular society can speak against religion. Those who publicly condemn homosexuality might be required to undergo "diversity training" or they may need "educating", presumably with a view to teach them not to think for themselves. Joe and Helen Roberts were questioned by the police because they complained about their local council's "gay rights" policy. The Bishop of Chester was investigated by the police for suggesting that homosexuals need not be homosexuals.

The church is viewed as another secular organisation. The church is a society of human origin in the eyes of a secular world. The concept of two jurisdictions within a nation (Christ's spiritual jurisdiction and the ruler's temporal jurisdiction) has long been forgotten. The concept of "co-ordinate jurisdiction and mutual subordination" (the view the Covenanters had of the Biblical relation) between church and state is a laughable concept in a secular age.

R. C. Sproul (1939-), who is well known in some circles for his writings on Christian Apologetics, said, "The impact of secularism . . . has been

cataclysmic, shaking the very foundations of the value structures of western civilization. The Judeo-Christian consensus is no more; it has lost its place as the dominant shaping force of cultural ethics.”

We have tried to show the thorns amongst which true religion seeks to grow in our day. These are the fruitless trees of the wood. Christ is the fruitful Apple Tree amongst the trees of the wood and may He continue to be so to us, the Chiefest and only One, among the ten thousands of barren, proud contenders. “Enter in at the strait gate,” said the Saviour: an exhortation worthy to be plainly declared and cordially received, being based on that solemn and infallible observation: “Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13-14).

Though the Committee cannot endorse all that is written by the following sources and authors, this part of the report could not have been written without their help: Blanchard, *Does God believe in Atheists?*; Christian Institute, Various Pamphlets; Craigs, *The Homosexual Agenda*; Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*; Mullen, *The Dark Side of the Moral Consensus*; Online Bible (Answers in Genesis), *The Quote Book*; Sproul, *Classical Apologetics*; Vos, *Crossroads*.

MORALS

ABORTION

The Abortion Act was passed into law on 27th October 1967 and came into effect 41 years ago this year on 27th April 1968. During that time more than 7,000,000 unborn children have been slaughtered, which is a direct violation of the sixth commandment “Thou shalt not kill”. If Pharaoh, King of Egypt, who commanded all the male children of the Israelites to be drowned in the River Nile, and King Herod, who slew the babes of Bethlehem, are ignominiously renowned in history for their murderous acts, how much more the disgrace of this supposedly Christian and civilised nation of Britain murdering millions of children in the womb. Scotland’s share of this killing is over 300,000 unborn children, the number for 2006 being 13,081.

An opportunity was available in 2008 to reduce the upper limit for abortions, presently 24 weeks, during the consideration of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill before Parliament, but even a minor reduction from 24 weeks to 22 weeks was not passed. The majority of MPs who voted to continue the *status quo* certainly have the blood of the unborn children on their hands. It was gratifying to note that plans by pro-abortion MPs to further liberalise the abortion law by bringing Northern Ireland under the scope of the law for the first time were defeated as also was abortion on request for up to 24 weeks, nurse abortion and GP Surgery abortion with completion at home. There were also proposals to jail pro-life counsellors who gave pro-life advice to abortion seekers. A pro-life lawyer said, “The good

news is that 18 months of fighting against the liberalisation of abortion through this Bill is now over and God has delivered us in this battle to hold the ground against the might of the Trade Unions, the medical institutions, the Abortion industry and a hugely pro-choice Parliament is miraculous indeed – praise be to God! However the battle on behalf of the unborn child will continue, perhaps for a lifetime. We will press on until we see the law of this land changed so that the most vulnerable are wholly protected.”

THE HUMAN FERTILISATION AND EMBRYOLOGY BILL

This Bill passed through Parliament on 22nd October 2008. This allows scientists to implant the nucleus of a human cell into an animal egg in order to form a hybrid animal-human embryo, which impinges on the sanctity of human life and, as such, is immoral. These embryos would be destroyed after 14 days, seeming to indicate a feeling of guilt on the part of scientists and legislators. Even worse are legalising (1) The screening of human embryos in order to eliminate those with undesirable genetic features, (2) The genetic modification of human embryos using a cloning technique in order to avoid certain genetic diseases, and (3) Recognising a lesbian couple as the “parents” of an IVF child born to one of them.

MURDER

Scotland’s murder rate is the fastest-rising in Western Europe. Data published by the United Nations (UN) found the number of killings was 2.1 per 100,000 people. Homicides have risen more than a third, making Scotland joint highest in Western Europe with Finland and Portugal. The UN Survey of Crime Trends and Operation of Criminal Justice Systems covered 2005-2006. In Scotland, the murder rate rose from 1.59 per 100,000 to 2.1, an increase of 34%. This rise was the sixth biggest in the world, coming behind Bahrain (73%), Jordan (45%), Tajikistan (43%), Armenia (37%) and Mauritius (34%). Of the 109 killings recorded, 31 were in Glasgow. Between 2005 and 2006 the number of murders in the city increased from 4.49 per 100,000 to 5.34. Almost half the killings were carried out with a sharp instrument such as a knife. Data released by the Scottish Government for 2006-2007 recorded 114 murder victims. Thousands of lethal weapons have been taken off Scotland’s streets during a police crackdown on violent crime. Nearly 3,000 Samurai swords, machetes, axes, knives and daggers have been collected by Strathclyde Police in the last six months. During a series of early morning police raids, with more than 300 violent offenders being arrested, Campbell Corrigan, an Assistant Chief Constable of Strathclyde Police, said, “Some of the items recovered in the last six months are truly terrifying and yet these are the weapons being used by people on the street”.

Every week in Scotland nine children are convicted of carrying knives. Statistics show prosecutions for under-18s carrying offensive weapons, such as meat cleavers, swords and household knives, has almost doubled in less than a decade. In 1999, 281 children were convicted, rising to 487 in 2008.

Earlier this year Ross Anderson, 17, of Montrose was found guilty of culpable homicide after stabbing another teenager to death while on bail. He stabbed Adam Paton six times and is to be sentenced later.

Truly it is written "The transgression of the wicked saith, within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes" (Psalm 36:1).

As if our nation was not murderous enough as it is, there is now pressure to pass a law for physician-assisted suicide. To date 101 UK citizens have travelled to a special clinic in Switzerland to end their lives where voluntary euthanasia is legal, as it also is in Belgium and the Netherlands. Margo MacDonald, an MSP suffering from Parkinson's Disease, launched a consultation on plans to make assisted suicide legal. She has already said she would like to be allowed to bring about her own death if her condition deteriorates. Under the measures she is proposing, people would be able to ask a doctor to help them end their life. She requires the support of 18 MSPs to progress her Bill. The British Medical Association and Scottish Government are opposed to the proposals. Dame Joan Bakewell, the Government's new Tsar for the elderly, says she supports assisted suicide and thinks the elderly should not be kept alive once they lose their identity. The Word of God is totally opposed to suicide, which is but self-murder as is revealed in the cases of King Saul, Ahithophel and Judas Iscariot, who all took their own lives.

ALCOHOL ABUSE

A Scottish National Health Service study has revealed that 633 children, including 15 under the age of 12 and as young as 8, were taken to hospital casualty units between April and June 2007 after drinking too much alcohol. They had consumed, on average, the equivalent of six pints of lager in the hours before being admitted to hospital. Almost a quarter had also taken illegal drugs including ecstasy and cannabis.

In February 2009 a news report disclosed that in Scotland alcohol-related deaths had now outstripped heart disease as the main cause of death.

ADULTERY

Breaches of the seventh commandment are now so commonplace that they are regarded as a normal way of life and behaviour. Further evidence of this is in the Press reports on 30th July 2008 where it is recorded that there was a surge in cases of Syphilis throughout Scotland. Homosexual and bisexual men were blamed for a huge increase in this and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), hitting a new high between 2006 and 2007. Cases of Syphilis, once thought to have practically disappeared, rocketed by 1,100% between 1996 and 2007. The latest NHS figures show that cases of STIs hit a new high last year. There were 22,906 diagnosis of acute STIs, up 7% on 2006 and 110% higher than 1996. The number of Chlamydia cases was up 435%, while the statistics for HIV nearly trebled, and cases of Gonorrhoea nearly doubled over the 11 years. Last year's figures show that 4 out of 5 new diagnoses of Chlamydia in women were in the 15-34 year age group, while 71% of cases

among men involved 20-34 year-olds. The total attendance at Genitourinary Medicine Clinics in UK in 2006 was 1,800,000, more than double the number in 2002.

Some of these can be related to immigration but the principal cause is the breakdown of morality. People are not usually born with these diseases and, provided they abstain from fornication, adultery and homosexual conduct, they are in little danger of contracting them.

The Word of God has the solution in the commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery". Abstinence before marriage, and total fidelity after, would bring almost to an end these diseases in one or two generations. Unfortunately, the Government response continues to be "more money" and "more sex education" with total opposition to a return to morality.

Even such a sin-hardened nation as the UK was recently shocked when a 13-year-old-boy was claimed to be the father of a baby born to a 15-year-old girl, being only 12 years old when the child was conceived. This news also added to the UK's reputation as Europe's capital for teenage pregnancies.

CIVIL PARTNERSHIP ACT 2004 – DISCRIMINATION AGAINST SISTERS

Two elderly sisters have lost their battle to enjoy the same tax benefits as same-sex couples who register for civil partnerships. Joyce Burden, 90, and her sister Sybil, 82, have lived together in the same house for years, caring for older family members and now for one another. Concerned that when one of them dies the other will have to sell the house to cover inheritance duties, the sisters have campaigned for decades to have their relationship treated like a marriage for the purposes of tax law. The Civil Partnership Act 2004 allows same-sex couples to register as civil partners, exempting them from inheritance tax. However, the Act prevents partnerships from being registered between close relatives. Before the law was passed it was argued by the Christian Institute and others that it ought to be extended to allow long-term, co-habiting family members to register as civil partners in the same way as same sex couples. This would have made civil partnerships fairer and less like "gay marriage".

The Burdens decided to take their case to the European Court of Human Rights. They claim that the Government was unfairly withholding from them tax rights now available to same-sex civil partners. The Grand Chamber of the European Court ruled that the sisters could not be compared with a married Civil Partnership Act couple, and so no discrimination had taken place.

Joyce Burden said, "If we were lesbians we would have all the rights in the world but we are sisters and it seems we have no rights at all" (*Evangelical Times*, June 2008).

DRUG ABUSE

Drug abuse rates (double those in England) are behind Scotland's higher mortality rate. Research by the *British Medical Journal (BMJ)* has found the rate, which is 15% higher than in England and Wales, was not caused by

deprivation as previously thought. The research points to deaths from drugs and drug-related issues such as infections, violence, suicide and overdoses, as being key to the figures. Previously deaths related to drug abuse have been overlooked unless they were from overdoses. Michael Bloor, from the Centre of Drug Misuse Research at Glasgow University, said: "Although drug use is of low prevalence it is bad for you. The mortality rate of drug users is 12 times higher than among non-using Scots of the same age and gender."

The human cost of drug abuse in Scotland could spiral in years to come, warned Fergus Ewing, Scotland's Community Safety Minister, as figures revealed a record number of deaths from heroin, cocaine and other substances. A total of 455 drug-related fatalities were recorded last year, more than double the 1997 figure and 8% more than than the previous year.

Scripturally drug addicts are in the same category as drunkards, as in Galatians 5:21: "Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in times past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God."

YOUTH INDISCIPLINE

This is evidenced in the number of pupils excluded from school. Although the overall number of exclusions was down, there was a sharp rise in those excluded for violence, amounting to 25%, with one child a day expelled or suspended for an assault with a weapon. Official statistics showed exclusions for physical assault were 5,961; 4,831 attacks on fellow pupils and 1,312 on staff.

Exclusions for violence with a weapon increased by 28% in just a year from 286 to 366, despite an 11% fall in the number of children expelled from the classroom. Boys accounted for 8 out of 10 exclusions. Some were suspended on several occasions for insolence, disobedience, and verbal and physical assaults on fellow pupils and staff. The breakdown of traditional family life is no doubt the root cause of the problem, many of the children involved in these figures have no suitable role models or discipline at home. They take their cue from other badly behaved children and have grown up to believe that teachers and fellow pupils are legitimate targets for their appalling behaviour.

The anti-family policies of successive governments have made a major contribution to this given situation. Marriage is undermined by such legislation as the Sexual Orientation Regulation, which favours the homosexual agenda, and policies which leave parents in a two-parent family financially better off if they split up. Successive governments have shown a distinct aversion to having their legislation undergirded by the principles of Christian morality as summed up in the Ten Commandments.

POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

Lillian Ladele, a Registrar with Islington Council in London, refused to carry out same-sex civil partnership ceremonies, on the conscientious grounds of her firmly-held biblical beliefs. As a result, her managers harassed her,

discriminated against her, and threatened her with the loss of her post. With financial help from the Christian Institute she took her case to the Central London Employment Tribunal. It was reported that she wept as she told the Tribunal that her bosses ordered her to perform the ceremonies or face dismissal for gross misconduct. She said: "I felt harassed and victimised. I was being picked on on a daily basis."

The case was decided in her favour, which was a significant victory, not only for her, but also for others in a similar situation. The Tribunal stated that "gay" rights should not be allowed to trump the rights of those with religious beliefs and that the behaviour of her colleagues had "the effect of violating Miss Ladele's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment". It also said that Islington Council "placed a greater value on the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-sexual community than it placed on the rights of Miss Ladele as one holding an orthodox Christian belief".

A 14-year-old Sikh girl has won a High Court claim against her school for discrimination for refusing to remove her religious bangle for which she was excluded for contravening their "no jewellery" policy. She said that wearing the Kara bracelet was an expression of her faith.

It makes one wonder why the High Court the previous year found against a Christian girl for wearing a chastity ring which signified that she does not believe in sex before marriage.

Social workers of Edinburgh Council have taken 2 children from their grandparents so that they can be adopted by a "gay" couple. They claimed that the grandparents were too old, being only 59 and 46 respectively. (The children's mother (26) is a recovering heroin addict.)

A leader writer, of 2nd February 2009, writes, "The decision of Edinburgh Council to take 2 children from their grandparents so that they can be adopted by a gay couple is extraordinary, even in an age in which political correctness is regularly placed above common sense". And in the same leader he writes, "Social workers, however, are considered to know best, a notion that would be laughable if it wasn't so tragic in so many cases".

CONCLUSION

Much more could be written in this report but sufficient is recorded to show the continuing downward path of the nation's morals.

A writer in concluding the 1994 report states: "In our witness as a Church we must have a regard to the glory of God in our prayers for Him to revive His cause. 'Thus saith the Lord God: I do not this for your sakes, O House of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen. . . . Thus saith the Lord God: I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them' (Ezekiel 36:22, 37). 'When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute and not despise their prayer' (Psalm 102:16-17)." This is our hope.

SABBATH OBSERVANCE COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener, *pro tem*

THE fear of God and the keeping of His commandments are inseparably combined in His Word.

The Lord has given us His commandments for His glory and our good and when an individual, or a nation, refuses to obey these commandments this demonstrates a low spiritual and moral condition. Sadly we have to confess that, to an alarming extent, this is our position as a nation.

The New Testament Sabbath, or Lord's Day, commemorates the rising from the dead of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and is precious to His believing people.

The function of this committee is to bring to the attention of our fellow sinners our mutual obligation to "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy . . .", as stated in the Fourth Commandment.

During the past year the following public figures and organisations have been written to about Sabbath observance.

The Prime Minister, who is the son of a Church of Scotland minister, was written to on four occasions concerning various activities on the Sabbath in London, including a political meeting which he attended. Two replies were received of a tokenistic nature which were mere standard photocopies of acknowledgement and it would appear that none of the correspondence reached his Private Secretary. In contrast, President G. W. Bush, reported that although he held meetings for reporting of national security each day of the week he did not have these meetings on the Sabbath Day.

The Edinburgh International Festival organisers were written to regarding pre-festival events aimed at young people which had taken place on the Sabbath before the Festival's official opening. Nor surprisingly, no reply or acknowledgement was received.

Mr. A. Allan, MSP, Mr. A. MacNeil, MP, and Mr. A. MacDonald (convener of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar), were written to about the campaign by some parties, at the end of 2007, to prevail upon Calmac to introduce a Sabbath ferry service between Ullapool and Stornoway. No replies were received.

Lord Thurso, MP, was written to regarding a public event which was scheduled to take place in his constituency on the Sabbath Day. We are pleased to report that action was taken and the event did not take place on the Sabbath Day.

The Synod, which met in May 2008, appointed Rev. Angus Smith to represent the Free Presbyterian Church as a speaker on Sabbath observance. On the evening of 31st October 2008 he gave a talk in Dingwall Academy, stressing that the first day of the week is now God's Sabbath Day. The meeting was advertised in the local newspapers, and the local churches were informed and, of the 60+ persons who attended, only a few were from other churches.

The Rev. H. M. Cartwright was invited to address a public meeting in Portree on Sabbath observance and spoke on "Calling the Sabbath a delight"

under three headings: (1) How we should view the Sabbath; (2) How we should keep the Sabbath; (3) What we should expect from Sabbath keeping.

The Committee would remind the people of our church that Mr. Smith is willing to continue as the Representative Speaker and any interested party should contact him directly.

These meetings are a witness in themselves and with the Lord's blessing may be used for the good of never-dying souls and His glory in our communities.

JEWISH AND FOREIGN MISSIONS COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. J. MacLeod

General

Over the year which has elapsed since the Committee last presented a Report to the Synod, our endeavours to bring the Gospel to the ears of sinners in distant lands have, in the kindness of the Most High, been maintained. It is cause for thankfulness that our ministers, in their own far-flung locations, have been sustained in health of body and mind and likewise, apart from Miss Norma MacLean, all other ex-patriate staff, occupying their own spheres of labour. Miss MacLean, self-denyingly, and with that devotion to duty which is so characteristic of her, returned to her post at Ingwenya in October after undergoing surgery at home. We trust that she will continue to be sustained in health. The Rev. Petros Mzamo, we are glad to report, is – although now retired – still able to take services and that is much appreciated. At the time of writing this Report, the Rev. K. M. Watkins's health is causing some concern, but we hope and pray that the nature and root of his indisposition will soon be diagnosed and successfully treated. Sadly, we have to place on record that Miss Marion Graham who, for many years, served the Mission well as Head of the John Tallach Secondary School, passed away in July 2008. Yet again we have to acknowledge the kindness and generosity of our friends in Holland. Their financial support, so absolutely vital to the continuation of our missionary work in Africa, is increasing year by year and, as the accounts will show, the Mbumba Zending Board has this year been extremely helpful and generous. The expenses incurred in regard to the work in Israel are met solely from the Church's own resources. We are indebted to the Oikonomos Foundation for their practical help in connection with the development of existing Primary Schools and HIV/AIDS prevention.

Zimbabwe

It is to be hoped that with a power-sharing government now in place the political situation in Zimbabwe will stabilize and that the on-going administration difficulties will ease. That hitherto the John Tallach School at

Ingwenya (now ranked among the best and most successful schools in the whole country) and the Mbema Hospital (whose reputation is such that patients now travel long distances to receive medical treatment) continue to function is to be attributed to the resourcefulness of the members of staff at both institutions. Many visits have had to be made to Botswana and South Africa to obtain provisions at supermarkets within the borders of these countries. In the circumstances prevailing, with empty shelves lining Zimbabwean shops, it can only be described as a remarkable feat that the amount of food necessary to feed 480 boarding pupils over each period of three months was secured. Mr. Hugh MacKenzie, in his capacity as Mission Co-ordinator, continued throughout the year to monitor the progress of all the works and stream-lining of administrative staff embraced in the Mission Plan drawn up two years ago. The practice of drawing up a budget for the year ahead – based on reports from heads of departments in Zimbabwe – has been adopted by the Committee and – as is now usual – this budget was submitted to the Mbema-Zending Board in January. The generous response has already been referred to.

Towards the end of 2008, Mr. E. Zikhali, who had served the Mission as Administrator for ten years, retired and Mr. S. Ncube has been appointed as his successor in the post. This being so important an appointment, a committee consisting of Rev. D. A. Ross (Chairman), Rev. Z. Mazwabo, Rev. S. Khumalo, Mr. S. Mpofo and Mr. H. MacKenzie, was appointed to interview applicants and choose the person who, in their view, was most suited to post.

The four active ministers – Rev. Z. Mazwabo in Mashonaland, the Rev. S. Khumalo in Bulawayo, the Rev. A. MacLean at Ingwenya, and the Rev. M. Mloyi at Zenka, faithfully continue to labour in the Gospel, no doubt encountering difficulties and the resistance of the kingdom of darkness, in common with all who have been called to that office, wherever their lot may be cast. They have the encouragement of their Master that in persevering in such well-doing they shall in due time reap if they faint not. Their own reports to the Synod will give an account of their labours and it is therefore not necessary to say more in this report.

At the John Tallach School, Mr. Ncube, the Headmaster, and his Deputy, Miss Norma MacLean, are to be commended for maintaining such a high standard of education year upon year. On account of the political and economic state of the country, the difficulty of retaining staff is acute with more lucrative posts available outside the country. This may well become a matter of even greater concern when the time comes to implement the proposal to raise the status of the school to that of a Sixth Form Secondary. Teachers being on strike over pay conditions, the new Session in January did not begin for several weeks, but we believe our staff there will have faced up to that difficulty and will have surmounted it. The absence of Miss MacLean from Ingwenya being longer than was anticipated, we are grateful to Miss Rhoda MacKay, Kinlochbervie, for going out to Ingwenya at short notice to help the hard-pressed teaching staff. She, self-denyingly, stayed on beyond the date of

her expected return and we appreciate that. We also much appreciate the fact that two young women – Miss Naomi Rowland and Miss Jacqueline Freeke – have volunteered to spend a year helping with the work at the John Tallach School. A third, Miss Catriona Fraser, will help for three months this coming Summer. We wish them well.

The Thembiso Children's Home provides a roof to orphans and children abandoned by their parents and under it they are lovingly cared for. Mr. Stanford Mpofu has reached retirement age, but in order to facilitate the implementation of the proposed transition of Thembiso from an institutional to family-based units, it has been agreed that he continue in his post for another year. The presence of Sr. P. Beukers as a member of staff has been of enormous help and benefit all round.

The revision of the Ndebele Bible continues. The New Testament, printed under the auspices of the Trinitarian Bible Society, is now widely distributed and the team, now working their way through the Old Testament, are currently looking at the concluding chapters of the prophecy of Isaiah. Mr. Teus Benschop is ably assisted by Mr. B. Mziya and Mr. N. Mpofu in Zimbabwe, while Miss C. M. MacAulay continues to make her invaluable contribution by electronic means from Breasclate. This work will occasion her return to Zimbabwe for a period of time from April onwards.

At the more remote Mbumba Hospital, Dr. Snoek and her staff – Sr. Willie Geurtsen (Matron), Sr. Gilia Winjngaarden, Sr. Celia Renes, and Sr. Erica van Breda – continue to provide medical care and facilities second to none in the area. It was agreed by the Committee that a trainee doctor should be allowed to work at Mbumba who would benefit from Dr. Snoek's teaching and be of assistance when she was away.

Kenya

In Kenya, the Rev. K. M. Watkins continues to fulfil his duties in an exemplary manner, bearing cheerfully the burdens laid on him – preaching, teaching, catechizing and keeping a watchful eye on all the day-to-day activities within, and sometimes without, the mission compound. Some pastors with a Pentecostal background are receiving instruction from Mr. Watkins and a number attend the services at Sengera. We hope and pray that this will lead to greater things. Mr. Andre Ploeg attends to administrative matters as Treasurer and provides help in spiritual duties as well. The considerable assistance given by Mrs. Watkins in various ways is appreciated by the Committee. The Omorembe Clinic continues to provide – within the limits imposed by the absence of a doctor – medical help to the sick and we would desire it to continue as a useful handmaid in bringing the Gospel to the ears of those who come for treatment or help. It was agreed by the Committee that a Clinical Officer might be appointed locally at the discretion of Mr. Watkins. The Rev. N. M. Ross and Mr. R. Campbell visited Sengera as deputies (18th February to 6th March) and they will be submitting their own report to the Synod. We hope Mr. and Mrs. Watkins and Mr. Ploeg will be sustained in health of body

and mind. The Mbumba Zending Board have agreed to provide the funding necessary to build a new purpose-built church building on the vacant ground adjacent to the Sengera compound. As the present church and clinic are under the same roof, the completion of this project will lead to the easing of congestion within the clinic and offer much needed extension space.

Israel

In Israel the Rev. J. Goldby is exploring every avenue open to him as he endeavours to bring the Gospel to the Jews. His centre of activities has moved from Jerusalem to Jaffa/Tel Aviv where he preaches to a small group of Russian-background Jews. A revision of the Hebrew Delitzsch New Testament was apparently long overdue (words have changed their meaning and punctuation changes are necessary) and Mr. Goldby has been appointed a member of the local committee set up by the Trinitarian Bible Society to facilitate this important work. As a first step, the Committee's attention has been focussed on the Gospel of John. He is also heavily engaged in the important ongoing work of translating the *Westminster Confession of Faith* into modern Hebrew. As he will be presenting his own report to the Synod, members will then be more fully informed of the nature of his work and the success or otherwise attending it.

Conclusion

It is clear that we have our portion allotted to us at a time when darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people. At home and abroad, wherever dwell men of whatever colour of skin – Jews and Gentiles – it is evident that spiritual death is reigning to a fearful extent and that there are but few who are longing to see the fulfilment of what the Saviour has left on record in regard to His coming to revive His own church: “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.” In dependence upon His grace, and within the limits of our sway, we believe that it is our aim in Zimbabwe, Kenya and Israel to do what we can to hasten that day. We urge our people to pray earnestly for the coming of His kingdom and while at the throne of grace to remember our labourers – male and female – who, on our mission field and within their own sphere, seek to spread abroad the renowned fame of the Lord Jesus Christ as the one and only Saviour of lost and ruined mankind sinners.

JEWISH REPORT

Rev. J. Goldby

“AND the light shineth in darkness: and the darkness comprehended it not” (John 1:5). “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11). These verses in the beginning of the Gospel of John bear witness to the solemn rejection by the Jews of their own Messiah prior to their being scattered across

the face of the earth. It is notable that one of the signs of the true Messiah is that he would be rejected: “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3). But to everything there is a time and a season – and a time, God says, when, “I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn” (Zechariah 12:10).

Jerusalem

Services were kept in Jerusalem from May 2008 until August at the YMCA in Jerusalem. We were pleased to see some who had attended our services regularly, while living in Israel, visiting and joining with us again in our worship. One American lady, Miriam Dewhirst, a serious student of the Bible, was very attached to us. Some time ago Miriam developed a serious illness from which she sadly passed away on Thursday, 7th August 2008. She had maintained a bright Christian disposition to the end and we felt her passing keenly, being the first breach by death among those with whom we have been associated in Israel. Following a short visit to Scotland in August we managed to obtain a place for our daughter Jennifer in the Tabeetha Church of Scotland School in Jaffa. This is, as far as we know, the only school in Israel which follows the British Educational system and one of the few who teach in English.

Jaffa

Jaffa is the ancient sea port of Israel. Through Jaffa came the timber from Lebanon used to construct the Temple of Solomon. We relocated to Jaffa in the beginning of September 2008. Tabeetha School lease a teacher’s flat from a local Palestinian family. In the absence of a teacher the flat was temporarily vacant and the Church of Scotland kindly allowed us to sub-let this flat at a reduced rate. The building in which the Jaffa flat is located is owned by a prominent Palestinian Christian (Greek Orthodox) family in Jaffa. Jaffa is part of larger Tel Aviv lying to the south of this city. The Jaffa neighbourhood sharply contrasts the modern Orthodox Jewish community of Jerusalem’s Arnona district where we have lived for the previous four years. Here in Jaffa, Jews and Palestinians, Christians and Muslims, rich and poor, live together in close proximity with an apparent degree of harmony – at least on the surface. In Jaffa one can see the blue and white Israeli flag flying over some homes whilst the Green Islamic flag flies from others. Israeli Palestinians have full citizenship rights and Israeli passports. Some have prospered in business, display considerable wealth, and interact well with their Jewish counterparts. Beneath the calm surface, however, genuine unity is absent, with a good deal of hostility between Muslim and Christian Palestinians and between Palestinians and Jews. The Gospel of Christ ought to be the means of bringing real unity but the nominal Christianity of many Arab Christians and negative

anti-Israel politics indicate little understanding and influence from the teachings of the Bible. Jewish Israel on the other hand discourages any kind of Missionary activity between religious communities so that it is difficult to bridge the religious divides. Tabeetha School has a good reputation educationally but does not have the clear Christian ethos that we might hope to see. Some years ago several Christian teachers were dismissed by the then head teacher for being too evangelical in their approach to students. Today the staff and pupils are a mixture of Jews, Muslims and Christians.

Church services in Tel Aviv and beyond

Having investigated the possibility of using Tabeetha School for services we eventually began a regular Sabbath evening service in Schoken St., Tel Aviv, a ten-minute drive from our flat. Occasional services are still held in the house in Nahariya near Israel's northern border. Unlike Jerusalem, Tel Aviv has few regular church premises except for a few Roman Catholic and Orthodox buildings in the Jaffa district. The building where we worship is used by a variety of groups but is mainly under the control of a Reformed Baptist church called the Hope of Israel Congregation, pastored by Mr. Tom Jamison. The members of the Congregation are mainly Jewish Christians from the former Soviet Union and the services are conducted in Hebrew with translation into Russian. Mr. Jamison himself and a few of his people attend our Sabbath evening service which we also translate into Russian. Thanks to Rev. Donald Ross and the Odessa Congregation we have some metrical Psalms in Russian which enable us to sing in English and Russian at the same time. We translate our service into Russian. Mr. Ross has also published the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the *Shorter Catechism* in Russian which we are circulating among the people. On two occasions I have been asked to address the Hope of Israel congregation and once to give a short address on the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. Sasha, the elder of the congregation, is a civil engineer and a graduate of the University of Kiev in the Ukraine. He recently gave a short address to the Congregation on the history of the Reformation in Scotland in the course of which he made mention of the *Directory of Public Worship* which encourages prayer for the Jews. Mr. Jamison has begun to address his congregation regularly on the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. The members of this Church are from many different backgrounds and are in need of much teaching. The leadership, therefore, welcomes our interest in them, even though we assist them, as it were, from the outside. Despite the differences in Worship, Baptism, Church Government, etc., a door of opportunity has opened here and whatever the future may hold we hope that the Lord will bless our small contribution.

Revision of the Delitzsch Hebrew New Testament

Following meetings held in the earlier part of last year, a plan was made to revise the Delitzsch Hebrew New Testament. The General Secretary of the Trinitarian Bible Society, Mr. D. P. Rowland, and Mr. Olavi Syvanto,

representing a Finnish Bible publisher with many years service in Israel, agreed in principle to fund the work. A revision committee was formed and met in April 2008 in Israel. In December 2008 a Revision team comprising Dr. Nerel, Mrs. Sara Nerel, Mr. Tom Jamison and Rev. J. Goldby met for the first time and began work on the Delitzsch Hebrew New Testament Gospel of John. Dr. and Mrs. Nerel compare the English Authorized Version with the Hebrew N.T. Mr. Jamison, who is a fluent speaker of modern Hebrew with good skills in the Biblical languages, compares the Hebrew translation with the Greek Textus Receptus published by the TBS. He and I go over his findings together before a weekly meeting with the Nerels to discuss and record any issue found in the text. The findings are then sent, together with the Team's comments and recommendations, to Mr. A. Hembd in Texas, who is now working as a TBS Consultant, and to Dr. Anderson and the TBS in London who in turn comment on the findings and add further information. The Gospel of John reveals high and deep divine doctrines and great care is needed to ensure accuracy of translation. Already a number of important issues have been identified and a number of changes recommended. We pray that in due course this work may be instrumental in bringing the knowledge of the Messiah to the people of Israel.

The translation of the Westminster Confession of Faith into Hebrew

Our translator, Rev. Baruch Maoz, to date, has translated nine chapters of the *WCF* into modern Hebrew. Each chapter is then examined carefully with the assistance of Mr. T. Jamison. Mr. Jamison and I then meet with Mr. Maoz to discuss theological and linguistic issues and agree on any amendments to be made. Reformed Theology is very rare in Israel and we are thankful to have the assistance of these two men – both of whom are reformed in their theology. One of the difficulties of translating such a work into Hebrew arises from the fact that modern Hebrew does not have the New Testament theological terminology developed in other languages over the last two thousand years. The cost of producing a faithful Hebrew translation of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* will be high; nevertheless, God willing, we hope that in due course the *WCF* will be published in Israel as a contribution to a range of Reformed Christian literature now being made available to Hebrew readers. Last year the *Heidelberg Catechism* was published in Israel by the Dutch Reformed Congregation's Board for Israel. The *HC* was launched at a seminar attended by a number of local pastors and elders. Two Dutch ministers gave lectures on the Catechism and complimentary copies of the publication were distributed.

Doctrinal controversy among the Messianic Churches of Israel

Jewish Christians in Israel face opposition not only from Orthodox Judaism outside but from doctrinal controversy inside. There is a serious Judaizing tendency among some who are exerting an increasing influence. Some also have even more serious doctrinal errors concerning the doctrine of Christ.

Recently a conference of Jewish pastors and elders was convened to discuss these issues. Thirty-six members signed a common statement of faith. The issue of Confessions and their importance is very much a matter of debate in Israel at the present time.

Hitherto the Lord has helped us and we are grateful for the opportunity and support given by the Jewish and Foreign Mission Committee, the Church at large and friends in many places, enabling us to carry on the work in Israel. We feel often the oppositions of sin and Satan and there is much need of praying always.

INGWENYA MISSION REPORT

Rev. A. B. MacLean

IN Matthew 13, the Saviour, through the parable of the tares and the wheat, teaches that in the Church of God there will be the Lord's people and hypocrites. It also teaches how this comes to pass. Satan takes advantage of the slothfulness of the men who are to protect the kingdom. "While men slept" expresses the slothfulness of men. It was while they were slothful that the enemy took the opportunity to sow the tares. The parable also shows that though the hypocrites are recognised by the disciples they are not to be rooted out of the Church because of the harm this will do to the true people of God. Their failings may be similar in some way to some of the sins of the hypocrite. If it was right to root out the hypocrite then the Lord's people would have to be rooted out also for the same sins.

Church discipline is a necessary feature here. Many cases come before the session. The main cause of discipline is Sabbath breaking. Also dealt with are cases of irregular attendance. It is noticed that the number of names on the communion roll seems disproportionately high compared to the U.K. This some might think indicates a healthier church here. This is clearly not the case. A detailed investigation took place also of a report that several members had attended the services of a man called the prophet of Mantanjeni. By the laws of evidence the guilt of those investigated could not be proved and they remain on the communion roll. A feature here is when one person is accused or reported for a sin they will immediately say it was not them but the person who reported them. Cases become very difficult to resolve when this happens because it will often come down to one person's word against the other person's word. Three people were removed from the communion roll for certain offences. One name was removed from the communion roll because of death.

Many applied to the session for Baptism and/or admission to the Lord's table. It was felt that none should be accepted. There is with most applicants a general lack of a fundamental knowledge of the Bible and doctrines of the Word of God without entering into any experimental evidence of the work of

the Holy Spirit. People have the Bible and can read. The doctrines of the Word of God have been explained over many years. The work of the Holy Spirit will lead a person to become familiar with the Word of God. Where basic knowledge is then not found in a candidate it is thought better not to accept the person but exhort instead to a prayerful seeking of the Lord through His appointed means.

The food situation in the country was difficult, especially in the latter part of the year. Barley was given out by the church to help alleviate the problem. The availability of seed maize was also a problem. A 10 kg bag of seed maize was also given out at a very reduced price. A system of inspections was put in place to monitor that the seed was being properly used. It was shocking to discover that in the Ingwenya congregation there were a large number of slothful people. Appropriate action was taken against them by withholding a measure of the food relief where slothfulness was found to be the case. Most responded to this correction. One of the local headmen sent a message to the mission saying that he was pleased people were being made to work hard. In the other stations attached to Ingwenya the people are hard working people in the main. The rains this year have been excellent and many are looking forward to what is called a bumper harvest.

It is a problem with European missions that they can attract people to the mission for the wrong reason of obtaining temporal benefits. They hear that the church gives out clothes and food and come for that reason. The rice Christian still exists. Even those who are at heart Free Presbyterians still have a mindset to receive from, rather than give to, the cause. This problem is partly created by the historic naïvety and gullibility of the European. Instead of telling people they can do better and properly investigating the cause of their problems they are too ready to give. It has been observed that many people in the community do not come to the mission but seem as well dressed and fed as those who do.

A paper was given at the theological conference this year which addressed the subject of Christian giving. One of the speakers at the conference asked the question, Why were other churches in Zimbabwe able to build manses, pay ministers salaries, etc., from their own means but the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in Zimbabwe does not? While allowances can be made for all difficulties, more can be done.

It was drawn to the attention of a local community leader that Sabbath breaking was a cause of their suffering. It was pleasant to discover that the community has agreed that no one is allowed to go to work on the fields on the Lord's Day. It cannot be a coincidence that there have been excellent rains this year. However, the community still persist in not going to work in the fields on Wednesday, which is the holy day of the ancestor religion. Christianity in Africa has been well analysed. It is prominent in the nation. More so than in the U.K. Prayer will be given a place at public meetings and politicians will speak about the Most High in their speeches. But there is no depth. There is also a holding onto the ancestor religion at the same time. This halting between

two opinions can never be blessed because the One living and true God and the religion of His Word is not followed exclusively to the abandonment of everything that is dishonouring and competitive to His glory.

During the year the sacrament of the Lord's supper was administered twice at Ingwenya and once at Cameron and Inyati. Rev. S. Khumalo and Rev Z. Mzwabo are thanked for their assistance at Ingwenya on these occasions. The usual preaching cycle was maintained more or less. This means regular services are held at Matapa, Inyati, Cameron, Gadade, Insiza and Ingwenya. The attendance at all places is consistent.

Rev. D. A. Ross, Laide, a member of the Jewish and Foreign Mission committee, visited briefly for interviews of the post of Mission Administrator. He was not idle during his visit taking, amongst other services, three prayer meetings connected with the Ingwenya congregation. It is pleasant to see deputies from the U.K. on the mission field as it was with Mr. Ross.

The Saviour's promise to the disciples, in John 15:16, of their ordination to bring forth fruit and the permanence of that fruit is an encouragement in a dark and cloudy day.

JOHN TALLACH SECONDARY SCHOOL REPORT

Miss Norma B. MacLean

THE year 2008 was a significant one in the history of the school as it marked 50 years since John Tallach Secondary School was opened on 21st January 1958. A function had been planned to commemorate this Golden Jubilee but it was thought prudent in the difficult economic and political environment to postpone any function until the situation would improve.

Dolina MacCuish's newly published book, *A Heart for Africa*, provides an interesting account of the school and its routine at that time. There were only 3 buildings at the start: one classroom, a science laboratory and an office. Over the years since then the school has grown massively: there are now 18 classrooms, 2 practical rooms, 3 science laboratories, the library, the staff-room, the hall, the resource room for the blind pupils, various storerooms, a strong room and 3 administration offices. There are 10 houses to accommodate the teachers and one house for the headmaster. In addition, of course, there is a large boarding department with a matron's house, the boarding master's house, 6 boys' dormitory blocks and 6 girls' dormitory blocks and a large dining hall with kitchen premises. In 1958 there was a total enrolment of 31 pupils, which is smaller than a single class today! The enrolment in 2008 was 587 pupils: 60 of these were day pupils from the local community and 527 were boarders, resident for the whole term.

While the numbers of pupils and buildings are very different to 1958, it was interesting to discover that the daily routine is much the same, even after all these years . . . Scripture still has the central place in the curriculum and the

daily routine which it has always had; the emphasis on hard work continues unabated; and the importance of good behaviour is stressed daily. Miss J. Nicolson is quoted in the book as commenting on how “lovable” the children are and that remains true today: teaching at John Tallach School is an immensely rewarding experience with few of the difficulties which are experienced in secondary schools in the UK.

There are difficulties, of course, but most of them are in connection with the economic situation: the currency eventually reached a situation of total collapse so that, by the beginning of 2009, all transactions were being conducted in foreign currencies. By Term 3 of 2008 it was very difficult to operate normally as supplies were so difficult to source. Many schools closed early due to lack of funds and food provisions but we managed to stumble on to the official closing date in December. This was in no small way due to the generosity of the JFMC which took over the payment of essential items direct from the UK.

At the time of writing, schools have not yet opened for Term 1 2009 but it has been announced that opening day will be 2nd March. This delay was due to the “incapacitation” of teachers nationwide who were unable to report for duty because of low wages. It means that the children have lost 6 weeks of schooling, so a lot of hard work lies ahead.

Staffing

Although she ceased to be a member of staff in 2000, this section must begin with reference to Miss Marion Graham, who passed away in 2008. Miss Graham was a member of staff and headmistress of the school for most of its 50 years’ existence. She gave 39 years of energetic and devoted service to the work of John Tallach School and, as she approached the end of her life, she was clearly as devoted and interested as ever. Many former pupils and teachers have testified to the effect that Miss Graham’s teaching and example has had on them.

Mr. C. Mhlanga, Science Head of Department, also passed away during 2008. Mr. Mhlanga was an exceptional teacher who had been at the school for almost 20 years. He passed away in South Africa while receiving treatment for cancer.

Mr. Ncube continued in post as Headmaster; Miss MacLean was on leave from April to August but was unable to return to Zimbabwe in August due to illness. She eventually returned at the end of October to resume duties. Thanks are due to Miss Rhoda Mackay, who came out to Ingwenya in March to take over Miss MacLean’s administrative duties and who generously agreed to extend her stay while Miss MacLean was on sick leave.

Throughout 2008 there was a large turnover of staff: every member of the English Department left for employment elsewhere and only two of the teachers in the Science Department remained in post throughout the year. It was a significant blow to the school when 2 of our most reliable and trusted members of staff chose to leave: Mr. C. Dube had been with us for over 20 years and Miss S. Gumpo for over 10 years; both were key members of the

English Department and were useful to the administration of the school in many other areas. Although replacements were found for all the vacancies, many of the replacements were untrained temporary teachers and we fear that this will be reflected in the results for 2008 and perhaps also 2009. Mr. Ncube was very happy to be able to source the services of a few experienced teachers who transferred to John Tallach from other schools: these teachers settled in well and helped to support the stability of the school.

By the beginning of 2009, except for the Science Department, all untrained members of staff had been replaced with trained teachers. The Science Department, however, is more or less totally unmanned, with only one part-time teacher available. We are still hopeful of recruiting others by the time school opens.

While the staffing situation is a matter of concern, it has to be stressed that the situation in John Tallach School remained more stable than in many other schools and there is every indication that the situation will improve as the new unity Government begins to operate.

In this scenario it was very encouraging to receive an application from 2 expatriates, Miss J. Freeke and Miss N. Rowland, to come to work at the school for one year. Both will work in Maths/Science and will be of valuable assistance in the Bible Knowledge Department, which is also one member of staff short. Miss Freeke and Miss Rowland are expected to arrive in Zimbabwe in August/September 2009, DV, when they have completed their studies. We would urge others to come to assist in the school – in spite of the difficulties and the undoubtedly heavy workload, the work remains rewarding and fulfilling and, as has been said in so many previous reports, we have a rare and precious opportunity to present the Truths of the Gospel to young and impressionable minds.

Pupils

Enrolment figures have already been mentioned. A new development for the school in 2008 and at the beginning of 2009 in particular is the steady stream of pupils who are now transferring elsewhere and not completing their O Level education at John Tallach. Some children were taken to South Africa/Botswana to join parents there, a very few others were transferred to private schools, due to uneasiness over the deteriorating staffing situation, and several others have transferred to schools/institutions which offer the Cambridge Certificate. The Zimsec Certificate has lost credibility with many people, due to the difficulties in marking the examinations and the delays in issuing the results. At the time of writing, we are considering introducing the Cambridge Certificate alongside Zimsec.

O Level results

In 2007, the pass rate was 87%, which was the second highest in Matabeleland North and in the top 10 schools nationally. Much to our surprise, we learned that we were the third top school nationally in Mathematics.

As usual we received many Provincial individual awards for our 2007 O Level results, achieving best performance (over 75%) in:

- Accounts
- History
- Agriculture
- Integrated Science
- Biology
- Literature in English
- Commerce
- Ndebele
- English Language
- Physical Science
- Geography

Of special mention is Bible Knowledge, which produced a very satisfactory pass rate of 91%.

Twenty pupils managed to pass with 5 or more As, three of them with 8 As. The O Level results for 2008 have not yet been published.

Finance

The economic and financial difficulties experienced in Zimbabwe are well documented. Due to the rapid loss of value of the Zimbabwean dollar, by Term 3 of 2008 the school failed to operate on its fees' income and payment of essential goods and services was taken over directly by the General Treasurer. It was due to this arrangement that the school managed to remain operational until the end of term in December.

The budget for Term 1 2009 was presented to parents in Rands and permission was received from the Ministry of Education to collect fees in foreign currency. Parents agreed on a rate of 1,800 Rands per child for Term 1. It is hoped that the school will therefore once again be able to fund its own running costs.

Developments

In spite of the difficult economic environment, significant developments were possible although at a much slower rate than anticipated.

The long awaited renovation of the old Form 1 boys' dormitory began in the middle of the year. This old building, which is still structurally sound, consisted of 2 large rooms accommodating 35 boys each with both rooms opening directly on to the bathroom area. A plan was drawn up to add a veranda to the front of the building and to subdivide the 2 large rooms into 6 smaller ones, each opening directly on to the new veranda. The bathroom area is to be completely renovated as well with a new access passage opened up. It is a very attractive plan but the rate of progress has been very slow and the building was not ready for occupation at the time of school opening in 2009 as had been hoped. The west wing is well underway but the project will continue far into 2009. As we cannot accommodate all the boys elsewhere, it means that half of them are in effect living on a building site but that seems to be a source of excitement rather than frustration!

The new 3 bedroom teachers' cottage which was started in 2007 was almost completed by the end of 2008 with only minor details left to finish. It is a very

attractive cottage with a solar water heating system. Three lady teachers will occupy it in 2009. This cottage has solved the problem of overcrowding in the teachers' accommodation – it will no longer be necessary to use sitting rooms as bedrooms.

The ceiling replacement programme continued but at a slower pace than the previous year, with only the ceiling of the school library being completed.

A new vehicle for collecting school orders and transporting teachers to and from Bulawayo was ordered in May 2008. The old heavily used vehicle had begun to develop serious problems and was not expected to last the year. It was no surprise to us, therefore, when it was put off the road by the Vehicle Inspection Department towards the end of November and it was a great disappointment that the replacement vehicle was far from ready because of difficulties in arranging the construction of the canopy. The new vehicle is still not ready at the time of writing.

A programme of installing rainwater tanks to extend the storage of water was begun during 2008: two 2,500 litre tanks and one 2,000 litre tank were installed at one of the houses and it is intended that this system will be extended to other properties on the mission. It is a simple way of collecting extra water which is useful for gardening and other purposes.

At the end of 2008 our 4-year isolation from telecommunications came to an end with the installation of a satellite broadband system. It is still wonderful to be able to communicate daily with the Mission office in Bulawayo and to be able to expect a response within a short time.

In 2008 an offer was received from a group of young people in Holland to come out and do some voluntary work at the Mission. This group arrived in January 2009 to start their projects: painting Scripture texts in all the classrooms, completing the renovation of the school kitchen premises by tiling and painting, installing a new switchboard and mapping the electricity system and setting up a secure storage system for tools and materials. The group consisted of 6 delightful and impressive young people who provided all the materials they used from funds they had sourced themselves – even down to the nails they used doing repairs. We are delighted with the work but major problems, some of them dangerous, were discovered with our electricity system which will have to be addressed.

Conclusion

As always thanks has to be recorded for the continued faithful and generous support of the JFMC, Mbuma Zending and the many individuals who contribute to different aspects of the work.

Without the protection and undertaking of the Most High, nothing would be possible, so our hope is that the work among the children, teachers and workers here will yet bear fruit to His glory and that a seed will be raised up from among them to do Him service.

ZENKA MISSION REPORT

Rev. M. Mloyi

ANOTHER year in time has risen, being governed by its Owner the Creator. It rose with its brightness showing the goodness of the Lord God who provides for His beings. The year began with all good hopes of harvest as the rains were pouring. Everyone was busy tilling the land but stopped abruptly and all crops withered away and famine was registered countrywide. It was a judgment upon our nation because we have sinned against God. The good beginning of the rainy season ended in dismay.

There is a great need of the downpour of the Holy Spirit upon our lands that the work of the Lord would be revived as Habakkuk prayed in chapter 3 verse 2. The year has been not good due to famine, disease and economic hardship. The church has sailed through a strong current only looking to the Good Shepherd who cares for His sheep. By the grace of God, who sustains His people, we went through the year. There was help in the form of food from the church under the famine Relief Scheme and also the non-governmental organizations were a great help too.

The doors at the preaching stations here were all kept open on the Sabbath and prayer meetings. The Word of God was preached to sinners and Christ and Him crucified exalted as the Saviour of sinners.

Fudu Congregation now has a resident Church elder, Mr. Dame Sibanda. He was ordained recently and Mr. Dingani Mdlongwa was ordained as a deacon in the same Congregation. These two men are now an asset to us. This congregation is supplied every Sabbath.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was dispensed twice in February and August as usual. It was very hard to conduct these Communion Seasons but by the Lord's good will we managed to go through. The congregations did what they could, though basic commodities were scarce – even purchasing the wine was difficult. This was bought in Botswana.

We were very thankful for the donation of Bibles to our Congregations. Our Congregations are now exposed to the Word of God, especially the New Testament in Ndebele. We pray that the Word of God will be blessed to the souls of the readers and will result in a saving knowledge of the Saviour. All Mission Schools have been provided with both Ndebele New Testaments and English Holy Bibles.

We pray for spiritual growth in our people, both parents and children. The translation team has helped also with Ndebele tracts to increase literature in Ndebele. All these are efforts to bring the Word of God to all in their own language.

Sickness and death still prevails in our lands. At funerals the careless are warned and exhorted to seek salvation for their souls.

What an experience I had in attending the 2008 Synod in Scotland, when I was accompanied by Mr. Mthandazelwa Dube, an elder at Mbumba. It was a

time of learning and an experience attending the Synod proceedings, which were quite new to me and my friend. Though it was long and tiring it was profitable to be there.

Our Mission prayer is that the Lord's will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help" (Psalms 121:1).

NKAYI MISSION REPORT

Rev. M. Mloyi

AS the saying of the Saviour, "for without me ye can do nothing", it is by His grace we have seen another year, though it was very hard to sail through.

The preaching stations were all visited in weekly prayer meetings and Sabbath as intimated. We are thankful that the Word of God is able to be preached in our lands. We pray for the Holy Spirit to bless the cause of Christ, especially the reading and preaching of the Word. It was a great pleasure to have a donation of Bibles for the Congregation and its stations. Those with poor eyesight received Holy Bibles with large print and we received some ordinary English Bibles and Ndebele New Testaments. Every home that comes to worship in our congregations has an Ndebele New Testament. We then encourage them to read these Bibles carefully and prayerfully.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was dispensed twice at Nkayi during January and June and in May at Donsa Dam School. By the help of the Most High all went well. Two girls at Donsa, one girl at Nkuba Congregation and one girl at Mathetshaneni received baptism. Leonard Nsimango was ordained as deacon at Donsa last September 2008.

Mr. James B. Mpofu has been of great help in the Nkayi Station but his ill health and failing eyesight are a problem for him. We are thankful that he is of great help as an elderly God-fearing man, helpful in experience and advice.

Mathendele Congregation lost the only professing member recently – she had been ill for a long time. We hope the Almighty will raise up some in this Congregation if it is His will.

Like every other part of the country and Mission, Nkayi was hard hit by famine too. We were thankful for the food-aid from the Mission and the non-governmental organisations which came at a real time of need. We thank the Mission also for maize seeds; there were none to be had at local shops nor in towns. It was a great help to have something for the planting season.

We trust that the seed of the Word of God would dwell in the souls of many and be fruitful under the influence of the Holy Spirit, as the apostle said to the Ephesians: ". . . that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge . . ." (Ephesians 3:17).

ZVISHAVANE MISSION REPORT

Rev. Z. Mazvabo

THE seasons of Zimbabwe – Summer hot and wet, Autumn cool and dry, Winter cold and dry, and Spring hot and dry – stand out distinctly one from one another although the end of one and the beginning of another may run into each other. So that, although February is the beginning of Autumn, the mountains and hills are still decorated with all the colours of the rainbow, the pastures and the fields are still green with grass and crops respectively, giving the eye of a stranger a misleading conclusion that all is well here.

In actual fact the arable land is divided up into patches of ploughed and unploughed. The unploughed patches take up a bigger share of the arable land than the ploughed. The explanation is that when the rain season started, there was scarcely any seed in the country, the result being that only a few people procured seed either by donation from the churches or international donors, but even that was not enough.

In the Southern part of the country the rains came rather late, but if it continues those who were able to plant will harvest something. In the other parts of the country people are glad to get green mealies from their fields. The general observation is that for many people famine will continue, not because there was no rain but because of other contributory factors such as lack of seed or lack of fertilizers. We pray that the Lord will bless these sufferings to the people of Zimbabwe so that they realize that they are gone away from His ordinances and have not kept them. We believe that only if they realize this and return unto the Lord then will the Lord return unto them (Malachi 3:7). First there was the political problem hanging over Zimbabwe for a long time, then came the famine on and off for many years. After that came the pestilence of HIV/AIDS; we cannot even remember when it started. As if that was not enough there was added the cruel pestilence of cholera. This is none other than the sword of the Lord drawn against the people of Zimbabwe.

It is for the servants of the Lord to blow the trumpet loudly but, sadly, many ministers of religion have climbed down from their pulpits to go and help with the distribution of food items made available by donors. Thankfully for just now, because of the greens from the fields supplemented by hand-outs from different organisations, the cry for food will not be so loud. But we must make it very clear that this period will be very short. The chief purpose of the presence of a minister of religion in a community is not to look after the social wellbeing of the people but to place at every doorstep the good news of the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But because of the desperate conditions the people lived in, whenever a minister of a religion visited them they expected that he would bring something to satisfy their hunger.

In the midst of all these problems the church services have continued and we think that many have been taught the Word of God. What we are praying for, and what we desperately need, is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit without

whom there can be no prosperity in the churches. We read that when Paul planted and Apollo watered, it was God that gave the increase, “So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase” (1 Corinthians 3:6-7).

We have very few good books in Shona for the people to read. Only the *Shorter Catechism* and the *Mother's Catechism* have been translated into Shona. We are expecting a properly printed and properly bound Psalm book for use in the worship of God to come out from the printers soon. The correction of the Shona Bible is not yet properly started but every arrangement is being made for that great work. Another book which could be of great help is the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and we hope that will also be translated sooner or later.

Two services are conducted every Sabbath day, with the help of elders, at every one of our congregations. Sadly though, because of lack of buildings, Sabbath schools are only held at New Canaan and at Chiedza. We have arranged that in other places the Sabbath school starts one hour before the service of the day.

Swollen rivers sometimes make it difficult to reach our stations. This is a problem that we encounter every year when the rainy season comes round. The roads are muddy and slippery, potholes and, in some places, dongas are opened across the roads. It is encouraging, however, that at every station a few people gather, as if to say, “Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God” (Acts 10:33).

Mr. Naison Siziba is still stationed at New Canaan congregation, which is the oldest of our congregations. The people of New Canaan were no exception to the devastating famine but they are briefly relieved just now. We say “briefly”, because only few of them will harvest enough to take them through the year. The absence of the old lady Makuzwa is very striking. She could no longer stay alone and was taken away by her brother. In well developed countries she could have been placed into an old people's home. There are still a few of those who have been with us from the start and it is encouraging to see them continue, for the promise is, “But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13). It is interesting to watch and to speak to one lady whose home is close by the church. She was a careless drunkard who spoke loudly against the church and all that the church stood for but since she was converted she is an altogether different woman – we believe that “this is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes” (Psalm 118:23). But we are very disappointed with our young people because they do not seem to endure. They continue with us for some time but when they grow up and go away to town to look for employment they join themselves to sects and charismatic movements which sweep across the country like a flood cast out of the mouth of the serpent seeking to carry away the woman and her child.

Schools have just opened, and many parents will now be disturbed and kept away from church services because they have to look after cattle and watch over their fields against baboons. The year end communion, which is usually

held in November at Chiedza, had to be cancelled because of the cholera outbreak and the January communion at New Canaan was also disturbed. The authorities allowed us to meet on condition that no people spent the night at the place, no food was cooked and that people did not shake hands. We could only meet those demands by restricting the attendance to the people around New Canaan and by holding only one service a day except on Sabbath. The congregations in Mazvihwa, which comprise Maware, Gwen'ombe and Ingezi, are preparing to hold their Communion at Ingezi in April. We only hope that by that time this cruel disease will have abated.

We would like to mention Maware Congregation. It is in the middle of the area under chief Mazvihwa and is a growing congregation but the church building is very small. Plans are underway to build a church building and some clay bricks have already been moulded. We hope that the Lord will help them to build a reasonably sized house to His name. Wherever we put up a church building we also build a pit latrine which is a requirement with the Ministry of Health and is in accordance with the Word of God: "Thou shalt have a place also without the camp, whither thou shalt go forth abroad: and thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon; and it shall be, when thou wilt ease thyself abroad, thou shalt dig therewith, and shalt turn back and cover that which cometh from thee" (Deuteronomy 23:12-13), but during the time of the cholera outbreak, those who did not have latrines were ordered by the health authorities to discontinue meetings at such places and we were advised to improve our latrines so that there would be places to wash hands after visiting them. This year, therefore, we shall endeavour to make the improvements by first of all installing gutters to receive rain water and then building tanks to receive the water, beginning at those places where communions are held. We are really disappointed that the council authorities in Zvishavane have not yet given us a site to build a place of worship for the Ebenezer congregation. We hope, however, that with these changes we shall be more successful in this respect.

Zimbabwe being a vast country there are places where the sound of the Gospel has not been preached so that the call is still loud and clear: Come over into Macedonia and help us because "the harvest is truly 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 REPORT

Rev. M. Mloyi

THE harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few, thus the wide and a holy cry of this station. As an Interim Moderator to this place I do visit to try to nourish and cherish the Mbuma stations but I come short of the expectation.

In the strength of the Lord I do what I can and earnestly pray for a resident minister in this congregation to shepherd these hungry souls. During the

course of the year I have tried to visit these stations at least once a month. We are thankful for elders and deacons who help in my absence to keep the doors open at weekday prayer meetings and on Sabbath.

Spiritual teaching continues at Mbuma, especially in the Hospital, where the resident catechist holds Bible lessons, helped by European staff. Workers also are included in these lessons and all patients being admitted to the hospital are exposed to spiritual literature and teaching by the catechist.

We are also thankful for the donation of Bibles, both in English and Ndebele New Testaments. The Word of God is now in every house around Mbuma. Encouragement is then given to all who are able to read, to do so carefully and prayerfully for the edification of their souls. Ndebele literature has been distributed to many young and old in the form of tracts.

The Sacraments were dispensed in this Congregation – the Lord's Supper twice in April and October and also infant baptism. It was not easy to carry out the work or to prepare for the communions, because of economic hardships, but by the grace of God it was successfully managed.

The Binga Mission has been visited twice this year. The Binga people need a resident preacher to nourish and cherish them. The visits made are too few. Unless one could be called to Binga, we fear it will be registered as a failure but at present the Mbuma Kirk session will continue to visit Binga as planned.

Towards the end of the year, Mpakama Congregation lost an elder, Mr. Jacob Maphala, after a short illness. It seemed an untimely death and was a loss to his family, Congregation and the Mbuma Kirk Session.

Like any other parts of the Mission, Mbuma experienced the heat of the famine. Non-governmental organisations came to our rescue but some benefited from the Christian care and some did not. The Mission Finance Relief Scheme helped the twelve preaching stations with barley and maize seeds and we were very thankful for this kind gesture. However, the Binga people were left out in this scheme so a request has been made to the Field Committee to extend this help to them if seed is still available. The Mbuma elders will visit Binga in March 2009, DV, to give them Ndebele New Testaments, tracts and some Psalm books.

Though the year had been hard to get through, we are thankful that the Lord God has given us His strength. We carried out our duties looking unto Him alone. As the Psalmist gave praise in Psalm 103, so would we: "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases" (verses 1-3).

MBUMA MISSION HOSPITAL REPORT

Dr. A. Snoek

THE year 2008 has been an anxious one. The increasing political tension in the first part of the year and the rapid deterioration of the economy, evidently did put more stress on the ongoing work. During the elections in June the entire expatriate staff from Mbuma left the hospital and stayed in Bulawayo for a few days.

How thankful we should be that we were all kept safely and have been enabled to continue with the work in and around the hospital.

In the beginning of the year our catechist, Mr. G. Nkiwane, started his work in the hospital. His quiet presence and going around among the patients, showing his concern with the spiritual needs of patients and staff, has been a great encouragement. Under his guidance the number of Bible classes was increased. Currently we have a Bible class for the nursing staff, the workmen, the domestics and the Primary School teachers, all dealing with different portions of Scripture. Bible classes with the pregnant ladies in the waiting-mothers dorm were guided by Sr. Gilia on Sabbath mornings. The Bible class for children, under the guidance of Sr. Celia, was attended by approximately 50 boys and girls every Saturday afternoon.

Administration and finance

From a financial point of view, 2008 was a special year. Every successive month we really did not know where the end of the month would find us. Besides the difficulties we had with the purchasing of all our medicines and materials, the increasing loss of value of the staff salaries made it a challenging year. The attitude of our workers, patiently bearing the hard circumstances, was admirable and it was nice to see that the food packs provided by the Mission encouraged our workers to continue with their daily duties.

We greatly benefited from the help and advice of Mr. Mackenzie, who established a good relation with local suppliers. Instead of running around to purchase all the needed drugs and commodities in as short a time as possible to prevent the evaporation of the monthly remittance, the deal with these suppliers significantly reduced the time spent with ordering.

BUILDINGS AND MAINTENANCE

Repairs and painting

After the work which had been done by the workgroup from Holland in 2007, the upgrading by repairs and painting of several other hospital buildings continued. Although there is still a lot of work to do before we will reach a normal maintenance level, it is nice to see the progress which has been made during this year.

New buildings

To solve part of the accommodation problem for our staff, it was planned to erect two new staff houses of the same type as the Ingwenya teachers' cottages. Because of the type of soil in Mbuma and the subsequently never-ending cracks, it was suggested to build a special foundation whereby a large amount of soil is removed and replaced by gravel. This took so much time, that by the end of 2008 only one of the foundations was laid. The building of the houses now will be expected to be finished in the first half year of 2009.

Electricity and water

The renewal of the electricity system, which had been done by the workgroup in the hospital, was continued in the staff houses. Although one of our 9 kVa generators broke down in the second quarter of the year and has not been repaired since, the other small generator proved to be sufficient to supply the Mission with electricity for 15 hours per day.

The investigations which are needed to perform an overhaul of our water system has been started by Johan Verhaar and will be continued during 2009.

Transport

A new tractor arrived in April and has been a great help in collecting the firewood which is needed daily. The lorry has been used nearly continuously for transporting goods and staff because of lack of other transport between Bulawayo and Mbuma, but remained in a satisfactory condition. Both the Home Based Care car and the Toyoto Twincab for expatriate staff became increasingly unreliable and needed regular repairs. Although the HBC car was used in the surroundings of Mbuma only and not for long distances, it needed to be towed home on several occasion. The ambulance proved to be very reliable: therefore it has been planned to replace the HBC car with the same type of vehicle.

Staffing

A number of staff changes took place during the course of the year. Sr. Gilia van Wijngaarden came back from furlough in January; I went on furlough in January, February and March and was absent for three weeks in September to attend the wedding of my brother; Sr. Willie Geurtsen went on furlough in June, July and August; Sr. Erica van Breda went for a short break of three weeks in November and Sr. Celia Renes went on furlough in November and December.

The vacant post of Management and Information System Officer was filled by Johan Verhaar, a young man from Holland, who has been working in the IT sector. He arrived in October. Besides the upgrading of the computer and information systems in Mbuma and other stations, he took over the supervision of the workmen and is working hard to improve the general condition of buildings, electricity and water systems.

The increasing workload in the hospital, due to the lack of medical care in surrounding hospitals and clinics, made us to apply for a second post for doctor in Mbumba, which was granted by the JFMC. Interviews were held in December and Dr. P. Mawere, a graduate from UBH, was found a suitable candidate. We are expecting him to start work in January 2009 and to stay with his wife in Mbumba.

Our qualified personnel was extended with three Primary Care Nurses, who came back after training and two Primary Care Nurses from other places. One of our RGNs was dismissed because of adultery. This brought the total number of qualified nurses to 5 RGNs and 12 PCNs.

Three clerks and three Nurse Aids were dismissed because of either adultery or theft. One Nurse Aid absconded and three Nurse Aids resigned because of the economic circumstances. The foreman, Mr. M. Mhlanga, retired and was replaced by Mr. A. Mdlongwa. One Primary Care Nurse and one Nurse Aid went for counselling training. One clerk continued with her clerical training and came back in December. Two Nurse Aids went for the Primary Care Nurse Training.

Out of the total of 80 staff members, approximately 40 members were Government paid and 40 members were Mission paid.

Hospital

The devastating effects of the AIDS epidemic do not seem to diminish yet. During the year we again increased our efforts in health and moral education. Thanks to the industrious work of our counsellors we managed to double the number of patients who were tested for HIV. As part of an integrated and systematic approach to the AIDS problem, several community meetings were held with stakeholders and community leaders. This resulted in a comprehensive Home Based Care plan, which will be implemented during the next 5 years, the Lord willing.

Because we split the statistics of general out-patients and the AIDS clinic out-patients, it looks like the number of OPD attendances have gone down, while in reality the total number of out-patients ($21,133 + 5,893 = 27,026$) has increased.

The number of theatre cases reduced because I had been away for more than 3 months during the course of the year. The number of dental cases reduced significantly because the RGN who performed the majority of extractions was dismissed.

Among the deaths we had two maternity cases. One lady passed away because of abdominal sepsis after an ectopic pregnancy. (She came into the hospital a week after onset of abdominal symptoms.) Another lady passed away because of eclampsia after delivering a baby with congenital abnormalities. The baby sadly passed away after one day too.

The number of births reduced significantly because a waiting mothers shelter was re-opened in Nkayi District Hospital, beside the fact that there is a general increase of home deliveries due to the prevailing economic circumstances.

After many troubles at the border, a large amount of powdered milk for babies, kindly donated from Scotland, was received at Mbumba. The milk was used in our so-called PPTCT programme (Prevention of Parents to Child Transmission). One of the aims of this programme is to encourage HIV-positive mothers to wean their babies at 6 months, to reduce the transmission of HIV. Without access to powdered milk this is not at all possible. But thanks to this donation we were able to help many mothers and their babies.

During the past years isolated outbreaks of Cholera were occurring in Zimbabwe, but this year a major outbreak hit the country. On the 31st of December the total number of suspected cases was 30,938 and the death toll was said to be 1,551. Thankfully, until the end of the year 2008, it did not affect Mbumba area or Nkayi District.

STATISTICS 2008

| | 2007 | 2008 |
|----------------------------|--------|--------|
| Admissions | 2,423 | 2,278 |
| General..... | 1,223 | 1,213 |
| Paediatrics..... | 521 | 526 |
| Maternity | 679 | 539 |
| Bed occupancy rate | | |
| General..... | 94% | 83% |
| Paediatrics..... | 54% | 93% |
| Maternity | 35% | 19 % |
| Deaths | 195 | 208 |
| General..... | 139 | 158 |
| Paediatrics..... | 54 | 48 |
| Maternity | 2 | 2 |
| Outpatients | 26,122 | 21,133 |
| New..... | 14,696 | 13,910 |
| Repeats..... | 11,426 | 7,223 |
| Births | 727 | 563 |
| Live births..... | 716 | 559 |
| Still births | 11 | 4 |
| Theatre/OPD | 650 | 512 |
| Major cases..... | 176 | 106 |
| Minor cases..... | 474 | 406 |
| Dental services | | |
| Number of patients | 334 | 64 |
| Number of procedures | 222 | 53 |
| Radiology services | | |
| Number of films | 1,221 | 1,928 |

| | | |
|--|--------|--------|
| Pharmacy | | |
| Number of attendances | 19,810 | 19,528 |
| Laboratory services | | |
| Number of lab tests | 5,182 | 6,809 |
| Number of HIV tests | 3,637 | 3,550 |
| | 1,545 | 3,259 |
| OIC (Opportunistic Infections Clinic = AIDS Clinic) | | |
| Number of attendances | – | 5,893 |
| Number of patients started on ARVs..... | 47 | 131 |
| Number of patients alive till date | 39 | 98 |
| Number of patients who died while on ARVs..... | 6 | 27 |
| Number of patients transferred..... | 2 | 6 |
| PPTCT: reduction of children found HIV positive at | | |
| 18 months | – | 30% |
| Number of mothers included in Milk project | | |
| | 15 | 50 |
| ANC (Antenatal Clinic) attendances | | |
| CWC (Child Welfare Clinic) attendances | 3,451 | 3,401 |
| | 5,275 | 5,493 |
| Ambulance | | |
| Number of transferrals..... | – | 45 |

UBH: United Hospitals Bulawayo

RGN: Registered General Nurse

PCN: Primary Care Nurse

PPTCT: Prevention of Parents To Child Transmission

Estimation: some records are missing

BULAWAYO MISSION REPORT

Rev. S. Khumalo

THE past year has come and gone. One wonders how swiftly time passes. The man of wisdom should be reminded how swiftly eternity is drawing nigh and how much we need to be found in Christ.

When one looks back this is what we would all agree on, that the past year had been the most difficult one in memory. It was most difficult in all spheres – that is, economically, socially, and politically – under the severe and worst famine; and as that was not enough, an outbreak of cholera was reported in the different parts of the country, where many perished because of the disease. I am thankful that none of our congregations in Bulawayo were affected.

We recall that two years back Bulawayo was almost dry without water. The main concern for everybody was what would happen if the season would not be favourable? When the rainy season began, there were a lot of rains the first

quarter and the dams were almost full. However, of the crops nothing was harvested, which became the cause of this severe famine. We had the same concern this year as the rainy season approached – what would it be if it did not rain favourably? Despite the desperate situation we were going through, the people of God were pleading with the Lord. It was not only in Zimbabwe alone but throughout the world wherever the people of God were. Yes, God did answer their prayers, in that we received good rains this season from which we hope there will be a better harvest. Above all, the Word of God instructs us to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all things shall be added unto us. We are thankful to the Most High for His goodness toward us that the prayers of His people were answered.

Bulawayo and its congregations have been coping smoothly, though we were also affected by the economic situation. The preaching of the Word of God itself was in no way affected. People gathered in all our preaching stations each Sabbath and at weekday prayer meetings. Something of interest – and it is very encouraging – is to see an increased number of those that attend the means of grace every Sabbath and seeing new faces, especially of young people, under the Gospel. Our prayer is that the Lord would fulfil His promise by sending the Holy Spirit to work effectually in the hearts of our people, that they may come to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There were three preaching stations in Bulawayo all along, but of late a new one has been opened at Mahatshula; which now brings the total to four. Services are held in a house of one of our adherent members and we are very grateful to them for their offer. The attendance has been very encouraging and it has been a great relief to our members who had to drive to Nkulumane or Lobengula for services, and those who could not attend services because of the distance. It is our prayer and hope that what the Lord has begun will not fail.

Lobengula church is the main station. Two services are held every Sabbath. As I have hinted, the attendance has been very encouraging and the church is always full, especially during the school holidays, as some of our young people are John Tallach students. We have two Communion services per year, one in June and the other in December, and all have been well attended. The sacrament of baptism was administered and some were received into full membership. The prayer meeting is held at 4 p.m. every Friday.

At Nkulumane services are held every Sabbath at the same time with Lobengula, at 11.30 a.m. and the prayer meetings on Wednesdays at 4 p.m. The attendance is very encouraging also.

Mguza is another station on the outskirts of the city. Services are held every Sabbath at 9 a.m., and the prayer meetings at 3 p.m. every Thursday. At Thembiso the prayer meetings are held on Tuesdays. There are no services on Sabbath but they all go to Lobengula church for services. When I am available on Sabbath I take the catechism class with the children at Thembiso at 4 p.m. I am thankful to the elders of the church for the help given in preaching, and Rev. Mzamo who, when health allows, continues unwaveringly witnessing to Christ and Him crucified.

I will conclude by referring again to the severe famine which we experienced as a country and as congregations in Zimbabwe. I would therefore on behalf of the Bulawayo congregations thank the Jewish and Foreign Mission Committee, our Church overseas with other friends, the Mbumba Zending and friends in Holland, for the help given in the form of famine relief and seed packs. It came when there was a real need. Those that planted and cultivated we trust will harvest something out of the seed packs.

When others asked the Lord, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:28-29).

Gweru

Gweru is the capital city of Midlands province and is situated along the highway between Bulawayo and Harare. It is almost 160 km from Bulawayo. Because of the concern of our people who are scattered over the whole country in towns and cities, the Zimbabwe Presbytery decided and agreed that a trial be made to open a preaching station there. I was asked by the Presbytery to undertake that duty.

I have, through contact with Mr T. Mashavakure, the son of our elder at Zvishavane, organised the meetings on Sabbath whenever I pay a visit there. The attendance has been encouraging and I am expecting it to grow as there is a university called Midlands State University, which enrolls some of our former students from John Tallach and our adherent members. We hope it will be fully operational this year. I have asked Rev. A. B. Maclean, Mr. N. Sibanda (student), and Mr. B. Mziya (elder), to go to Gweru at some point. We all agree that it is encouraging.

It is our desire and prayer unto God that the Gospel would reach every corner of our country, and that the Lord would raise up more labourers in His vineyard. "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). What a word of encouragement we have from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who knows all our concerns!

TRANSLATION COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. S. Khumalo

THE instrumental means of the new birth is the Word of God – 1 Peter 1:23. In order for the new birth to take place it is necessary that the Word of God be translated into the language of every nation in which the people of God are to be found. The Scripture shows, Revelation 5.9, that these will be of every "kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation". It is also necessary for the translation to be from the Received Text. The current Ndebele Bible, printed by the Zimbabwe Bible Society, is not based on the Received Text.

It was wonderful to see this year the New Ndebele New Testament in print. It was translated by the Translation team. The Trinitarian Bible Society assisted throughout with recommendations on problems of translation that arose. They also bore most of the cost of printing the New Testament. The Presbytery is indebted to the Trinitarian Bible Society and the supporters of the society for their assistance and generosity in this production. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). A total of 9,000 copies were donated to the Presbytery for free distribution. Copies were not only given to the congregations but also school children, libraries, police stations, council offices and to people who do not attend Free Presbyterian services. It is an excellent production in a good hard cover with an attractive medium-sized print which is proving easy to read. The Presbytery has adopted this New Testament as the one to be used in the public worship of God in the church. When a sermon is preached from the New Testament this translation is the one that is used in reading and preaching. The quality of the translation has been commended and well received. "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes" (Psalm 118:23).

During 2008 the translation team continued in the translation of the Old Testament scriptures into Ndebele. The books covered were Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon. The Book of Psalms was felt to be especially difficult. The Hebrew original has unusual words and poetic language. There are several words in the Psalms which only occur there in the Bible. The word order can also be difficult to maintain. However, in the main, the Ndebele language has sufficient breadth to allow accurate translation from the original language.

While the main focus of the translation team is on the Bible, other items of a profitable nature were also translated. These included five tracts: *What Does it Mean to be Saved?* by Rev. R. M. M'Cheyne; *Wicked People*, by Rev. A. B. Ndebele; *Are You in Darkness?* by Rev. I. R. Tallach; *Repent and Believe*, by Revs. D. A. Ross and N. M. Ross; and *One Mediator Between God and Man* by Rev. G. Hutton.

The following items were reprinted during the year. The Ndebele Psalm Book, *Mother's Catechism*, and *Westminster Confession of Faith*. Booklet versions of the Gospel of Mark and the Gospel of John were also reprinted.

The members of the translation team showed their usual diligence. N. Mpfu had a minor operation which was successful. B. Mzia had to be absent for about 2 months. He had agreed to assist the Jewish and Foreign Mission Committee by giving pulpit supply in Kenya. Miss MacAulay, when not in Zimbabwe, continues to assist by email. She was also in Zimbabwe for several months during the year and she attended the daily routine of the translation team. T. Benschop has a good level of expertise in the original and Ndebele languages. He has been asked to familiarise himself with the Shona language so that a translation of the Bible from the proper text and according to proper translation methods can take place in due time, God willing.

EBENEZER SCRIPTURE MISSION AND THEMBISO CHILDREN'S HOME REPORT

S. B. Mpofo

I HOPE 2008 is a year that most Zimbabweans will never forget because of the hardships that affected even the smallest child. Rightfully did the Psalmist say in Psalm 38:8: "I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart." This is true with some of us.

Thembiso Children's Home

The major conversion of the Home from dormitories to family units could not start because of delays in planning permission by the local authority which was not functional because of the political situation in the country. Thankfully, as we begin 2009, the work is now under way. Meanwhile during the year we took delivery of a standby generator which will be of great assistance because of the frequent power cuts experienced in our locality. We also computerised the office systems, which is a great help in our record-keeping and communications. Plans are in hand to deepen our borehole and to connect the pumped water to the main supply so that when the local supply is cut off we can still have water in the Home. We also hope to acquire a larger bus for the transport of the children, particularly to church on Sabbath, when presently the small bus has to make three trips from the Home to the Lobegula church. It will also be very useful for day trips and special outings.

The children

In January, Sister Petra Beukers joined the staff as resident nurse. The most remarkable effect of her presence has been the improved health of the 50 resident children and the regular monitoring of each child in the Home in a loving and caring manner. Special attention is now given to those who are HIV positive with sound medical practices being applied to ensure they have the best possible opportunity to enjoy a relatively good quality of life. Sadly we lost one little girl who had severe heart and liver problems. Agnes was a clever and delightful child whom everybody loved. It was indeed a very sad occasion when her young life came to an end at the age of 10. The older children attended her funeral and the occasion was marked by solemn reminders to all the children of the need to remember their Creator in the days of their youth.

There were also happy times to record, especially the organised trips and outings, the most memorable being our visit to the Victoria Falls in December. The trip had to be cancelled on several occasions because of the political unrest in the country but eventually we managed to arrange it. The children were so happy, especially after so many disappointments, and when the day arrived they could hardly contain themselves with excitement! Although the journey took most of the day they enjoyed the picnic stops with cakes, rice and chicken, etc. We spent two days there and managed to see the spectacular falls, a crocodile farm, took a sunset cruise on the Zambesi and even went for a meal out at Wimpys.

Each day in the Home begins and ends with family worship. On Tuesday morning the children attend the weekly prayer meeting. On Friday afternoon they have a Bible class and on Sabbath, apart from the normal church services, they have morning Bible study and an afternoon catechism class. Those who have not reached school age learn the psalms and have Bible stories read to them. Schooling for the children was badly affected by the teachers' strike, which meant that for three months the schools were closed. Arrangements had to be made for the children to be taught in the Home but, because of shortage of tutors, the teaching achieved was limited. At the time of writing the schools have re-opened and the children are pleased to be back in the daily routine of school life.

Staff

Over the year we lost a number of staff due to the poor state of the economy and the virtual collapse of the local currency, forcing many to move to South Africa. We also lost our faithful driver, Mr. R. Masuku, who succumbed to a sudden and short painful illness which he bore with great patience. His friendly and helpful personality is greatly missed by all in the Home, both staff and children.

Although the provision of monthly food parcels to supplement the deflated wages encouraged those who remained, it fell short of a satisfactory compensation for the difficulties the staff had to endure throughout the year. Recent government relaxation on the use of foreign currency to conduct business transactions has helped greatly and it is to be hoped that the Mission will be able to establish a foreign currency account which will ensure that staff are paid reasonable salaries and the general Mission work can continue as planned.

Food supplies

One would wonder how food was obtained for the Home during such severe shortages but, thanks to the Most High, our children never went without a meal, as was the case in some other institutions. The charity organisation, World Vision, supplied mealie meal, oil and beans, which was a great help. When commodities were particularly hard to get, trips were organised to Botswana to purchase the necessities but latterly we were able to obtain supplies through supply agents organised by our Mission Co-ordinator, Mr. Hugh MacKenzie. In this way our children went throughout the year with provision of all meals per day, hence their good health was maintained.

Bookroom

Sales in the Bookroom dwindled as supplies could not be purchased within the country. However, with a healthy supply of Bibles from the Trinitarian Bible Society and religious books from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom, we have managed to maintain some measure of provision of sound literature in Bulawayo where there is no other similar outlet.

ZIMBABWE MISSION ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

S. Ncube

THE year 2008 was a most difficult one as the economic meltdown reached its peak. Effectively, I assumed the Mission Administrator's post on 2nd January 2009 after a takeover which spanned one and half months. At the beginning of 2009 the banking system had effectively collapsed; companies could not meaningfully transact business as all suppliers or service providers required cash payments. It was impossible to get cash from the bank and at the same time employees were not able to access their pay from the bank – it even became difficult for the General Treasurer to send remittances to the Mission in Zimbabwe. The local currency was rendered worthless as all businesses demanded foreign currency. However, by the Lord's grace we were enabled to transact business through some arrangements which had been made by the Mission Co-ordinator and my predecessor.

I am still new in the post but I have managed to switch the accounting and payroll systems to Rand Currency since we are now transacting in Rands due to the collapse of the Zimbabwean banking sector. Measures have been put in place for the General Treasurer to send remittance in Rands to our Foreign Currency Account so that we may effect payment for goods and services locally. However, we continue to monitor the effect of the dollarization of the economy and its impact on the Mission activities.

Some of our bankers failed to issue us with bank statements to confirm the financial transactions that were processed by them. The statements that we failed to get from the bank are from July to December 2008. Consequently this means that the office has not been able to reconcile the books for audit purposes and the preparation of the financial statements for the year end has been disrupted. The reconciliation statements are crucial in the preparation of the financial statements as they give an assurance that the transactions indeed occurred. The banks also processed a lot of transactions using the RTG system which has no record – like cheque stubs – other than the RTG copy which is filed. If such copies go missing there is no way of obtaining the record of such transactions.

We have, however, discussed this issue with our Auditors who have also tried to get the bank statements through their contacts without any success. The Auditor has promised to write a report to this effect and propose the way forward given this untenable situation.

Despite the above difficulties, I am thankful for assistance that I got from my predecessor, the Mission Co-ordinator, colleagues, Field Committee, staff in general and even from members of the FMC. This has encouraged me to look forward with hope on the Lord's promise when he said to Joshua, "Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua 1:9).

TRANSPORT AND BUILDING PROJECTS REPORT

P. Mzamo

THE year 2008 has not been a good year to us as individuals and also to all our Mission stations through out Zimbabwe but the Word of God remains as an encouragement in all the endeavours: “Thou therefore endure hardness as good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Timothy 2:3). This verse clearly demonstrates that getting through difficulties is not by our own strength but by His, as is indicated in the following chapter of the same epistle: “Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me” (3:11) – this indicates that we cannot do anything by ourselves.

The following is a summary of what happened during the year.

TRANSPORT

Head Office: There are three Mazda pickups at the head office – only one is in good condition, the pickup truck used by the Administrator; the other two vehicles, used by Transport and Building projects Manager and the other used for orders by the office, were sent for overhauling towards the end of the year but even after overhauling the two still have some problems.

Bulawayo: The Lobengula congregation has one vehicle in good condition and the other is off and on the road.

Ingwenya: There are only three vehicles which are in good condition at Ingwenya. The big lorry was once condemned by the Government Vehicle Inspector for being unworthy to be on the road and the faults were rectified and it is on the road again but it is still giving problems. The small bus was also impounded by Government Vehicle Inspectors and is still there. To take it out would cost the mission a large sum of money whilst we are still waiting for the new small bus which, hopefully, will be out by mid 2009. The delay is being caused by the construction of a canopy. The big bus for the school is off and on the road.

Mbumba: A new Toyota Hilux 3.0 was procured for the Hospital, replacing the other Toyota Hilux which is giving the hospital some problems and it has not been cleared by the supplier at the time of writing this report. The Hospital ambulance is still in good condition. The 5 tonne Hospital lorry is not in good condition, although it is still a new truck, but because of the state of roads in our country it has been having breakdowns now and then. The Home Based Care vehicle is not really roadworthy and we are awaiting a replacement. The new tractor is functioning well.

Translation: The Mazda sedan is still in good condition.

Thembiso: The three vehicles of the Home are all in good condition.

Zenka: The pickup truck still in good condition.

Zvishavane: The pickup truck is still in good condition.

BUILDING PROJECTS

Head Office: The extension of the office was started at the end of 2007 and was carried forward to 2008 and completed four months before the year end.

Bulawayo: Extension of the Lobengula manse was carried forward to 2009.

Ingwenya: Extension and modification of Form 1 Dormitory started mid year and was also carried forward to 2009. The upper sixth development depends on the approval of extension of the Mission land by the Local Authority.

Mbumba: Two staff accommodation houses were started at the end of April and also carried over to 2009 because of the special foundations needed for the Mbumba soil which, over time, causes subsidence cracks to existing buildings. The office block was carried forward.

Translation: A water tank was installed as a reservoir for the Townsend Road suburbs.

Thembiso: Subdivision and conversion were also carried forward to 2009 due to the delay by the Local Authority in approving plans.

Zenka: Renovations of the old manse started towards the end of the year and carried forward to 2009.

Zvishavane: The Chiedza borehole has been completed and is functioning very well.

KENYA MISSION REPORT

Rev. K. M. Watkins

I WRITE this at the end of a week in which we were called on to secure the release of one of our mission workers from detention in the local police cell at Ogembo. His son – a drunkard – had died in hospital. At first, our worker had been rescued by the local assistant chief from a mob of angry youths who were blaming him for his son's death. But then he was arrested on suspicion of murder. After some ten days spent in awful conditions, and with not one visit from his family, charges were proceeding and still no post mortem had been conducted. My wife arranged for this with the police and the local hospital, and it transpired that the young man died of meningitis. That was enough to secure our worker's release from the cell, but not enough to satisfy all his family, so it was not safe for him to attend his son's funeral. He remained within the safety of the mission compound for a few days. Thankfully, he is

now at home again. How terrible it is that few seriously consider that they are on their way to incarceration in hell for their crimes against God! To be secured from those endless and intolerable pains requires much more than a little money for a post mortem examination. It required the infinite love of God to give His only begotten Son to the cursed death of the cross.

Another year has gone by in which many have heard the truth of the Gospel through the labours of the mission, but few seem to have taken it to heart. Sabbath services have been conducted at the main station in Sengera, along with mainly midweek services at the three outstations. Classes to teach the *Shorter Catechism* have continued not only in the congregations but also at the local school. The five Sabbath School classes have been maintained. Mission workers have been instructed in the worships conducted at the beginning of each working day, continuing through the Gospel according to John. Much sowing! But until now there has been little reaping. Sometimes we fear for Kisii land. "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned" (Hebrews 6:7-8). But we continue. Ours is to plant and water. It is with the Lord to give the increase – and with us to give Him no rest until He does.

The work with the "pastors" has continued. Four one-week courses have been held with the first group of 13 men, including a week on the Regulative Principle of Worship, a week on Paul's Letter to the Romans and a week on the Five Points of Calvinism. Five of those pastors now attend Sabbath services at Sengera with their families. We have begun meeting with a second, larger, group. At today's meeting with them a woman calling herself a pastor tried to attend! Of course she was refused. We labour on in hope that some good will come, but were reminded recently of how difficult the task can be. Another missionary working in a different part of Kenya with more than 20 local pastors admitted that in the United Kingdom not one of them would still be in the ministry. Discipline would have removed them all! The men had learnt what justification was, but whether they had experienced it or not was a different question, as was putting its ramifications into practice.

Kenyan standards of church membership and leadership are so low. John Owen's words from long ago are so appropriate: "The cursory perusal of a few books is thought sufficient to make any man wise enough to be a Minister. And not a few undertake ordinarily to be teachers of others, who would scarcely be admitted as tolerable disciples in a well-ordered church. But there belongeth more unto this wisdom, knowledge, and understanding than most men are aware of. Were the nature of it duly considered, and withal the necessity of it to the Ministry of the Gospel, probably some would not rush on the work as they do, which they have no provision of ability for the performance of." Some think that our mission has "failed" in that we do not give baptism and the Lord's Supper to hundreds. But faithfulness to Biblical standards requires us to reject most professions. Our "success" lies in being faithful. With that in

view, it is hoped that the Zimbabwe assessor elders can return to Kenya to enable the Session to meet with applicants for baptism.

Around the compound, the security wall with its electric fence has been completed, the buildings continue to be maintained, and the mission vehicles kept in good running order. A new electronic security system for the guards was set up by Mr. Ben Fiddes when he was here in the summer. Each guard now has to register every 20 minutes during his shift at one of six points on his allotted circuit. The security of the mission's vehicles has been upgraded with the installation of tracking devices.

We had hoped by now to have started building on the new land adjacent to the existing compound. The new buildings are to comprise a church with vestry, five Sabbath school classrooms and a church hall/lecture room. This would have enabled us to expand the existing clinic accommodation back into the present church. Sometimes we still have in-patients and maternity clients on mattresses on the floor. At a particularly busy time last year, ladies in labour could not even be accommodated like that. They had to sit on wooden benches until beds became available. The busy child welfare clinic is held in a corridor which is the entrance to the church. Confidential meetings with patients are hard to conduct privately with our present physical set-up. The pharmacy stock is kept in 3 different secure places. Sadly, we have been let down by the Asian contractor and we are now seeking an alternative builder.

Real encouragements have come at the school. The external examinations at the end of 2008 yielded a great improvement: the average score increased from 182 to 256. Rianyakwara FPCS Primary School thus attained the distinction of being the most improved school in the district. More than half of the pupils who sat their final primary school exams (KCPE) passed, compared with none the previous year. We were thankful to complete the second set of classrooms, so now all the children are in upgraded accommodation. To motivate the children, we have introduced book prizes each term for the best three pupils in each class. No doubt these things have helped, but the work of the headmaster and his team of teachers is to be commended. We were particularly pleased that Mr. James Matara was appointed Deputy Head by the Ministry of Education. James is from our church and assists with interpreting the services when necessary. He has been teaching the school children the *Shorter Catechism* for many years, and leads one of our Sabbath School classes.

Another encouragement is the number of children and young people attempting the Scripture and Catechism Exercises. The library is not used as much as we would like, but there is a difficulty in sourcing suitable new reading material for children and young people. I am grateful for the faithful work of Miss Peris John in the library twice a week. Conversely it is discouraging that a number of children and young people of the congregation, who had been helped so much by the mission and individuals in the past, have forsaken the church in an endeavour to obtain more temporal help elsewhere or to enter into local "marriages" that have no official standing in Kenyan law. We are thankful to receive some extra funding for the Poor Fund in order to

buy maize. The price has rocketed and the harvests have not been good, so some people are going to face hardship later this year. It will be good to be able to help them a little.

It is hoped by the time of the Synod that a new, enlarged Ekegusii Psalm book will be in use. There is a need for us to start a Psalm book in Swahili. With this in view, my wife and I started Swahili lessons in December. Mr. Ploeg continued with his Ekegusii studies.

It is my pleasure to thank all those who have assisted in the work of the Kenyan mission for another year. In particular, we are grateful to Mr. Buthi Mziya, who came to cover for my furlough, and to Mr. Ben Fiddes for his voluntary and useful assistance last summer. I must acknowledge the continued help of Mr. Andre Ploeg – especially his labours in the Sabbath School and covering morning worships and clinic worships when I am away on mission business. I am also grateful for the ongoing efforts of my wife, who once again was left alone on the mission when Mr. Ploeg was on furlough and I was in the UK in December last year. At the end of February 2009, Rev. Neil Ross and Mr. Roderick Campbell came as deputies from the Jewish and Foreign Missions Committee and I am thankful for their help. May their labours in connection with the Kenyan Mission be blessed for the furtherance of the Gospel here. We do not forget the assistance of Mbuma Zending, for its unflinching support of the Kenya Mission, along with all others known and unknown who have contributed to the work here.

KENYA MISSION CLINIC REPORT

Rev. K. M. Watkins

OMOREMBE Health Centre has continued well for another year under the oversight of the in-charge, Mrs Gladys Asande, and the work of the staff.

Staff

The current staff complement is: 5 qualified nurses (including one seconded by and paid for by the Ministry of Health); 1 locum nurse; 2 part time laboratory technicians; 5 support staff; 1 clerk; 2 part-time cleaners; and 1 voluntary community health worker.

Monitoring by Ministry of Health (MOH)

MOH have continued their rigorous inspections of government and private health facilities, coming almost every month with unannounced visits. The targets they set are harder to achieve each year. Omorembe is seen as a vital medical facility in the district and a major support to the government hospital in Ogembo. Yesterday the clinic was inspected by 10 members of the District Health Management Team, particularly focussing on our follow-up of TB patients and defaulters on the toddler immunisation programme. Although

there is always room for improvement, yet again we were highly commended by the inspectors, who described Omorembe as their “star facility” in the District across the range of services we offer.

An area of particular concern is the increase of drug-resistant strains of TB in Kenya. TB is confirmed after three sputum tests. The usual treatment lasts for 6 months. The side effects of the drugs are unpleasant, resulting in many patients defaulting on their treatment. We are inspected regularly by the District TB co-ordinator and all records are closely examined and reasons must be given for any untraced defaulters under our care. The usual TB treatment costs the Kenya Government about £55 per patient, but treating a patient with drug-resistant TB costs closer to £9,000.

A small but real difficulty for our clinic staff is the increased number of reports and statistics required by MOH. It would be easier if the reporting tools were not changed as frequently as they are and if duplicate information could be consolidated. Often we are required to give immediate statistics for various reports with no notice and at times of our busiest clinics.

KEMSA

A new development in 2008 was the supply of various drugs free of charge by the Kenya Medical Supply Agency (KEMSA). We receive about 30 large boxes approximately quarterly. We can use most of the drugs and other supplies. But we are not given notice as to when the consignment will arrive or what it will contain. We do our own monthly drugs order and sometimes we have ordered items that have been supplied unexpectedly by KEMSA shortly after. Some items we use frequently are supplied in small quantities and other drugs are sent in the tens of thousands! There is little organisation or attempt to have a supply and demand system. Also, drugs received in the third quarter for example may have earlier expiry dates than drugs received in the second or first quarter. Nevertheless we are thankful for these supplies. We can charge about 45p for any combination of KEMSA drugs. Sometimes we have our own stock of the same item which we have purchased. My wife has overseen the integration of KEMSA supplies into our own stock and we have tried to implement as straightforward a system as possible for stock management and charging. Although we have no qualified pharmacist, we have an agreement with MOH that unqualified European staff can manage the pharmacy as long as they do not prescribe or give medicines directly to a patient.

Outpatients

The outpatients department has been running as usual. As well as accident and other emergency cases, a number of patients continue under our long-term care and supervision, including TB and HIV/AIDS patients, who come regularly for free routine drugs, blood tests and support and advice. Our nurses are particularly good at identifying and referring cases timeously that are beyond our clinic’s capacity to deal with. If this were not the case, we would have had several deaths recorded over the last year.

ANC, Maternity and MCH

The ante-natal clinic continues to be very well attended with approximately 18 new clients each week. All our qualified staff are trained in Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (of HIV). We continue to achieve a 100% HIV testing on new ANC cases, and also 100% on maternity cases who did not come for ANC. Most recent records show about 10% of new ANC clients are HIV positive.

Our maternity services remain popular. We give a small gift at each delivery and we are grateful to those at home who have collected second-hand baby clothes and knitted booties. We are always needing these. We had 11 stillbirths over the last year. Where difficulties in childbirth arise which are beyond our resources to deal with (for example, where caesarean section is required), our ambulance is available 24 hours a day to transfer cases to nearby hospitals.

The child welfare clinic (MCH) on Mondays and Tuesdays continues. We are entirely dependent on MOH for the supply of the vaccines and for several months some of them were unavailable. Nevertheless, 9,250 immunisations were given over the last year. A short time of worship and explanation of the Word of God is held with the mothers and their infants. A health talk is also given and dried blood samples are collected from infants whose mothers are HIV-positive. Any infant who has a positive result is given anti-retroviral drugs until the age of 18 months when another blood sample is taken. If the result is positive again, the child has HIV and will need treatment for life.

STI, VCT and HIV/AIDS Support Group

The sexually-transmitted diseases programme continues, and patients are charged for their treatment as donor funding is no longer given in Kenya.

Opportunity for people to be tested voluntarily for HIV/AIDS is offered free of charge 3 days each week. The tests are supplied to us at no cost. It seems that the number of people being affected by HIV is falling slightly.

The monthly support group for people living with HIV/AIDS is well attended. A time of worship and spiritual teaching is held at each meeting. The demonstration garden is maintained and the group also make soap (from inedible avocados growing on the compound) to sell to raise funds. The group is now properly registered with the local authority and keeps monthly minutes of meetings and has an elected chairman and treasurer. Free medication is given to all HIV/AIDS patients whether they attend the support group or not, as well as extra-nutritional porridge flour.

Community Health Worker (CHW)

At the end of last year we were able to get a small monthly salary (about £27) for our CHW from a non-governmental organisation. For more than a year he had worked faithfully for us on an expenses-only basis and his role is vital for follow up of defaulting patients. His work mainly centres on TB and HIV patients but he also gives health talks at schools, community “barazzas” and

local markets. He also arranged the deworming of pupils in several schools, reaching some 2,000 children.

Clinic accommodation

This is referred to in the Kenya Mission Report. Our current level of services has outgrown the available space in the clinic. This is not satisfactory and we hope that before too long we will be able to re-use the present church accommodation for clinic services.

Laboratory

The laboratory is open Monday to Friday 8.30 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. Some 3,500 tests were done this reporting year. The busiest day of the week is Wednesday when the ANC mothers have various tests. Outside of the usual hours, some basic tests can be done by the nursing staff, such as blood sugar, malaria and pregnancy. In March 2009 six small blood sugar testing machines were donated by a local surgery in the UK interested in our work here.

Conclusion

The work of the Kenya Mission on behalf of this 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. TBS Bible calendars are given to all patients at the appropriate time of year. Physical health obtained at our clinic is one thing – a valuable thing; but it is only for a time. Spiritual health obtained from the Lord Jesus Christ is for ever and ever.

DOMINIONS AND OVERSEAS COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Rev. D. A. Ross

WE are thankful to the Most High that a number of deputies were able to visit some of our congregations abroad. Rev. D. A. K. MacDonald visited Singapore, Australia and New Zealand and took services in each of these places. He also presented two papers at the Free Presbyterian Youth Conference in Sydney. The ministers, Rev. J. A. T. van Dorp, New Zealand, and Rev. Edward A. Rayner, Australia, plus various people in the congregations, have expressed their appreciation of his ministerial supply.

There are separate reports from Mr. van Dorp and Mr. Rayner, who give information about the work of the ministry and the state of religion in the congregations under their care. Apart from attending to the preaching of the Gospel in their own congregations it is very difficult for them to give more visits than they do to all the congregations under their care. They are very much indebted to the resident elders for their readiness to conduct the services in these congregations each Lord's Day. Singapore is so much further away

and therefore more difficult to supply; nevertheless the ministers visit when they can but the burden of taking services there continues to fall on the shoulders of the elder, Mr. B. Yong.

There is some uncertainty as to when there will be another youth conference for the young people of Australia and New Zealand, but it is hoped that perhaps there will be a conference in two or three years' time. There is also the difficulty of the cost of travel for the young people, and there is to be some discussion as to how best to help them.

Rev. W. Weale visited the Ukraine for a fortnight, preached at all the services, including those of a communion season in Odessa, and assisted in a number of ways in further establishing our Church in Odessa. His report has appeared in the April issue of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*. The people of the Odessa Congregation were deeply grateful for the presence of yet another minister from the church in Britain and look forward to others coming in due course, God willing, to take services and help on the mission.

There were no deputies to our congregations in Chesley, Canada and Santa Fe, USA, since our last report. We hope, however, that in the coming year deputies will be able to visit them. The interim moderators from the home Church have been diligent in overseeing these congregations, Rev. Roderick MacLeod over Chesley and Rev. Neil Ross over Sante Fe. We are glad to report that the Rev. Lyle Smith is now the minister of the Sante Fe Congregation. The induction in August was a happy occasion and Mr. and Mrs. Smith have settled in well with the congregation. There are no reports to Synod from these congregations.

There was also a visit by our Singapore elder, Mr. Bernard Yong, to the Philippines. We have received repeated requests for help over a number of years from a group of pastors and believers in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of the Philippines (RPCP). We came to the conclusion that perhaps we ought to visit them, and Mr. Yong gladly agreed to spend some days among them. He sent a full report to us and we decided that the time was not ripe for the association requested by them. We have sent them requested Psalm books and the Trinitarian Bible Society has sent *Words of Life* Calendars, but more needs to be done. What we require in such situations is a missionary who would be there long term to teach the people the way of God more perfectly and if possible to set up a congregation of the Church.

Many enquiries come from overseas through the internet, quite a number of them from South America. We can do little more than communicate with these enquirers, but the Outreach Committee supplies literature to them where appropriate.

Mr. Lucio Strata was able to visit the people of the Fornaci di Barga group for two Sabbaths and take services. Although the people are somewhat uncommitted as to adhering to any one church, they do very much appreciate Mr. Strata coming to give them Gospel exhortations in their own tongue and without the distraction of interpreting from English. We had occasion to conduct a funeral worship when we were in Italy. It was no small matter for

the family, which had been ardently Roman Catholic, to have a Protestant funeral instead of a Roman Catholic one. We trust that all those Roman Catholics who were addressed at the graveside on the issues of death and eternity and salvation by Christ alone, will yet come to appreciate their need of the one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

There are two separate reports on the work in Eastern Europe, but one matter we may mention here is that at long last we have finished the enormous task of erecting a building for the Mission in Odessa, despite delays of all sorts and inflation. Indeed, we do wonder at the Lord's goodness in this respect.

May His mercies continue to follow all our activities as a Church for the furtherance of the Gospel in these widespread congregations. "And let the whole earth be filled with His glory; Amen, and Amen" (Psalm 72:19).

AUSTRALIAN REPORT

Rev. E. A. Rayner

IT is a matter for thankfulness that health and strength were given over the past year to continue with the regular duties of supply to Sydney, Singapore and New Zealand. Visits to New Zealand included assistance at the two communions in Gisborne, and two in Auckland, where Presbytery meetings were held in June 2008 and January. Although I was not the interim moderator of the Singapore congregation Kirk Session this year, I was able to give supply in November for two Sabbaths. Since Mr. Yong is the only elder there and has a busy schedule with his work, which requires him to be overseas on many occasions, it is important that supply be given as much as possible. It was a privilege and pleasure to be with them again, and much appreciation was expressed by them for the supply given by ministers, including deputies from the UK, who usually supply during weekend stopovers on their way to and from New Zealand and Australia. Such stopovers are beneficial to the deputies themselves in giving them a break in what would otherwise be a very long non-stop flight across the world.

The Sydney communion was held in the first week of September. While there were no new communicants we continue to pray that the Lord would raise up a seed to do Him service, and it is a matter of thankfulness that those who have professed have persevered. Another family has been added to the congregation as a result of migration from Gisborne, New Zealand. The two Sydney elders capably continue to keep the services in the absence of a minister. Again it is our prayer that the Lord would raise up and send forth labourers for the harvest which is plenteous but the labourers few.

We are thankful that this year's Church deputy, Rev. Donald MacDonald, agreed to give assistance at the Youth Conference in early January. This was a new venture and since Sydney was the venue, the practical organisation was dealt with by a committee consisting of the two Sydney elders, appointed by

Presbytery. We also pray that the added privilege of pulpit supply by Mr. MacDonald will bear fruit by the Lord's blessing.

The Lord has graciously maintained the Grafton congregation with three elders and a minister, and again we record the Lord's goodness and long suffering toward us. While there were no deaths, some of the elderly show their frailty, but the Lord promises His people that though "flesh and heart may faint and fail", He will never fail them. Employment is always a matter of concern for young people who prepare for the workforce in a relatively small city of around 30,000 people. It is not easy to provide work for those who may wish to settle in the district, and some may have to go further afield to find employment. However it is remarkable how the Lord has provided for some over the years.

The Lord has had the candlestick of our Church established in these distant parts for many years. We pray that the light of the truth we profess, that of being Reformed in doctrine, worship and practice, will by Divine grace not only continue to be maintained but also increased. We plead that labourers would be raised up and sent forth to this end. Meanwhile we are thankful for the encouragement given by the visits of deputies.

NEW ZEALAND AND SINGAPORE REPORT

Rev. J. A. T. van Dorp

THERE is reason for thankfulness to the Lord for a reasonable measure of fitness, not only for study but also for the usual amount of travel within New Zealand and Australia and for visits to Singapore and Britain.

In Gisborne we are conscious of the departure of the Stuart van Dorp family, consisting of Stuart and Mairi with their two children. Because of family circumstances they found it necessary to relocate to Sydney where they have joined our congregation there. We miss their presence very much here in New Zealand but hope to see them from time to time when visiting Australia. The Lord's Supper was dispensed twice according to the well-established pattern but this year again there were no baptisms. With the ageing of the elders it became necessary to have an election of office bearers in the congregation which resulted in the election of Dr. Geoff Cramp and his ordination and induction to the office of elder on 9th November 2008.

I visited Wellington twice for the purpose of Kirk Session meetings and preaching the Gospel. No sacraments were dispensed there during the past year. I am indebted to the two elders who conduct the services during the remainder of the year.

This is also true of the situation in Auckland. There are a good number of young people in the congregation who are appreciative of the services conducted by the elders. An old character, Mr. Duncan MacKintosh, well known throughout the church, is now very frail and incapacitated. He was able

to come to the services once a week until fairly recently but a fall caused a broken hip and he has been in hospital for some time. I visited Auckland twice this past year for the communion services and the meetings of Presbytery. The congregation are missing the company of the de Boer family who will be away to visit family in the Netherlands for about ten months. There were two baptisms of infant children, and two young people (a husband and wife) were admitted to the Lord's Table.

In Tauranga the number of people attending the services has been very small for a few years. The congregation consisted exclusively of four elderly people. But now a small improvement has occurred – since the middle of 2008 a few people have joined the congregation for the services and have shown an appreciation of the truth declared there. At the last communion there were several applications for membership and five were granted permission to sit at the Lord's Table. There were also two baptisms of young girls, aged 9 and 11, so that there are again young people in the congregation.

In Singapore the services continue to be well attended. At the annual communion in December 2008, one person sat at the Lord's Table for the first time. I spent one week in Singapore at that time and also supplied the pulpit there on two Sabbaths on my way to and from the Synod. Rev. E. A. Rayner agreed to supply on two Sabbaths in November 2008. The congregation are very appreciative of supply given also by the Church Deputies who visit them. Throughout the year they meet twice each Sabbath for services and every Wednesday for a prayer meeting. Mr. Bernard Yong takes the services but when he is overseas in connection with his employment, he has the assistance of two other male members who take the services. For example, when he visited the Philippines in August 2008 at the request of the Dominion and Overseas Committee, Mr. Angus Lau took the services in Singapore and Mr. Bernard Tan accompanied him on his visit to the Philippines.

I am thankful that the Rev. D. Macdonald agreed to deputise in these antipodean regions, giving lectures at the Youth Conference in Australia, and assisting at Auckland communion.

We pray and hope that the Lord of the harvest will raise up labourers and faithful witnesses on the side of truth and righteousness within the bounds of our Presbytery, as well as in other parts of His extensive kingdom. "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

EASTERN EUROPE MISSION REPORT

Rev. D. A. Ross

WHILE our mission work takes us to different countries in Eastern Europe, it is in the Ukraine that we mainly work. Our mission there is only one of many Christian missions, and while some of these missions have been more successful than ours in gathering larger congregations, sadly much of what

goes on as mission work has little relation to the Gospel because unscriptural methods are used. There is need that we be preserved from engaging in unbiblical activities, for it is all too easy to be enticed to do so for the sake of seeming success.

Romania was once again visited. We sent a load of aid to the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Central Eastern Europe in Tirgu Mures, and we are indebted to Messrs. Maarten Schouten and Alan Boyd for transporting it. They informed us of the appreciation of the church for the aid, and in particular the 1,000 Hungarian Bibles, 8,000 *Words of Life* Calendars in Hungarian and booklets with selected Bible texts. We are indebted to the Trinitarian Bible Society for providing the Bibles and calendars. Our own Church also sent a number of Christian books. While it seems that the Gospel is preached in this church, there are also unscriptural methods used. We are indebted also to the ladies of the Inverness and other congregations who collected clothing and other articles and for doing the difficult work of preparing it all for despatch. As we send out the Scriptures to be distributed among the people we pray that the Holy Spirit will prepare good soil in the hearts of many for bringing forth the fruits of the Gospel. We hope too that one day a door will be opened in Romania for the establishing of the witness of our Church there.

We had hoped to take a load of humanitarian aid to Odessa Children's Hospital also, but stringent custom restrictions prevented this. However, we sent out 8,000 *Words of Life* Calendars, kindly granted by the Trinitarian Bible Society, and these have been distributed by Mr. Igor Zadorozhnyy and others in many places in Odessa city. There are two further reports about our work which give encouraging information and an insight to the work there: Rev. W. Weale's account, which appeared in the April issue of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, and Mr. Igor Zadorozhnyy's Synod report of Mission Work in Ukraine.

Since the last Synod there have been two visits by Church deputies to our congregation in Odessa. An account of the first visit appeared in the October issue of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*. We are also indebted to Rev. W. Weale and Mr. E. Ross for visiting Odessa early this year, when a communion season was once again held there. It was by all accounts a most profitable occasion although there were no new members. The numbers were less than on previous occasions; one regular adherent unhappily broke her thigh and has been unable to attend for a number of months; another took offence, due to our condemning the errors of Roman Catholicism, and no longer attends. We prayerfully hope, however, that the Lord will in His loving kindness and for His own glory build up the congregation there.

While Mr. Igor Zadorozhnyy does a vast amount of work for the mission, there are other people in the congregation who are also exceptionally busy in the work. Mrs. Inna Levyskyy continues to translate the Psalms into Russian in metre. There are those outwith the congregation who seek her services in translating Christian articles, some of these being taken from the *Young People's Magazine*. A copy of the translated Psalms and the tunes for them

have been sent to Rev. John Goldby in Israel who uses them among Russian speaking Jews. Mr. Dmytro Levytskyy continues to study, although his future is in the balance as a student of the Church because the Training of Ministry Committee has recommended to the Synod that he no longer continue as a student because of his failing the Advanced English Examination. Among other things he is busy proof-reading the Russian translation of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and Rev. Robert Shaw's *Exposition* of the Confession.

We regretfully have been faced with a situation in which Mr. Levytskyy, on behalf of our Church, had to supervise the building contractors in building our new Mission Centre. He also had to install certain fittings. His work in these areas was most necessary and invaluable and has helped greatly to expedite the project and keep costs down, but it had the negative effect of very significantly curtailing the time available for his studies. He is at present liaising with our lawyer in the lengthy process of commissioning the building.

Apart from some small internal and external items of work, the Mission Centre is complete. The project began over two years ago with the removal of 630 cubic metres of soil in preparation for laying the foundation and basement. There has been no progress in the erection of the security wall and it looks as if it will be a considerable time before it will be completed. It is hoped that by June the building will be commissioned. This is also a costly business at £4,000, and can only be finalised with the expertise and local knowledge of our lawyer. The total cost of the building to the present time is £152,498.74, which includes £15,750.00 for the purchase of the site, and the fees of the architect, lawyers and different City Council Departments responsible for implementing building regulations. During the building period we had to also contend with delays which added to the cost, as did inflation in the region of 45 per cent. In addition, the falling value of the British Pound sterling has added to the cost – for example, the lawyer some time ago quoted \$5,000, or about £3,000, as the fee for commissioning the building, but now \$5,000 equates to £4,000. Mr. Dmytro Levytskyy has attended to all financial matters throughout, and his spreadsheet shows that the total expenses for the Mission for 2008 are £38,319.00, most of which is for the building.

We had every hope that our new translation of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and Shaw's *Exposition* of the Confession of Faith would be in print by now. This has not been possible for a number of reasons, not least that the new building in its final stages demanded much of the funds available. Once the building project is totally completed we hope, God willing, that the essential work of printing Christian literature will again be in full swing.

The Trinitarian Bible Society is considering printing another batch of Kulish Bibles. Mr. Igor Zadoroshniy writes; "We received from TBS, about ten years ago, through the assistance of a pastor of the Transcarpathian Reformed Church, Rev. Laszlo Horkay, 12,000 copies of the Kulish Bible. This minister kindly helped us with customs formalities and transporting. We put a stamp on every copy of this Bible, which says: This Bible is a gift. It is not for sale,

exchange or hire. In order to receive additional literature, write to PO Box 100. Odessa- 91. 65091.” Igor Zadoroshnyi continues, “It is a great pity that while we have a long list of people who want to receive this Bible, we have only 200 copies left out of the 12,000 last received. Requests for Bibles and donations for postage are still coming as an endless stream.” We are anxious to continue spreading this version and we hope that the Trinitarian Bible Society will be able to provide it once again. While there are archaic words in the Kulish version, it is very popular in central Ukraine and other regions.

There are other Eastern Europe mission matters which might be mentioned but sufficient has been written to show the nature and progress of our work. Finally, we greatly appreciate and are thankful for the good will of all who continue to contribute money for the work of the Gospel in those distant parts. Without these contributions over several years the work could not exist. It is, we believe, the Lord’s doing and may “He that openeth, and no man shutteth” (Revelation 3:7) continue to keep open a great and effectual door for the furtherance of the Gospel of His grace in Eastern Europe.

REPORT OF MISSION WORK IN UKRAINE

Mr. Igor Zadorozhnyy

UKRAINE is one of the biggest countries of Europe, with a population of nearly 45 million citizens. As to its spiritual condition, it was in atheistic bondage for 75 years, the dominating “religion” being communistic godlessness. The *Works* of Lenin, *Capital* by Karl Marx and *Germinal* by Emile Zola were in the bookcases of communists, and the Bible was put on a level with pornographic literature and ruthlessly burned. Christians, therefore, had to write the Gospels and collections of hymns into their notebooks.

In these difficult conditions, Ukrainian Christianity continued to exist only in the Orthodox Church and in small Arminian congregations of different persuasions. Reformed Churches were represented only by the Hungarian Reformed Church with a total of about 120,000 members in Transcarpathia.

At the end of the last century, when in the providence of God the “Iron Curtain” was destroyed, the Ukrainian nation was freed from atheistic bondage and got its independence. I saw former communists gathering collections of Lenin’s works for recycling. For the first time there appeared the real possibility of foreign missionaries coming to Ukraine. But, in fact, when communistic ideology was abolished, a spiritual vacuum came in its place. The majority of Ukrainians were guiding their lives by horoscopes, and very often consulting extrasensory individuals, sorcerers and false healers. Other sections of Ukrainian society started to search for truth, and went to church services of different denominations. Former communists – the deceived builders of a “radiant future” – were in need of a spiritual cure, even the Word of God and the time-tested doctrines of the Reformation.

Nowadays in Ukraine, Presbyterian Churches are represented by three branches. The first on the scene were Korean Presbyterian congregations, mainly consisting of immigrant Koreans in agricultural business, especially the sale of vegetables. These congregations did not mix with other Presbyterians and have never engaged in missionary activities in Ukraine.

The second group of Presbyterians is the result of the missionary activities of North American Presbyterians. Ministers of the Gospel came from the USA and had as their motto as it were, "Works of necessity and mercy". They operated free of charge canteens for poor people, and ran a rehabilitation centre for drug addicts and drunkards. Today, in Odessa, they have regular public worship on Sabbath mornings and an organ concert in the evenings in the old former German-French Reformed Church in Odessa, which they renovated. They give special attention to children's hospitals by bringing them humanitarian aid, such as medical equipment, medicines, furniture, and children's food. The American Presbyterians have translated into Russian and printed the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, but being based on the American edition it is a defective version.

We believe that it is a great privilege for Ukrainian Christians that the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland showed its Christian care for people in Eastern Europe and sent its missionaries to this country. Ukrainian Christians, at the end of the 20th century knew practically nothing about Reformed doctrines such as predestination, election, justification, adoption and sanctification. Many of them were taught erroneous Arminian doctrines by so-called ministers of the Gospel and believed in universal redemption.

When missionaries of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland got to know the situation they aimed for the spiritual enlightening of the people, and for that reason they translated the fundamental documents of the Reformation, such as the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, and the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*. They also published the *Children's Catechism*, by John Willison of Dundee, which they translated into both Ukrainian and Russian. (It is very popular among teachers of Sabbath schools in Baptist Churches.) We receive thankful letters for the book of *Sermons* by Rev. Donald Macfarlane (which is much used for spiritual nourishment in small groups which have no ministers). We have also tracts which, in simple language, explain the false doctrines of Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, Mormons, and Pentecostals. We have also distributed throughout Ukraine about 50,000 tracts about the danger of occult practices.

Articles about Presbyterianism by a professional journalist are being published in the Christian newspaper, *Christian World*, which is printed in the city of Kharkov but circulated throughout Ukraine. Readers of *Christian World* are asking us many theological questions which we answer in the pages of the newspaper. With the help of our worker, we have also published many tracts which explain the basic doctrines and practice of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

In recent years we have seen an interest in Calvinism among young Christians, and we have been invited to give lectures on the Reformed Faith in Odessa Technological Academy and the International Christian University of Odessa. We took along with us about a hundred copies of the *Shorter Catechism*, and after the lecture each student willingly took a copy for studying later. We believe that this work with our youth is a great blessing from the Lord.

In recent years we received letters with theological questions from Russian-speaking people in different countries such as Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Argentine, Germany, USA, and Slovakia. Therefore, in order to save money on international correspondence we set up a website in Russian, which was designed for us free of charge by a Christian believer. Now we can place on the website our tracts and some translated articles from the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* and the *Young People's Magazine*. In addition, the website contains an advertisement about our literature which we distribute by post and free of charge.

During the past year we have sent out by post the following Bibles and pieces of literature: Table Bible (Russian), 171 copies; *Sermons* by Rev. D. Macfarlane, 376; *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Russian), 345; *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Ukrainian), 215; *Which Church?* 641; *Pentecostals*, 641; *Seventh Day Adventists*, 641; *Mormons*, 641; *Jehovah's Witnesses*, 641; *Dangers of Occultism*, 641; *Law and Gospel*, 641; *The Unknown God*, 641; and the *Children's Catechism*, 641.

During 2008 we received from correspondents the following donations for postage costs: from Ukraine, £482.81; from Russia, £33.31; a total of £516.12.

A Christian Congress takes place in Odessa Lutheran Church twice a year and is attended by delegates from various denominations. Organisers of the Congress asked us to give a donation of a copy of *Sermons* by Rev. Donald Macfarlane and a copy of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* to each of the delegates. We granted these requests with gladness knowing that these books will go to their homes and churches.

When the Reformation started in Europe, John Calvin wrote small tracts and distributed them among his friends. We believe that his practice is appropriate in our circumstances. The price of a tract or booklet is small but the efficiency is great. For example, in one of the Baptist Churches in Moldova, 11 members repented and burned the occult literature which they were keeping at home, after they read our tract, the *Dangers of Occultism*.

We ask you to pray for our missionaries who are working in Eastern Europe.

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND AND SINGAPORE

Rev. D. A. K. MacDonald

I FLEW from North Uist to Singapore via Heathrow on 23rd December 2008, and was warmly welcomed at Singapore next afternoon and taken to my accommodation by Mr. Bernard Yong, the elder in the congregation there.

The following evening I took the prayer meeting which was attended by fourteen people. Unfortunately I then had flu and was laid low for the rest of my time there. However, I managed to take the Sabbath services which were attended by 32 people in the morning and 28 at night.

On Monday 29th, I had a six-hour flight to Sydney Airport, where Mr. Calvin Mackenzie, an elder in the Sydney congregation, was kindly waiting to take me to his home. I stayed with him and Mrs. MacKenzie for the next two nights, and on Tuesday evening took the weekly prayer meeting, which was attended by 20 people.

Next day, the last day of the year, I flew to Grafton, where the Rev. E. and Mrs. Rayner kindly had me in their home for the next few days. I took the prayer meeting that evening, the New Year Day service next day, and the services on the following Sabbath. There were good attendances at all the services.

On Monday, 5th January, I flew back to Sydney, accompanied by Mr. Rayner, to attend the Church's Young People's Conference from Tuesday to Thursday. The conference was held at Kurrajong Conference Centre, a very suitable venue, about an hour's drive from Sydney. Mr. J. van Praag, another Sydney elder, was conference chairman, and we commenced with worship, an introduction by Mr. Van Praag, then my first paper on Arminianism – a subject I approached from the viewpoint of man's total depravity and his inability to recover himself.

The evening paper, by Mr. Calvin Mackenzie, entitled "Christianity and the First Fleet", dealt with the beginnings of Christianity in Australia and highlighted the ministry of Rev. Richard Johnson, who arrived with the First Fleet and endured many trials. There was also references to the ministry of the Rev. Samuel Marsden, who like Richard Johnson, was an Anglican minister.

Next morning we were taken on a tour of historical places by Mr. Hank Optland. We saw the sites where the Gospel was first preached and the first churches erected, both Anglican and Presbyterian. In the afternoon, Rev. J. van Dorp gave his paper, "The Christian Church", in which he defined the true spiritual Israel of God, taking all his arguments from Scripture. I presented the evening paper, "Baptism", in which I tried to give the biblical view of the mode and meaning of the sacrament, and of those who had a right to receive it. The lecture was followed by a stimulating discussion.

Thursday morning's paper, "Pentecostalism", was given by Mr. Rayner, and he gave an overview of the subject and showed, among other things, how Pentecostalism is very much linked to the ecumenical movement.

The conference came to a conclusion in the afternoon, and it was unanimously agreed that it was successful. It was well organised and the topics were useful; Mr. Van Praag was a very good chairman; the young people (23 in all) were appreciative participants; the house mothers (Mrs. Connie van Dorp and Mrs. Kathy Optland, to whom we were grateful) did an excellent job; and the venue was comfortable and the catering good.

It is hoped that the next conference will be in 2011. The Australia and New Zealand Presbytery has yet to decide if the conference will be an annual event, if its venue is to be Australia and New Zealand year about, and whether or not a fund be set up to assist young people with travel costs. Of course it is acknowledged that such conferences are but handmaids to the Gospel and are very useful in their own place, but that the preaching of the Gospel and the worship of God as instituted by Christ Himself must be given the pre-eminence at all times.

I stayed with Mr. and Mrs. van Praag for the weekend and supplied the Sydney congregation, where there were over 30 people attending. On Tuesday I flew to New Zealand, was met at Gisborne by the Rev. J. van Dorp, and for the next three days was kindly looked after in his manse by himself and his wife. At the prayer meeting on Wednesday, which I conducted, there were 21 people present.

The next two weeks were spent among the people of our Auckland congregation, and in the kind home of Mr. Ken van Kralingen and his wife, who is very much confined to her home because of an arthritic condition. In the second week of my stay began the communion season at which Mr. Rayner and I assisted Mr. van Dorp, the interim moderator, who was also present. While sadly there were no new communicants, it was a privilege to have the Lord's death remembered on the Sabbath once again in the congregation, and heartening to see such a good proportion of young people and children making up the congregation.

On the following Thursday, 29th January, I travelled on to Singapore where on Sabbath I supplied the congregation which consisted of 34 people in the morning service and 30 in the afternoon.

Finally, I flew to Britain overnight on Monday, 2nd February, and arrived safely at my home in North Uist next day.

In the congregations in all three countries I visited there is potential, not least because in most of them there is a good proportion of young people and children. However, members of Presbytery have large distances to cover, and there is no doubt that pastors are much needed throughout the Presbytery for the work of the Gospel. There are just two ministers in the Presbytery, Mr. Rayner in Grafton and Mr. van Dorp in Gisborne, who are now advanced in years, although thankfully in the Lord's kindness they are still in good health. May their labours there over many years be abundantly blessed. We are

indebted not only to them but also to the elders who hold services from week to week in the vacant congregations there. Such is the spiritual need in those parts that we should be praying always with all supplication and prayer that the Lord of the harvest would send labourers into his harvest, for “the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few” (Matthew 9:37-38).

In my travels over many miles during these six weeks I had been shown much kindness by all the people I met and by those with whom I stayed, and I am very grateful to them. Above all, I thankfully acknowledge the Lord’s great kindness to me and care of me in all my travels, which went smoothly. Also, I wish to record my gratitude to those who looked after my congregation in my absence, and to those who supplied the pulpit.

REPORT OF DEPUTIES TO KENYA MISSION

Rev. N. M. Ross and Mr. R. A. Campbell

Introduction

Following our two week’s deputation visit, we are very pleased to confirm that our Church’s work in Kenya continues securely and steadily despite difficulties, past and present. It is 23 years since contact was made between certain Kenyans there and our Jewish and Foreign Mission Committee, and almost 21 years since that contact developed into the beginning of our mission among the Kisii people. Our base there is, of course, the densely populated rural community of Sengera not far from Kisii, the administrative town of the region. Having obtained help of God, our Church continues the work to this day. It is striking that most of the 80 plus children in the Sabbath School and many of the young people in the congregation have been born and raised up in the Free Presbyterian Church.

While we are impressed and encouraged by the scope and amount of good work being done there because of the Lord being mindful of us, we feel very much the need that He would “bless us still”. Our prayerful hope, like that of many others, is that the work will be preserved and prospered by the Most High, for “except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain” (Psalm 127:1).

Having been sent out by the Jewish and Foreign Mission Committee, we left Scotland on Wednesday, 18th February, and were kindly welcomed at Kisumu airport next day by Mr. Andre Ploeg, Mission Treasurer, in the absence of the Rev. Keith Watkins, Mission Superintendent, who was taking theological classes that day. As we drove around Kisumu on Mission business we saw some buildings in the centre of Kisumu reduced to burnt-out shells after being set on fire by angry protestors – stark reminders of the violence which followed the Kenyan elections last year.

We arrived in the late afternoon, safe but weary, at Sengera Mission where Mr. Watkins and the mission staff warmly greeted us. As we looked around, the most noticeable changes on the compound since our last visits were not only the completion of the security wall and the increased tropical growth, but also the decrease in the number of European staff. The only Europeans on the Mission now are Mr. and Mrs. Watkins and Mr. Ploeg. On the whole, the compound looked much as it did when Mr. Watkins was inducted to the Mission work almost eight years ago, on 25th July 2001.

We noted once again that the compound is on a narrow, steeply sloping site with the main entrance at the top. The upper section contains the main buildings in a kind of quadrangle layout: Omorembe Health Centre, the church (seating for about 350 people); the two storey administration and workshops block; a block housing the canteen, a dormitory and medical rooms; and another block containing classrooms, the cookhouse and the laundry. In the next and lower section are the nine mission dwelling houses; and in the lowest section are two vegetable gardens and two semi-detached houses for the guards. Just below the compound is Rianyakwara Primary School which is sponsored by the Mission.

Outside and adjacent to the compound and beside the main entrance is the site on which the new church and tuition rooms are to be built, God willing. It has local roads running by its south and west boundaries, which means that the new church will be much more visible to the community than is the present one.

Spiritual work of the Mission

We were impressed by the zeal and activity of Mr. Watkins in preaching and teaching the truths of the Gospel on Sabbaths and weekdays, becoming increasingly familiar with Kisii culture and publically warning against wrong tribal customs, demonstrating the errors of the false religion which abounds in the region, acquiring a good knowledge of the local language, and producing printed Christian material in the Ekegusii language for the local people.

We noted with pleasure that the Sabbath services at Sengera church continue to have average attendances of 240 in the morning and 140 in the afternoon. On the rare occasions when Mr. Watkins has to be away in the UK or Zimbabwe, his place is taken by Mr. Ploeg or Mr. Mosoti, who read sermons under Mr. Watkin's guidance. There has been a great improvement in congregational praise since we were last there – the variety of tunes, and the quality and volume of the singing were as impressive as they were unexpected. The number of metrical Psalms in Ekegusii is now increased to 68 whole or part psalms.

At the three outstations, Ogembo, Magencha and Maiga, Sabbath worship in the form of an extended family worship is conducted by a local man in each place. Mr. Watkins preaches at each of the outstations once in three weeks and also on a Sabbath when he has a visiting minister or elder to take his place at Sengera. We were happy to help in taking some services.

Instruction in the rudiments of the faith is essential in any congregation, and we saw that in the congregational Catechism classes, held every Sabbath at both Sengera and the outstations, the level of proficiency appears to be good among many of the children and adults. The children get further Christian instruction in the large Sabbath School at Sengera in which there are five classes. These are taught by Mr. Watkins, Mr. Ploeg, Messrs. James Matara and Joel Omari, and Mrs. Watkins. Our help was enlisted on both Sabbaths for this pleasurable work also. It is heartening to see the good seed of the kingdom being sown in the minds of these children and young people. On the wall of two of the classrooms is painted, in large letters in Ekegusii, the opening phrase of Ecclesiastes 12:1: “Inyora bono Omotongi oo ase amatuko y’obosae bwao.” May they indeed remember their Creator in their young days.

The fact that our Mission is primarily engaged in the work of the Gospel is underlined by the observing of daily worship with the 30 or so Mission staff and visitors at 8 o’clock every morning from Monday to Friday. The passage of Scripture is read and expounded in English as well as Ekegusii, not only for those who prefer English but also to highlight the greater faithfulness of the AV translation compared to the Ekegusii version. Worship is also conducted at clinics at the Health Centre every Monday and Tuesday morning, when Mr. Watkins also gives a short explanation of the Bible passage read. When we accompanied Mr. Watkins, he took us also to visit the maternity unit where we saw a new addition to the congregation in the person of baby Lydia, born to the wife of one of the guards. May the prayer offered at the mother’s bedside be answered by many hearts there being opened by the Lord, as was the heart of Lydia of old, to receive the truth. Worship is also held with the 15 people of the AIDS Support Group which meets once a month at the Mission to receive antiviral drugs and counselling. We listened as Mr. Watkins gave them a Gospel talk and commended the Saviour to them in their need.

Translation work, which is fundamental in any mission strategy, is done by the translation team, under the superintendence of Mr. Watkins and overseen in its day-to-day operations by Mrs. Watkins as translation co-ordinator. In the team are also translators Messrs. Justus Mosoti and Tomas Ondieki, whose main work at present is the translating of more Psalms into Ekegusii in metrical form.

As was reported by Mr. Watkins last year, another outreach opportunity was given when a number of Kisii pastors, some of them former Pentecostals, came to the Mission for instruction. This is reminiscent of what happened in our Zimbabwe Mission at its inception, when some elders of another denomination came to Rev. J. B. Radasi to be instructed, and were later very useful to the Mission there. Mr. Watkins first gave the Kisii pastors instruction on occasional Saturdays in Kisii on the cessation of charismatic gifts and the falsity of certain kinds of evangelism. At the classes in Sengera, which they attended from Monday to Friday for four weeks over an 18 month period, the main courses undertaken were Pastoral Theology, the Doctrine of Scripture,

Introduction to Genesis, Introduction to Romans, the Regulative Principle of Worship, and the Five Points of Calvinism. It was encouraging to see these fundamentals of the Reformed Faith ably presented to those pastors from backgrounds very different from our own, and to know that they were being taught “the way of God more perfectly”. A second group of pastors is under tuition.

Rianyakwara Primary School, a government school sponsored by the Mission, is another open door of opportunity for giving Christian instruction. Since our last visit, a new headmaster, Mr. Stephen Mosigusii, has taken over; the old classrooms have been replaced by more substantial and pleasant buildings, and the teaching results are much improved. Last year saw a 75 per cent improvement in grading assessments over the previous year’s results.

We took part in the weekly catechism class conducted in their assembly building (which used to be our Mission church building). As we entered the building with Messrs. Watkins, Ploeg and Mosoti, we heard the beautiful singing of Psalm 100 in Ekegusii by nearly 200 children. We were greeted by two teachers, Messrs. James Matara and Joel Omare (both belonging to our congregation, and Mr. Matara being one of the two deputy heads), whom we joined in examining the pupils. We were each assigned a group of pupils and heard most of them repeat the answer, in English, to the question, “What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?”. They were then given a clear explanation of the doctrine of the resurrection by Mr. Watkins, and it was obvious from their ready responses to supplementary questions that many of them had assimilated the Catechism’s teaching.

The Church’s freedom and frequency of access to the school is a wide open and useful door to the minds and hearts of these school children, comparatively few of whom attend our Sengera congregation and Sabbath School. It is gratifying that not only three Europeans, representing the Mission as school sponsor, have seats on the School Board, but also that three of the local Kenyan members on the Board are Free Presbyterians.

Mr. Watkins receives considerable help in the spiritual work from Mr. Andre Ploeg, the Mission Treasurer, who teaches in the Sabbath School, helps in day school catechism classes, participates in organising the Scripture and Catechism Exercises, and occasionally conducts church services.

Omorembe Health Centre

It seemed that the Health Centre might have had to close at the beginning of 2006. However, the Jewish and Foreign Mission Committee decided it should remain open and be run by the present staff until a matron was appointed. Although the Committee was unable to appoint a matron, the Centre continued in operation under the dedicated service of the Nurse-in-Charge, Mrs. Asende, and other clinic staff. Besides the maternity unit, which has an average of about 50 births per month, there are regular clinics for expectant mothers, child welfare, and HIV/AIDS patients. The Centre is the third highest in the Gutcha District for the number of birth deliveries, and the second highest for their

success in preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV. Both the community and government are exerting pressure for a full hospital to be re-established at Sengera.

Despite the excellent work done by the Centre, we have concerns about it operating less fully as “a handmaid to the Gospel” than it formerly did. The Mission Superintendent does indeed conduct worship with outpatients, but it is necessary that European Christian nurses, and ideally a Christian matron, would be appointed as soon as possible in order that there would be more Christian input on a one-to-one basis.

Administration work of the Mission

It will be remembered that when the former administrator was transferred to Zimbabwe, his work was then done by the Mission Superintendent, Mr. Watkins. This management arrangement was regarded by the Jewish and Foreign Mission Committee as a temporary measure until a new administrator would be appointed to carry out the wide range of tasks involved in the post, including supervision of the maintenance workforce, transport and the security of the compound. No suitable person came forward, but in 2007 the Committee appointed Mr. Andre Ploeg to be Mission Treasurer, with responsibility for some administrative duties. Mr. Watkins continues to shoulder numerous administration tasks, assisted by his wife.

It is therefore urgently necessary that an administrator would be appointed to completely relieve the Superintendent of such duties, and stand in for him when he is absent. Such a person would be particularly valuable if he were an elder of the Church who was able to supply the outstations and help in other spiritual duties. The appointment of an administrator and matron would also result in the reviving of the local Field Committee, a most important element in the management structure of the Mission’s work.

The security of the compound has been vastly improved, especially by the building of the boundary security wall and electric fence, erection of lighting columns around the compound, and the installation of the warning klaxon. The need for such security arose because of the robbery at the Mission some years ago, but it is still necessary to have the system in place.

Concluding remarks

More help is urgently needed in Sengera. We feel for Mr. Watkins in his bouts of ill-health, which we hope and pray will soon be successfully diagnosed and treated. His spiritual duties alone, which he carries out cheerfully and diligently, are numerous and exceedingly demanding, and in fact merit the presence of another minister on the Mission. To have the assistance of a suitable colleague, especially in the spiritual work, would lift much of the load off his shoulders, provide for the outstations in their need of preaching supply, and cater for the continuance of the work. May the Lord move the hearts of some suitable people to offer their services for this corner of the Master’s vineyard.

It had been hoped that the building of the new church and tutorial rooms would have begun by now, but unavoidable delays have been the main problem. Probably the best way to carry out the project is that a European “hands-on” builder with good experience would come to Sengera and supervise the work on site right through to completion.

Although money is available for building a small new church at Ogembo, the project is in abeyance because the hope of obtaining a suitable site has been disappointed and is not likely to be revived in the near future.

Finally, our visit was most pleasant and heartening. We acknowledge the great goodness of the Most High in giving us health and strength for our work and in preserving us in all our travels. We are also most grateful for all the kindness shown to us by friends there, and for their willing co-operation with us in the duties allotted to us by the Committee. It is true that we have concerns about the lack of European manpower and the indifferent health of the Superintendent, but our hope is that suitable persons will be led by the Most High to offer themselves to work there in the ministry, administration, nursing and building. In the Lord’s providence our Church has been directed to Sengera, and we believe there are Kisii people there who bless God that this is so and that the light of the Gospel has arisen among them. Satan tempts the Lord’s servants sometimes to shake off the dust of their feet against a place and people, but we must remain at our place until the Lord Himself says, “Arise, let us go hence”.

TRAINING OF THE MINISTRY COMMITTEE’S REPORT

Convener: Rev. J. R. Tallach

OVER the past academic year, Messrs. George Macdonald and Jett Smith have been studying Old Testament, Hebrew, Pastoral Theology, Church History and Scripture, and Mr. N. Sibanda all of these subjects, apart from Hebrew, under Rev. K. D. MacLeod. The Lord willing, Mr. MacDonald will be ready for licensing this year.

Due to continued lack of progress in his studies, the Committee decided to recommend to the Synod that Mr. D. Levitsky, Ukraine, be removed from the list of divinity students.

The Theology Conference in December 2008 was held in Inverness with a fair attendance and lively discussion following each paper. For the first time the two evening papers were held in public. Arrangements are well advanced for this year’s conference in Glasgow in December. Though titles and areas may be further refined, the subjects and speakers planned are: Justification, Rev. K. D. MacLeod; The Covenant of Works, Rev. D. W. B. Somerset; The Preparation of Sermons, Rev. J. R. Tallach; Calvin, Rev. D. Campbell; and The Inerrancy of Scripture, Rev. H. M. Cartwright. In these days when a

professional (lawyer, doctor, teacher, etc.) is expected to be a perpetual student, the Conference, in a small way, contributes to this laudable aim among us.

Our system of tutors and examiners has been designated the Free Presbyterian College. The College, long accustomed to examining and assessing students, was itself examined exhaustively by a Government recognised body, the British Accreditation Council. The inspector concluded that the course was “very intellectually demanding”, that, “the three essays seen were of an exceptionally high academic standard”, and that the course was, “self-evidently meeting its central purpose successfully”. The College was awarded the Certificate of Accreditation on December 2008 and it is valid for four years. We are thankful to the Lord for this successful outcome which means, among other things, that our overseas students can obtain a visa to study in this country.

The textbook for New Testament Greek has been changed from J. W. Wenham to J. Duff, *Elements of New Testament Greek*.

A plan has been agreed by the Committee for the more efficient use of the library area in the Glasgow church and this plan is being sent out for tender. Under the direction of the Rev. R. MacLeod, sets of theological books have also been bought and placed in the library. It is hoped to bring the library catalogue up to date and to make it available in electronic form.

No new applications to study divinity were received this year. It will be a matter of concern to the Church at large, as it is to the Committee, that, with many vacant congregations and several of our active ministers well beyond normal retirement age, the Church is in urgent need of further students.

“Lift up your eyes and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest” (John 4:35).

THEOLOGICAL TUTOR’S REPORT

Rev. K. D. Macleod

MESSRS. G. B. Macdonald, N. Sibanda and J. Smith studied in Leverburgh for the 2008-2009 session, attending classes in Scripture, Hebrew, Old Testament Introduction, Pastoral Theology and Church History. There is reason for thankfulness that Mr. Sibanda was granted a visa to enter the UK for this session, although classes had, in fact, started before the visa was granted. The work covered was exactly the same as in the previous session. However, instead of a session of three terms as in the past, the Training of the Ministry Committee decided that there would be two semesters of 15 weeks each.

This session, the students’ History essays dealt with the following subjects: a comparison between Knox and Cranmer, the missionary efforts of the Church, and the state of the Church in Scotland during the eighteenth century. These essays give the students the opportunity to explore a few subjects in somewhat greater depth than is otherwise possible.

The students worked diligently and I trust they will be successful in their exit exams. I am grateful to them for the help they have given in taking services in the South Harris congregation and elsewhere. May the Lord use them greatly to His glory and keep them in whatever part of the vineyard they may, God willing, be called to labour in!

WELFARE OF YOUTH COMMITTEE REPORT

Rev. D. A. Ross

IT was noted in last year's Synod report that the Australian and New Zealand Presbytery had decided to investigate the feasibility of a Conference in Sydney for their young people. The Conference took place in January. While the Welfare of Youth Committee made a small contribution to the organisation of the Youth Conference held in Sydney, it was entirely under the direction of the Australian and New Zealand Presbytery. The wish to have a conference arose from a desire by a number of people in the Presbytery who felt that it would be beneficial for the young people in the church there. Rev. Donald A. K. Macdonald, the deputy from the home church, attended the conference and presented a paper on Arminianism and another on Baptism. He has submitted a report to the Dominions and Overseas Committee which is an interesting and encouraging account. There were also other papers; "Pentecostalism", by Rev. E. A. Rayner; "The True Israel of God", by Rev. J. van Dorp; "The Beginnings of Christianity in Australia", by Mr. Calvin MacKenzie, as well as a Historical Tour under the direction of Mr. Hank Optland.

Mr. Macdonald also reminds us that conferences are handmaids to the Gospel and that "the preaching of the gospel and the worship of God must have the pre-eminence at all times as instituted by Christ". We have noticed in Scotland, Church conferences taking place on the Lord's Day, and in some cases dispersing on that day. The Lord's Day is the special time appointed by the Most High for public worship and in the manner stipulated by His Word. We believe it is not legitimate to have conferences on the Lord's Day and caution our young people regarding such conferences, especially when it means absenting themselves from public worship in their own congregations.

The Youth Conference centre for this year is in Inverness Scottish Youth Hostel, situated on Victoria Drive and convenient to the bus and train station. The airport is eight miles to the east of Inverness. It is not our first time in this hostel, although on this occasion it is expected to be rather crowded. Our last experience of this hostel was pleasant.

The Conference is a time for spiritual edification. Also our young conference members have perhaps not met since the last conference, which is cause for considerable pleasure and excitement. They are usually very well behaved but need supervision, which can be a heavy task for the

Housemothers. To spread the burden of these duties the Committee have decided to engage a third Housemother. We are glad to have Miss Janet Campbell included with Miss Eona MacQueen and Mrs. Norma MacLeod. We are indebted to the Housemothers for the care and concern shown to our young people. Also our young friends show their appreciation by presenting the Housemothers with a bouquet of flowers or some other token of thanks.

A report has appeared in the *Young People's Magazine* in connection with our last conference, which was held in Ayr. The papers at this year's Youth Conference were as follows:

- 1. The Relevance of Scripture for Today**
Knowing your Bible
Rev. David Campbell
- 2. Baptism**
A Biblical View
Rev. Donald Macdonald
- 3. John Calvin and Calvinism**
An Introduction to "The Christian Institutes"
Rev. David Campbell
- 4. Church History in Easter Ross**
A Tour
Rev. Neil M. Ross
- 5. Prayer meeting**
In Inverness Free Presbyterian Church
Rev. D. MacLean
- 6. Martha and Mary**
Expressing Devotion to Christ
Rev. Hugh M. Cartwright

Our deep appreciation once again goes to the conference speakers who take on this task, the main burden of which is preparing and presenting the subjects studied. And certainly conference members have always expressed their appreciation for these papers, as well as the profitableness of discussion periods.

We are glad too for the continuance of work done by the ladies who prepare and correct the Scripture and Catechism Exercises. Our children and others outwith the Church continue to do these exercises. No doubt too there is also the driving force of caring parents who wish to see their children's religious knowledge not only as good as but better than secular attainments. We are sure the Scripture and Catechism Exercises are a great help to that end, and would encourage children to keep on in this useful work. Our hope and prayer is that these different religious exercises will contribute towards our young people coming to know the Lord Jesus as their Saviour and to be followers of Him through good and evil report.

As conference members and speakers travel to and from conferences, some for great distances, gathering together for a number of days, we conclude this report by recording our humble thanks to the Most High for His gracious care over us in so many ways. When one considers the many untoward things which could happen we have been mercifully preserved from these evils. “Both good thou art, and good thou dost” (Psalm 119:68).

BALLIFEARY RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME COMMITTEE’S REPORT

Convener: Rev. J. R. Tallach

SUITABLE workers for a Christian care home are not easy to find and retain and we are glad to be able to report that the Home had a full complement of very suitable carers during the past year. On occasions throughout the year extra staff had to be employed due to the higher level of assistance needed by some of the residents. One member of staff is in training for SVQ 2 in social care and training was also given to other members in different aspects of caring such as dementia, palliative care, fire training, etc. Matron and her staff are to be admired for their hard work and high aspirations for the Home.

The Home had two Care Commission inspections during the year and received reports to which no requirements were attached. Under the new care Commission grading system the Home received an overall Good grade for the four areas covered; i.e., Quality of Care and Support, Quality of the environment, Quality of Staffing and Quality of Management and Leadership. The Rev. D. MacLean is the Residents’ Representative reporting to the Committee.

Equipment was replaced or upgraded within the Home as required through the year while the drive entrance was improved and a new metal rail installed at the front.

With sadness we record the passing away of Sybil MacKintosh on 27th January, Agnes Fraser on 31st January, Catherine Beaton on 10th February, Annie Mackintosh on 25th February, Grace MacLean on 15th March, Marjory Dunbar on 23rd March, Maureen Waite on 19th April, and Duncan MacPherson on 28th May. Acting as he did as a virtual missionary to the Home, Duncan has been very much missed.

The Committee are indebted yet again to our two auditors, Mr. John Fraser and Mr. Kenneth Maclean for their work in keeping an eye on our finances and thanks them and all who contributed to the ongoing work at Ballifeary. It is not easy to maintain a biblical witness in an increasingly secular society. The Committee covet the prayers of the Lord’s people for the work in Ballifeary.

“I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them” (Ezekiel 36:37).

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

ANOTHER year has passed in the history of the Leverburgh Care Home. Once again we seek to acknowledge the goodness of God in providing for the Home, both in the spiritual and temporal sphere. The global recession is having an influence in so many areas of people's lives and, if it continues to deepen, institutions such as our Church Homes could be affected. We are thankful that at the present time the Home is operating almost at full capacity, which is a great benefit to the Home financially; this was not the case for most of 2008, when we had a number of vacant beds. We also have a full complement of staff working in the Home, who are dedicated to their work and enjoy working within the atmosphere of the Home.

Another chapter has closed in the history of the Home with the retirement of Mrs. Marion MacSween, who worked in the Home since it opened 21 years ago, in 1988. Mrs. MacSween started as a Senior Care Assistant, and then became deputy to Miss Ishbel Campbell (North Tolsta) until she retired in 2000. When Mrs. MacSween took over as Manager, the Government were in the process of setting up the Scottish Care Commission, which was to introduce big changes within the Care Sector. This included overseeing the formation of detailed policies for the Welfare of the elderly, which she handled in a very professional manner. She also had an excellent relationship with the various organisations that visit the Home throughout the year. The Matron's role in the modern day is very different to what it was even twenty years ago – the post is more managerial and administrative, with paperwork and new policies being the norm. The Committee and the Community are indebted to her for her years of good service to the Home. We wish her well on her retirement and the Lord's richest blessing for herself and her family.

Mrs. Isabel Campbell, a local lady from Leverburgh, has taken over as Manager. She is a trained nurse by profession and we wish her every success and the Lord's blessing in her new role.

We have had three deaths in the past year; Mrs. Catherine Macleod, Leacklea, Mrs. Norah MacVicar, Borve, and Miss Mary Kate MacCuish, Kintulavaig. We would extend our sincere sympathy to all relatives.

The Care Commission continue to conduct inspections on a regular basis. Their last inspection emphasised the "excellent care the Home continues to deliver". The inspector was confident that the Home would continue to receive a good grading.

The Committee would wish to thank all the staff for their commitment and dedication, also the administrator, Mrs. Margaret Macleod, for her handling of the finances. We wish also to thank those who come in and take family worship, and the medical services that visit the Home, and to acknowledge the

support and kindness of the local community shown to the Home throughout the year.

“Hitherto the Lord has helped us” (1 Samuel 7:12).

OUTREACH COMMITTEE’S REPORT

Rev. D. A. Ross

ISAIAH the prophet records: “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” (Isaiah 53:1). By the grace of God this did not stop Isaiah continuing the good work of declaring the Word of the Lord. Our lot as a Church is in similar trying times. However, we are assured that the spreading of the Word will in a measure prosper: “Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days” (Ecclesiastes 11:1).

We continue to spread the Word of God in different parts of the country. To Mr. Alan Boyd we are much indebted for the amount of colporteur work he has cheerfully done. While not employed by the Church, and indeed he prefers it that way, he gives a considerable amount of his time to the spreading of the Scriptures. Lately he has worked in the Skye area. There was a welcome reception from a goodly number of homes in the Staffin community. He is now slowly working his way to the west of the island and the reception is not so encouraging. However, there is not a home visited but a Gospel tract is left and, if opportunity affords, other literature freely distributed. Mr. Boyd has also done part of the Stoer area in West Sutherland, as well as some areas around Ullapool. The lack of response from a large majority of people is alarming. Truly the Lord has departed from our coasts, the reason being that our Highland people are like the Gadarenes who plead with Christ to depart from their country. Nevertheless, the Saviour in His mercy left a converted Gadarene among them and no doubt visits by our colporteur along with other Christians in these areas, is we believe the continuance of the Lord’s mercy to plead with sinners to turn from their sinful ways. While there are discouragements, at the same time those who fear God in these areas are much encouraged to see some work done by way of spreading the Word of God. No doubt too their prayers accompany these activities.

Regarding our present book van, we were told by the garage proprietor who supplied the MOT that it is highly improbable that it will pass the next MOT. Also the van is too small for door-to-door work. Persons who come into the van have to crouch while looking for a book to purchase and it can only take one person at a time. We are deeply indebted to the Inverness Kirk Session for having provided the van in the first instance and since receiving the van it has done a great amount of work in different church activities. An opportunity arose to purchase a larger vehicle from the Glasgow Deacons’ Court at £1,600 – their former mini bus – and given at trade price which is considerably cheaper than retail. It has yet to be fitted with shelving. It can comfortably take

both the sales person and at least two persons looking for books to purchase. Hopefully it will be ready for the summer months.

Under the patronage of the Outreach Committee the North Harris Congregation have set up a small bookshop at the back of the Tarbert Church financed by the Deacon's Court. Stock is obtained on trade terms from several Christian publishers and the Glasgow Bookroom have provided additional stock on a sale or return basis. All Bibles and a large selection of books are sold at discount prices to encourage the spread of sound Christian literature and various booklets and tracts are available free to anyone visiting the shop, the majority of which has been received gratefully. A turnover of over £2,000 was achieved between September and December 2008. It is intended that any profits from the shop will be used to support local outreach, including the distribution of TBS calendars to every home in the community, and free audio material for the elderly and it is hoped that as sales continue, it will be possible to fund the free distribution of Bibles to every child in the community as they leave primary school. It is interesting to note that the majority of the customers coming to the shop are not connected with the FP Church and many of those purchasing Bibles and other sound literature are not regularly attending any Church. The intention is to have a bookstall from the shop at local craft fairs and similar events. Our prayer is that the work of both the shop and the van will be blessed to many

Once again we had opportunity to set up a religious book tent at the Black Isle and the Portree Agricultural Shows. While there are irritating distractions surrounding us in these places, the fact that we are there is a Gospel call to the passer-by. Not least, having Bible texts displayed in a prominent place and those who meander through the Show Grounds, who can tell it may be the arrow purposed by the Most High to captivate a sinner. Mr. Alan Boyd and Mr. Kenneth Hutton attended to the Black Isle book stand and reported some encouraging responses. Thereafter Mr. Boyd proceeded to Portree and met up with Rev. Wilfred Weale, where they had the help of local friends to erect the tent and to do other heavy work. Here too a number of people visited the book tent. The responses are few in comparison to the large number of people who pass by.

Our hope is that we will be able to do much more of this kind of work, not only by going to other Agricultural Shows but visiting towns and villages and parking the book van at market places. We have said as much in other reports but as yet have only covered a fraction of the country. Now that we are favoured in having the able help of Mr. Boyd to do this kind of work, we hope to see more expansion. We trust others in the committee will undertake to engage in this work from time to time. As has been noted in other reports, these outlets for Christian literature do not bring in money profits, and indeed run at a considerable loss. However, while profits are very desirable, these cannot in any way compare to the spiritual profit from such work, even the smallest profit. May the Lord be gracious to bless our work to bring sinners to a sense of their spiritual need.

Enquiries continue to come through the internet and we distribute literature as we see fit. Some requests are rather large and we do not venture to supply such needs until we get to know the people. However, we do ensure that those who ask for literature are supplied with some literature as well as with church magazines and other leaflets. We obtain from time to time requests from those who profess conversion from the Muslim religion to the Christian religion and who approach us with much caution lest they be discovered. We have tried to follow these up, but often after a while they no longer respond. It is common too to be challenged regarding our doctrine. For example the Seventh Day Adventists are very fond of this kind of exercise, challenging us to show them a text in the Bible which indicates the change of the Sabbath Day from the seventh to the first day. Their religion is very much based on keeping Saturday as the Sabbath and to keep the first day is the mark of the beast. The abundant confirmation by the Apostles establishing the first day as the Christian Sabbath is not sufficient for Seventh Day Adventists but it has been sufficient for the Christian Church from the beginning of the New Testament.

There has been little progress in the distribution of tracts in foreign languages. However, there is a steady flow of tracts in the English language and requests coming from many parts of the United Kingdom. Our advert for tracts continues to appear in Christian newspapers which brings a number of enquiries and requests to supply tracts.

These different activities engaged in by your Committee are small as over against the spiritual needs of our nation. We are deeply conscious that none of our work will prosper apart from the Lord's blessing, and crave the Lord's intervention by His Word and Holy Spirit, who "when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement" (John 16:8).

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. The circulation of each magazine has dropped by small amounts.

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.

We trust that the Magazines are of some spiritual profit to those who read them. But we must be continually conscious of our absolute need of God's

help and blessing if anyone is to derive benefit from them. To that end we would ask the Lord's people to pray for such help and blessing on the work of producing the Magazines.

PUBLICATIONS AND BOOKROOM COMMITTEE REPORT

Convener: Rev. K. D. Macleod

Publications

Two new titles have been published since the last meeting of Synod. These were *A Heart for Africa*, by Miss Dolina MacCuish, which is an account of the life of Miss Jean Nicolson, who spent so many useful years on the Church's Mission in Zimbabwe. The Committee is grateful to Miss MacCuish for all the effort she has put into researching and writing this volume. We are also grateful to Mr. David Clemence for obtaining an abundance of illustrations for the book. The other title produced in the past year is volume 10 of *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*.

The Committee is disappointed that John Colquhoun of Leith's book on *Saving Faith* has not yet appeared but we do hope that, DV, it will be published in the course of 2009. Looking forward, the Committee hopes to reprint the children's book *Peep of Day*, which went out of print some time ago; it is to be published in a sturdier binding and with suitable illustrations. The Committee also plan to begin a set of booklets for young people, which will each bring together a series of articles which has appeared in *The Young People's Magazine*.

As a result of having three new titles (including *Ruth: Her Story for Today*) available, sales of Free Presbyterian Publications books in 2008 were much higher than in 2007.

Bookroom

In the course of the year Mr. Kenneth Hutton intimated that he was resigning as Bookroom Manager. We were sorry to lose him as he had run the Bookroom effectively and pleasantly for more than seven years and we would like to express our grateful thanks to him for his valuable work over that time. We were thankful that Mr. Murdo MacLean, of the Glasgow congregation, was available to take over for a temporary period until a new Manager was appointed. Mr. MacLean has had considerable experience in the retail trade and he was able to make a number of useful suggestions in a report to the Committee. After advertisement in *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*, the Committee appointed Mr. Norman Fraser, a communicant in the Edinburgh congregation, to the position of Bookroom Manager and he began work in October. In each case, a handover period was arranged and we are grateful to

Mr. Hutton and Mr. MacLean for each helping his successor to become familiar with the duties of the post. These handover periods have, however, contributed to an increase in staff costs over the year.

The decrease in sales, of about £3,500, may reflect the downturn in consumer spending but the Committee is conscious of the need to do whatever is possible to increase sales. However, 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 probably assumes increasing importance in the Bookroom's work as the years go by.

We would also express our gratitude to all who have been involved in the work of the Bookroom, in particular those who have kept the Bookroom open on Saturday mornings and during the Manager's holidays. Last but not least, we again request the prayers of the Lord's people for His rich blessing on this work of the Church.