

FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

**REPORTS OF
STANDING
COMMITTEES
OF SYNOD**

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REPORT OF THE RELIGION AND MORALS COMMITTEE

Convener: Mr F R Daubney

INTRODUCTION

THE Report was compiled in the usual way by each member of the Committee writing one or more reports on items of topical interest.

During the year the Committee's article on homosexuality was publicised in the following ways: it was printed in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* and on the Church website; letters from the Convener, with links to the article, were printed in the *English Church Newspaper* and the *British Churchman*. The editor of the *English Church Newspaper* published the full article across two issues; the article was also reproduced in booklet form and sent to every member of the Scottish Parliament, from which only two responses were received.

In October 2018, a letter of protest was written to a Church of Scotland minister in Inverness for his advocacy of a "gay pride" march through the city and his criticism of Bible-believing Christians. As is usual on these occasions, no reply was received. There seems to be no desire to engage in discussion.

In February 2019, the Convener attended a Scottish Government consultation meeting in Glasgow, on the proposal for the introduction of new "Hate Crime" legislation. Others attended a similar meeting which was held in Stornoway.

Following the Synod of 2018, the Statement of Differences was amended to incorporate the proposed changes. This Statement has been closely scrutinised over the years by the Committee and Synod, and we are keen to see it approved by Synod at the 2019 meeting.

RELIGION

Romanism – abuse, conflict and decline

The main interest that we have in that system which calls herself the "Catholic Church" is connected to the hope that it will cease, and therefore no longer hide the Gospel from sinners. That day will come when the "mystery of iniquity" (2 Thessalonians 2:7) will be no more. There are signs that it is a deeply troubled organisation with a rapidly declining influence. In the USA, which is often a barometer of global change, there has been a close to 30% decline of those identifying as Roman Catholic amongst the population over the past six to seven years (nearly 50% if Hispanic immigration is excluded). This may portend a complete collapse, argues Garry Mearns, a senior management consultant, and a Roman Catholic with in-depth knowledge of the situation (*The Hill*, 25/5/18). In Europe, Australasia and in South America too, Rome faces declining congregations. Several factors are turning people away from the Roman Church – the most significant being the worldwide child

abuse crisis. Never has there been any organisation with such a terrible record of abusing children. To add to the multitude of abuse scandals that have arisen in the past few years, a raft of fresh scandals have broken out over the past year: in the US, Germany, Australia, Netherlands, Italy, Chile and Argentina. A 900-page Pennsylvania grand jury report describes a sickening catalogue of abuse, of more than 1,000 children, abused by 300 Romish priests over the past 70 years; and moreover, a litany of lies and deceit by senior figures in covering it up.

There was a time when the wickedness of Rome was in great measure hidden behind the secrecy of closed doors. Such however is the sheer scale of clerical depravity, and the openness of information in the age of the internet, that it can no longer be effectively covered up. In Germany 3,600 children were sexually abused at the hands of some 1,670 RC clergy over the past seventy years, according to a September 2018 Church report leaked to the Press. In Chile 80 priests have been reported to authorities because of abuse in the past 18 years. In many countries, there is less of a culture of openness. In discussing the state of reporting of abuse, Archbishop Scicluna, formerly the top child abuse prosecutor at the Vatican, said: “We have to realize that there are constraints . . . that mean we’re not at the same point in different parts of the world.” As well as a multitude of child abuse cases, there have been likewise scandals concerning the abuse of nuns and junior clergy worldwide.

Bergoglio, the present Pope, has a number of times favoured those who have been accused of abuse, or covering up of abuse, until such time as he is forced to act by the facts becoming public knowledge. One such case arose on a papal visit to Chile last year when he called accusations against Bishop Barros slander. Barros had been appointed by the Pope in 2015 and had been sanctioned as long ago as 2011 for sexually abusing minors. The papal fallibility became all too obvious when the Pope later had to admit to his own “serious errors” in defending Barros. Cardinal Pell, one of the Pope’s closest advisors, and head of finance at the Vatican was found guilty in Australia in December 2018 of child abuse. Pell, McCarrick, a cardinal who has now been defrocked for child abuse, and the Argentinian Bishop Zanchetta, were all appointed to important positions in the Vatican by Bergoglio, even though he knew there were very serious accusations against them. The late English Cardinal Murphy-O’Connor, who is said to have been the most important agent in promoting the election of Bergoglio, was accused of child abuse, and a subsequent investigation was reputedly quashed by the Pope shortly after the papal election (*LifeSiteNews*, September 2018).

The present pope has been very actively engaged in putting his stamp on the Church by appointing cardinals sympathetic to his left-wing views. So far, he has appointed 75 cardinals. Mearns wrote: “As a socialist cleric, his tools are controlling communications, silencing dissent, spending other people’s money and, under pressure, cloaking himself as ‘God’s voice on earth’.” Such openly critical views by papists of their own pope, once unheard of, are becoming increasingly common. Archbishop Vigano of Italy, a former Papal Nuncio to

the USA, who the Press describes as conservative, has attacked the Pope, calling upon him to resign for his handling of the McCarrick case (the Pope had removed sanctions against McCarrick that his predecessor had imposed upon him, and instead had promoted him and even made him his trusted counsellor!). In a letter Vigano said of the Pope that “he knew from at least June 23, 2013 that McCarrick was a serial predator. He knew that he was a corrupt man, he covered for him to the bitter end.” In August 2018 he called upon the Pope to resign and has several times repeated the call, albeit from hiding as he fears for his own safety. In response to these accusations the Pope has refused to engage with the Press but has on at least two occasions impugned his critics as doing the work of the devil.

That the work of the devil is going on apace within the Roman Church is indisputable. One estimate put the percentage of homosexual clergy within the Vatican as high as eighty percent. Amongst other matters, the Pope has raised the ire of conservatives by implying that divorced people may receive mass, and by failing to do anything about the increasing prevalence and influence of homosexual clergy. The historian Professor Roberto de Mattei has warned that the RC Church is in danger of collapse because of the extent of the “homosexual plague”. Some years ago he raised the ire of liberals by linking the fall of the Roman Empire to the influx of sodomites from Carthage. His thesis is that history is being repeated in the Romish Church.

A Papal summit in February 2019 to tackle the problem of abuse has just finished at the time of writing. It has resulted in no substantive changes. Anne Barrett-Doyle of the abuse-tracking group bishopaccountability.org, summed it up: “As the world’s Catholics cry out for concrete change, the Pope instead provides tepid promises, all of which we’ve heard before. . . . Especially distressing was the Pope’s familiar rationalization that abuse happens in all sectors of society. . . . We needed him to offer a bold and decisive plan. He gave us instead defensive, recycled rhetoric.” The Vatican seems to be attempting to normalise the situation, not only by highlighting child abuse in the general population, but also in warning that reports of popish abuse will not cease any time soon. The abuse problem seems to be caught up in other conflicts such as the partisan political struggle, and the homosexual agenda, which may prevent decisive action, even if the Pope was of that mind. As their “infallible head”, absolute power is invested in him, but if he is to prevent a break-up he needs a degree of unanimity.

It is perhaps inevitable that the Roman Church, being essentially a power-hungry organisation, should rupture according to political difference. The internal conflicts reflect its complete worldliness – indeed the mounting public evidence is of it being, as the true Church in Scotland since the Reformation has always believed it to be, the single most wicked organisation on earth, in Scriptural terms “that antichrist” (1 John 2:18) whose head is “that man of sin” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). It is a house divided which sooner or later must fall. We hope that day will come soon.

Anti-Semitism in Christianity

It must be remembered that anti-Judaism is not the same as anti-Semitism. In anti-Judaism a person disagrees with the tenets of Judaism, while anti-Semitism is an emotional bias or hatred not specifically targeting the religion of Judaism but the Jews as a people. Anti-Judaism is not anti-Semitic, as it only rejects the religious ideas of Judaism without rejecting the Jewish people. Evangelising of Jews is not a form of anti-Semitism.

Anti-Semitism strictly targets Jews because of their supposed biological characteristics or lineage. It is a form of racism in which a person expresses their anti-Jewish prejudices. We believe that there is a spiritual element, as the Jews are the natural seed to whom the promises belong.

As the early Church emerged from Judaism, the early Church Fathers identified the Jews and Judaism with heresy and held them to be “outside of God”. It was stated that the god of the Jews was inferior to the Christian God, that Judaism itself was incomplete and Christians were the true “Israel of God”. It was also recognised that the Jews would be saved at the end of the world. Augustine held that the Jews were to be loved as a means of bringing them to Christ.

As the Romanist heresy grew under such theologians as John Chrysostom, the idea developed that as the Jews had rejected Christ, they were only fit “for the slaughter”. Jerome, one of the early Fathers, identified all Jews with Judas Iscariot so that “Judas is cursed, that in Judas the Jews may be accursed”. This theology led to a general oppression or persecution of the Jews in society and the accusation that they drank the blood of Christian children in mockery of the mass. The Fourth Lateran Council required Jews to wear a mark of identification to show that they were Jews.

At the time of the Reformation, Luther believed that it had been the evils of Roman Catholicism that had prevented the conversion of the Jews. But when his own attempts to evangelise them failed, his general attitude towards them changed. In his book *On The Jews and Their Lies* he spoke against them and called for their permanent oppression and expulsion. In this regard Luther continued to hold medieval views that were anti-Semitic. However, at the end of his life, in his final sermon, he stated, “We want to treat them with Christian love and to pray for them, so that they might become converted and would receive the Lord”.

Throughout the 19th and 20th Centuries Romanism still held strong anti-Semitic views. David Kertzer, in his book, *The Popes Against the Jews*, states that the papists adhered to a distinction between good and bad anti-Semitism. Bad anti-Semitism promoted hatred of the Jews because of their descent and should be considered un-Christian as the Christian message was intended for all and anyone could become a Christian. Good anti-Semitism criticised Jewish conspiracies to control newspapers, banks and governments. Up until 1870 the Papal states required Jews to live in ghettos, and such groups as the

Jesuits refused candidates from Jewish descent unless their great grandfather had been a Romanist.

Adolf Hitler, in a meeting with Romanist Bishop Wilhelm Berning of Osnabruck, stated: "I do not set race over religion, but I recognise the representatives of this race as pestilent for the state and for the Church, and perhaps I am thereby doing Christianity a great service by pushing them out of schools and public functions." The Nazis also used Luther's book *On The Jews and Their Lies* to claim a moral righteousness for their ideology. In this book Luther stated, "We are at fault in not slaying them".

In the year 2000, 220 rabbis and intellectuals from all branches of Judaism issued a statement that "Nazism was not a Christian phenomenon. Without the long history of Christian anti-Judaism and Christian violence against Jews, Nazi ideology could not have taken hold, nor could it have been carried out. Too many Christians participated in, or were sympathetic to, Nazi atrocities against Jews. Other Christians did not protest sufficiently against these atrocities. But Nazism itself was not an inevitable outcome of Christianity."

Modern anti-Semitism is rooted in economic and racial thought. White supremacy groups, many of which identify as being Christian, are also anti-Semitic. They accuse the Jews of seeking to control the media, international banking, radical left-wing politics and promoting multiculturalism. No doubt this has been aggravated by instances like Billy Graham and President Nixon being caught on tape in the 1970s discussing how to address the Jewish control of the American Media.

Anti-Semitism in UK politics has recently been in the news. However, it is the fear of Jews living in Scotland that causes us the greatest concern. A spokesman for the Jewish Community responded to a survey taken in 2015, by saying, "It is terrible being Jewish in Scotland", Jews are "treated differently" and "singled out" in relation to anti-Semitism. The number of anti-Semitic incidents has increased. Many Scottish Jews "actively discuss leaving Scotland because they feel alienated, vulnerable and not at home". "Many Jews are still considerably more nervous about the state of anti-Semitism, politics and society than was the case 10 or 20 years ago."

Much of the prejudice directed at Scottish Jews is due to the bigotry of Scots opposed to Israel who express their views by bullying, intimidating and abusing Jews. Jews are being singled out because of their cultural and religious ties to the Jewish state. The idea of Zionism or a Jewish movement for self-determination is considered to be socially unacceptable and politically incorrect.

This fresh anti-Semitism seems to be encouraged by Churches taking an anti-Israel stance and being involved in boycotting Israeli produce. Such anti-Israeli activism often involves comparing the Israeli government's treatment of Palestinians, to the Jews' treatment of Jesus. Many Israelis living in Scotland are forced to hide their nationality and many Jews keep their Judaism secret. They feel alienated and no longer Scottish. The Scottish government's "disproportionate obsession" with Israel does not help matters, nor Police

Scotland's failure to tackle blatant anti-Semitism among the Scottish anti-Israel movement.

Although we cannot condone all the activities of the State of Israel, especially their opposition to Christianity, we ought to be praying earnestly for the fulfilment of the Lord's promise that the Jewish people "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). A true Christian ought to have a love for the Jews and a real desire for their conversion and ingathering.

Judaism today

A distinction must be made between Jewish people and the religion of Judaism. Many Jews do not practise Judaism but rather consider themselves to be secular, atheistic or agnostic. Secularism is growing among today's 14 million Jews. Over the generations many people of Jewish descent have embraced the Christian Faith.

Judaism began with the establishment of Rabbinical Judaism and the destruction of the Temple in AD 70. At that time the sacrifices of the Temple and the priesthood came to an end. The Rabbis became the authority on spiritual and legal matters.

Judaism has four main sects:

- Orthodox Judaism adheres to the traditional laws and customs as they relate to the liturgy, diet and Sabbath observance. It requires full submission to the Talmud and the authority of the written and oral laws of Judaism.
- The Reform movement which began in the 19th Century seeks to integrate Jews into mainstream society. It follows an abridged liturgy and makes observance of the Sabbath and dietary laws optional.
- Judaism is another movement which began in the 19th Century to counter the Reform Movement. It is a compromise movement retaining a conservatism in religious practices but encourages the advancement of modern education and culture. The Law is reinterpreted to adapt to contemporary culture.
- Reconstructionist Judaism is a movement that seeks to adapt classical Judaism to modern scientific views, art and reason. Here, Judaism is seen as an evolving civilisation rather than a religion.

Modern Judaism holds to various beliefs that makes it incompatible with Biblical Christianity:

- It denies that Jesus Christ is the Messiah and believes Him to be a false prophet.
- It denies that Jesus is Divine.
- It interprets the Old Testament in line with its rejection of Christ, making the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 to be the nation of Israel rather than Jesus.

- It rejects the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. This means that the god of Judaism is not the God of Christianity.
- It rejects the Scriptures of the New Testament, while giving a prominent place to the Talmud – uninspired writings of men.
- It claims that man is born in the image of God without original sin.
- It believes that a proper relationship with God only comes through repentance, prayer and obedience to the Law. Salvation is merely a betterment of self and society (a covenant of works).

Clearly, Judaism and Christianity have significant differences. In reality they do not worship the same Triune God. They have a different theology of salvation. Judaism is works orientated and rejects the atoning work of Christ and His divine nature.

One other element of modern Judaism is the place given to Zionism or the belief that the Jewish people must be resettled in their own homeland in order for them to obtain salvation and to bring salvation to the Jewish people.

For an adherent of Judaism to become a Christian would mean for them to reject their Judaistic heritage and distinctive cultural characteristics such as circumcision. In other words, they would have to become as gentiles. This alienates them from their families and religious communities.

According to the Old Testament, the Jews are descended from Abraham and it is to them first that God has given special promises and a prominent role in the evangelisation of the world. This is confirmed in the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12; the Land Covenant in Deuteronomy 30; the Davidic Covenant of 2 Samuel 7 and the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34. Even though they have failed to worship God as commanded and rejected the Messiah, yet God is faithful, and He will fulfil His promises to them at the appointed time.

There are great blessings promised to the gentile Church in connection with the restoration of the Jews and we ought to be praying for the fulfilment of this (Psalm 80).

Persecution

In the past year the trend of worsening persecution against the Christian Church has continued unabated. We know from Scripture that the great dragon, “that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan”, persecutes the Church with great wrath, making war with the Churches “which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ”. The latest evidence from bodies such as Barnabas and Open Doors, who specialise in reporting persecution of Christians world-wide, shows that the experience of the Church still matches the testimony of Scripture. In this reporting it is regrettable that these organisations speak of Christians from sects such as Romanism.

Part of the growing opposition to the Church is found in nations with authoritarian or dictatorial regimes such as China and North Korea. Persecution of the estimated 200,000-400,000 professed Christians in the latter country is the most fierce, with many tortured and killed and tens of thousands

confined to brutal concentration camps for a mere profession of Christianity. In China, the government has been clamping down on the Church through new laws which have restricted religious freedom. Thousands of churches have been closed as a result and a ban on sales of the Bible from shops and e-commerce sites was introduced.

Another recent trend is the growing aggression of Hindu extremists in countries such as India and Nepal where their political power is on the increase. Numerous states in India have passed anti-Christian laws leading to the forced closure of mission schools and hospitals. While it is always hard to find reliable statistics, Open Doors recorded 12,500 attacks in India against individual Christians, attacks on 100 schools, arrests of 200 simply for their Christian faith and 10 deaths.

In countries with sizeable Muslim populations across the Far East, the Middle East and Africa, violent persecution of Christianity continues to grow. The list is so extensive that it cannot be given in full here, but the worst offenders are reckoned to include Pakistan, Nigeria, Somalia, Egypt, Iran, Iraq and Indonesia. On the African continent violent Islamic terrorist groups such as Boko Haram are behind much of the bloodshed which has taken place. Last year, in one region of Nigeria alone, Boko Haram attacks led to the destruction of 30 church buildings and 4,436 Christian homes, while many lives have been taken away when heavily armed militias killed thousands of church members.

Such is the sense of the scale of the persecution, that the subject was debated in the House of Commons towards the end of 2018 under a motion tabled by the Democratic Unionist Party. In the course of the debate it was claimed that in the current year 100,000 Christians will be massacred and 200 million persecuted for their faith. The House passed the motion calling on the government to do more through foreign policy and aid work to support these Christians. This is a welcome gesture, but it is to be feared that there are those within the political establishment in the UK who would relish the opportunity to bring more persecution to the Church of Christ within their own country. Indeed, the persecution of Christians in our own land is not unknown.

The Scottish Churches

The year 2018 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the ordination of women to the ministry in the Church of Scotland. The proportion of women ministers had reached 25% by 2014, and it continues to rise. The impression is that a new Church of Scotland minister is now likely to be female, and the proportion of women elders is already well over 50%. Given such a fundamentally unbiblical composition, it is not surprising that the Church of Scotland makes no stand whatever on contemporary moral matters such as abortion, sodomy, divorce, and the smacking of children. If anything, its influence tends to be against Christian principles.

Still worse, however, is the Episcopal Church of Scotland which now supports and practises sodomite marriage. In 2018, its Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney, which had previously opposed sodomite marriage, had a female

bishop, Anne Dyer, imposed upon it who was an ardent supporter of sodomy. This led to resignations; and at least two congregations have left the denomination as a result of the controversy.

The trend of funerals becoming a celebration of life accompanied with levity and innovations of worship, often led by women ministers, is causing increasing dilemmas of conscience for many regarding their attendance.

MORALS

Abortion (child killing)

This report is given under the sense of the dark shadow of infant death throughout the United Kingdom, and the wrath of God against it for the great sin of such child killing. We believe that the life of an infant (embodiment and ensoulment) begins at conception, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psalm 51:5), and “For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb. . . . My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth” (Psalm 139:13,15); and is the gift of God, bearing His image. Therefore, we regard abortion as the express violation of the solemn commandment of God, “Thou shalt not kill”, and therefore a great sin.

Since the Abortion Act of 1967, there have been almost 9 million infant deaths in the United Kingdom (including 520,000 in Scotland), that is, about 3,300 children every week, or 475 each day, (including 192 every week, or 27 each day, in Scotland). This is equivalent to the present combined population of Scotland and Wales.

We are caught up in what are literally “killing times”. These killings have been committed, and are presently being done, not only against the express directive of God, but also against a very public witness, both by pleading and poster, of the zealous pro-life or anti-abortion organisations. There are six of these bodies actively opposing this wickedness, employing in addition to other means, a horribly graphic, yet real and restrained description of a typical abortion performed on women who are between 14 and 24 weeks with child (the heart of the child normally begins beating at 17 weeks). They describe the actions of the doctor doing the abortion using a metal grasping instrument to tear out of the mother’s womb the child’s legs, arms, spine, intestines, heart, lungs and head (after having crushed the skull, as shown by the seeping out of a white fluid in evidence of the squashing of the brain), so that the child is reduced to a pile of bloodied parts thrown on a table, to then be disposed of casually.

Lamentably, these very active and vocal organisations have a hollow zeal, untempered by knowledge. They are either popish, or heavily influenced by that satanic sect. They express much concern for the life of the child carried by the mother and go to great lengths during their vigils outside abortion clinics to preserve that life, (and in a very few instances succeed in persuading a woman with child to keep the living one within her). However, whilst they are

instrumental in preventing some abortions, they promote and foster another gospel, that is, a salvation by works, not by faith in the obedience of Christ, which is a deadly perversion of the truth of Scripture, “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Galatians 2:16). They bring a cursed dogma, which if embraced murders the soul.

The wicked spirit that encourages women to abort is rife in the United Kingdom (including Scotland), with 92 per cent of the population favouring abortion, 1 in every 5 women with child aborting the child, and 1 in every 3 women aged 15 to 44 guilty of having killed a child they were bearing. There is a murderous spirit afoot in the land, with some women, desirous of pursuing an emerging trend in the United States of America to implement “full-term abortion”, that is, to kill the child when he or she is born (infanticide). During the past 51, almost 52 years, there have been so many abortions carried out in the United Kingdom, including Scotland, under the gaze of the Most High, Holy God. These abominations have been, and are being done, before Him who hates and must punish sin.

These great sins are a major cause of the wrath of God against Scotland. They have defiled the land with an enormity of sin and guilt and quenched and grieved away the Holy Ghost. Yet, by far the greatest sin in the land is not abortion, which is even warranted biblically if the woman’s life is considered to be in grave danger, but the slighting and despising of the adorable and only Saviour of sinners, Jesus Christ, as He is freely offered in the Gospel (a good report of Himself).

The wrath of God is palpably evident against Scotland, primarily because of what appears to be an almost universal rejection of Christ (as well as the sin of child killing, and many other sins not mentioned here). Furthermore, so many in the land are giving “appearance of reprobation, and a forerunner of hell” (David Dickson). We are to look over the belly of these evil and discouraging days, to the Scriptural promise of the better times, when “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9). Then will dawn that which shall be as life from the dead, and we long that it may be soon.

The equality agenda

The equality agenda asserts that certain groups must receive special advantages to ensure equal treatment. They include age, disability, sexual orientation and gender reassignment, sex, race, and religion or belief. Including LGBT within this is a subtle way of promoting such sinful choices alongside other more acceptable issues. It is clear, however, that those promoting this believe some of these characteristics deserve greater equality than others. All kinds of organisations have equalities policies and run diversity training to prevent discrimination. Not content with this, they feel

they must now promote some of these characteristics in order to be seen to encourage equality.

To many people, this agenda sounds like it is simply talking about treating people with respect and fairness. But with a leftist emphasis on equality of outcome it is an agenda with authoritarian pretensions. It seeks to regulate and control every area of society to further this agenda. It is never satisfied because it seeks the impossible goal of equality of outcome. It has obvious inconsistencies in relation to absolute equality. Age discrimination does not apply to children. When some call the abomination of homosexual “marriage” equal to real marriage, they do not envisage that anyone can marry absolutely anyone they might wish to.

Equality of outcome is an impossible goal that undermines God-given liberties and responsibilities. It is not the same as equity. The Bible requires justice and equality before the law but condemns partiality. It also demands righteousness in relation to what God’s law requires and forbids. The equality agenda has no regard for this and celebrates sinful lifestyles. Scripture asserts equal human worth but also equal responsibility to give obedience to God. This too is entirely different from the equality agenda.

As with other useful and attractive words, equality has become abused as a term. We find a Scriptural description of true equality in 2 Corinthians 8:14. It does not mean absolute equality, rather there is to be a fair balance through mutual dependence. God provides in Providence greater abundance in spiritual and temporal things to some, that they may minister to the needs of others. Let us seek grace to pursue biblical priorities for equality.

Homosexual agenda

The Word of God tells us that “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (2 Timothy 3:13). The continued aggressive push by the homosexual community and their growing band of supporters to force their agenda on our country in the last year is evidence of their increasing boldness and wickedness. One of the most prominent prongs of their attack on the moral standards of our nation has been the increasing use of public marches to rally support to their cause. For the first time these abominations were held last year in our once faithful Highlands and Islands, with homosexual marches in both Inverness and Stornoway. The support given by the public and a whole host of political leaders, media, and businesses, gives the impression at least that the majority of the population is now behind the homosexual movement.

The BBC is openly and deliberately promoting the homosexual agenda and they have expressed the aim of making homosexuality equally suitable for mankind as heterosexuality. Part of this drive involves an official target of having homosexuals make up 8% of all staff levels including leadership. Current estimates show that 11% of their staff are already LGBT anyway, without any positive discrimination having been in place. They have also set a target of 8% for onscreen portrayal of homosexual characters. One Christian

newspaper commented that “Christian homes which still have a television, now might think about saving the annual licence fee”.

The Scottish Government is one of the most aggressive supporters of homosexuality and they seem bent on making Scotland, once the fairest daughter of the Reformation, the leading homosexual-friendly country in the world. One instance of this is their recent move to introduce mandatory promotion of homosexual rights in all Scottish primary schools – something no other country in the world has yet done. Ominously, no opt-outs are to be permitted, exposing every child attending these schools to their abhorrent teaching.

It is becoming more and more clear that the Church’s stance over homosexuality is to be a key test of her faithfulness to her Divine Head. Numerous Churches, including the national Churches of Scotland and England, have shown their enmity to God and their friendship with the world in their open support for the homosexual movement. During the past year the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland sent a booklet outlining the scriptural position against homosexuality to every member of the Scottish Parliament. The church’s duty to be faithful to Christ brings an obligation to denounce homosexuality as heinous sin, whatever the cost.

The news media

The Athenians “spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21). The revolutionary effect that the internet has had on the production and consumption of news has made our culture more Athenian than ever. Events are reported as they happen with 24-hour broadcasting and social media. It reduces the time available to present facts that are verified. The very quantity of time devoted to certain topics skews our perspective on the relative importance of events. On the internet most news is presented in terms of what people want to hear and how it fits with their view of the world. People select the news that suits their views or emotional response, and avidly share it with others before checking whether it is genuine. Facts become less important, leading some to describe such a culture as “post truth”.

The advent of “fake news” has diminished confidence in journalism. Traditional media have tried to portray themselves as reliable in contrast. Yet they too have been guilty of deliberate forgery sometimes, such as the recent case of the reporter Claas Relotius being sacked by *Der Spiegel* for faked stories. BBC insiders freely acknowledge an institutional left-wing and pro-homosexual bias. Bernard Goldberg, longstanding CBS insider, documented blatant techniques for distorting the news. These include selectivity, priority, spin and labelling. The sheer volume of information and opinions presented can have the cumulative effect of wearing down and disabling critical thinking. We do not wish to undermine honest, hardworking journalists but we must be conscious that everyone has their own opinions and bias, whether conscious or otherwise. Some journalists are so far removed from an objective

understanding of, or acquaintance with, religion, that they are incapable of reporting it accurately and with discernment.

We need to be on our guard in relation to the way that events are reported to us. Let us also examine ourselves concerning what news we seek to know and why and how we seek it. Do we have a Christian response to the news that we hear that we would seek to use it for the purpose of prayer or praise?

Personal and Social Education

Personal and Social Education is the current dogma being prescribed in the teaching of our children today. In his introduction to the Review of Personal and Social Education, Mr John Swinney MSP, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills in Scotland, said, “While the health and wellbeing of every child and young person is rightly the responsibility of all school staff, learning in health and wellbeing is largely taught through personal and social education, or PSE. Learning in PSE should address the current issues affecting the lives of young people such as an understanding of consent and healthy relationships, substance misuse education, how to manage their mental health, the impact of social media and the importance of LGBT inclusion.”

The Review says, “Children and young people should feel nurtured, safe, respected and included in the learning environment and all staff should be proactive in promoting positive relationships and behaviour in the classroom, playground and wider learning community”. This appears to be commendable, but on closer examination, PSE is found to involve quite explicit sex education being introduced to infants of 3 and 4 years of age and LGBT behaviour being taught as natural. Small children are to be taught these things with no right of parents to remove them from the classes. LGBT issues are to be embedded in all aspects of the curriculum and will be a core part of education for all ages. There will be no tolerance for those who disagree, and teachers will not be able to avoid the all-embracing aspect of it in the education of our children. All of this will aid the Time for Inclusive Education, LGBT, agenda. It results in an unavoidable two-pronged approach on all children taught in the state sector.

The Review concludes by saying that, “Health and Wellbeing/Personal and Social Education can have a crucial role in supporting higher levels of literacy and numeracy, in making the school environment respectful, in preparing young people for the challenges and opportunities that they will experience and in delivering a positive outcome for society”. One may not doubt the sincerity of those who are behind this initiative, but it completely denies the rights of parents and teachers who want no part of it.

PSE teaches inappropriate sex education to infants and seeks to saturate their young minds with the concept that sodomy in all its modern manifestations is natural, proper and acceptable.

While all this is going on in Scotland, the Government in England is consulting on plans for Relationships Education to be taught as a statutory subject in primary schools. This will mean teaching young children about

different types of relationships, including sodomy, trans-sexualism and same sex “marriage”. According to draft guidance, parents of primary school children will not be allowed to withdraw youngsters from relationship education, but sex education will not be compulsory. The guidance says schools are free to determine how they address LGBT-specific content, but the Government recommends that it is integral throughout the programmes of study. The Christian Institute reports that, “At a time when there is growing alarm at the sexualisation of children, this package of change could lead to the sex education industry, which promotes explicit materials, having much greater influence.”

Smartphones and social media

Smartphones are mobile phones with multi-purpose mobile computing abilities. In addition to the usual functions of phoning and texting, they have extensive mobile operating systems which incorporate software for internet browsing, and multimedia functions such as music, videos, cameras and gaming. As of February 2018, 80% of mobile phone users in the UK used a smartphone; this equates to 75% of the general population, around 45 million people.

The potential for benefit is huge but conversely, the potential for harm is undeniable and is widely exploited. Cyber criminals are fraudulently taking advantage of smartphones in ever increasing regularity. We read on a daily basis of the harm done to people, especially children, by the misuse of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other forms of social media. Vulnerable young people are being encouraged to self-harm and even to commit suicide by images and messages on these forums. In addition, they may be stalked by paedophiles and others who wish to do them harm. Despite this, the media giants appear to be immune to moral pressure, or parliamentary rebukes. Clearly legislation of some sort is needed to require them to behave responsibly. Profit from advertising seems to be the motivation, regardless of the consequences to young children and grieving families.

Texting has become the favoured method of communication for a majority of youngsters today; some have been described as “hypertexters” who send over 120 text messages a day. The constant availability of the internet, and the relative privacy of accessing it on a mobile phone (it is estimated that more than 50% of parents know little or nothing about what their children do on their phones), mean children can be drawn into inappropriate behaviour such as “sexting” (sending sexually suggestive images by text), cyber bullying and accessing unsavoury social media content.

Fallen man has a natural predisposition towards that which is sinful, and children, with their curious and immature minds, are particularly vulnerable when they become involved in this dangerous environment.

Parents should consider carefully the age of their children before buying them smartphones, and ensure that they teach them to use them in a responsible and disciplined way. Parental guidance, the teaching of right and

wrong, and a strong moral compass nurtured in a loving Christian home, are ever more necessary in a rapidly changing world.

Suicide – a Christian perspective

Over 5,000 people in the United Kingdom commit suicide every year. Statistically men are three times more likely to commit suicide than women.

There is a difference between volitional or wilful suicide and suicide due to psychological or physiological factors such as clinical depression, an altered mental state such as schizophrenia or chemical imbalance. This article deals with volitional or wilful suicide.

Suicide is the deliberate taking away of one's own life, usually as a response to suffering in some form or other. Suffering can be physical, mental, emotional or spiritual in nature. This suffering may arise from depression, money troubles, the breaking of a relationship, bereavement, peer pressure, bullying, confusion over gender, escape from punishment or pain. Alcohol and drug abuse can also be contributing factors.

There are six examples of suicide in the Bible. Abimelech, Judges 9:54; King Saul, 1 Samuel 31:4; Saul's armour bearer, 1 Samuel 31:4-6; Ahithophel, 2 Samuel 17:23; Zimri, 1 Kings 16:18; Judas Iscariot, Matthew 27:5. All the examples of suicide in the Bible are of men of a dubious moral character who are never commended for their actions. It is represented as a fitting end to a wicked and unrepentant life.

The believer may be tempted with this sin like any other. Satan tempted the Saviour to commit suicide, Matthew 4:5-6. Solomon reached the point where he hated life, Ecclesiastes 2:17; Elijah was fearful and depressed and yearned for death, 1 Kings 19:4; Jonah was angry with God and wished to die, Jonah 4:8. Yet, they would not take their own life. Instead, they learned to "fear God and keep his commandments" (Ecclesiastes 12:13) and to wait upon God for comfort and rest (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Suicide needs to be distinguished from willing self-sacrifice of one's own life, such as in military service, the self-sacrifice of the Saviour Himself (John 10:18), nursing the infectious, and dangerous mission work. The death of Samson, a hero of the faith, was a divinely enabled self-sacrifice and not suicide.

Suicide is wrong for many reasons:

- It is against God as the creator and sustainer of life.
- It rejects God's gift of life, Job 1:21.
- It rejects God's sovereignty and His prerogative as the giver and taker of life, Job 12:10. Our bodies are not our own; "My times are in thy hands" (Psalm 31:15).
- It is a violation of the sixth commandment, Exodus 20:13.
- It disregards the image of God and the sanctity of human life, Genesis 1:26, 27, 9:5-6.

- It harms those left behind, Matthew 22:36-39, Ephesus 5:29.
- It overlooks the value of human suffering, Romans 5:3-5. Believers are called to suffer with Christ, Romans 8:17; and hope for that which is to come in the midst of present troubles.
- It fails to recognise how unnatural death is, Romans 5:12.
- It fails to appreciate the sufferings of a lost eternity.

Bible-based Christianity has always held suicide to be a terrible sin and a form of self-idolatry. It is equal to murder. It is a most solemn sin, as most “successful” suicides leave no opportunity for repentance.

Anyone who turns to Jesus for forgiveness is pardoned and accepted as righteous, Romans 5:9.

Scottish legislation

Over the last 60 years laws have been passed which are totally contrary to Scripture. Although passed by the UK Parliament, they have affected Scottish law. First, the death penalty for murder was removed. After this the 1967 Abortion Act was passed, leading to almost 9 million children being slain in the womb. The effect of this is an ageing population, as many of these destroyed children would have now been in the work force, so that there would not have been the need for foreign workers who bring with them their false religions.

But since the granting of a Scottish Parliament, things have become much worse, with laws which are an abomination in the sight of God, with legislation for civil partnerships, followed by homosexual and lesbian marriages. The Scottish Government is consulting on hate crime recommendations made last year by Lord Bracadale. This consultation closed on 24th February 2019. The most concerning proposal is for new “stirring up hatred” offences. The existing law only covers race, but could be extended to cover religion, sexual orientation and transgender status, which could have a profound effect on free speech and religious liberty, impacting on freedom to proclaim Christ as the only way of salvation, or to call people to repent of sin.

The Government is planning to make it illegal for parents to smack their children. If it becomes law, it would give parents a criminal record which could prevent them obtaining visas for visiting foreign countries.

Another cause for concern is John Swinney’s announcement to incorporate compulsory LGBT teaching into the national curriculum for all state schools, starting at nursery. “On each side walk the wicked, when vile men are high in place” (Psalm 12:8, metrical version). There are many at present promoting the wicked LGBT cause, and not only men, but also women.

What need there is for prayer to God who ruleth over all: “O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy” (Habakkuk 3:2).

CONCLUSION

As we noted in a previous Report, the terrorist organisation ISIS is in retreat and the past year has seen its aspirations to create a caliphate mercifully disappointed. The danger remaining is that its dispersed fanatics have scattered across non-Muslim countries in Europe and may yet cause much mischief. We pray that our police and security forces will be enabled to contain these malign people.

This Report includes an item on abortion. The advocates of this form of murder are ever more strident; American Democrats in Rhode Island and Virginia are proposing to allow abortions up to the end of pregnancy for any “health” reasons, including “age, economic, social and emotional factors”. They describe all protections for unborn babies as “insidiously restrictive, harmful and patriarchal reproductive laws”. In the UK there are campaigners wanting to further liberalise our own laws in accordance with a “woman’s right to choose”.

Paedophilia and the sexual abuse of children are constantly in the news and Romanism often appears to be at the forefront of what we hear. On-line grooming is another manifestation of this perversion. Satan and his minions are constantly busy suggesting ever more degrading forms of temptation to mankind.

Our report shows once more the exceedingly low state of religion and morals in our nation. Surely the greatness of the need must encourage us to continue instant in prayer seeking that the Lord would hasten the day when the whole earth will be filled with His glory and that every nation, tribe and tongue would bow the knee to Jesus.

SABBATH OBSERVANCE COMMITTEE’S REPORT

Convener: Rev J B Jardine

THE Committee would use this opportunity to remind the people of the Church of the spiritual danger of breaking the Sabbath Day and becoming unnecessarily involved in the things of the world during the Lord’s Day. The unnecessary use of the internet, particularly social media, is detrimental to a proper observance of the Sabbath. The use of the internet to access religious materials on the Sabbath is not a work of necessity or mercy, and the 2012 Synod passed a resolution against all such unnecessary online access. Texting, messaging and phoning about either religious or worldly matters, including unimportant family news, that can be left to the Monday, are also detrimental to Sabbath keeping.

Rev R MacLeod, Glasgow, has been appointed by the Synod to give lectures on the Christian Sabbath. Mr MacLeod can be contacted direct by interested congregations. Public lectures were held in Halkirk and Portree towards the

end of 2018, both of which attracted considerable interest from outside the FP Church.

One aspect of the Committee's work this year has been writing to the organisers of tour companies and others that disregard the Sabbath in providing for the tourist trade. Tourism has become an important part of the economy of the Highlands and Islands. However, this has come at the cost of losing the Sabbath Day.

Like Esau in days of old, our heritage has been sold for a "mess of pottage". A case in point would be the renting out of holiday homes over the Sabbath without due regard to what Sabbath breaking activities may be taking place within their bounds, and using them like hotels and B&Bs. We would exhort to a rightful observance of the Sabbath. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, *nor thy stranger that is within thy gates*: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:8-11). "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26).

Letters

The Committee has endeavoured to continue to widen the number of Sabbath-breaking activities addressed. This has often proved difficult, as the only point of contact, in about a third of events, is an email address.

The following letters were issued.

Sport

British Show Jumping	No reply
British Swimming.....	No reply
Darts World Ltd.	No reply
English Hockey	No reply
English Squash	No reply
Irish Open	No reply
Ladies Scottish Open.....	No reply
Loch Ness Marathon	No reply
PGA	No reply
Professional Darts Corp.....	No reply
Scottish Basketball	No reply
Scottish Snooker.....	No reply
Scottish Squash.....	No reply
Silverstone Circuit.....	No reply
UK Athletics Ltd.	No reply
Waterford GM	No reply
World Snooker.....	No reply

Cruise companies

Cruise and Maritime.....	No reply
Princess Cruises.....	No reply
Seabourn.....	Reply received
Tui Cruises.....	No reply
Costa Cruises.....	No reply
Viking Cruises.....	No reply
Fred Olsen.....	Reply received
Holland America.....	No reply
Regent Seven Seas.....	No reply
Aida Cruises.....	No reply
Phoenix Reisen.....	No reply
Crystal Cruises.....	Reply received
Royal Caribbean.....	No reply
Celebrity Cruises.....	Reply received
Oceana Cruises.....	No reply
Cunard.....	No reply
NCL.....	No reply
Saga Cruises.....	No reply
Marella Cruises.....	No reply
Voyages to Antiquity.....	No reply
Hapag Lloyd.....	No reply

Port authorities

Lerwick.....Out of 79 calls, 3 occur on Sabbath.....	Reply received
Kirkwall.....Out of 100 calls, 12 occur on Sabbath.....	No reply
Invergordon.....Out of 85 calls, 10 occur on Sabbath.....	No reply
Dundee.....Out of 8 calls, 5 occur on Sabbath.....	No reply
Leith.....Out of 85 calls, 12 occur on Sabbath.....	No reply
Greenock.....Out of 64 calls, 9 occur on Sabbath.....	No reply
Oban.....Out of 8 calls, 2 occur on Sabbath.....	Reply received
Tobermory.....Out of 24 calls, 4 occur on Sabbath.....	No reply
Fort William.....Out of 6 calls, 2 occur on Sabbath.....	No reply
Ullapool.....Out of 17 calls, 7 occur on Sabbath.....	No reply

Tourism

David Urquhart Coaches.....	No reply
Shearing Holidays.....	No reply

The following were written to following a request from a concerned Christian:

Football Clubs

Aberdeen FC.....	No reply
Arsenal FC.....	No reply
Ayr United FC.....	No reply

Barnsley FC	No reply
Blackburn Rovers FC	No reply
Brighton and Hove Albion FC	No reply
Celtic FC.....	No reply
Chelsea FC	No reply
Crystal Palace FC	No reply
Dundee FC.....	No reply
Dundee United FC.....	No reply
Everton FC	No reply
Hartlepool United FC	No reply
Heart of Midlothian FC	No reply
Hibernian FC	No reply
Huddersfield Town FC	No reply
Ipswich Town FC	Reply received
Kilmarnock FC	No reply
Leicester City FC.....	No reply
Liverpool FC	No reply
Maidenhead United FC	No reply
Manchester City FC.....	No reply
Manchester United FC.....	No reply
Middlesbrough FC.....	No reply
Newcastle United FC.....	No reply
Newport City FC	No reply
Norwich City FC	No reply
Partick Thistle FC.....	No reply
Plymouth Argyle FC.....	No reply
Portsmouth FC.....	No reply
Rangers FC	No reply
Ross County FC	No reply
Rotherham FC	No reply
Southampton FC.....	No reply
St Johnstone FC.....	No reply
Stoke City FC	No reply
Sunderland FC.....	No reply
Swansea City FC	No reply
Tottenham Hotspur FC	No reply
Watford FC	No reply
West Bromwich Albion FC	No reply

Rugby clubs

Bath RFC	No reply
Cardiff Blues RFC.....	No reply
Harlequins RFC.....	No reply
Leicester RFC.....	No reply
London Irish RFC.....	No reply

Northampton RFC	No reply
Ospreys RFC	No reply
Sale RFC.....	No reply
Saracens RFC	No reply
Scarlets RFC.....	No reply
Wasps RFC	No reply
Worcester RFC	No reply

JEWISH AND FOREIGN MISSIONS COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev J MacLeod

General

This Report is written with a view to providing the Synod with up-to-date information on the Church's mission work and, in particular, the Jewish and Foreign Missions Committee's involvement in it. Since other more detailed and informative reports will be submitted by those more immediately concerned – who serve on the “front line” (so to speak) – this report will therefore be somewhat more concerned with the administrative aspects of the work. But while this is so, we are still and above all mindful of the fact that our great aim is to continue to bring the Gospel into contact with the minds of sinners, young and old, and we do so in the hope that, since faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, the Holy Spirit will add His blessing to our endeavours and make it effectual to the convincing and converting of souls. We receive, from time to time, requests for help from other groups outside the borders of Zimbabwe, but we are unable to provide it for lack of resources and especially for lack of heaven-sent ordained missionaries. We maintain an interest in the Jews and seek to do what we can towards their ingathering. It was the importance and significance of that event and the hastening of it that moved Samuel Rutherford to write these words: “O to see the sight next to Christ's coming in the clouds, the most joyful! Our elder brethren the Jews and Christ fall upon one another's necks and kiss each other! They have been long asunder; they will be kind to one another when they meet. O day! O longed-for and lovely day-dawn! O sweet Jesus, let me see the sight that shall be as life from the dead, Thee and Thy ancient people in mutual embraces.” May the inclusion of them here stir all of us up to pray all the more earnestly!

Over fifty years ago in Holland the Mbumba Zending was founded in the Lord's providence, and every year since then we have had occasion to express to its Board Members our gratitude for the financial help they have unfailingly provided. We have, on our part, endeavoured to use these resources wisely to the furtherance of Christ's cause and kingdom and we believe that our doing so has not been in vain. This year again we express our apprecia-

tion of their continuing support and we would like to extend this to include all our Dutch friends, young and old, who devote so much of their time and energy to the collection of funds. It is always a pleasure to meet with Board Members and we are glad that three of them are expected to attend the Synod meeting.

Zimbabwe

We are glad to report that all our ministers in Zimbabwe have been sustained in health and are attending to their duties in their respective congregations and also, in the case of some of them, in vacant congregations over which they meantime exercise pastoral oversight. There are many scattered preaching stations within the bounds of the mission (fifteen, for instance, are under the umbrella of the Mbumba congregation) and the only way in which it is possible to maintain regular public services at them – when the congregational minister is not able to be there – is to appoint ruling elders to preside. At their ordination to office these men personally subscribe to the doctrine and practice of the Church as set forth in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and Catechisms and we are confident that they are sincere and faithful men. If at these stations the psalms are sung, the Bible is read, prayer offered to God and a word of exhortation given to hearers: is not that, in the circumstances, acceptable public worship? We are also confident that the Zimbabwe Presbytery will be keeping a watchful eye on matters and if there should happen to be any departure from the standards mentioned that they will deal with it.

What follows in this report is largely from the pen of Mr Hugh MacKenzie, the Mission Co-ordinator, who visits Zimbabwe several times a year and also, by means of the use of “Skype” takes full part in Zimbabwean Mission Board Meetings; this, while sitting in his own home in Lewis! He is, therefore, well informed and we are grateful to him for his contribution.

In *Zvishavane*, where the translation team regularly met, in 2018 the translation of the Shona Bible was completed and is now ready for the Trinitarian Bible Society to print, publish and distribute. The translation team has now been disbanded. It marks the end of a project of what is seen as the most accurate translation of the Scriptures into Union Shona. It is estimated that there are about 10 million Shona-speaking people in Zimbabwe, many who have little or no access to sound Christian literature. [Mr T Mwedzi, who served on the team of translators, is now a Divinity Student and we thank him for his contribution. We also desire to thank Mr T Benschop, the leader of the translation team, for his dedicated work and wish him well for the future.]

At *Mbumba* the planned third Rural Health Clinic at Sagonda did not take place due to local disagreements on the precise location of the clinic. In recent weeks it appears that a resolution has been arrived at and that construction will commence in the coming financial year. The clinics at Lutsha and Vova continue to provide a greatly appreciated medical provision to those living far from the hospital. They also provide suitable locations for Gospel outreach work. It is encouraging to see that during the October Communion at Mbumba,

one new member was accepted, together with three persons for baptism, all from the Lutsha area.

At *Ingwenya* the pastoral charge remains vacant since the resignation of Rev A B MacLean on health grounds. Rev S Khumalo continues as interim moderator for the time being, adding to his already heavy workload as minister of the Bulawayo congregation and also as interim moderator of New Canaan, since the passing of Rev Z Mazvabo. With sadness we report the death of Paul Moyo. A faithful man, we believe, who kept his garments clean as an Elder and a pillar in the Ingwenya congregation for many years.

At *John Tallach High School* one of the pupils, Primrose Tshuma, came second in a prestigious SADC essay writing competition which was open to pupils from across the 11 nations of SADC. It made national news and even came to the attention of the President. The prize-giving ceremony took place in Namibia where Primrose and her teacher went to collect the award by courtesy of the President's private jet, followed by the additional honour of being invited to meet with him on their return! The school celebrated its 60th anniversary this year. Miss Maria Kerkhoff from Chilliwack, Canada, has joined the staff and we wish her well. Largely as a result of the dedicated work of the Headmaster, Mr Bonekele Ncube, and his Deputy, Miss Norma B MacLean, the school retains its place among the top schools in Zimbabwe.

At *Themviso Children's Home* the House-staff refresher course was completed as planned in 2018, when both the tutors from overseas (Margaret MacAskill and Petra Beukers) were able to give sufficient of their time from home and work commitments. The high cost of running the Home, mainly due to staff wages, has constrained the JFMC to introduce a policy of non-admission of any further children and to instigate a fostering/reunification programme of those reaching the age of 16. Assessment of this approach in 2018 will shape the direction taken in the year ahead.

Preview of 2019

The major development planned for 2019 is centred on the delivery of Bible Knowledge in the five Primary Schools, for which the Mission is the responsible authority. In 2016 one Bible Knowledge teacher was appointed to each of the schools. After the experience of a full academic year in 2017, it was decided in the current year to extend the programme by appointing more teachers, especially in the larger schools, and appointing a dedicated Education Officer to oversee all aspects of the programme. The success of the programme depends on identifying suitably endowed Christian teachers and securing adequate funding.

The Zimbabwe economy is suffering from a serious shortage of foreign currency which is causing great hardship for the general populace. The Government introduced a parallel currency about two years ago (bond notes), reportedly based on the Reserve Bank stock of US dollars. However as these reserves dwindled so has the face value of the bond notes, currently running at approximately 4:1. Those paid in bond notes have seen their purchasing power

in the shops reduce accordingly, plus the added trend within the retail system of using the situation as an excuse to raise prices even higher. So far the Mission has been cushioned to some degree, because organisations funded in foreign currency from outside the country are still permitted to withdraw money in US dollars rather than bond notes. Although it is too early to predict, fears that the economy may return to the hyper-inflation of 2008 seem to be well founded.

Reflection

Our nation was once known as “Sabbath loving Scotland”. Recently it has been described as “Sabbath hating Scotland”. A contrast that cannot be disputed; only mourned over. Over the centuries Scotland spread the Gospel love of the Sabbath to the far corners of the world, especially to Africa. In 1947 children attending our school at Ingwenya were asked to write an essay on “The Things I appreciate most at Ingwenya”. This is what one pupil, Isabelle Mlotjwa, wrote:

The thing I appreciate most at Ingwenya is how the Sabbath day is kept. I found the people there are very strict on the Sabbath day. There should be no noise, there should be no work done except cooking, there should be no visitors on the Sabbath day. So I learned a great deal about how I should keep the Sabbath day. Before I came to Ingwenya I used to play and sing all sorts of songs on the Sabbath day but now I know how the Sabbath is to be kept. I am able to teach my young sisters and brothers how to keep it holy. This is the most interesting thing I found at Ingwenya.

Because of the religious liberty afforded to our Mission in Zimbabwe and the sincere zeal of the staff, the same disciplines Isabelle met in 1947 are just as evident to the pupils there today. Where breaches occur, repairs can be made and every effort to maintain the sanctity of the Sabbath is rigorously applied. May the bread cast upon the waters return to Scotland.

Israel

On a very much reduced scale our work in Israel continues. Reverend John L. Goldby continues to be our representative there and visits Israel from time to time, keeping an eye on the ongoing work of revising the Delitzsch Greek New Testament and other translation work including the translation into Hebrew of the Shorter Catechism together with a tract on the Sabbath Day.

Conclusion

We desire to be thankful that in the Lord’s kind providence our mission work is continuing even in these difficult times. We solicit the prayers of all who have the ear of the Great Head of the Church to pray earnestly that He would send an outpouring of His Spirit to revive His own cause among us at home and abroad. “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.”

INGWENYA MISSION REPORT

Rev S Khumalo

Ingwenya has a Primary and a Secondary school and four preaching stations: Cameron, Gadadi, Insiza and Inyathi. There is no resident minister at present. The cry is “Come over and help us”, as was the prayer of a man of Macedonia. As I am the interim moderator, I try through the strength given to supply the stations and attend the communions. The shortage of labourers and office bearers has not spared Ingwenya. It was worsened by the passing on of Mr Paul Moyo, elder, on the Sabbath of 27th January 2019. It was a really sad loss to the church at large, especially Ingwenya congregation. Mr Moyo had been one of the few remaining old elders of our church in Zimbabwe and the last in the Ingwenya congregation. He had been an elder for over 40 years at Ingwenya. It was a loss indeed and we believe it was a gain to his Master whom he served so faithfully to the end.

As we look around, we witness the diminishing of the older generation in all our congregations. What is admirable is that the more their bodies fail, the more their light burns, becoming brighter and brighter to the end. It is our desire and prayer to God that He would grant us grace to “remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation” (Hebrews 13:7).

The services are held at Ingwenya and its stations. I am thankful to Mr B Ncube, Headmaster at John Tallach High School, who is of great help in supplying Ingwenya on Sabbaths during the school term, helping Mr S Ncube, the only elder at Ingwenya.

Mr P Mzamo is based at Cameron in Mbembesi and he supplies Gadadi and Cameron and is assisted by Mr Mkhomazi. At Insiza, Mr H Ntakana is the resident elder and at Inyathi there is Mr Majozi, whose health is poor but is assisted by Mr Ndlovu. I am very thankful to these men. May the Lord grant them grace and health to enable them to undertake these duties laid upon them.

There are four communions: at Ingwenya in March and September, Cameron in July and Inyathi in November. In all these communions, the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was dispensed and notably a young man who had finished his Law degree was accepted in full membership. Rev N Sibanda was assisting in March and Rev M Mloyi in September. In Cameron and Inyathi, there was no invited Minister, so I was alone.

As I mentioned in one of my reports, transport challenges are affecting my mobility as a result of bad roads and high fuel costs.

In June, Rev I D MacDonald came as a Deputy and supplied Ingwenya for two Sabbaths. The visit was much appreciated and we yearn for such visits and that the Lord would bless the Word to the hearers.

Finally, on behalf of the Ingwenya congregations, I would like to thank the church overseas, friends, the JMFC and Mbumba Zending Committee for their

prayers, financial and material support for the continuance of the preaching of the Gospel in this country.

“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19).

“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).

JOHN TALLACH HIGH SCHOOL REPORT

Miss Norma B MacLean

When Rev J B Radasi started missionary work here at Ingwenya in 1905, he also opened a school, being anxious that the people should learn to read the Bible. Mr Radasi said of his teaching efforts then: “Our main object in keeping a school is that the people may learn to read their Bibles. It is there that they can learn the doctrine of our ruin by the Fall, redemption by the blood of Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Ghost. . . .” The doors of John Tallach High School did not open until 21st January 1958 but the professional and well developed High School has its roots in the humble kraal school started by Mr Radasi. Scripture was the main focus of the educational work in 1905 and throughout all the expansion, progress and remarkable successes since then, Scripture has remained at the centre of education at Ingwenya. The children are constantly exposed to the Word of God but the blessing of the Holy Spirit is needed so that they might indeed be convinced of the truth of the doctrines of ruin by the Fall, redemption by the blood of Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Ghost.

Miss Maria Kerkhoff from Canada joined the expatriate Mission staff in September and settled in very quickly. She is multi-talented so is proving to be a very useful addition to the school. Miss Kerkhoff’s main duties are teaching of Bible Knowledge and Catechism and also teaching Form 3 Sabbath School. When her work permit was granted in May, however, we did not know that one of only two Mathematics teachers who are qualified to teach Form 6 would be leaving for other employment in July, nor did we know that the Ministry of Education would not replace him in Term 3, leaving the Lower 6 class without a Mathematics teacher. Miss Kerkhoff, who is a well qualified and experienced Mathematics teacher, happily agreed to take over the class. It was very encouraging to see the Lord’s clear provision of such a critical need in the school: He is true to His Word, “. . . your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.”

Enrolment

In Term 1 – 2019 a total of 649 pupils were enrolled, 320 girls and 329 boys. There are 34 day pupils and 615 boarders on the roll. This year three pupils are

registered in the Resource Unit for visual impairment: one girl in Form 3 who suffers from albinism, and two boys in Form 2 both with varying degrees of low vision.

“O” Level results

The “O” Level pass rate for 2018 was 98% and the quality of the results was very pleasing. Although less importance is being placed on school rankings, it was very satisfying to come first in the Province again.

ZIMSEC (Zimbabwe Examinations Council)

Individual subject results were as follows:

Accounts	100.00%	History	96.80%
Agriculture.....	100.00%	Integrated Science	98.10%
Bible Knowledge	98.50%	Literature in English	97.60%
Biology	100.00%	Literature in Ndebele	95.40%
Business & Enterprise Skills	100.00%	Mathematics.....	84.70%
Chemistry	100.00%	Ndebele	100.00%
Combined Science	98.80%	Physics	97.00%
Computers.....	50.00%	Statistics	100.00%
English Language	98.50%	Textile Tech & Design	100.00%
Geography	96.20%	Wood Tech & Design.....	100.00%

The number of “A” passes increased significantly. Out of 129 candidates:

13 x “A” passes	– 2 pupils
12 x “A” passes	– 5 pupils
11 x “A” passes	– 7 pupils
10 x “A” passes	– 5 pupils
9 x “A” passes	– 3 pupils
% with 5 or more “A” passes – 65% (84 pupils)	

ZIMSEC no longer offers Bible Knowledge at “O” Level, which is very disappointing as it was a very good course and the prospect of an “A” pass motivated the pupils to learn the work well. Those who can afford it will sit the Cambridge “O” level instead. Otherwise Bible Knowledge will now only be assessed internally at school.

CIE (Cambridge International Examinations)

In spite of the economic challenges, the Cambridge examinations continue to be very popular with pupils: 43 registered for the Cambridge “O” Level examinations in November 2018. The pass rates improved on the previous year.

Biology	100.00%	Combined Science	100.00%
Business Studies	89.71%	English Language	97.61%
Chemistry	100.00%	Geography	88.88%

IsiZulu.....	100.00%	Principles of Accounts	92.30%
Mathematics	97.67%	Religious Studies	80.00%
Physics.....	100.00%		

Among the passes were 9 “A”*.

“A” Level results ZIMSEC

The overall pass rate for the ZIMSEC “A” Level examinations was 100%: this means that all pupils passed at least 2 subjects.

Accounting	96.00%	Economics.....	100.00%
Additional Maths.....	100.00%	Physics	100.00%
Biology	100.00%	Pure Maths	100.00%
Business Studies	100.00%	Physics	100.00%
Chemistry	100.00%	Statistics	100.00%

Of the 50 candidates, 8 were awarded 15 or more points – these are outstanding results. The top performer was a girl who passed 5 “A” Levels with 4 “A”s and 1 “B”.

- 1 passed with 24 points
- 1 passed with 22 points
- 1 passed with 19 points
- 2 passed with 16 points
- 3 passed with 15 points

Apart from these very high performers, 34 passed with 10 points or more, so the quality of results was very good.

CIE

Twenty-one pupils registered for the Cambridge “A” level examinations, and all of them passed all their subjects.

Finance

The economic situation deteriorated rapidly towards the end of 2018. Rapidly rising prices and loss in value of the Bond (local currency) meant that the school recorded a deficit of \$104,000 at the end of the year which meant the reserves were completely exhausted. Parents agreed to an increase in fees from an average of \$470 to \$920 per child per term, which is a huge increase particularly as wages have not increased. Many items are no longer available in the local RTGS \$, with suppliers demanding USD instead but schools are not permitted to request payment of fees in USD.

Developments

1. New teachers’ cottage

This very comfortable cottage was ready for occupation when school opened for Term 1 in January 2019.

2. Form 6 girls' dormitory extension

Work on the final phase of the Form 6 girls' dormitory began mid-November: this is expected to be completed by the middle of Term 1 – 2019.

3. Solar water pump

In October, the electric pump on the main borehole was replaced by a solar powered pump. This was another clear providential provision as the main line electricity was completely cut by the beginning of December with no prospect of reconnection in the near future. We have been told that several kilometres of overhead wire have been stolen.

4. FIM (Parents' Board) funded projects

The Parents' Board continues to work harmoniously with the Mission Board and the school administration. FIM has committed funds to enhance teachers' welfare, so teachers now receive tea, lunch and dinner at school, FIM pays for teachers' rent and internet access and also pays the salaries of temporary teachers employed to fill Government post vacancies. Several of these posts have now been vacant for some time. Work on the vehicle shade for the school's fleet of vehicles is still ongoing, as is the work started on construction of a small recycled water system for the school toilets. Both of these projects were put on hold for a time due to lack of funding. It is hoped to resume the work in 2019.

Conclusion

The support received from the JFMC and Mbuma Zending is still a major contribution to the work of the school, and is much appreciated. Above all prayerful support is needed for the preservation of the witness here when Christianity is no longer given the pre-eminent place it had for such a long time in the national curriculum.

ZENKA MISSION

Rev M Mloyi

HOW soon time passes by! 2018 has passed and a new year 2019 has risen, thanks to the Almighty God directing all things to come to pass according to His wonderful works of providence. This is His most holy way of governing all things that come to pass.

The past year had its constraints but thankfully the Lord led us through in His kindness and mercy. In our frailty we can do nothing without Him, as Christ says in John 15:5, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing".

By the grace of God the doors in all our preaching stations were kept open for the weekday Prayer Meeting and on Sabbath. We found some constraints on fuel: the congregations tried to contribute towards this fund, but the flow of currency was a problem to many, and also the availability of fuel as at times fuel pumps were empty. Prices also kept on being hiked. Even so, we carried forward the Lord's work in His kindness.

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was dispensed twice as usual. In February Rev S Khumalo assisted and in August Rev N Sibanda assisted. We pray for the Spirit of God to rain upon the dry hard hearts of our people who still persist in heathen life and also are taken up by false religions of false prophets. They are so prevalent and powerful in drawing many young people to their false doctrines. O! If unction would descend and our community be converted and see the truth, while it is said, today is the time of salvation.

The rains started late and people had late planting, after a long dry spell from December to the last week of January. The government distributed maize seeds and fertiliser to help communal farmers. At the time of writing it is not raining heavily and the dams are still empty. We hope and pray for a heavy downpour to fill the dams for the livestock in winter. We expect a minimal harvest.

There was civil unrest in the beginning of the year, but now it seems to be calm and we can travel to preaching places freely. We are thankful for that. Pray for us.

NKAYI MISSION REPORT

Rev M Mloyi

THE work of the Lord has been carried out in the spirit of love, as Naboth kept his vineyard and would not give it to any. "And Naboth said to Ahab, The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee" (1 Kings 21:3). All this has been done in the strength of the Lord.

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was dispensed twice at Nkayi as usual in January and June and Rev S Khumalo assisted in June. At Donsa Dam it was dispensed in May. As a small station we do not invite a minister to assist. This congregation has elderly people. As they age they pass on and the communion roll remains low. This place is dominated by Seventh Day Adventists and Apostolic sects. We find a lot of young ones and men are taken up with these sects.

In my absence the church elders supply these stations for Sabbath services and weekday prayer meetings.

I would like to express my appreciation to the Nkayi deacons for their effort in organising the Manomano congregation to put up a structure for worship which is now at window level. The work has been slow, as cement has been a scarce commodity and very expensive to buy in local shops which want

foreign currency which they do not have. One of the community men, the Chairman of the School Development Committee whose wife is a church member at Manomano, took a wonderful initiative to help in gathering building materials and helping this congregation mainly made up of women. Two elders help in this station, Mr S B Mpofu and Mr L Ndlovu, neither of whom have good health.

We pray that the Lord would grant strength and wisdom to finish this project. We encourage them as in 2 Chronicles 15:7, "Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded".

As in many other areas, Nkayi had late planting and the rains were not favourable. The dry spell of January took its toll too. We pray for the rains to continue so that crops reach ripening stage. The faithful God shall answer our prayers in due time. Brethren, pray for us.

ZVISHAVANE MISSION REPORT

Rev S Khumalo

In the kindness of the Lord, the work begun by the late Rev Z Mazvabo continues and we have a reason to be thankful to the Lord for preserving His work and people in these evil times. The forces of darkness in this world may desire the elimination of the true Church of Christ but it has not been so. What encourages the people of God is that the Lord reigneth. Through thick and thin, the Gospel continues to be preached in all our stations, with Christ and Him crucified being set forth unto sinners.

There are nine preaching stations. New Canaan has two Communion which alternates with Lot 4 in Zvishavane when the weather is favourable. Last year both communions in January and August were held in New Canaan. Mr N Siziba the home missionary and Mr A Sibanda are the elders that help supply New Canaan, Makovere and Lot 4 in Zvishavane on Sabbath and weekday prayer meetings, with the help of other professing men.

It was in New Canaan congregation that there were problems between the Headman, community and New Canaan congregation over the refusal by the congregation to go to false prophets' gatherings and their refusal to attend the chief's court on Sabbath. They requested to attend the chief's court on a Monday. I then requested for an appointment for a meeting with the chief and he gave us a date on a Sabbath. Mr Siziba then made it clear to the chief that we would attend on any day given except on Sabbath. Nothing happened ever since that time and there is now a good relationship with the chief because of what he heard from the church members in their defence. Thankfully the issue made our stand to be known concerning the keeping of the Lord's Day and not attending these unholy gatherings.

We are very thankful to the Lord, the elders and the congregation for their stand in defending their faith and practice.

In all the preaching stations, services are held every Sabbath and there is also the weekday prayer meeting. Other communions are held at Chiedza in May and November, Maware in April, and Mnaka in September. The Kirk Session decided to alternate communions between Mnaka and Maware due to shortage of labourers.

Mr Mwedzi is now studying for the Ministry, and an elder from Maware left the church, but we are thankful to the Lord that some professing men are helping to keep the doors open.

As in most parts of the country, there is a looming drought as there was very little rain to enable crops to grow. What was planted has since wilted due to the severe heat experienced during the planting season. It will be a very difficult year for our congregations and the country. May all these things be a way and means for us to come to ourselves and repent. "Thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel" (Amos 4:12).

Finally we are thankful for the support we receive from JMFC, Mbumba Zending Committee and all friends and the church overseas. "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations" (Matthew 24:14).

MBUMA MISSION REPORT

Rev N Sibanda

"FOR here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Hebrews 13:14). Every year when the Kirk Session sits to purge the communion roll, we are reminded of this truth. There are 137 communicants on the roll.

Throughout 2018, services of public worship were maintained in our stations. The usual communions were held at Mbumba (April and October) and Somakantana (August). We thank Rev S Khumalo and Rev M Mloyi for their assistance on these occasions. The sacrament of Baptism was administered to five adults and one infant.

In May the congregation welcomed Rev I MacDonald, a Deputy to Zimbabwe. Rev MacDonald visited Lutsha, which has a church, primary school and clinic. His next stop was Vova Clinic. He took prayer meetings at Mbumba and Gampakalala. We value such visits from our brethren. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:4-6).

MBUMA MISSION HOSPITAL REPORT

Dr A Snoek

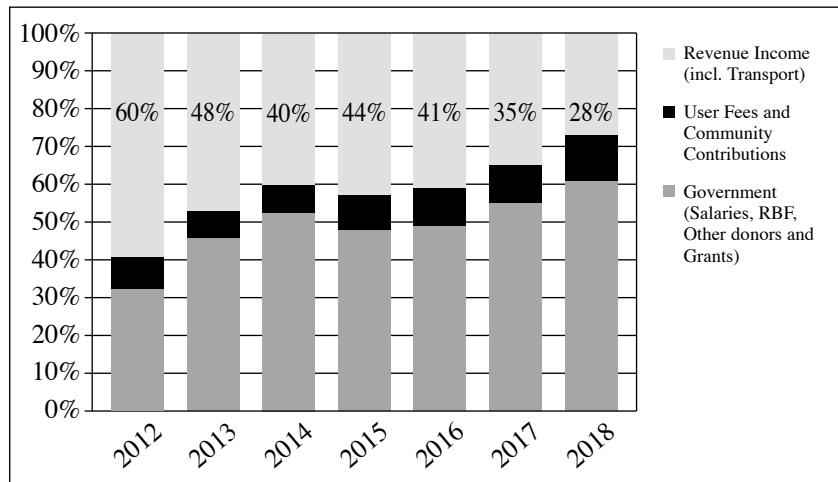
ANOTHER year has become history. Plans to erect the 3rd Clinic in the area of Sagonda failed, due to a disagreement about the chosen site.

Resurfacing inflation during the last quarter of the year increased the difficulties in sourcing the necessary supplies.

Thankful we are however that the Lord enabled us to care for the ill and needy and that His Word was sown in season and out of season.

Finance

The trend of becoming less donor dependent, initiated by the Options Appraisal in 2012, is steadily progressing, resulting in a local generated income of 72% in 2018.



Lutsha RHC functions financially independent from donor money. It received most of its medicines from the District and it is using RBF money for other necessary supplies.

Vova RHC is still not registered under RBF. The majority of its supplies has been received from the District. For other necessary commodities and certain medicines it continued to be supported by Mbuma Hospital.

Maintenance and Capital Projects

Buildings

The decentralisation of over 40% of our OIC¹ patients to the new Rural Health Centres, made the separate building for HIV and AIDS services no longer

¹ OIC = Opportunistic Infection Clinic.

necessary. It was therefore decided to relocate the OIC and re-integrate it into the OPD². The OIC building was transformed to administration block and is now accommodating the several offices which before were scattered over the hospital. The entrance of the OPD was changed from the courtyard to the outside of the hospital, whereby a newly-built shed has improved the ambiance on entering the hospital.

Equipment

The digital X-ray machine, commissioned in 2012, developed a serious fault in November 2018. Assistance was received from a volunteer engineer from South Africa, but due to inefficient and hampering administrative procedures, transport to South Africa was greatly delayed, resulting in a non-functioning X-ray machine till date.

Transport

Serious challenges were faced again in the course of 2018 related to transport. A beautiful new Toyota Landcruiser ambulance was received in April 2018. Sadly enough a few weeks later the car sustained serious damage when it collided with a cow on the Vic Falls road. Non availability of parts delayed repair till the last week of August.

The old Toyota Landcruiser ambulance continued to have its regular breakdowns.

The Nissan lorry virtually was not functional during 2018. Parts ordered from South Africa turned out to be incorrect. Sourcing of the right spare parts took the rest of the year. The Ford Ranger staff car, awaiting spare parts as well, did not move a single inch the whole year.

Thanks to the assistance we got from Town Office in the form of the loan of the blue Ford Ranger, we were able to continue with the necessary outreaches, community work and call-outs.

Electricity and generators

The electricity supply from ZESA was reasonably good till the first week of December 2018, when a major break down left us without mains electricity for the next months. The installation of the new solar system greatly would have eased the situation and would have reduced the fuel consumption by the generator. However during the installation of the solar field in December it was found out that part of the electrical wiring of the hospital was in such a state that it could not be connected to the new solar panels. We are awaiting rewiring of the major part of the hospital, before we will be able to enjoy the yield of the solar field.

Lutsha and Vova Rural Health Centre

The Rural Health Centres continued to deliver a well appreciated packet of Primary Care services, including Maternal and Child care. Both clinics

² OPD = Out Patient Department.

however did not have a Waiting Mother's shelter, which has proven to reduce the number of Home deliveries. With the help of a donation from overseas, the community of both clinics started to build the so-called AnteNatal Dorms, which are expected to be finished in 2019.

Staffing

In the course of 2018 4 RGNs were added to the staff establishment, besides 2 Nutritionists (Mbuma/Lutsha) and 2 Counsellors (Mbuma/Lutsha).

3 RGNs and 1 PCN transferred out to another hospital or clinic, 1 gateman was relocated to Lobengula, 2 RGNs left Government service and 1 Microscopist left for further training.

Mr D Ncube, gateman at Zenka, retired, after having worked for 10 years both at Mbuma and Zenka.

Mr J Magunya, who has been working as Catechist for 5^{1/2} years, retired in December. Faithfully he has been sowing God's Word and his tireless effort to caution and comfort the ill and bereaved was very much appreciated by the patients. The vacancy he left was filled by Mr K Mpata.

At the end of 2018 the total number of staff members was 85 for Mbuma Mission Hospital, 8 for Lutsha RHC, 5 for Vova RHC and 2 for Zenka Mission, 85% of them being Government paid.

During 2018 we enjoyed the visit and companionship of Friso de Weert (medical student), Kate Gillies (medical student), Rev I MacDonald (JFMC), Johanna and Willie de Koning, Regina Hofland and Albertine Donker (2 Dutch Physicians).

Hospital and Clinic services

Care for patients in and outside the hospital continued as in previous years, whereby Lutsha and Vova RHC are taking care of 36% of the Outpatients services and 56% of the Preventive services.

	2016	2017	2018
Admissions	2,055	1,753	1,862
General	906	755	789
Paediatrics	277	257	232
Maternity	806	681	778
Neonatal	66	60	63
Deaths	120	109	117
General	104	100	105
Paediatrics	9	4	6
Maternal	1	0	0
Early/Late Neonatal	7	5	10

Out Patients Department	2017 All	2018 Mbuma	2018 Lutsha	2018 Vova	2018 All
New Clients	6,772	5,697	2,280	1,820	9,797
Repeat visit/Chronic Clients	3,031	4,350	706	758	5,814
Total	9,803	10,047	2,986	2,578	15,611

Preventive services	2017 All	2018 Mbuma	2018 Lutsha	2018 Vova	2018 All
Antenatal/Postnatal Clinic attendances	3,297	890	824	654	2,368
Child Welfare Clinic attendances	10,974	4,321	1,880	2,300	8,501

While in the Mbuma catchment area the HIV positivity rate is as low as 2.1% (from 22.7% in 2009) and the death rate among the people living with HIV and AIDS is 0.9% only, one would expect a decreasing hospital death rate. This did however not happen: the death rate for hospitalized patients increased from 10.2% to 10.9%. Most likely contributing to this is the fact that 40% of the admitted patients are coming from outside the catchment area. They often present late and seriously ill.

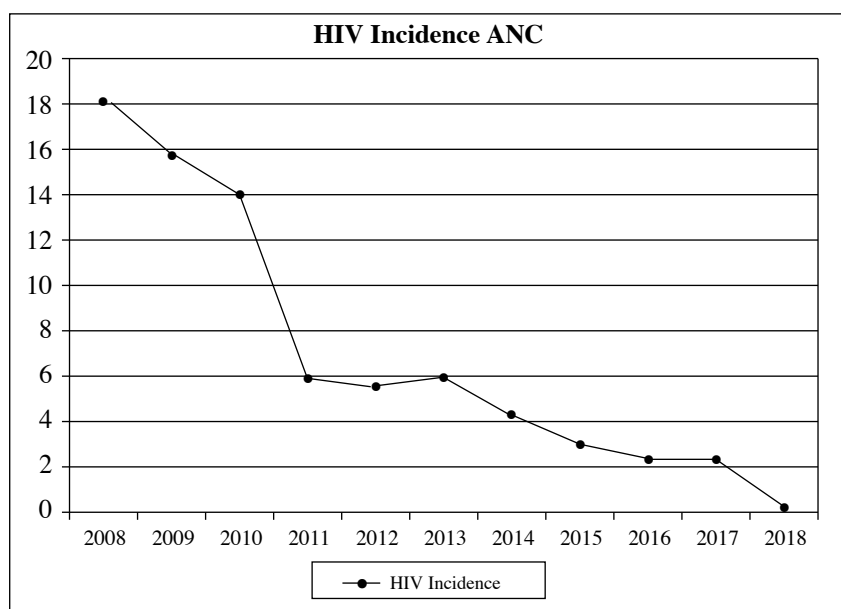
Total Births	2017 Mbuma	2017 Lutsha	2017 Vova	2018 Mbuma	2018 Lutsha	2018 Vova
Live births	652	58	21	723	38	35
Still births	12	0	0	3	0	0

While we have been experiencing a high number of approximately 10 Macerated Still births per year during the past 3 years, this did not happen in 2018. Research so far has not been able to demonstrate a clear reason.

2018	Still births			Early Neonatal Death			Maternal Death		
	Fresh (FSB)	Mace-rated	Total	<2.5kg	>2.5kg	Total	Hospital	Home	Total
Hospital	1	2	3	6	4	10	0	2	2
Clinics	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Theatre/Labour ward	2017	2018
Caesarean section	110	95
Other major operations	124	138
Assisted deliveries (Vacuum extractions and Symphysiotomies)	129	121

	2017	2018
Radiology services		
Number of X-rays taken	2,614	2,558
Number of Ultrasound Scans taken	571	675
Laboratory services		
Number of lab tests	10,162	9,681
Number of HIV tests	4,515	2,675
HIV incidence in ANC	2.5%	0.4%



The HIV Incidence in the AnteNatal Clinic, a reliable indicator for the impact of the HIV epidemic, reached the historically low level of 0.4%. However while one epidemic is going, the next epidemic makes itself ready. Cardiovascular diseases, Diabetes Mellitus and Cancer are progressively on the increase.

Newly diagnosed Non Communicable diseases	2016	2017	2018
Hypertension	36	45	45
Diabetes Mellitus	10	14	18
Cancer	15	24	22

Beside the work in the hospital, the work in the community went on.

The 143 Community Home Based Care workers continued to give their valued care and health education in the villages. During monthly community meetings with them and the Kraalheads, Bible lessons are given, besides Health education and discussions about health related issues. These community meetings have proven to be an important link between the hospital and the community.

Part of the community care concerns the orphans and vulnerable children. A short evaluation of the past 10 years of the Orphans Care project, shows the following figures. Further evaluation of the welfare of the beneficiaries will be carried out.

Orphans Care Project			
Number enrolled	89	Underwent further training	9
Finished Primary School	80	Known to be employed	5
Finished Secondary School	76	Still at school	9
Attained 5 or more "O" level passes	12		

Biblical teaching and counselling was delivered unceasingly by the Catechists in the wards, during worship times, on Outreaches, during the community and CHAT meetings, in the Bible classes, Sabbath schools and during home and school visits.

During the school holiday in August, so-called "Bible days" were held in all the outstations of Mbuma. More than 1,000 children attended, for some of them this being the only time in the year that they are taught from the Bible.

The work continues to be manifold, overwhelming at times, and manifold have been our shortcomings. We and our work will wither, but the Lord will sustain His work. "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it."

BULAWAYO MISSION REPORT

By Rev S Khumalo

IT is time once more to reflect back as the wheel of time has made a complete circle. As we look back, we have a reason to be thankful to the Most High for preserving mercy in His good Providence.

The journey through the year has not been easy, having its difficulties and challenges, but hitherto the Lord has helped us.

Like in most countries in the world, especially to the true church of Christ, the pressures of secular religion and declensions from true religion and the doctrine of the Word of God is very much felt even here in our country. Few

are like those who heard Christ teaching and “were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority”.

Despite all these pressures, the Word of God has authority. It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. This is our prayer, that we would be kept by the grace of God to hold fast, stand firm, our eyes fixed and our hands of faith clinging upon the two pillars of our salvation which are the death and resurrection of the blessed Redeemer.

Enabled by the grace of God, the preaching of the Gospel has gone unhindered in all our stations in Bulawayo. There have been some encouragements and discouragements. When we witnessed some embracing by faith the Lord Jesus Christ, we felt encouraged. And when some fell on the way and openly rebelled against the Light, it was saddening.

Bulawayo and its four stations are supplied every Sabbath and I am very thankful to the Elders and all those who help keep the supply and doors open every Sabbath. As I am now Interim Moderator of Ingwenya and New Canaan, I am not always there.

The Communion is held twice in Bulawayo at Lobengula. In June, we were thankful to receive two new members and one for baptism. Rev M Mloyi was invited to preach. In December, Rev N Sibanda was invited. In both communions, attendance was very pleasing and we had visitors from other stations.

In June, Rev I D MacDonald visited Zimbabwe as a Deputy. The Bulawayo congregations had an opportunity to hear him preach on one of the Sabbaths he was here. Services continue to be held at our stations: Lobengula, Nkulumane, Mahatshula and Mguza. At Thembiso, prayer meetings are held on Tuesdays and it is pleasing to note that since the appointment of Bible teachers in our schools, there has been an improvement in Psalm singing. We pray that it will be not only that but more and more growth in the knowledge of the Word of God which will lead to the saving knowledge of Christ.

Challenges there have been, and travel has become a great challenge. We have been experiencing fuel shortages and at the same time it is expensive. There is also the bad state of the roads and the increasing cost of vehicle repairs. I am thankful that despite all these challenges, we are soldiering on.

Lastly, I would like to express our gratitude to our church overseas, the JFMC and Mbuma Zending in Holland, for their prayers, financial and material support to the mission to enable the propagation of the Gospel with this great message: “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else” (Isaiah 45:22).

GWERU MISSION REPORT

Rev S Khumalo

“AS the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God” (Psalm 42:1). How painful it is when such a desire is not fulfilled.

The supply in Gweru has not been consistent due to the shortage of manpower. Some of our men who might be of help are employed and it is difficult for them to go to Gweru over the weekend and be back in time for work on Monday. I am very thankful to Mr Keith Mpata, Mr Thuba Ndebele and Mr Mashavakure, who when they have time, offer themselves to go and supply Gweru.

I am also thankful to Mrs Watkins who sources printed sermons to be read at Gweru. We pray and hope that the Lord will answer in His own time the prayer of those whose desire is toward His name. “He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them” (Psalm 145:19).

THEMBISO CHILDREN'S HOME REPORT

B Maphala, Home Superintendent

THE past year was full of upheavals but through faith and the Lord's benevolence, we came through to yet another year. We have every reason to be thankful to the Almighty for His mercies shown unto us. The Psalmist had this to say in Psalm 145:18-19: “The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.” True to His word, Thembiso Children's Home has survived all the storms and afflictions.

Gospel work

The Word of God is the cornerstone of Thembiso Children's Home. Morning and evening prayers are led by the Superintendent and house mothers on a daily basis.

Home

Currently the Home is operating at a reduced capacity. The Home scaled down from five family units to four. There are no longer any new children admitted into the institution, even if vacancies arise.

Children

At present we have 34 children under our care: 22 boys and 12 girls. All children attend formal education. Seven are at secondary level and 27 at primary level. Of the primary level children, four are at Early Childhood Development level.

Fostering care plan/exit plan

The fostering exit plan is currently under way for those who have reached sixteen years and above. The plan is spearheaded by a committee of B Maphala, Sister Petra Beukers and Margaret MacAskill. The Jewish and Foreign Missions Committee has recently endorsed it. The committee will keep the JFMC abreast of developments through the Thembiso Board.

Staff

The institution is continuing with its skeletal staff but managing well. In accordance with Mission policy, we no longer recruit new staff when people retire. Instead we reassign from within to fill the gaps.

Conclusion

We are bracing for yet another gloomy year since we received rains below the normal average. Yields will be next to zero, hence the economic situation will melt down and prices will rocket. However, we are optimistic; God answers prayers. In Jeremiah 33:3, we read: "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not". One day it shall be good.

ZIMBABWE MISSION ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mr M A Mpofu

IN presenting the report for the year ended December 2018 we have to express our thankfulness to the Lord for all His goodness toward us as a Mission in Zimbabwe.

Our congregational contributions fall far too short of what is required and were it not for the support offered by the JFMC our work in Zimbabwe would seriously be affected.

Boards of Governors

The Boards of Governors established in 2014 continue to deal with matters that concern the running of all our various institutions. There are three boards, namely Ingwenya, Mbuma and Thembiso. The Head Office Committee oversees the affairs of the Mission Head Office.

Staffing

The staffing numbers generally remained stable throughout the year.

Government has through the Ministry of Health continued to absorb workers from the Mission payroll at Mbuma into the civil service payroll system. This has reduced the Mbuma wage bill by over 90%, but this welcome development comes with its own problems, for example some employees once

they go on to the government payroll become unnecessarily hostile to the Mission, which technically is no longer their employer.

Expatriate staff

Miss Maria Kerkhoff from Canada joined the staff at John Tallach High School as a Bible Knowledge and Mathematics teacher. She has settled down very well and has been a great assistance to Miss N B MacLean during weekends when most of the staff are away in town.

At Mbumba Dr A Snoek, the Medical Superintendent, and Sr W Geurtsen, the Matron, continue with their labours in that remote but very busy hospital.

Visit by the Deputy

Rev I MacDonald visited the Mission as a Deputy. He visited all the Mission stations where he also preached. He was able to attend one or two board meetings, including the Head Office Committee meeting which he chaired.

Finances

The General Treasurer continued to remit monthly allocations for the different boards of governors. Each board is now responsible for managing its funds.

The Zimbabwean economy is still struggling but prices seem to be stabilising particularly for those who have foreign currency. The availability of funds can be a challenge for many but all the shops are well stocked with all goods and foodstuffs.

The auditors were able to finish auditing our accounts on time; these should be presented at the Synod.

Sustentation fund

There have been slight improvements in the contributions made by congregations. The drought which is currently ravaging the whole country due to the poor rains will have a negative effect on these contributions in the coming months.

Primary schools

Bible Knowledge teachers continue instructing pupils in the Word of God. It is sad to report that the Religious Education syllabus that is offered by the ministry is now very anti-Christian, although there is a claim that we are a Christian nation. The appointment of Bible Knowledge teachers in our schools is therefore a worthy cause. "Man has grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount."

The high enrolment at Zenka and Mbumba has necessitated the recruitment of more teachers. An appointment has been made at Zenka and the recruitment process is going on for Mbumba.

School statistics

School	En-rolled	Boys	Girls	Quali- fied Staff	Para Profes- sional Staff	Un- trained	BK Teacher	2018 Grade 7 Pass Rate
Ingwenya	302	130	172	8	0	3	1	44%
Thembiso	424	197	227	15	2	0	1	88%
Zenka	823	425	398	23	3	0	2	73%
Lutsha	555	272	283	11	1	2	1	23%
Mbuma	726	335	391	16	1	0	1	47%
Total/Average	2830	1359	1471	73	7	5	6	55%

Rural Health Centres (Clinics)

The construction of the third clinic at Sagonda was postponed because there was no agreement between the Council and the communities on the site of the proposed clinic.

The board of governors has since recommended that a clinic be constructed at Simbo, eleven kilometres north of Mbuma. A site has been identified and the Simbo community is more united and ready to start the project.

Conclusion

Ingwenya and New Canaan have no ministers of the Gospel. We pray that the Master of the Field would raise faithful servants for these Charges.

Pray for us, brethren, that we would put the spiritual needs of our fellow countrymen we work with above all others, and that we would be faithful in the duties laid upon us.

OVERSEAS COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev D A Ross

HAVING had the experience once again of visiting the congregations in our Asia Pacific Presbytery, I could not help but recall the tremendous distances travelled by Church deputies of the past, who spent a number of weeks at sea, then several months going from place to place preaching to interested and attentive listeners.

By comparison, deputies and others who supply our overseas congregations in this day and age have their burden of travel and time spent abroad greatly reduced; in that respect our work is not as onerous as their's. However, this somehow does not lessen the greater burden of preaching the Word. It is a heavy task, however pleasant the circumstances.

Also, while the Asia Pacific Presbytery is blessed with having more resident ministers of the Gospel than in the past, this does not alter the fact that supply is much desired by our brother ministers and congregations in those distant lands. While we have our struggles with obtaining supply in all parts of the Church, whether in the United Kingdom or overseas, we are one Church, and it is cause for thankfulness that we are still in a position to help one another.

It is a matter of concern also that there are other denominations in Britain and overseas that see our exclusiveness in adhering to the reformed principles of doctrine, worship and practice as nothing more than some kind of clannishness. God forbid that it should be so. It is our love for these principles and our subordinate standards as firmly based on the Word of God that weld us together in these different countries where we have congregations. In fact it was a love for these principles that brought about the first formation of our congregations overseas in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Singapore, America and Ukraine – may it by the grace of God ever continue and remain that way.

Our church is indebted to those ministers, Rev R Macleod and Rev D Campbell, who have the heavy burden on their shoulders of interim moderatorship duties, Mr MacLeod for Chesley and Vancouver, and Mr Campbell for Sante Fe, especially of giving and obtaining ministerial supply from time to time. The Overseas Committee is willing to give help in this direction also.

A gathering for public worship has now been in existence for a few years in Wisconsin, USA. Services are taken by Mr Joseph Smith, an elder of our Sante Fe congregation, who now resides there; the gathering consists mainly of two families. As yet, this small congregation is not regularised as being under the jurisdiction of the Free Presbyterian Church. With regard to Mr Smith, I and others were distressed to hear of the serious knee injury he sustained due to a fall. We hope that by now and in the kindness of the Lord, he is strengthened and encouraged by a good degree of healing.

It is remarkable that in Vancouver, where there had been a total closure of our Church, a congregation of worshippers is now established again, in God's providence, out of a desire for the Reformed faith. While in the UK a number of places of worship have closed down, it is encouraging to the whole Church to witness a place of worship re-established overseas. Our joy is increased by the knowledge that their desire for scriptural unity of doctrine, worship and practice has led them to cast in their lot with the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

Odessa in Ukraine, where we have had a mission and congregation now for more than 20 years, is a city fraught with war problems, as indeed is the whole country. Rev D Levytskyi's report of the Eastern Europe Mission tells us about their ongoing labours in the Gospel, not least their distributing large amounts of reformed literature and Bibles. We are deeply indebted to the Trinitarian Bible Society for its enormous grant of Ukrainian Bibles in the Kulish translation, which is appreciated in western Ukraine particularly. The

congregation is sending these Bibles to those who request them. May much blessing follow.

We are sorry that Mr Levytskyi will not be able to attend the Synod this year due to serious health problems, which air travel exacerbates. However, he is able to carry on with the work of preaching and other duties in Odessa. Also, with the help of his family, he has attended to the improvements to their place of worship, namely the forming of a direct entrance from the street into the church which now obviates entering by the private entrance to the mission residence.

It is certain that the work of our Eastern Europe Mission could not possibly be done without the financial help of our congregations. We encourage our people to continue supporting the work of the Gospel in our overseas congregations as well as in Eastern Europe.

May we constantly be praying that the Lord will give the increase to these labours. "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:7).

AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND AND SINGAPORE REPORT

Rev G B Macdonald

Introduction

SINCE the last report, the work of the Gospel in our congregations in Australia, New Zealand and Singapore has continued. Services are held on Sabbath and weekly prayer meetings are conducted, when prayers are offered up for the divine blessing. The Lord's Supper is administered and some are baptised. We can so easily be tempted to think of these things as commonplace, yet they are not. The worship of God and the fellowship of the saints is the regular life of the Church and the fact we can meet in peace and safety year by year is a reason for thankfulness.

In January 2019, a youth conference was held in New Zealand at Hunua Falls Camp near Auckland. Around 20 young people gathered for the conference, supplemented by some who attended for one or two of the papers. The Chairman was Rev J Smith and Mrs H Geuze and Mrs M van Dorp of Gisborne acted as house mothers. Papers were presented on the Life of Joseph (Mr H Optland), Rev Alexander Duff – the first Church of Scotland Missionary to India (Rev G B Macdonald), Creeds and Confessions (Rev C Hembd), Resisting Temptation (Rev D A Ross), and the Covenanters (Rev C Hembd). In addition, the conference members attended the prayer meeting in Auckland on the Wednesday evening, when Rev Ross preached from Psalm 34:6. It was a profitable time and it is hoped that a conference can be held in Australia next year, the Lord willing.

We were glad to have Rev Donald Ross attend the youth conference. He hopes to continue his work in these parts as a deputy of the Synod appointed by the Overseas Committee. We are very grateful for his visit and his steadfast support of the work of the Gospel in Australia, New Zealand and Singapore over the years.

Sydney

In the suburb of Riverstone, where our Sydney congregation meets, the ministry of the Word continues. One young man was accepted for communicant membership, having joined the congregation from another church. He was one of the few in our day, who became convicted of the regulative principle and the need for psalm singing in the worship of God, careful keeping of the Sabbath and things that once were more commonly held than in our day. One child was baptised. I still have the opportunity to minister a worship service in a local nursing home in the foothills of the Blue Mountains, every second Monday morning, and enjoy the fellowship and assistance of Mr Alex Neil in so doing. He told me that this ministry began in 1985 when a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia was asked to help. Mr Neil requested my help in more recent years, as he is now well into his eighties, yet still comes along and gives encouragement.

The elders of the congregation – Mr Jake van Praag and Mr Calvin MacKenzie, continue to help and support the minister, and this was especially seen when I was absent for a number of Sabbaths overseas. It was good for me to be able to conduct some services in Singapore, and Scotland during that time, though due to sickness I was not able to take one Sabbath service in Skye, I had intended to be available. Upon my return to Sydney, I felt led to preach on Nahum 1:7, “The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knoweth them that trust in Him”. During our time overseas the illness of a loved one caused great concern, but the Lord granted healing and help. When we reflect on prayers answered and help given, our duty is to render thanks to God for His goodness and mercy.

Grafton

Our Grafton congregation meets in its place of worship on Fitzroy Street, not far from the well known Clarence River, one of the great rivers on the North Coast of NSW. We are thankful that Rev Hutton has been spared in health and strength for the work of ministry.

He writes:

In the past year baptism was administered to four children in the congregation, while two new members were received into communion. The congregation is very grateful to the great King and Head of the Church for these additions to the congregation, particularly in this day of small things. These tokens of divine kindness encourage us to press on with the work of the Gospel, looking by faith for even greater

blessings in God's divinely appointed time. The ministry in Grafton has come under vicious attack in the past year from the new Dean of Grafton Cathedral, who is known even within the Anglican communion as a Liberal of the Liberals. He claims he will do everything in his power to protect the citizens of Grafton from the "regressive theology" of our Church. The Dean has stated to the clergy in the Clarence Valley area that the "conservative views" of the Grafton FP minister are those that "almost any educated theologian is bound to dismiss as nonsense". The Grafton congregation is just like a little oasis, in the midst of a spiritual desert. Nevertheless, by divine grace we are what we are, and where we are.

Auckland

Our Auckland Congregation meets in a most suitable building, in the suburb of Otahuhu. Rev Jett Smith reports that since the last Synod Report four persons have been accepted as communicants. In 2018, one infant was baptised. One of those accepted as a communicant grew up in Russia, and in the providence of God was led to begin to attend the church in our Sydney congregation before moving to Auckland. The ways of providence are at times most wonderful and we are to take careful note of such encouragements in a day when we are tempted to discouragement. In 2018 Rev Smith was able to give a number of weeks' supply to our Santa Fe congregation in Texas. He was also able to take his family with him, which they very much appreciated as their relations live in the US and Canada and they had not returned to see them for some years.

Tauranga

Following the passing of his wife, Mr Dick Vermeulen moved to Wellington due to the burden of old age and infirmity. The congregation have deeply felt his absence as he was one who guided them and was a very practical man in tending to the affairs of the congregation. So we see that congregations may be deeply affected, not only when a minister is removed by death or to preach elsewhere, but when a valued elder is, in providence, removed. Such events are a loud call for the congregation to seek the help of the Head of the Church in their loss.

Gisborne

Gisborne is the first city in New Zealand to see the sun rise each new year. Rev Caleb Hembd continues to preach and minister to our congregation there. As in recent years, the minister and congregation are encouraged when some on holidays come to attend the worship services. One couple from the USA sought out the Gisborne church as it was psalm singing. They have the commendable habit of holidaying in places where they can attend a psalm-singing church. In January 2018 Rev Hembd took over the responsibility of being the interim moderator of the Carterton Kirk Session. When he travels by

car to Carterton he is able to stop and visit the few souls in Hastings who adhere to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

Carterton

Since the move to Carterton from Wellington, the congregation has grown considerably. The conversion of the former bank building to a place of worship has resulted in a most suitable meeting place. When a visiting minister supplies, the congregation may be swelled by a number of souls from the local Dutch Reformed Church as the afternoon service does not clash with theirs and they seem to appreciate the additional opportunity for the ministry of the Word. Two new members in full communion were added to the communion roll at the communion season in February, where Rev D Ross assisted Rev C J Hembd.

The new church building occupies a prominent spot on the high street and traffic to and from the Capital City of Wellington passes by the door. Sadly of course, many on the Sabbath do pass by and so the mad rush to eternity goes on, not stopping even for one day in seven to think of the higher needs of the soul. But who makes us to differ? Of us can it not be said of various sins? "And such were some of you:" but what a blessing if it can also be said, "but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

Singapore

Mr Bernard Yong continues to shoulder the heavy burden of responsibility in taking services in our Singapore congregation. Whilst the congregation would like to secure a meeting place they could call their own, this has proved challenging. The options available are fleeting and invariably very expensive. One option whereby the congregation could secure a premises, is if part of the room is used for an activity such as translation of Christian literature and sermons, and this is being explored.

In 2018, there was a change in interim moderator, when I handed over to Rev Hutton after around seven years in the role. I record here my thanks to Mr Yong and the congregation for their kindness to me during my visits to Singapore. On my last visit, accompanied as I was by my wife and family, a young man attended the congregation and listened carefully. Sadly he has not come to form a long-term attachment to the congregation and seems to have gone elsewhere or returned to the place where he used to worship. Yet, one must not despair of those who seem to pass like ships in the night; the seed sown may yet bear fruit with God's blessing.

Conclusion

So this report concludes with our good wishes to the Synod as it meets, and the desire that our brethren would continue to remember us in prayer. "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: And that we may be delivered

from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith” (2 Thessalonians 3:2).

EASTERN EUROPE MISSION REPORT

Rev D Levytskyi

THE Lord blessed the Eastern Europe Mission of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in 2018 by enabling it to continue its mission work among the Ukrainian people despite difficulties of different kinds and the war with the Russian Federation which is still ongoing in the east of Ukraine and in Crimea. Most of the population is still very supportive of the military forces of Ukraine and is therefore sending to the front line a lot of goods to support the soldiers.

The situation with displaced, temporarily moved persons is still very difficult since the state is not able to supply sufficiently the needs of these people and because criminal activity is getting worse.

The country overall is moving toward presidential elections which at the time of writing are due on 31st March 2019.

The Odessa congregation, in the kind providence of the Lord, had the opportunity to have a communion season last October. Mr Edward Ross, Lochcarron, one of our assessor elders, was able to be present and, along with myself and the resident elder, Mr Igor Zadorozhnyi, made up our Kirk Session. The numbers of local people attending the communion services were the same as usual and Mr David Norris along with his son made a welcome addition to the congregation.

During the year there were different people visiting us. Some of these persons got to know about us and found their way to the Mission by means of the internet.

The Mission sent free of charge during 2018 to those living in rural areas, to soldiers of the Ukrainian army and to ministers of different denominations, these Bibles and items of literature: Table Bible (Ukrainian) – 161 copies, Table Bible (Russian) – 82 copies, *Sermons* by Rev D MacFarlane – 20 copies, *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Russian) – 396 copies, *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Ukrainian) – 58 copies, *A Catechism of the History and Principles of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland* – 60 copies, *Words of Life* Calendars for 2019 (Russian and Ukrainian) – 2,011 copies, *Golden Thoughts* Calendars for 2019 (Russian) – 2,133 copies, *An Exposition of The Westminster Confession of Faith* by Robert Shaw – 89 copies, Books for children: *Line Upon Line* by F L Mortimer – 109 copies.

We sent out 162 parcels and 75 letters. Donations for postage amounted to £91.78, which was enough to cover distribution expenses for 2018. On 1st January, a balance of £435.41 remained in the fund for distribution.

Church door collections for 2018 amounted to £663.58.

It will be helpful to Mission funds that the Ukrainian state company, Ukrposhta, has introduced a new service whereby postage can be paid by recipients of our packages and letters. About ninety per cent of our addressees agreed to pay postal expenses in this way.

Our work goes on against a background of war. The military actions are being continued between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, which has the help of local pro-Russian collaborators. Every day there are two or three deaths because of bombing, and many are injured, even among civilians. In this connection, the Ukrainian government has enacted a law making the Ukrainian language the only state language. We see therefore the continual increase of interest in the Ukrainian translation of the Bible.

We warmly thank the Trinitarian Bible Society for the 3,500 Ukrainian Bibles they have granted. We now have the opportunity to distribute them among citizens of Ukraine. There are many teachers of Sabbath schools, as well as of schools of general education, who are interested in our literature and send us requests for Bibles and Catechisms.

The Odessa Congregation website also gets a lot of requests for Bibles and other literature. We also include in our parcels Gospel tracts and tracts that expose the religious errors of the cults and false sects.

We also receive letters of thanks periodically. Here is one:

Honourable Christian Mission!

I recently visited my friends and they showed to me the Ukrainian Bible in the Kulish translation, which you sent them several years ago as a gift. I liked that Bible very much. It has good print and language that I can understand, and it is easy to read and remember.

If you have this type of Bible in stock would you kindly send a copy to me, please. I thank you in advance, if I receive such a valuable Book – the Word of God, in my native language.

With respect.

We ask you to continue to pray to the Most High that He would grant the Ukrainian people peace and cessation of the war but especially that He would open the way for the glorious Gospel of Christ to be preached throughout our land and that many sinners would be brought to “repent and believe the gospel”.

“They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (Psalm 126:5-6).

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO ASIA PACIFIC PRESBYTERY

Rev D A Ross

IT is the constant concern of the Overseas Committee to help overseas congregations when possible. Happily I was in a position to give five Sabbaths to the congregations of the Asia Pacific Presbytery. I am much indebted to Rev A E W MacDonald for taking the oversight, during my absence, of the several small congregations that fall to my care, to Rev John Goldby for taking all the services in Laide and to Rev B Whear, with the unfailing help of the elders, for supplying Sheildaig, Applecross, Lochcarron and Kyle congregations.

We humbly acknowledge the Lord's goodness and mercy in still keeping these small congregations alive and active, and also in giving me the opportunity and privilege of visiting a number of the overseas congregations of our Church.

All thanks is due to the Lord for giving me safe travel and not least for keeping me free from sickness in all my journeys and work during those five weeks. The kindness I received from the congregations I visited was overwhelming. They expressed their heartfelt appreciation of the assistance received, and so many asked on numerous occasions for more regular visits of ministers from the home Church.

It is a blessed privilege to experience one-mindedness with others in connection with the cause of Christ – a spiritual blessing which the Lord continues to leave with us. The unity of the Spirit in doctrine, worship and practice is a rare blessing in this world. It is true that contentious matters arise in our Church sometimes, and no doubt will do so in the future, but the God-given blessing of spiritual unity based on the Word of God is a foretaste of the unity of saints in glory.

I left Laide on 14th January and arrived in **Auckland** on the 16th, when I was met by Mr Cornel van Kraligen, an elder of the Auckland congregation. He and his family showed me much kindness. That evening I conducted the weekly prayer meeting in the church (situated in the Otahuhu district) and spoke on Psalm 46:6. The congregation was enlarged considerably by the attendance of the Youth Conference members, speakers and house mothers.

After a good night's rest in the home of Rev J Smith we headed for **Hunua Falls Camp**, about an hour's drive from Auckland, where the Youth Conference continued from the previous day. I was sorry I missed the first day's paper, "The Life of Joseph – Lessons for Young People" by Mr Hank Optland, the elder from the Carterton congregation. However I had the privilege of hearing the other papers, "The Life of Rev Alexander Duff – First Church of Scotland Missionary to India" by Rev George Macdonald; also, "The Need for Creeds and Confessions"; and "The Covenanters: What they Teach us Today", both by Rev Caleb Hembd. These papers and their associated discussion sessions certainly left the impression on me that within our Asia

Pacific Presbytery there is an abiding interest in Mission work and a valuing of our subordinate standards. I myself gave a paper entitled “Resisting Temptation”.

There were 20 young persons present, some of them coming from as far away as Australia. At some sessions the numbers were augmented by others of the Auckland congregation who were able to come for some of the lectures. The young people showed a lively interest which was particularly evident during question and answer times. The chairman, Rev J Smith, skilfully kept the conference running smoothly. The two house mothers, both from the Gisborne congregation, Mrs Gueze and Mrs Margaret van Dorp, made us feel at home during our stay. It was a profitable occasion and it was good to be there. Among our young friends I felt that there was a degree of genuine desire with regard to moral and spiritual issues. Yes, only the Lord truly knows whether or not this was so, but I trust I did discern this was the case, and we prayerfully hope that much good will follow. A number of these young friends waited after the conference to attend the Auckland communion.

Although it was a pleasure to participate in the conference as a handmaid to the Church’s great task of spreading the Gospel, the remainder of my time was taken up with preaching the Gospel itself and related matters. I do not intend to go into much detail other than record my visits to the various congregations. I was glad that in the good providence of the Lord, I managed to visit all the places of worship. It was profitable to be with the ministers and their families; to obtain insights into the ministers’ Gospel labours and most importantly to meet once again their own congregations as well as the pastorless congregations for which they have the oversight.

One such pastorless congregation is in *Tauranga* and has Rev J Smith, Auckland, as its interim moderator. It lies approximately mid-way between Auckland and Gisborne on the east coast. Here I spent my first Sabbath, when we met twice as a small group in a hired hall, and together we worshipped according to the directions of the great Head of the Church. None of the congregation is from a Free Presbyterian background, though now firmly settled in the Free Presbyterian Church; most came from a Pentecostal background and it was encouraging to hear from a number of them that it was their reading of the Authorised Version of the Bible as over against other versions, which led them to search the religious landscape which eventually brought them in the direction of our Church. They are deeply aware of their need of spiritual nurturing, as I also was, and their interim moderator graciously endeavours to do just that.

My next stop was back in *Auckland*, where I was to assist at the communion season. The church was nearly full on most occasions. Rev George MacDonald was also assisting and his earnest Gospel preaching I trust touched the souls of many. During the services we were conscious of intently listening hearers. Also we were encouraged by seeing many young people present and young mothers diligently taking their little children to the crèche in the church hall so that they themselves would hear the Word preached.

The Asia Pacific Presbytery met in Auckland on the Friday of the communion, which may seem unusual to some. The reason is that a number of Presbytery members, some of whom have to travel enormous distances, are inevitably present at the communion, and therefore it is an opportune time to have a Presbytery meeting and thus reduce heavy costs and save precious time. I, as a visiting Church deputy, was associated with the meeting. No communion services are hindered by this arrangement, although on occasions it was not possible to have the fellowship meeting.

We were sorry that we could accept only a few of the many invitations we had to receive hospitality in homes of the congregation. The kindness in the manse was profuse, as also in the homes we were able to visit. One good and gratifying thing about all the kindness we experienced is that it arose from a regard for the Gospel.

From Auckland I went to *Grafton*, where I was well cared for, and where I spent half my time with Rev E and Mrs Rayner and the other half with Rev G and Mrs Hutton. Mr Rayner is now retired of course. Having known him for many years and spent part of my student days with him, we had a lot of ground to cover, but the cause of Christ was the recurring subject of our conversation. I held a prayer meeting service in Grafton, when there were about 70 present. Mr Hutton took me to visit a number of his flock which was very profitable for us and greatly appreciated by the housebound (as was the case during my pastoral visits in Auckland).

We also visited the Trinitarian Bible Society shop, store and office, so well organised by Mrs White, one of the ladies in the Grafton congregation. Their work of Scripture distribution is done over a very large area. May all this Gospel work in Grafton, but especially the preaching of the Word, be much blessed not only to the congregation but also in the surrounding areas.

Thereafter I flew down to the *Sydney* Congregation spending my time with Rev G Macdonald and his family in his manse. I certainly had a royal welcome when most of the congregation came to greet me at a gathering in the manse. I had the duty of preaching twice on the Sabbath, thus giving Mr MacDonald respite from preaching duties and the opportunity for a much needed rest from his heavy workload. He had just come back from his duties of taking part in the Youth Conference in Auckland, supplying Carterton Congregation, assisting at the Communion in Auckland, participating in the business of the Presbytery, which lasted several hours because of a difficult case, the burden of which fell largely on him as Clerk. I was glad to be in a position to give a little relief.

The congregation in Sydney, which not so long ago was quite small, is now numbered in the fifties. To have young families in the congregation is most encouraging both for the present and the future of the Church – so different from the situation in a number of our congregations in Scotland which are made up mostly of old people. Children, with the blessing of the Lord, are the future of the Church. When leaving Sydney, travel between the manse and the airport by car and train was long and tedious but Mr MacDonald's welcome company was appreciated and cannot be readily forgotten.

Departing from Sydney, I flew via Auckland to *Gisborne*, where long ago I spent some years shepherding and had the privilege of being under the ministry of the late Rev W. Maclean for most of my time there. How the years have sped on since then! Rev J van Dorp followed Mr Maclean and ministered there for 38 years. Then came the APC movement which caused havoc in the congregation, as it did wherever it took root, and resulted in a great scattering. With this reduced congregation the Rev Caleb Hembd felt called by God to cast in his lot. For that we are thankful, as is his congregation. Having a little flock can be disheartening, but Mr Hembd was in the company of one who has an even smaller flock; as such I trust I was enabled to be of some encouragement, especially through the preaching of the Word.

I could not resist Mr Hembd's kind offer to take me to the old places I lodged and worked in those many years ago. It was a pleasure also to visit persons of the congregation I knew so well in the past, who faithfully remained with the congregation during scattering times and who continue to attend the means of grace under Mr Hembd's faithful ministry. I enjoyed being with the informal, welcoming gathering of the congregation in the home of Mr and Mrs Murray van Dorp – Mr van Dorp's wife Margaret belongs to the Ross family in Foindle, Sutherland.

Mr Alasdair MacPherson, one of our home Church Missionaries, who was privately visiting New Zealand at the time of my visit, and had attended the Auckland communion, joined us in Gisborne. He and I stayed with the Hembd family where we thrived on the usual abundance of kind hospitality. On Sabbath, Mr MacPherson took the services in the Tauranga congregation. When he returned, he joined our chariot for the rest of our travels in the North Island. On his journey back to Scotland he was to stop off at Singapore to take the Sabbath services in our congregation there. The company of an older elder from Scotland was much appreciated by our people, especially by the young ministers of the Presbytery.

On the Monday we drove to *Havelock North*, where Miss Jocelyn Cox, a long-standing member of our Church, has her home. Miss Cox and her family relations regularly gather each Sabbath to hold a service of worship led by one of the men. That Monday evening we had a prayer meeting service at which nine were present and after which we had an edifying discussion. Finally, next morning we left our motel to have family worship, conducted by Mr Hembd, with Miss Cox and bid her good bye. Again we cannot speak highly enough of the kindness shown by Jocelyn and her sister Jan during our short stay. As Jocelyn is somewhat unwell, the organising connected with our visit would not have been easy.

Thereafter we headed for *Wellington* to visit Mr Dick Vermeulen, now in a nursing home and otherwise cared for by his family. He of course is well known by our Church in Scotland, having spent many years of useful service on our missions in Africa. Our conversation inevitably and often tended in that direction. Mr Dick Vermeulen was also the means, in the providence of God, of setting up the Free Presbyterian Church in Tauranga. All

these labours are now behind him and he humbly looks in the direction of the better country.

That evening we managed to arrive in *Carterton*, our last stop in New Zealand. Here we were in the home of Mr and Mrs Hank Optland where we enjoyed overflowing kindness, and as we did from others there. The Carterton congregation is under the care of Rev C Hembd and during my stay there I assisted him at the communion season in the congregation. It was easy and edifying to listen to Mr Hembd's sermons. There were two new members received, a young man and a woman, and one person was given the privilege of baptism for their child. Also, two men were elected to be deacons and are yet to be ordained and inducted.

It was very gratifying to see the congregation (previously known as the Wellington congregation) now well established in Carterton, the home town of the Optland family. Before that, the Optlands continued worshipping in Wellington, travelling each Sabbath 50 miles from Carterton to Wellington over a mountainous pass (sometimes impassable in winter because of ice and snow). When the Wellington congregation eventually settled in Carterton it consisted of four people but is now grown to over twenty. At first they worshipped for some time under the original name of the Wellington Congregation but it is good that at last they have officially taken the name of Carterton Free Presbyterian Church. During the communion season there were up to forty people present at some services. The church is a handsome structure, having previously been the local bank, and is in the middle of this country town. The congregation is very thankful for the money loan from the Church in Scotland and for donations from many donors to bring them to this present position of having a fine church. This outcome, due to loans and donations and not least to the gracious determination of one family to have public worship in keeping with Reformed principles, is an encouragement to us to endure when we have small congregations.

My last call was the *Singapore* congregation, of which Rev G Hutton is the interim moderator. Regretfully I was able to give only a prayer meeting address, which I felt was rather ungenerous in the face of the tremendous burden of duty which is on the shoulders of Mr Bernard Yong, the elder of the congregation, but in the circumstances I was unable to wait to take the Sabbath services. We are grateful to Rev Bruce Jardine, who is to preach in Singapore for two weeks in March, God willing. The congregation, despite many upsets, yet with encouragements, has kept going until now, largely by the labour of Mr Bernard Yong under God. It is no small matter that there are those in Singapore, somewhat reformed though not as reformed as they ought to be, who try to lure our people to their own cause. Thankfully, in spite of these endeavours and the presence of many churches in Singapore attractive to the flesh, this small congregation continues by the grace of God. Pulpit supply given by those of our ministers who pass through Singapore on their way to and from Britain is much appreciated by the congregation. I was much refreshed and rested by the usual gracious care of the Yong family.

I arrived in Scotland on 22nd February, when Mr Neil Ross, Dingwall, met me at Inverness airport. Thus with the loving care of the Most High and all these helps provided by Him in my travels, I arrived home safely in Laide. We crave now His blessing on all these Gospel endeavours, not only in the Asia Pacific Presbytery but also in our other overseas congregations. We seek the same divine blessing on the preaching of our overseas ministers when they visit Britain. May these reciprocal visits have a binding effect on all our congregations, at home and abroad, in that oneness of doctrine, worship and practice urged upon us by the Word of God: "Be of the same mind one toward another" (Romans 12:16).

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO SINGAPORE

Rev J B Jardine

I ARRIVED safely in Singapore after an 18 hour journey from Stornoway. I was met by Mrs Yong and taken to my accommodation for the next 10 days at the Metropolitan YMCA.

On Sabbath 10th March, I led the worship at the Beacon International College. There were 13 present morning and evening.

Members of the congregation come from various areas of the city and a minibus is used to bring them to Church. The time taken to pick up the various members of the Congregation is significant and shows a high level of commitment by the Congregation to the observance of the Church's stance against the use of public transport on the Christian Sabbath.

Not all of the congregation were able to attend the Prayer Meeting midweek but we believe the Lord's blessing was with those that did. I was able to ask two of the younger communicants, Shang Yu and Linus Lau, to pray. It was a great encouragement to see the Lord raising up young men. Midweek services are held at Lion Building B, an industrial complex.

I spent some of my time finding out a little more about the history of Singapore by visiting the National Museum, the Chinese Heritage Centre and the Museum of Asian Civilisation. The religious history of the region is of great interest and sets before us something of the great need that there is for the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in Asia.

The following Sabbath the same numbers were present at the services and I hope some benefit was received by both speaker and hearers.

The unique geographical position of Singapore presents an opportunity for taking the unique testimony of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland out to many different countries in the Far East including China, Malaysia, Indonesia and Japan. May the Lord open a "great door and effectual" for the spread of His Word in the Far East.

I would like to thank the Congregation and especially the Yong family for their warm welcome and generosity to me during my visit.

I would commend the work of the Gospel in Singapore to the hearts and prayers of the Church at large.

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO ZIMBABWE

Rev I D MacDonald

Summary

The apostle Paul discovered at Ephesus that a great door and effectual was opened to him (1 Corinthians 16:9). He also discovered that there were many adversaries. Yet, he purposed to tarry there and to preach the Gospel. This assessment sums up my impression of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland mission in Zimbabwe following my recent visit there.

Arrival at Ingwenya

I flew to South Africa on a KLM flight from Edinburgh via Amsterdam early in the morning of Friday 25th May 2018. The following day I boarded the small plane which took me north to Zimbabwe's Bulawayo airport. There I was welcomed by Mr Mpofu, the Mission Administrator, and Miss Norma MacLean, the Deputy Head of John Tallach Secondary School. Immediately I felt at home. I then drove myself and Miss MacLean to the Ingwenya mission compound, and settled into the manse, now vacant since the departure through ill-health of Rev A MacLean. I was received most hospitably by Miss MacLean who provided refreshments and dinner later on, and who continued to show great kindness during my stay.

On the first Sabbath I had the usual three services in Ingwenya. During the first service I felt freedom speaking on Hosea 6:3, "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord". It was with interest that I afterwards learned from the Headmaster that in the Sabbath School before the service the discussion had centred on the question of if, and how, one might know if they were saved. The school children were out in usual force and at least some among the 600 or so seemed to give good attention. However, since Rev A Maclean's departure the 60 or so of the local congregation who were regularly attending have reduced to nearer 30. Considering the circumstances, the conduct of the children during public worship is commendable on the whole, and any irregularities are dealt with prudently by the Headmaster and Deputy Head who maintain excellent standards.

On the following Monday I was given a tour of both the primary and secondary schools at Ingwenya. It was a delight to meet the children as I went from classroom to classroom. Opportunities opened at every turn to give impromptu addresses, or a brief word of exhortation to the children who were most respectful and apparently receptive. On questioning them, their

knowledge of the Shorter Catechism was discovered to be excellent. There was evidence in some classrooms, here and elsewhere too, of the need for the church to be vigilant in her oversight of the schools, especially given the high proportion of government paid and appointed teachers. The tour of the John Tallach High School was especially informative. The school achieves way beyond its infrastructure and resources, and Mr B Ncube Headmaster and Miss N MacLean Deputy Head are clearly doing an exceptional job of maintaining both the highest educational and religious standards. Later in the afternoon I took the senior Timothy's group – a voluntary session on Bible instruction and discussion. Some of the children show a great openness and even eagerness to be instructed and to converse about spiritual things. My interaction with them was too superficial to judge if any were under a true concern of soul for salvation.

Zenka, Mbuma and Bulawayo tour

On Tuesday Mr Mpofu, the Mission Administrator, and I headed for Mbuma, first calling at Zenka. We left at 7.00 a.m. and drove via the "Farm road", which felt more like travelling up a river bed than a road. We arrived at Zenka where I took the prayer meeting at 10.00 a.m., preaching on John 3:14,15. The church was packed with a congregation nearing 1,000 persons including over 800 primary school children. In these meetings the preacher is faced with a sea of faces as the children crammed in to the church, where some sat on the pulpit steps, and on the floor in front of the pews. In the vestry around 40 of the youngest children sat on the floor. It was wonderful to see how still and quietly they sat all throughout the service, though they did not even have the comfort of pews.

Afterwards, I had lunch with Mr Mloyi and his wife. Then I was given a tour of the primary school. There we met the school's Bible Knowledge teacher who had a dedicated classroom and seemed very proactive.

We left Zenka for Mbuma and visited an old lady, the only surviving daughter of Mr John Mpofu who was an elder in Rev J Radasi's day. On route, we called in at the Lutsha clinic, the first of the Rural Health Clinics to be built by the church in the outlying districts of Mbuma. On the same site stands our Lutsha church and Primary School. From a professional point of view the clinic seemed to be well staffed and professionally run. More could be done to remind the people of Lutsha that this was a mission-run clinic under the auspices of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

I then had an impromptu tour of the Lutsha Primary School. The children all lined up outside, overseen by the ever watchful teaching staff, and I was given an opportunity to address them. I tried to speak a little on what it was to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever, and pointed them to both the publican's prayer and the story of the Highland Kitchen Maid. We then travelled to Mbuma where I was hospitably received by Rev N Sibanda.

On the Wednesday we toured the Mbuma Mission Hospital, led by Dr A Snoek, who clearly does an exceptional job as the Mission's only doctor. It is

a pity that there are no Free Presbyterian staff from the home church to bolster the efforts to maintain the church's standards in our institutions such as the hospital. Afterwards, Mr Sibanda and I travelled to one of Mbumba's 16 outstations where I took a prayer meeting attended by perhaps 30 people.

Thursday morning at 8.00 a.m. I took a prayer meeting in Mbumba attended by a similar congregation to that I had found in Zenka, only with a larger proportion of adults in attendance. We then travelled to Bulawayo where I stayed for the night at the mission's Townsend Road property with Mr Hugh Mackenzie, our Mission Co-ordinator, who was on one of his regular visits to Zimbabwe.

On the Thursday, after a Mission Head Office board meeting in the morning, we proceeded to Thembiso where I was given a tour of the primary school. Thereafter, I was shown around the neighbouring Thembiso children's home. I enjoyed another impromptu address to the children of the home while they were gathered for a Bible class. I returned to my base in Ingwenya later that same day. Saturday was free for preparation, and on the Sabbath I took the morning and evening services at Ingwenya. Inbetween I was driven by the Headmaster to Cameron to take the afternoon service.

Zvishavane and New Canaan tour

Early this week, myself and Mr Mpofu drove to Zvishavane to be met at the Manse by Trycot Mwedzi, one of the church's Divinity Students, and his wife. After an ample lunch we proceeded to New Canaan where I took the prayer meeting. Then at 5.00 p.m. I took another prayer meeting in Zvishavane Town. On the Wednesday we travelled 2 hours or so to the Chiedza prayer meeting which I took at 12.00 noon, accompanied by Rev S Khumalo who arrived earlier that day. Thereafter we travelled to Maware where I took the prayer meeting at around 2.00 p.m. The local primary school, while not under the auspices of our church, is sympathetic toward us. The entire school, staff and pupils came to the service so that the little church was packed full. It was delightful to meet the children again, all of whom wish to shake your hand after the service is finished. Thereafter myself and Mr Mpofu returned to Bulawayo after refreshments from our kind friends at the Zvishavane manse. I then proceeded alone to Ingwenya.

Final days and travel home

Later that week I took the morning prayer meeting in Ingwenya, which was attended by a congregation swollen with the mid-week addition of the school day pupils. On the Sabbath morning I was driven to Lobengula, via the backroads to avoid the toll roads, for the morning and early afternoon services. I preached on the Saviour cleansing the temple from Matthew 21 at both services with felt freedom during the first. Thereafter I returned to Ingwenya for the evening service, attended only by the High School pupils, where I preached on Hebrews 2:3, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?".

Early this week Miss Norma Maclean accompanied me to the airport, and I travelled home via South Africa and Amsterdam. I would like to place on record my thanks to our friends and brethren in Zimbabwe for their kind reception. My experiences in Zimbabwe convinced me that the door opened in God's providence through Rev John Boyana Radasi over 100 years ago is ajar still. The church faces much opposition, however. There appears to be an overall decline in religious standards in the regions where the church is based. Many in the communities are going back to the old superstitions, and sects such as Seventh Day Adventists have become more active in areas where our church has a presence. False religion, rather than irreligion as in the west, seems to be the great device used by the enemy of souls to oppose the Gospel in Zimbabwe. The mission requires great care and attention from the Church at home in terms of investment, oversight and direction, and the provision of volunteers who would give their time and talent. Above all we know that the greatest need is that the Lord of the Harvest would send forth His own called and equipped labourers, in the form of Gospel ministers, into the harvest field of Zimbabwe.

TRAINING OF THE MINISTRY COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev J R Tallach

THREE students, Mr John Campbell, Mr John Morrison and Mr Trycot Mwedzi, started the Theology Course in September 2018 with New Testament Greek and cognate subjects under Rev Dr A W MacColl in Ness. Mr Mwedzi had to return to Zimbabwe in late January 2019 when his visa to stay in the UK expired. Mr Roy Bartle expects to complete his DPhil later this year and, after sitting further entrance exams in August, to join the three other students under Rev Dr D W B Somerset in Aberdeen.

The Committee had allowed its membership of the British Accreditation Council (BAC) to lapse after the last class of students completed their studies, so had to re-apply to that body for membership in order to obtain a visa for Mr Mwedzi. After interviews involving Rev R MacLeod, Mr W Campbell (General Treasurer) and the Convener, and with the same BAC inspector sitting in on classes and conducting interviews with the students and tutor in Ness, the Training of the Ministry Course was recognised and membership granted for 4 years.

The subjects planned for the 2018 Theology Conference and mentioned in the 2018 Synod Report were presented in Inverness and the labour involved for the presenters appreciated by those who gathered.

The Conference papers planned for 29th and 30th October this year in Glasgow DV are as follows:

Saving Faith	Rev K M Watkins	Tues. afternoon
Singing the Psalms of God, a History of Psalmody	Dr R Dickie	Tues. evening
Synod of Dort	Mr J Freeke	Wed. morning
John Kennedy	Rev K D MacLeod	Wed. afternoon
Prophets of the Captivity – Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel	Rev W A Weale	Wed. evening

We pray for the leading and guidance of the Spirit of God without whose presence in all our work we are but beating the air.

“Thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness” (Psalm 143:10).

THEOLOGICAL TUTOR’S REPORT

Rev A W MacColl

THE theological classes in New Testament Greek and cognate subjects have been conducted over the past session at the excellent facilities of the purpose-built classroom at the Church in Lionel. Classes began on 6th September 2018 and our meetings each morning usually continued from 9.30 until 12.30 from Tuesday to Friday. There were three students in attendance, Messrs. John Campbell, Trycot Mwedzi and John A Morrison. The students applied themselves very diligently to their studies and it was a pleasure to have been able to consider some of the most precious passages of God’s Word with them over our time together. For reasons related to his visa Mr Mwedzi had to return to Zimbabwe at the end of January to the regret of the other students and the people of the Ness congregation. Thankfully we have been able to have Mr Mwedzi join up with the class since then through the internet.

The curriculum covered has been more or less the same as that followed in the 2013-14 session. The course embraces New Testament translation and exegesis, and some wider areas of New Testament studies where we give a brief overview of Introduction, Canon and Inspiration, Hermeneutics and Textual Criticism. The main difference this year is that in studying the Greek grammar we have largely concentrated on a thorough revision of J Duff’s *Elements of New Testament Greek*. Each student has been asked to prepare an exegetical exercise once every three weeks. These are designed to dovetail with their consideration of the historical and literary background of the individual New Testament books. A homiletical outline is included as the culmination of a due practical treatment of the portion of truth being discussed. An essay was set in the first semester dealing with the importance of language studies in Scripture interpretation and a fuller exegetical paper with more scope for discussion of the material was produced by each of the students in the second semester.

The usual standard authorities were consulted in the various other elements of the course dealing with Catechetics (*The Westminster Confession of Faith*) and Church Law and Polity and we looked at the Doctrine of the Church with the help of the late Rev H M Cartwright's lectures on that precious and important subject. The whole New Testament is covered for the students' examination in the English Bible and a number of passages were also selected for memorisation.

The students have supplied other congregations regularly but I have tried to give them two free Sabbaths per month in order to provide more time for their theological studies. I listened to the students' conducting of public worship on a number of occasions and attempted to give appropriate comment where necessary and I am grateful for their supplying my own congregation from time to time. We must acknowledge the goodness of the Lord in carrying us through the period of our time together in health and strength. We trust that the students will be helped to pass their exit examinations due at the end of April DV and that the work covered this year will prove profitable to them and to the Church of Christ in time to come.

WELFARE OF YOUTH COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Rev D A K Macdonald

It is most pleasant to meet with our young people from time to time at Communion and at our Youth Conferences. It is our desire and prayer for them that they would seek the Lord in the days of their youth.

Since our last report there are no improvements in our liberal society. It is getting worse and worse. Christian foundations are constantly under attack and are being eroded. The state continues more and more to intrude into the role of the family. Our young will potentially be exposed to trial and maybe hardships. We hope and pray that the Lord will prevent this in mercy. However, the Most High may permit things to happen in judgment.

I am not adding anything new in this report; our comments on so many issues may seem so negative, and yet there is one thing we should remember positively and that is that God's kingdom rules over all. It is going to last to eternity whatever opposition there may be.

Again, the main work of the committee over the year is the Youth Conference. This year the Conference was held from the 9th to the 11th of April 2019. The venue was Strathallan School, Forgandenny, Perth, PH2 9EG. The fees were the same as the previous year at £50 for those in full employment and £25 per person for others. Cheques are payable to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland; I would encourage all who hope to attend in the future to get their application in if possible by the middle of March. I emphasise this for future conferences as the venues like to know the numbers

early for catering purposes and for room allocation. Those who are minded to come to the Conference should apply as early as possible.

The following papers were given:

Tuesday 9th April:

Afternoon: **The Tabernacle and Temple: Their History and Purpose**..... Rev J B Jardine

Evening: **The Sanctity of Life: What the Commandment Teaches** Dr R J Dickie

Wednesday 10th April:

Morning: **Justification: What the Bible Teaches** Rev J R Tallach

Afternoon: **Historical Tour to St Andrews** Rev D W B Somerset

Evening: **John Calvin: His life and Work**..... Mr F Daubney

Thursday 11th April

Morning: **The Prophet Samuel: Consecrated to God** Rev N Ross

We thank those who gave the papers and the house mothers for their help at the venue for looking after the young people. Numbers were again down; this is a reflection too of what we see in the Scripture and Catechism Exercises.

We as a committee also thank all those who set and correct the Scripture and Catechism Exercises, both at home and overseas, which appear in the *Young People's Magazine* and on the Church's website. Mrs Christina Sutherland is retiring from setting the exercises (Junior Section); we thank her for years of service which was a labour of love. Our prayerful good wishes go to whoever takes over this work. We appreciate their prayerful interest in our young people and wish them all the Lord's blessing and help. May they know that their "labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

BALLIFEARY RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev J R Tallach

AN annual report on a Church Home such as Ballifeary reminds us powerfully of the need of that godliness which has the promise for this life and that which is to come. We record with thankfulness the Lord's continuing kindness over the past year.

It is with sorrow that we note the following deaths: Mrs Wilhelmina Patience on 5th January, Miss Rhoda MacDougal on 12th February, Mrs Johan Martin on 12th March, Mrs Margaret MacLean on 8th May, Miss Rhoda

MacKay on 5th July, Mrs Isabella Duncan on 23rd August, Mrs Angusina Starke on 13th November, Mrs Margaret Hulks on 15th November, Mr Ruairidh MacKinnon on 6th December, Rev Donald K MacLeod on 23rd December.

Admissions were: Mrs Joyce Martin on 19th January, Mrs Helen Fraser on 1st February, Mrs Margaret Hulks on 7th April, Mrs Marion Sloan on 16th April, Mrs Isabella Duncan on 17th May, Mrs Angusina Starke on 26th July, Mrs Katie Campbell on 30th August, Mr Donald MacKintosh on 18th September, Mrs Lilian Flack on 6th December, Mrs Elma Allan on 10th December, Rev Donald K MacLeod on 18th December.

No residents were admitted for respite in the last twelve months. One resident, Mrs Marion Sloan, was moved to another Home which was better suited to her needs.

All staff vacancies throughout the year were filled. Matron is due to retire this year and so far, advertising for a replacement has proved fruitless. This is a matter of concern to the Committee which we would commend to the prayers of our people. Matron has had her health problems but has continued to render faithful service, while the quality of the work done has been adjudged excellent by the Care Inspectorate. We take this occasion to thank them all for work well done in difficult circumstances.

Home staff completed courses on – Medication, Dementia Awareness, Palliative Care, Infection Control, Tissue Viability, End of Life Care, Pain Management in Cancer Care. The Home had a Care Inspectorate inspection on 13th April 2018 in two areas, Quality of Care and Support, and Quality of Staffing and received a Grade 6 – Excellent, in both.

This report cannot but end as it began, with thankfulness to the Lord for His care over every aspect of this Care Home.

“The Lord of us hath mindful been,
And He will bless us still:
He will the house of Isr’el bless,
Bless Aaron’s house He will.”
Psalm 115:12, metrical version

LEVERBURGH RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME COMMITTEE’S REPORT

Convener: Rev D A K 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 the temporal spheres. We are thankful that over the past year the bed capacity has been almost fully utilised, which helps greatly the finances of the Home.

The past year has not been without difficulties staff-wise. With older and experienced staff retiring and some moving away, it became difficult to replace them in the current climate. From the start of last summer the Home was struggling to obtain staff locally, so the Home was using an agency, which involved its own cost. After requesting financial help the Council agreed to grant 50% of the cost.

In the past year there were several bereavements in the Home: Mrs Mary Matheson (Cromore), Mr David Nicolson (Lemreway), Miss Morag Morrison (Lickisto), Mrs Flora Ann Macleod (Scadabay), Mr Roderick Maclellan (London), and Mr Roderick Macleod (Meavaig South). We would extend our sympathies to their families in their loss.

We thank all the local services for their interest and care of the elderly, and the local Fire Brigade who are in close communication with the Home about possible fire hazards. Other inspections from time to time are Health and Safety and Kitchen Hygiene and the fire inspection which gave good reports.

The recent Care Commission inspections continue to be good: the Home has retained an overall grade of 5 at the recent unannounced inspection. Grade 6 is the highest. Grades are from 1 to 6. The categories are as follows: Care and Support, Environment, Management and Leadership, and Staffing. All received grade 5 except Staffing which received grade 4, reflecting the dependency on agency staff.

We also acknowledge the support of the local community and the many expressions of kindness shown to the Home. We are grateful to all those that hold family worship in the Home from time to time.

We again are indebted to the Officer in Charge and her staff for all their hard work and dedication in the care of the elderly and in the administration of the Home. We wish residents and staff the Lord's blessing.

OUTREACH COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev D A Ross

THE Outreach Committee is appointed by the Synod to spread the Gospel beyond the bounds of our congregations. Of course every believer has a duty to spread the Word of God and ministers of the Gospel especially must preach the truth in the field of labour to which they are called and appointed. However, we as a committee seek to go to places where there is little or no voice of the Gospel, and among people who cannot, or will not, hear the Word. We have to acknowledge that however much we are enabled to do, it is very little in comparison to what needs to be done in the enormous field set before

us by Christ in these words from His parable, “Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled” (Luke 14:23). We are thankful to the Lord that we are able thus far to do some work in that direction.

We are deeply aware of ongoing efforts to limit freedom of speech by government legislation, and thus indirectly to prevent the spread of the Word of God, as is evidenced by numerous attempts to find occasion against street preachers. We also see more and more Christians of all sorts being persecuted in this country and in unprecedented numbers abroad. Persecution is as old as the world: Cain in enmity towards Abel, his godly brother, slew him. We are thankful that over the years we have been kept free from persecution as we pressed on with our work. Of course, there ever were frowns of disapproval at our presence at agricultural shows and our distribution of the Word of God. Those who display their dislike of the Word of God show that they think themselves wiser than God. But it would be strange if a lost world was heaping praises on us. Did not Jews and Gentiles show their disapproval of Christ! As we endeavour to exalt Christ we can expect similar disapproval.

Be that as it is, our new method of display boards with Bible texts catches the eye of most people passing by our stall tent and van at agricultural shows. We have many more boards on display than previously, both on the van and at ground level. The boards are designed to withstand heavy rain and winds – somewhat costly but very effective. Some passers-by slow their pace to read; others stop and ponder but not many; others look the opposite way or at us as if we are out of touch with reality. Some people stop and ask questions; others come into our tent to look around and then go their way; some come in to speak well of our work or to make a purchase. We have had some who simply want to talk about religion and in some cases to pose searching questions about spiritual realities. These are examples of what we experience and which we have mentioned in past reports, but we mention them again to encourage an ongoing prayerful interest in this important work.

To those who come into the tent we have been giving a pack with booklets, tracts and the Church Magazines, whereas previously we gave a few tracts. Some callers, not wishing a pack, were more ready to take a tract. Occasionally and sadly we have found some of our distributed literature thrown away. However, it is a comfort to know that “the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and the intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). When the Holy Spirit works effectually by the living, powerful Word of God, who can resist Him? No one. May our small effort be thus blessed.

As you can see, we continue very much with the same mode of outreach. The want of time and personnel continues to be an obstacle in doing more work. However, we still seek that the Lord will open more doors of opportunity for us. Mr Edward Ross and Mr Chris Lamont are still our main helpers with our book van work at agriculture shows.

Rev Bruce Jardine has much opportunity yet for the distribution of Bibles. There is a steady stream of requests through the website which he is able to supply. Through the Church Bookroom there continues to be an ongoing demand for our Gospel tracts and other literature. As a committee, we are deeply indebted to those who are so ready to become involved directly with the work of distributing the Word of God. May the Lord give the blessing.

We are constantly adding to our list of tracts and leaflets and are making progress, although slowly. God willing, we will have a fuller report next year on this additional material. We cannot say that our output for reaching out to others is vast, but we trust it can be said of us as Christ said of the woman who anointed His head with very precious spikenard ointment: “She hath done what she could” (Mark 14:8).

PUBLICATIONS AND BOOKROOM COMMITTEE’S REPORT

Convener: Rev K D Macleod

AS in previous years the format of the report is the same and focuses on the three areas of the Committee’s activities.

Magazines

Both the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* and the *Young People’s Magazine* have continued to be issued each month. The Committee appreciate the help given over the past year by all those who have contributed articles and reviews or have suggested material that might be reprinted. The *Free Presbyterian Magazine* has continued to publish, for a wider audience, papers given at the Theological Conference. Among those published during the year were those by the Rev Allan W MacColl on James Bannerman’s treatise on *The Church of Christ* and an historical paper on the Reformer and Martyr, John Hooper, by the Rev Keith M Watkins. November 2018 marked the centenary of the end of World War I and the Magazine for that month reprinted an obituary written by the Rev John R Mackay of thirty-four year old Private Murdo Macfarlane, the son of James Macfarlane, an eminent Free Presbyterian Missionary on Skye. James Macfarlane was the younger brother of the Rev Donald Macfarlane of Dingwall. Murdo Macfarlane was mortally wounded at the battle of Marne on 24th July 1918 and died eight days later. As in previous years the Editor is very appreciative of the contributions provided by members of the Editorial Board of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*. The Editor, the Editorial Board, and the Committee seek, by God’s grace, to maintain the standard set by previous editors with respect to the spiritual character and thoughtful content of the Church’s Magazines. The Committee is pleased to

report that once again they have been able to keep the cover price of the Magazines at the same level for 2019.

The *Gaelic Supplement*, edited by the Rev A W MacColl, continues to be issued quarterly and is sent free of charge on request and as we indicated last year is now available online at the Church's website in a similar way to the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* and the *Young People's Magazine*.

Publications

In our last report we indicated, that though Tentmaker Publications was closing due to the illness of Philip Roberts, a Minister in Stoke-on-Trent who ran the organisation that has produced almost all our recent publications, he was willing to try to complete volumes 14 and 15 of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* and the *Memorials of the Life and Ministry of Charles Calder Mackintosh*. Sadly, due to his deteriorating health Mr Roberts had to inform the Clerk that he was unable to produce these volumes for the Committee. Accordingly, the *Memorials of the Life and Ministry of Charles Calder Mackintosh* is currently being proof-checked for sending to an alternative typesetter for producing as a paperback volume. As we indicated last year it will be very difficult for the Committee to find another source of producing hardback books, from scanned material in small quantities, to the quality and competitive price that we have been able to achieve using Tentmaker Publications.

Bookroom

Christian bookshops continue to close; the Free Presbyterian Church is the only Church in Scotland that continues to operate a bookshop. Indeed, it is one of the very few Christian Bookshops in the United Kingdom still operating that is devoted entirely to distributing the Authorised Version of the Bible and Reformed and Calvinistic literature to various parts of the world. It, therefore, deserves the support of Free Presbyterians.

After seeing the annual deficits reduce in 2015 to slightly less than £400 it has risen in successive years. In 2016 it was almost £6,400, whilst in 2017 it rose to almost £14,000 though £3,400 was due to the Bookroom's share of the roof repair costs at St. Jude's and its share of Organisation Fund Costs. In 2018 the deficit is marginally lower at just over £10,000. The continuing deficits are a matter of concern. During the year the Bookroom Manager, in order to promote sales, has continued to send out by email lists of second-hand books for sale and listings of new books that are available. The Website Committee are assisting the Publications Committee in the design of a Bookroom website which will enable the purchasing of books online. Following a great deal of work by the Website committee the new website should be operative shortly, albeit rather later than originally envisaged. It is the Committee's hope that once there is the ability to purchase books on-line the deficits in the Bookroom will be reduced. The Committee view the Bookroom as a ministry not only to Free Presbyterians but to the wider church.

The Committee would urge prayer to the Lord for His blessing on every part of the Committee's work, the production of Magazines month by month and the publication and distribution of Christian literature. In the history of the Church, since the Reformation, books and magazines have played a significant part in the building up of Christ's Kingdom. Rev Iain Murray in his biographical introduction to the 1960 reprint of James Bannerman's volumes on *The Church of Christ* observes that one of the factors leading to the spiritual movement that led to the Disruption was "the publication of a book in 1811. It was the biography of John Knox by Thomas M'Crie. All over Scotland this work was used to revive the memory of the great Reformer and nothing could have been a more telling protest against the stifling influence of Moderatism." It is the Committee's continued desire that the Lord would use these means for the good of never-dying souls and advance the cause of His Church in the world.

WEBSITE COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev K M Watkins

VISITS to the Church website continue to increase, with viewings per day so far this year up to 872 (a 5.8% increase on 2018). Through the whole of 2018 there were over 300,000 viewings. The pages that consistently attract most interest, apart from the home page, are the sermons, the magazines, the places of worship, and the articles on gender distinction, especially the one on long hair for women and short hair for men, which had 2,000 viewings in just a few days in December, due to a secular website linking to it, regrettably only to ridicule it. Enquiries remain at a low level.

Both Church magazines are uploaded to the site, one month after the printed editions are published. Thanks to friends in Vancouver, the invaluable first few volumes of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* are now available for download and online viewing. The Bookroom's monthly offers and other sales literature have been uploaded as well.

Current sermons from some congregations and communion seasons are uploaded, along with some historic recordings. Recently Rev Donald MacLean's 46 prayer meeting addresses on Romans, from the 1980s, were added. Articles are posted too, sometimes original and sometimes from previous magazines. The Committee is conscious that more material needs to be uploaded to the website on a regular basis.

The joint working group, set up to produce a commercial website for the FP Bookroom with representatives from the Website Committee and the Publications and Bookroom Committee, has almost completed its work at the time of writing. It is hoped that the bookroom website will be fully operational by the time of the Synod. The project of converting part of the website into Chinese is ongoing, checking the translation and searching for a suitable hosting provider.

CHURCH ARCHIVES COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev D W B Somerset

THE remit of the Committee is to oversee the preservation of the Church's archives. Progress has been made on the inventory of home and overseas records presently in the possession of the Church, particularly regarding those held in the Southern Presbytery, but further work remains to be done. As reported last year, all the volumes of the Northern Presbytery have now been scanned except the current one, but we have not heard whether other Presbyteries have scanned their records. It would be prudent to do so. Several congregations have purchased fire-proof safes, and the Committee would strongly encourage this. Small fire-proof safes cost only a few hundred pounds, are able to survive ordinary fires, and provide a convenient storage place for non-current congregational records, thus obviating the danger of the loss of these records when there is a change of clerk. Events in the last year have shown that this danger is not imaginary.

The late Edward Greene left a number of items of interest to the Church. These include letters from worthies of the past such as Rev. Lachlan Macleod and Finlay Beaton, and also a number of unusual portraits. Those of the first Rev. Donald MacFarlane as a young minister and of Rev. Neil Cameron as a student appear to be unique, and thought needs to be given to their long-term preservation. Further material by the late Alex MacLennan, Muir of Ord, has been scanned since the last Synod, along with several photographs; and a few other interesting items have been handed to the Committee, for which we would like to thank those concerned. The Committee also wishes to emphasise that those who have materials of historical interest to the FP Church need to consider what is going to happen to these materials at their death, and to make appropriate arrangements. Families are not necessarily sympathetic to the Church, and may be ignorant of the value, or even the existence, of important papers.

The Committee has contacted Mrs Anne MacDonald, a professional archivist, who would be happy to assist the Committee with its work, and it is intended to consult the Finance Committee over remuneration for Mrs MacDonald.