

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 Synod's Religion and Morals Report of 1922 depicted a bleak trend in the spiritual and moral condition of the nation in the aftermath of World War I. Most, if not all, of these annual Reports in the near 100 years since then have, in various ways, depicted the same sorrowful trend of spiritual and moral decay, and this year is no exception. Had the Lord's people asked back then, as they surely did, concerning the state of their day: "Lord, how long?"; such is the spiritual and moral condition of the land today that the answer we might say was the same as that given to the Prophet: "Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate" (Isaiah 6:11). Nevertheless, the Lord promised, despite their great provocations, to bring His people of old out of captivity, and so in due time Jacob did rejoice, and Israel was glad (Psalm 53:6); and so we believe it shall be again at the time that He has set: "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come" (Psalm 102:13).

Having completed the *Statement of Differences* and the booklet on *Homosexuality*, the Committee published these in booklet form during the year. Much of the Committee's focus this year has been on combating the Scottish government's proposed RSHP (Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood) agenda, whereby they seek to impose an educational programme for students from pre-school to 18 years of age; which, from a moral perspective, contains extremely obnoxious and damaging components. Articles were submitted to the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* on this, and the related matter of obeying God rather than man. The public consultation on RSHP is due to begin after the writing of this Report, sometime in May.

Mr John Mason MSP was written to in order to acknowledge his tabling of a motion in the Scottish Parliament to restrict the lateness by which abortions can be carried out. Sadly he got support from only one other MSP, Jeremy Balfour.

RELIGION IN THE UK

Recent surveys like the British Social Attitudes (BSA) Survey July 2019 indicate significant decline in religious affiliation during the course of a generation. 52% say they do not belong to any religion, compared with 31% in 1983. This tracks an increase in atheism with a quarter stating "I do not believe in God", compared with just 10% 20 years ago.

The number of people identifying as Christian has fallen from 66% to 38% over the same period (a fall from 50% in 2008). Further, only 11% of those who say they are Christian attend church at least once a week (66% in the UK

never attend religious services, apart from special occasions such as weddings, funerals and baptisms). This religious decline in Britain is generational with each generation being less religious than their forebears. Two non-religious parents tend to have non-religious children, while two religious parents are only likely to see half of their children maintain the same faith. Muslims have increased from 1% in 1983 to 6% (the majority of the 9% of non-Christian religions).

“No religion” is not strictly speaking a reality. What we have as a nation is secular religion, where faith has become individualised and pushed out of public concerns. When we listen to the language of climate change activists and other campaigners it is clear that they have a religion. Ironically, it is based on categories of moral thought inherited in a distorted way from Christianity. Even atheists are not necessarily non-religious either. The “Understanding Unbelief” project at the University of Kent in the UK is conducting a survey of atheists and agnostics. Around three-quarters of atheists and nine out of ten agnostics are open to the existence of supernatural phenomena, including everything from astrology to supernatural beings and life after death.

Research for the Theos report, *The Spirit of Things Unseen* (2013), revealed that more than 60% of the non-religious believe that “there are things in life that we simply cannot explain through science or any other means.” Only 25% agreed that humans have no spiritual element. The rapid growth of mindfulness, yoga and other quasi-religious activities, indicate an interest in metaphysical matters.

There is a folk religion based on superstition. This is often on display at funerals in many churches as well as elsewhere. It is a religion that focuses on the self, pleasure and in some measure showing some kindness to others, but makes room for an idea of the after-life as pagan as anything heathen cultures have dreamed of. Too much of the deliberately ambiguous and vapid Christian message of many churches fits neatly with this folk religion. Many presentations of the gospel simply focus on human needs and fulfilment. What our confused nation desperately needs is the clarity of the biblical law and gospel. Does our heart not bleed for the poor, blind perishing idolater of our nation?

“He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?” (Isaiah 44:20).

Popery (Romanism)

The wicked spirit of Popery is essentially what could now be described as Arminianism, another abhorrent gospel (the root of which is in all of us naturally, involving a hatred of Christ), and was secretly working in Paul and John’s time (2 Thessalonians 2:3-12; 1 John 4:3), and will continue to do so, sometimes overtly, and sometimes covertly, until it will be utterly destroyed, and all perpetual papists will be cast into hell. This devilish, delusional spirit is particularly evident in the declaration of the Council of Trent (1545-1563), where the Popish hierarchy viciously sought to choke the indispensable truths

retrieved at the Reformation by Martin Luther and others. In particular, it maliciously and vehemently attacked the doctrine of Justification by Faith.

In Canon 9 the document declares: “If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified, in such wise as to mean that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to the obtaining of the grace of justification, and that it is not in any way necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will, let him be anathema”. The Council daringly so blasphemed the Reformers’ sound teaching on Justification as damnable heresy, and its advocates as accursed. In doing so they expose themselves as deluded, false dogmatists, spreading that which is expressly contrary to Scripture concerning this crucial matter of how a man may be right with God: “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). The Council manifested in its pontification on Justification a strange blindness to the total depravity and utter inability of natural man, and the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, placed to the sinner’s account, and received by faith alone.

Popery is a naturally powerful and bitter enemy and adversary of Christ, and His dear ones, and is presently plaguing Scotland and the rest of the world. It is no church, rather a satanic sect, the house of the great whore, mother of fornication, and has wickedly sworn to destroy utterly the true church of Jesus Christ. In 2011 it boasted of 841,053 followers in Scotland (we have less than 1,000), and in late 2017 it had 15.9% of church attenders, exceeded only by the degenerate Church of Scotland with 24%. Additionally, Popery worldwide is recorded as having 1.33 billion followers, out of a total population of 6.6 billion. Also, it is estimated to have monetary wealth of between 10 and 15 billion pounds, wherewith to spread its soul-destroying heresy, and seek to eradicate the true church of Jesus Christ.

Mercifully, the Scriptures foretell and denounce a time of Divine judgment against Popery (presently very prevalent in Scotland and the rest of the world), when Satan will be bound for either a literal 1,000 years or a very long time (Revelation 20:2, 7). Then heaven, now largely shut, will be opened, and the Holy Ghost, presently almost completely departed, will return, and revive Scotland, and all other lands (Romans 11:12, 15, 17, 24, 25-28; Psalm 72:16-19; Jeremiah 31:34). The wonderful light of the gospel (a good report of Christ) will be welcomed everywhere; the glorious militant millennial church (ferverently desired by the truly godly in Scotland, and earnestly begged for at the throne of grace for more than 450 years, now lodged as a sweet fragrance in heaven, and as yet unanswered) will appear and flourish. It will be as life from the dead, and the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Islam

It has recently been reported that Christian belief has halved in Britain over the last 35 years with only one third of the population identifying itself as being Christian. This has been coupled with a rise in both atheism and Islam. Those identifying as Muslims increased from 1% in 1983, to 3% in 2008, and to 6% in 2018. Islam has become the second largest religion in Europe after Christianity, with this increase being primarily due to recent immigration. It is also the second largest religion in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. A survey conducted in 2016 found that Muslims made up 4.9% of the European population. It is expected that this will rise to 8% by 2030 and will be as high as 14% by 2050, depending on migration trends. The Muslim population of the UK is expected to rise to around 13 million by 2050. According to Deutsche Welle, 64% of Muslims in the UK identify themselves as being highly religious.

There has been a negative backlash towards the increased Muslim population. The Pew Research Centre reported in 2018 that most Europeans favoured restrictions on face-covering veils. An estimated 13 out of 15 favoured an outright ban as they perceive Islamic dress to be more about the ideology of Islamism than an actual religious symbol. This, in turn, seeks to extend the influence of Islam into the family, society and politics.

A 2013 study showed that Islamic fundamentalism was widespread in Europe. Religious fundamentalism is far more common among Muslims than Christians in Europe. Belgium, which has comparatively generous policies towards Muslims and immigrants, also had a relatively high level of fundamentalism. France and Germany which have restrictive policies had lower levels of fundamentalism.

The EU Counter-terrorism Co-ordinator stated in 2017 that there were more than 50,000 active radicals and jihadists in Europe. A jihadist is an Islamic militant. UK authorities have reported that 23,000 jihadists stay in this country, the highest number in Europe; about 3,000 of them are actively monitored with 500 being under constant supervision by MI5.

It has been recently reported by “Hope not Hate” that 35% of Britons believe Islam threatens the British way of life. 32% believe that there were “no-go areas” in Britain where sharia law dominated, and non-Muslims could not enter. The far-right seeks to tap into this and have moved their emphasis from anti-immigration to anti-Muslim. Many ordinary men and women may also become caught up in such movements as the English Defence League who use street protests to oppose the rise of Islamism, sharia law and Islamic extremism in the UK. We believe that the gospel is the only power that will take away the power of Islam.

Between 75% and 77% of Muslims living in the UK are of the Sunni sect, with between 5% and 8% being of the Shia sect. Sunni is “the larger of the two main branches of Islam, which differs from Shia in its understanding of the Sunna, its conception of religious leadership, and its acceptance of the first

three caliphs”. Shia is “one of the two main branches of Islam, followed by about a tenth of Muslims, especially in Iran, that rejects the first three Sunni caliphs and regards Ali, the fourth caliph, as Muhammad’s first true successor”. Most mosques are managed by men of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin.

Muslims are playing an increasingly prominent role in the political life of the UK, with a significant number having influential positions in the Cabinet or Shadow Cabinet. Most Muslims vote for the Labour party.

The interest shown in politics seems to conflict with the rising place given to sharia councils whose authority is taken as being greater and of a higher priority than the law of the land. The UK government between 2016 and 2018 investigated the sharia councils in England and Wales via an independent panel. The councils have no legal status and no legal jurisdiction within the UK and yet there are anywhere between 30 and 85 in existence.

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11).

Christian persecution and church growth in Iran

Christianity is officially a small minority religion in Iran, numbering between 100,000-200,000 Armenian and Assyrian Orthodox Christians of native birth. There are also a considerable number of Christian refugees from Iraq. The official figures, however, do not account for the underground Protestant Iranian church. Open Doors estimates the total Christian population of Iran to be about 800,000, which is about 1% of the total population of 82 million. From a few hundred Protestant Christians at the time of the revolution in 1979, the heavily persecuted underground church today is said to consist of hundreds of thousands of converts from Islam.

The Iranian regime considers the growth of Christianity to be one of a number of threats to its own existence, and has vigorously tried to suppress it. Building of churches has been forbidden since the revolution in 1979. Today there are only a few church buildings, mostly belonging to Orthodox sects. Holding of Christian worship in Farsi (Persian) is strictly forbidden, as are Protestant translations of the Bible in Farsi. In the past few years many hundreds of people have been arrested and many languish in prison. It is thought that most of these are house church leaders or those engaged in wider organisation or evangelists. Some of these have ended up in the notoriously abusive Evin Prison in Tehran, where those considered enemies of the state are normally imprisoned. Ordinary members of house churches, if exposed and arrested, are usually warned against proselytizing, and subsequently released if they agree to cease that activity. Suspected converts are also subject to monitoring of their electronic communications by the government. The danger of being reported mostly arises from neighbours, but sometimes from other

family members. Christian converts tend not to be charged with apostasy from Islam; it is rather the perceived political threat to the Iranian regime that seems mainly to motivate their persecution.

Due to intensity of persecution, extreme secrecy is required. House church services are not announced but organised privately, and may take place in an outdoor environment such as in a public park or garden as well as in homes. They are restricted to small groups of less than a dozen, and as they grow, will split into further groups. Adherents are encouraged to bring in friends and relations, but have to be wary as state agents seek to infiltrate them. Islam under the Ayatollahs has become a painful experience for the Iranian people, and the intimate connection it has with the dysfunctional and oppressive regime is harming it, to the potential benefit of other religions. Indeed, such is the disillusion with Islam, it is said that when one person in a family becomes Christian, other family members often follow. Nevertheless, in other cases, they are too frightened even to let their family members know that they have become Christian.

House churches have thus increased rapidly, at least in part because of personal contact with Muslims in the family or workplace. Each member or adherent is encouraged to bring the gospel to their fellows by distributing Bibles, by persuading others to join them, and to be an example to them in personal and moral conduct. Evangelizing is also undertaken amongst the dissolute members of society, such as drug addicts and prostitutes.

The development of the church in Iran is thus both constrained and greatly enabled by persecution. There are significant inherent dangers in the Iranian model of church development. The only way that it is in conformity to the true scriptural pattern is seen by the fact that it is oppressed and constrained in the way that it is. In addition, Pentecostalism and other introduced Western errors are widespread. Women are said to be the main leaders in church organising and in ministering, a situation which has arisen in part because women comprise the majority of the church, which may be because women in particular suffer in Islamic counties such as Iran. No doubt Western church influences also tend to lead Iranian Christians away from sound scriptural teaching in this and other matters.

Despite these problems the Scriptures in Farsi are continuing to be widely distributed, and there seems to be a genuine hunger for the gospel.

The Regulative Principle

The professing Christian Church believes in and holds to one of two Christian theological principles which dictates the form of worship that they follow.

The non-reformed part of the visible Church (Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists and many Independents and Baptists) tends to follow the Normative Principle of Worship, which teaches that “whatever is not prohibited in Scripture is permitted in worship”.

The reformed part of the visible Church (Presbyterians) tends to follow the Regulative Principle of Worship which teaches that “only those practices or

elements which are specifically commanded or modelled in Scripture are to be permitted in worship services". All other practices are prohibited in the worship by God. This is the biblical opinion: "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it" (Deuteronomy 12:32), "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20). Calvin summed up the principle in his work, *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*, when he said, "God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by His Word".

The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland has held firmly to the Regulative Principle since its inception in 1893. The form of worship practised within the bounds of the Church is therefore in clear obedience to God. The Church strictly excludes and fervently witnesses against disobedient practices in the worship of God. It endeavours to hold fast to the principle of *Sola Scriptura* in worship as well as in doctrine and practice.

It is difficult to comprehend why anyone who values the authority of Scripture and considers themselves to be a biblical Christian would not hold to the Regulative Principle, repeatedly confirmed by the Word of God itself as in the story of Cain (Genesis 4:3-8). Also in the building of the Tabernacle (Exodus 25:40), "look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount"; in the second commandment, Exodus 20:4-6; in the incident of the golden calf, Exodus 32; in the story of Nadab and Abihu who offered up "strange fire", Leviticus 10; in God's rejection of Saul's sacrifice, 1 Samuel 15:22, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams"; in Christ's rejection of the tradition of the elders Matthew 15:1-14; in Paul's admonition to the Churches in Colosse and Corinth to reject "will worship" or self-made religion, Colossians 2:16 and 1 Corinthians 14:27-32.

The Word of God identifies the various elements of ordinary public worship as defined by the Regulative Principle:

- Reading the Word, 1 Timothy 4:13;
- Preaching the Word, 2 Timothy 4:2;
- Singing the Word (the Psalms), Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16;
- Praying using the Word, Matthew 21:13;
- Sealing the Word in the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:38-39, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, Colossians 2:11-12.

The Confession of Faith also mentions oaths, vows, solemn fasts and thanksgiving.

God has not left His church free to invent her own worship. God has given specific guidance as to how He is to be worshipped. In practice this means exclusive psalmody, no musical instruments and no Christian festivals. Everything must be done "decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40).

Without the Regulative Principle we would find ourselves at the mercy of the particular whim that a leader of worship might adopt. It is sad to observe previously reformed Protestant churches in our land loosening their attachment to the Regulative Principle.

Four reasons can be given for adopting the Regulative Principle in worship:

1. To promote true reformation and return the Church to its Biblical origins;
2. To promote true Christian unity;
3. To secure Christian liberty for all believers;
4. To honour God with submission to His authority.

“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:18-19).

Breakdown of family life and discipline of children

From biblical times and through to the twentieth century, the family unit was always held to be a man and his wife with their children. The Scriptures are very clear on this. Genesis 2:24 tells us of Adam’s relationship to Eve, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh”. Also, the man must provide for his family: “But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel” (1 Timothy 5:8). This family unit should be a loving bond between father and mother and children.

In Deuteronomy chapter 6, we are told that we should love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and might, and that these words which are in our hearts we should teach our children diligently. Family worship is cohesive, the cementing of a bond between man and wife, parents and children; the raising of children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. It used to be said, “the family that prays together stays together”. To a God-fearing family the Lord was always “in straits a present aid”, to those who called upon His name. In this day and age we are far more mobile. Extended families more frequently live far apart and can no longer give support to each other as in the past. When difficulties developed there was often a family member to help you through. In particular the help of a loving, prayerful, mother at home was of inestimable value to children.

For many years there has been an increasing secularisation, a moving away from any form of religious practice. Any thought of a family praying together is now regarded as quaint and old-fashioned, at best. Church attendance has fallen away considerably to the point where only a minority of the population

attend a church of any kind. There is now a more selfish approach to others and a more grasping attitude to our “rights”.

Even little children in schools are told that they have rights which their parents must not infringe. Smacking as a form of discipline is now illegal in Scotland and other intrusions into family life are constantly endeavoured by government. Children are taught many things which conflict with so much that a Christian family holds dear. Secular friends and the atheistic ideas which are so prevalent today inevitably influence young minds. All of which begins to chip away at relationships in the home between parents and children, which, sadly, on occasions, results in a complete breakdown.

These changes of beliefs and attitudes in society have consequences. Attitudes towards marriage vows are taken much less seriously and the notion that marriage is for life is little regarded. If marriage vows are not regarded as being made in the eyes of God, then sincere endeavours to honour them may not be made. The easing of the divorce laws has made it much simpler to end a marriage, but statistics show that the rate of divorce has been falling in recent years. Even so, currently the number of marriages ending in divorce is 42%, which is shockingly high. The reasons put forward for the falling numbers are that many people are cohabiting before getting married and therefore more likely to know each other better. People are now older when they get married and so have a more mature approach to marriage. There are no statistics for those who cohabit and then separate. It is difficult to speculate but one would expect that this would be higher than the figures for divorce.

The biblical family unit is the safe and loving environment for the raising of children. “Those from broken families are more likely to suffer from behavioural problems, under achieve at school, become sexually active, become pregnant, smoke, drink, do drugs, and when adults experience poverty” (Rodgers & Pryor, Joseph Rowntree Organisation).

The secularisation of society, the lack of religion in the home, same sex “marriage”, civil partnerships and cohabiting, are all contributing to the breakdown of the family life required and provided for by our God and Creator.

Sanctity of life

When a society begins to disregard those parts of the Moral Law, a departure which even the natural conscience knows to be wrong, then it is far on indeed in its departure from God. The old world was far gone in apostacy from God prior to the flood when the sixth commandment, “Thou shalt not kill”, was disregarded to the extent that “the earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence” (Genesis 6:11). It is alarming to observe the same trend in the United Kingdom, and Scotland in particular. Not to mention the slaughter of unborn infants in the womb, as often noted in these reports (and which reached a record high of 200,000 abortions in the UK in 2018), there is evidence on every hand that the sixth commandment is being increasingly trampled on in our society.

For instance, the lenient sentences for murderers and their early release removes the deterrent which a genuine life sentence would provide in the absence of capital punishment, the only scriptural sentence for murder. This development is not new. But a new low was reached by the judicial system in 2019 when a woman previously jailed for the murder of her husband was acquitted on grounds which amounted to her murder being justified by the emotional abuse to which she was subjected. The murder was viewed instead as manslaughter, but because she had served sufficient time in prison for that crime (according to the judge), she was set free. While acknowledging the difficulty of dealing with such abuse, to hold that a brutal attack, which did not stop till her husband was dead, is not murder, is to set a new moral standard more akin to the revenge cultures of the third world than that previously upheld in the developed world. Is it any wonder that murders and violent assaults are a daily occurrence in our land? In London alone over 130 people were murdered on its streets last year, most being the victims of savage knife attacks.

Another aspect is the disregard to one's own life shown by those who indulge in excessive alcohol indulgence and in drug abuse. The number of drug-related deaths in Scotland soared by 27% over the past year to reach a level which puts the country on a par in terms of the fatality rate per capita with the United States. The death rate is now more than three times that of England and Wales and is higher than any other EU country. Suicides are increasingly common, especially among our young people. The World Health Organisation reports that, worldwide, suicide is the second largest cause of death among young people, after road accidents. Scotland again has a higher rate than the rest of the UK. Dr Kennedy's long-since-uttered prediction that, as a result of the rejection of the gospel in church and state, suicides and sudden deaths would increase, especially among young men, is being fulfilled before our eyes. Truly, sin is destructive of the good of mankind, and a nation which turns its back on Christ brings upon itself a whirlwind of sorrow and death. "Do thyself no harm" is the voice of the sixth commandment to those who are destroying their bodies, and their precious souls in the process.

How great is the need that the Prince of life and peace would be held up in the preaching of the Word throughout our land as the only remedy to the awful destructive power of sin. Only as His kingdom advances and Satan's kingdom is destroyed, will men beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks.

Scottish Parliament – intolerance of Christian principles and political correctness

On Thursday 6th February 2020 the Scottish government was rocked by the revelation that the Finance Secretary, Derek MacKay, just hours before being due to announce his financial statement to Parliament, was guilty of inappropriate behaviour as reported in the Scottish *Sun* newspaper and was

forced to resign. He had sent 270 messages of a suggestive nature to a 16-year-old youth, and also dozens of unwanted messages to a party activist over a four-year period. MacKay had declared himself to be a sodomite in 2013. “The sinners’ hands do make the snares wherewith themselves are caught” (Psalm 9:16, metrical)

The First Minister wants immigration control to be passed from London to Edinburgh, asserting that: “We are an ageing population and need foreign workers”. Of course we are because of the 1967 Abortion Act which allows the murdering in the womb of 25% of unborn children, tens of thousands of whom would now be in the workforce. Pharaoh and Herod are noted in Scripture for infamy in drowning all new-born male babies in the Nile and for slaying all males in Bethlehem under two years of age.

On 3rd October 2019 a ban on smacking children by their parents became law under The Children (Equal Protection from Assault) (Scotland) Bill, which is contrary to the Word of God. Also the proposed changes to the RSHP (Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood) Statutory Guidance issued by the Scottish government may direct many teachers in State schools to teach unchristian and indeed unnatural and vile material. “On each side walk the wicked, when vile men are high in place” (Psalm 12:8, metrical).

There are many of these at this time, and women too. What need there is for praying without ceasing. “Do thou, O God, arise and plead the cause that is thine own” (Psalm 74:22, metrical).

LGBT in schools

Twenty years ago Clause 2a (Section 28 in England), which prohibited the promotion of homosexuality in schools, was repealed as one of the first legislative actions of the new Scottish Parliament. In February 2020 a primary school in Paisley invited the local SNP MP and an explicit adult drag performer to speak to four- and five-year-olds about the effects of Clause 2a. Thankfully there was outrage leading to an apology but the incident is by no means isolated. It illustrates just how far the promotion of LGBT lifestyles in schools is going. Most secondary schools have LGBT posters all over the walls of their corridors and clubs dedicated to encouraging children to explore “their sexual orientation”.

The curriculum is, of course, not free from this influence. In England and Wales there is no right of withdrawal from relationships education. Many believe that it will be compulsory for schools to teach about sexual orientation and gender identities from September 2020. The government has clarified: “Although there is no requirement to teach about LGBT relationships in primary schools, primary schools are strongly encouraged to cover LGBT content, and for all levels of the curriculum from early years to senior phase”. The reality is that some schools will take this as an indication of what a good school inspection will require. They may also use it to veto parental objections. Church of England and other “faith schools” are set to teach this. Stonewall recently celebrated this with the comment: “A lot of faith schools are really

stepping up and sending an inclusive message”. They also said, “This will be a landmark moment – a whole generation will attend schools that not only accept LGBT people and same-sex relationships, but also celebrate and offer support on the issues that young LGBT people face”. Indeed government documents state their expectation that “headteachers and senior school staff demonstrate strong leadership in promoting LGBTI awareness and inclusion in schools to deliver long term societal change”.

The greatest wholesale reversal of Clause 2a is the initiative in Scotland to embed LGBT education in all areas of the curriculum. Thankfully progress with implementing this has been slower than anticipated. But it is a wholesale systematic implementation in all areas of the education system. It is nothing less than a re-education of everyone involved in it. Qualifications and course specifications, teacher training and professional learning, leadership and parental involvement are all areas to be “transformed”. School inspectors are to use LGBT prompt questions during standard school inspections. Recommendations are now expected to be delivered by the end of March 2021. Yet already resources for LGBT education are being made available to schools recommending ways of delivering the curriculum to achieve their goals. The inclusion of LGBT content in every subject is not statutory or mandatory. Teachers, headteachers and other professional educational practitioners must decide about the implementation of it. However, it is hard to see how any headteacher can avoid it, given that school inspections will involve a key focus on it.

The fearful wickedness of exposing children to such poisonous abomination might be described in terms of Psalm 64:5-6: “They encourage themselves in an evil matter: they commune of laying snares privily. . . . They search out iniquities; they accomplish a diligent search.” Yet we pray that the Lord will yet “make their own tongue to fall upon themselves” (Psalm 64:8).

Transgender Movement

The Transgender Movement has made astonishing progress in Britain in the last year. The idea is now established in the minds of many that a person may simply declare what sex he is (whether male, female, or some imaginary alternative) and that the rest of the world has to accept his claim. If he claims to be a woman, there is no need for “gender re-assignment surgery” or legal recognition of his claim; it is enough for these people that such a claim has been made. A girl at school may decide that she is a boy one day (and use the boys’ toilets), a girl the next day, and “non-binary” the third. Such behaviour has an obvious appeal for attention-seeking and manipulative children.

Those who refuse to play along with this nonsense are said to be showing hatred (“transphobia”), and there is no need for an actual incident to arise; it is enough simply to mention that one would not join the pretence – perhaps in answer to a question – and one may thereupon be branded as transphobic and lose one’s job, or be rejected for employment. Several such cases have arisen, and the jobs that people are losing may have very little to do with transgender issues.

The delusion is not confined to a “lunatic fringe”. An employment judge has ruled that the view that a man cannot become a biological woman is “not worthy of respect in democratic society”. An MP, who is a member of the shadow cabinet, declared in a TV interview that “children are born without sex [i.e. neither boys nor girls]”. Another Labour MP, who at the time of writing is a contender for the leadership of the party, has pledged to expel all party members who have expressed “transphobic” views. The Humberside police warned a man, who had tweeted against transgenderism, that he faced potential prosecution if he continued to do so. He subsequently won a High Court case against them, but how much this will restrain the police, particularly in Scotland, remains to be seen.

One area of concern is the children with “gender dysphoria” who are being encouraged to take puberty-blocking drugs, and even to have irreversible operations at very early ages. An organisation called Mermaids is promoting this, and the coffee chain Starbucks is raising money in support. It seems likely that there will be many court cases arising out of this child abuse (which is what it really is) in years to come.

Another group that is suffering as a result is the radical feminists. After behaving in a highly intolerant and unreasonable manner themselves for a long time, they are now receiving a taste of their own medicine; and it is hard not to feel somewhat sorry for them. Those who refuse to accept “trans-women” (i.e. men pretending to be women) are vilified, especially online, as TERFs (trans-exclusionary radical feminists), and are “no-platformed” when they try to address meetings, and face extreme abuse and expulsion from organisations such as Stonewall. One woman who has been vilified in this way is the billionaire, J K Rowling.

There have been a number of cases, both in Britain and the US, of women being assaulted by “trans-women” (i.e. men) in prison, and one female inmate is seeking a judicial review of UK government policy on allowing transgender men to share women’s prisons. Many public authorities and some schools in Britain have introduced “gender-neutral” toilets, and there are reports of women and schoolgirls preferring to suffer discomfort rather than face the fear, unpleasantness, or embarrassment of using these places. Transgender men are increasingly prominent in women’s sport, including the vociferous “Rachel McKinnon” (formerly Rhys McKinnon, and now Veronica Ivy) who has become a women’s world cycling champion. One TERF commented pertinently: “He didn’t just want to be an ordinary woman; he had to be a special woman. How typically masculine”.

CONCLUSION

It is manifest from this Report that the present generation is one that overwhelmingly disdains the Law of God. It is no surprise, therefore, that we are under the manifest and sore judgement of God at this time. The Psalmist said concerning the degenerate in his day: “Rivers of waters run down mine

eyes, because they keep not thy law” (Psalm 119:136). It would be good to be affected likewise when we read of the grievous matters covered in this Report, and on what, in general, we read and hear in the news from day to day, which evidences the declining religion and morals of our generation. It ought too to be a matter of great thankfulness that we have in God’s Word, a sure guide in all these matters – “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105).

SABBATH OBSERVANCE COMMITTEE’S REPORT

Convener: Rev R MacLeod

WE are the poorer for the loss of Rev Bruce Jardine, who ceased to be a member and Convener of this Committee at the last Synod. His indefatigable labours, in defence of “the Day that the Lord hath made”, were largely set at naught by a Sabbath breaking world. But another Day is on the wing. The Day of Judgment will arouse the slumbering consciences of those who set at naught the warnings of God’s witnesses. The Committee was further weakened by the death of its Speaker, Rev Angus Smith, on 27th August 2019. Though the work done in connection with the Sabbath Observance Committee attracts no fame in this world, Mr Smith’s protest at the commencement of commercial Sabbath sailings across the strait of Kyleakin between Skye and the mainland of Scotland will be remembered as long as there is a Sabbath kept in the Highlands.

By a motion passed at our Synod in May 2018, an Assistant Speaker for this Committee was appointed. At its meeting the following October, the Committee agreed that the assistant speaker should liaise with our local ministers and interim moderators to arrange public meetings. With the co-operation of the local FP minister, talks on the Sabbath were delivered in Halkirk, Portree, Bonar Bridge and Inverness. While visiting our congregation in Chesley Ontario, the assistant speaker was asked to give the annual lecture to the Canadian Lord’s Day Society in that province. As far as the assistant speaker is concerned, this has been a most rewarding part of the Committee’s activity. However, the Committee is somewhat disappointed at the relative lack of interest in this part of our work. Whether such addresses should be followed by a session with the local minister and members of the committee inviting questions from the audience, is as yet undecided.

The Committee meets twice between each annual Synod. At our meeting in October 2019, it was agreed to write to our ministers who have a responsibility for Free Presbyterian charges in the UK, and to offer the Committee’s co-operation by raising a witness against instances of Sabbath desecration in their locality. Our letter suggested that it may be of some value to the local witness, if the Committee added its dissenting voice to theirs. The Committee thought that this part of its work would be more focused if we addressed recent

and unprecedented public breaches of the Fourth Commandment, in the localities we represent as a Church. Our letter also suggested that, should our ministers consider it advantageous, the Committee would be pleased to organise a public lecture in their respective localities. Hitherto the talks delivered in the UK by the assistant speaker have been devotional and practical rather than topical and polemic, but if the Committee was made aware of local issues relating to Sabbath keeping, the speaker could address these issues in a public meeting, if that was deemed helpful by the local minister.

At our meeting in October, it was suggested that there was a need for good books on the topic of the Sabbath Day. The Committee considered publishing a book of notes and anecdotes on keeping the Sabbath Day holy, with older youths in view. Material was (and is still being) gathered from various sources. It may be that rich and varied personal experiences could be sourced from the members of Synod and from others who read this Report. It was agreed that Rev I D MacDonald would act as collator and editor. Despite a busy winter, a large amount of relevant and excellent material was drawn together by Mr MacDonald, arranged in topics, and circulated to the Committee in time for the meeting in March 2020. A second draft of this work is currently being prepared. The Clerk is to approach other Committees to see how we can realise our desire to bring this project to completion. The Committee does not have any funds and its members have had little or no experience in publishing. This has slowed the progress of any publication envisaged by the Committee in the past. Only by dint of an indomitable determination on Mr Alisdair MacRae's part, has a tract on the Fourth Commandment been recently published. The Sabbath Observance Committee is indebted to the Outreach Committee for their help in realising this goal.

The Sabbath Observance Committee has testified to the sanctity of the blessed "Day that the Lord has made" for many years. Its current members are glad to be a part of that continued witness and we crave the prayers of Synod for grace to know how, in changing times, to hold fast to, and apply the eternal principles in the Fourth Commandment.

"This is the day God made, in it
We'll joy triumphantly.
Save now, I pray thee, Lord; I pray,
Send now prosperity."
(Psalm 118:24, 25, metrical)

JEWISH AND FOREIGN MISSIONS COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev J MacLeod

DURING the year the number of Gospel ministers was reduced to two, Rev S Khumalo at Bulawayo and Rev N Sibanda at Mbumba. Four pastoral charges at New Canaan, Ingwenya, Zenka and Nkayi, remain vacant which these ministers have to share as interim moderators (see chart on page 23). An already heavy burden has been greatly increased since the passing of Rev Z Mazvabo, the departure of Rev A B MacLean and the removal of Mr M Mloyi. In addition, Mr Siziba, Home Missionary at New Canaan for many years, retired earlier this year. The harvest is great but our labourers are few. Even so, it is encouraging to record that Mr T Mwedzi from New Canaan has passed to the second year of his divinity studies in Scotland (Matthew 9:38).

Rev J B Jardine visited the Mission for three weeks as a deputy at the beginning of 2020 and his presence and help in preaching at Ingwenya and other Mission areas was very much appreciated. Rev Jardine is to present his own report.

In August, a deputation from the Mbumba Zending Board visited the Mission. The group visited all the main locations of the Mission which enabled them to see the work of the Mission first-hand and to meet many of those involved in the Gospel work, together with those who assist in the fields of medicine, education and child-care. In conveying their impressions of our mission work in Zimbabwe, they expressed much satisfaction and assurance of continued financial support.

The fragile economy of Zimbabwe continues to dominate so much of the lives of the population at large. Food shortages, low incomes, and the reintroduction of the Zimbabwe dollar to the exclusion of all foreign currencies, have presented a number of serious challenges when conducting everyday business. As far as the Mission is concerned, this applies especially to the Hospital at Mbumba (MMH) and John Tallach High School (JTHS) at Ingwenya, where the school fees are paid in Zimbabwe dollars at much less value than the US dollar the currency has replaced. Because JTHS is not permitted to deal in foreign currency, there have to be regulated school fees and levy increases to maintain the most basic functions. The situation is replicated at MMH. It means the burden of the resultant deficit falls on the respective Mission revenue accounts.

The rains were poor or came at a time which did not assist growth over the past two years and there was real deprivation over Mission areas. A generous response to a Famine Appeal yielded £40,000 of which £10,000 has already been spent on two tranches of meal bought and distributed to the needy. The limiting factor is the availability of meal. Current Mission reports speak of a likely crop failure again this year so there will be a continuing need of support through 2020.

At Mbumba the plan to build a third Rural Health Clinic at Sagonda had to be abandoned due to lack of co-operation between the communities involved. The focus is now on the Simbo area, where, just recently, formal permission to build a Clinic has been granted by the Local Authority. Funds are in hand for the project which are currently held in reserve by the General Treasurer. Work on the access bridge to the Vova Clinic is finally complete which removes the long detour previously necessary for travellers during the rainy season.

In November 2019 the JFMC appointed Dr Carolien Janse as a part-time doctor at Mbumba. The appointment is subject to her being granted a work permit by the Zimbabwe Department of Immigration. However, in the light of the shortage of doctors in the country, it is anticipated that a permit will be granted. It is intended that her husband, Mr Sjoerd Janse, and their infant son, Ruben, accompany her. It was also agreed that Mr Janse would seek opportunity for Mission employment on arrival in Zimbabwe, based on his professional qualification and experience as an energy engineer. Dr Janse expects to take up the appointment sometime in 2020, DV. Her recruitment will relieve some of the pressure on Dr A Snoek, whose workload has greatly increased due to a prolonged strike by hospital doctors across the whole country.

With long spells of electricity power-cuts, conversion to solar energy is gradually taking place across the Mission. A combination of generator and solar supply is being used as a cost-effective solution to the failure of the national grid to meet critical demands. So far we have installed grid-tie solar field at Ingwenya, and off-grid systems at Thembiso, Head Office, the Townsend Road property, Ingwenya administration offices and MMH wards. We have also installed street lamp-posts at Ingwenya, Mbumba and Thembiso. For 2020, cost-effective quotations are to be sought for the JTHS kitchen, dining hall, cold storage facilities and boreholes. At Mbumba quotations are being sought for boreholes and the permanent residents' houses. It is anticipated that the allocated funds will be sufficient to complete this next phase in solar energy investment.

Several incidents of school roofs being blown off during storms and injuring pupils gave rise to concern about the condition of the classroom roofs. A professional structural survey of all schools was commissioned to assess the state of each building. The structural engineer's report highlighted a number of serious defects which require attention but at some considerable cost. The most urgent work is being carried out in the current financial year from existing funds. However, the bulk of the necessary work remains outstanding with estimates of material and labour costs currently being calculated.

The appointment of Mr T B Mpfu to the post of Education Officer in 2019, together with two additional Bible Knowledge teachers, has enhanced the provision of sound teaching of Bible Knowledge in our Primary Schools. The syllabus has been reviewed across all grades, with a view to providing the children with a better learning experience of biblical truths. The review

focused on the overall structure and appropriateness of the material used in content and delivery.

As far as our work in Israel is concerned, our representative in Israel, Rev John Goldby, has visited Israel several times in the past year. The Trinitarian Bible Society translation team is continuing revision work on the Delitzsch Hebrew New Testament. The books completed so far are Matthew, John, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, while 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon and Hebrews are in hand. The Gospel of John was printed some years ago, and Romans and Galatians more recently in booklet form. The Hebrew *Westminster Confession of Faith* has been printed, and a Hebrew translation of the *Shorter Catechism* has also been completed and is currently being reviewed. A recording of the Hebrew New Testament is also being prepared for audio distribution.

In ending this report we seek to express the harmony between the various activities of the mission field as stated by the late Rev Dr R Macdonald, Medical Missionary at Ingwenya, in his report to the Synod of 1936:

It was the intention of the church that the medical work should be an aid in the sowing. This is our only justification in attempting medical work there, that we may by these means be enabled further to sow the seed of the Word. And the same applies to the educational work. But I would not like that the educational and medical and the ministerial work of the Mission should be dissociated in your minds as if they were three separate things. There is a sowing, less regular, perhaps, but a real sowing through the educational work. There is a ministry, a sowing through the instrumentality of medical work as well as the more regular and organised ministerial work. One thing we must acknowledge, and I hope with reverence and humility, and that is, that there has been a reaping also. The Lord has and is now graciously blessing the weak efforts of our church in the foreign field.

Eighty-three years on, the purpose of sowing and reaping continues, principally through the preaching of the Word but also in the caring for the sick, in the teaching of the young and in the nurturing of the orphan.

“And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth” (John 4:36-37).

Zimbabwe Presbytery (November 2019)

Sanctioned Charges

Mbumba Rev N Sibanda	Zenka (vacant) Rev N Sibanda	Nkayi (vacant) Rev N Sibanda	Bulawayo Rev S Khumalo	Ingenya (vacant) Rev S Khumalo	New Canaan (vacant) Rev S Khumalo
9 Elders 4 Deacons 141 Communion Roll	4 Elders 1 Deacon 58 Communion Roll	7 Elders 1 Deacon 56 Communion Roll	6 Elders 5 Deacons 76 Communion Roll	4 Elders 1 Deacon 52 Communion Roll	5 Elders 5 Deacons 77 Communion Roll
Mbumba Bhubhu Gambakalala Lutsha + Clinic Lukamba Magazi Makwatheni Mpakama Mthoniselwa Sikkhaleni Singemi Singwangombe Simbo Sipemba Somakantana Vova Clinic (no church)	Zenka Fudu Katasa Mabayi Farms (Outreach)	Nkayi Donsa Dam Nkuba Manomano Mathendele Mathetshaneni	Lobengula Nkulumane Mahatshula Mguza Gweru (see below) The Gweru congregation currently does not have communicants, there are adherents only. There is a weekly attendance of about 15 to 20. Supply is by Rev Khumalo or elders from Bulawayo, Ingenya and Zvishavane.	Ingenya Cameron Gadade Insiza Inyathi	New Canaan Akori Chiedza Chiwara Gwen'ombe Ingezi Makoverre Maware Munaka Zvishavane (Ebenezer)

INGWENYA MISSION REPORT

Rev S Khumalo

IT was at Ingwenya that the first Mission of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland was established by Rev J B Radasi in 1905. The work that was begun there has by the Providence of God continued to this day.

One would hear the old generation speaking of Ingwenya as a place they passed through in their early years of education. As it was in the past years, so it is today, that whoever goes through Ingwenya has an opportunity to hear the gospel of salvation through Christ. It has thus been through the past year and we have a reason to be thankful to the Most High. Ingwenya has a Primary School and High School, where at every weekly prayer meeting on Thursday morning the pupils, teachers and all workers assemble at the place of worship to hear the message of the gospel of grace; and every Sabbath, the doors are opened and sinners are invited to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation. Ingwenya has five preaching stations, namely Ingwenya, Cameron, Gadadi, Insiza and Inyathi. There are four Communion services held in a year: two at Ingwenya, held in March and September; at Cameron in July; and Inyathi in November. In all these stations services are held every Sabbath. I am thankful to the elders who help to keep the doors open. Our prayer is that the Lord would raise up a Minister for the congregations as there is no resident Minister there.

During the September communion at Ingwenya, there was a male member accepted to full communion. In July at the Cameron communion, there were some restorations to membership and it was so at the Inyathi communion in November, where elderly old woman was accepted. The work of the ministry, as everywhere, has some encouragements and discouragements, but we must cast all our burdens upon the Lord who says, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness".

Like all our congregations in Zimbabwe, Ingwenya was not spared from the effects of a poor performing economy and the drought which has brought hardships to the people. The unaffordability of essential commodities for most people, mobility challenges due to fuel unaffordability and shortages, the bad state of roads and ageing cars, are some of the major challenges faced. We are, however, thankful that our freedom of worship is not threatened.

We pray that all these things would work together for good for us, to bring us closer to the Lord by faith.

I would like to thank the JMFC, Mbumba Zending Committee and the church overseas and the people of God for their financial, material support and for their prayers for the prosperity of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"The Lord hath made known His salvation: His righteousness hath He openly shewed in the sight of the heathen. He hath remembered His mercy and His truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God" (Psalm 98:2, 3).

JOHN TALLACH HIGH SCHOOL REPORT

Miss Norma B MacLean

THE beginning of another decade is a forceful reminder of the passage of time: every year approximately 140 children leave John Tallach High School to pursue their future elsewhere, so, in one decade, we can assume that around 1,400 children have come to and gone from the Means of Grace in our midst and the considerable Bible teaching they come into contact with during the daily school routine over a period of 4 years for most of them and 6 years for others. For most of the children their only exposure to true biblical Christianity is at the school and, sadly, although some do give evidence at times of being affected by the Word, very few show any sign of coming under the yoke of Christ. The great need is that the Holy Spirit will work on them so that it might be true of them, “. . . that ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard . . .”.

We are thankful to report that there is still complete freedom to teach biblical truth to the children and to run the school, though imperfectly, in a scriptural way. Ministry of Education officials are still very respectful of our practices, and parents appreciate the standards of behaviour and moral principles set before their children. We are especially thankful that the staff at school not only acquiesce with our practices but appear to respect them too. Their urgent need also is to “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” that they might be saved.

Miss Kerkhoff’s work permit which expired in May 2019 was renewed with great difficulty: after a great deal of behind the scenes diplomacy by the Headmaster it was extended to November 2020.

Enrolment

In Term 1 of 2020 total enrolment was 662 learners: 335 girls and 327 boys. There were 37 day pupils and 625 boarders. The Resource Room caters for 3 learners: one girl in Form 4 and 2 boys in Form 3 with varying degrees of visual impairment.

‘O’ Level Results

At 98.5%, the 2019 “O” level pass rate was fractionally higher than that of 2018 and it was very pleasing to maintain such a high standard. These were the first “O” level results for the new curriculum.

ZIMSEC (Zimbabwe Examinations Council)

Accounts	96.97%	Combined Science	86.36%
Agriculture	96.77%	Computer Science	96.55%
Biology.....	100.00%	Economics	96.97%
Business & Enterprise Skills	100.00%	English Language.....	100.00%
Chemistry	100.00%	Geography	94.90%

History.....	96.92%	Physics	100.00%
Literature in English	97.83%	Statistics	100.00%
Literature in isiNdebele	93.94%	Technical Graphics	35.71%
Mathematics	84.09%	Textile Tech and Design ..	100.00%
Ndebele Language	99.25%	Wood Tech and Design ..	100.00%
Physical Education	100.00%		

Despite the challenges of adjusting to the new curriculum some individual learners performed very well. Out of 133 candidates:

11 x “A” passes	– 9 learners
10 x “A” passes	– 4 learners
8 x “A” passes	– 4 learners

% with 5 or more “A” passes – 39% (52 learners)

CIE (Cambridge International Examinations)

There was a marked drop in the number of learners registering for the Cambridge examinations because of the serious economic challenges. Only 25 learners registered for the 2019 Cambridge “O” levels.

Biology	100.00%	isiZulu	100.00%
Business Studies	75.00%	Mathematics.....	80.00%
Chemistry	100.00%	Physics	100.00%
Combined Science	33.33%	Principles of Accounts	80.00%
Economics	75.00%	Religious Studies	89.00%
English Language	100.00%	Statistics	67.00%
Geography	43.00%		

Among the passes were 3 “A”*.

“A” Level Results ZIMSEC

It was very disappointing to fall below a 100% pass rate for the first time in 2019. The pass rate for 2019 was 97.44%. Out of the 39 candidates only one failed to pass at least 2 of his subjects.

Accounting	100.00%	Economics	100.00%
Additional Maths	100.00%	Physics	93.75%
Biology	100.00%	Pure Maths	100.00%
Business Studies	100.00%	Statistics	100.00%
Chemistry	95.83%		

Of the 39 candidates, 16 were awarded 15 points or more which are outstanding results.

1 passed with 21 points
4 passed with 19 points
5 passed with 18 points

3 passed with 17 points
2 passed with 16 points
1 passed with 15 points

In total 35 candidates passed with 10 points or more ensuring automatic university entrance.

CIE

Twenty candidates registered for the Cambridge “A” level examinations and all passed at least 2 subjects giving a 100% pass rate, although the quality was mixed with only 9 candidates scoring 10 or more points.

Finance

Much could be written about the catastrophic situation into which the Zimbabwe economy declined throughout 2019. Suffice it to say that the economy again entered the realm of hyperinflation with all the difficulties that brings in maintaining budgets.

The burden on parents is significant but we are thankful that our parents are very diligent in trying to meet their commitments. Full fees in Term 1 of 2019 were \$950 per learner but in Term 1 of 2020 the charge has risen to \$6,430 per learner even after stringent economies. The school ended 2019 with a deficit of \$451,746.

Developments

Developments are only possible because of the continued support particularly of Mbumba Zending for which we are deeply thankful.

1. Form 6 girls’ dormitory extension

This project carried over from 2018 and was completed by the end of Term 1 in 2019.

2. Security fencing for the boys’ dormitories

The new security fencing has greatly enhanced the personal security of the boys and also ensures that their property is safe from interference.

3. New house for the Boarding Master

This lovely new house, which incorporates a small sick bay for the boys and an office for the Boarding Master, was ready for occupation by the end of the year. It has been constructed adjacent to the boys’ dormitory area so the Boarding Master is able to supervise them more effectively.

4. Completion of pavements/fireguards round boys’ dormitories

As well as improving the safety of the boys and reducing the risk to the buildings of damage from bush fires, these concrete fireguards also improve the visual aspect of the dormitory area.

5. Replacement of girls' dormitory open concrete lockers with lockable metal lockers

Completion of this project has been delayed due to the rise in cost of the metal lockers. Alternative options are being investigated.

6. En-suite bed/sitting room for Senior Lady

This very attractive and comfortable development is much appreciated by the Senior Lady.

7. External solar security lighting

During extended power outages from the national grid – and these can last for several weeks at a time – overnight security was compromised so the installation of solar powered security lights all over the compound has been both a necessary and very welcome development.

8. FIM (Parents' Board) funded projects

As well as paying for all the day-to-day running expenses of the school from school fees, the parents' board tries to assist in the welfare of the teachers, most of whom are on the Government payroll. Throughout 2019 the board managed to continue providing teachers with tea, lunch and dinner at school. It also continued to pay the teachers' rent and to provide transport for them to and from school on Monday mornings and Friday afternoons. FIM has also managed to continue paying the salaries of temporary teachers employed to fill Government post vacancies.

There was, however, a serious challenge in being able to pay for the bulk diesel required for the running of the generator during the frequent outages from the national grid. Suppliers insisted on payment in US dollars but schools are only permitted to raise funds from parents in Zim dollars. We were very thankful that the JFMC stepped in to take over these payments for the second half of the year.

9. Anonymous donation for small minibus

A boarding school such as JTHS needs a variety of vehicles to meet all of its needs as the roadworthiness of hire vehicles cannot be guaranteed. For a few years now, the school administration had been saving any US dollars which came its way so as to purchase a minibus for transporting small groups of learners to competitions. It was, however, a very slow process so we were very thankful for an unsolicited and unexpected donation which facilitated the purchase of the minibus towards the end of the year.

Conclusion

2019 has been a very difficult year for all the business and commercial activities of the school and we acknowledge that without the support and financial input of the JFMC and Mbuma Zending the standards of service

would have been dramatically reduced. We record our thanks here for the continued and unwavering support.

ZENKA MISSION REPORT

Rev N Sibanda

I WAS appointed Interim Moderator for the Zenka congregation in October 2019. This was after their minister was deposed by the Zimbabwe Presbytery. The whole congregation was traumatised by this sad development. However, the doors of the five preaching stations remained open and services continued to be held. "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:1, 2).

The congregation has four elders and two deacons. The communion roll stands at 61 and there is encouraging attendance at all services. Communion services were held in February and August as scheduled. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

NKAYI MISSION REPORT

Rev N Sibanda

"FOR He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments" (Psalm 78:5-7).

Nkayi congregation is the second oldest in Zimbabwe (after Ingwenya). The Mpofu family which was the core at the beginning has remained loyal to the church six generations later. All the congregations in the Tshangani Reserve were established using Nkayi as the launching pad.

There are six preaching stations. The congregation has eight elders and one deacon. The communion roll has 60 names. Communion services were held in January (Nkayi), May (Donsa) and June (Nkayi).

The new church building at Manomano is nearly ready for use. The Deacons' Court will be looking at acquiring pews and building a pulpit in the coming year, DV.

ZVISHAVANE MISSION REPORT

Rev S Khumalo

ZVISHAVANE is situated south of the midlands Province of Zimbabwe. Further south is Mberengwa District and to the east of it is Chivi District. It was here that by the providence and grace of God the late Rev Z Mazvabo set up a place of worship and laboured. The preaching of the Gospel has thus continued since then up to now. The preaching of the Gospel continued in the past year and we have a reason to be thankful to the Most High for that. Our prayer is that the Lord would prosper His cause in this part of the country and that many will come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

This past year has been a very difficult one due to the poor economy and drought whose effects have not spared our congregations. Despite all these challenges, the work of the gospel continues in all our congregations. I am thankful to Mr N Siziba and all the other elders and professing men, who continue to keep the doors open every Sabbath and weekday prayer meetings. "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).

Due to the wide field of my labour and fuel shortages, the frequency of my visits to these stations has been reduced. There are six communions in the New Canaan Mission but due to the shortage of labourers, these have been temporarily reduced to five per year, with Mnaka and Maware alternating. Chiedza and New Canaan each have two communions taking place in May, November and January, August respectively. At Chiedza in November, two adults were accepted in full communion and in August, three children were accepted for baptism. We were thankful that in August at the New Canaan Communion, we had visitors from Holland. We thank them for sparing the time to come and be with us and it was appreciated by the congregation.

As I mentioned in my other reports, the effects of the drought have not spared us and the prospects of a good harvest for the coming year are not good, as the rains have been scarce and inconsistent and the economy continues to perform badly. Despite all this, we are thankful that we have no drought of the everlasting gospel of grace.

We would like to thank the JMFC, the Mbumba Zending Committee, the church overseas and the people of God, for the financial, material support and their prayers for the advancement of the work of the Gospel and the salvation of sinners. "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Philippians 4:19, 20).

MBUMA MISSION REPORT

Rev N Sibanda

THE 5th of December 2019 marked six years of my labouring amongst the people of Mbuma. I have seen so many changes taking place during that period; people passing to eternity, people coming into the congregation and others leaving, the Tshangani Forest decimated, and children growing into adults. Moses the man of God remarked, "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting, Thou art God" (Psalm 90:1, 2).

The sixteen preaching stations remained open every Lord's Day thanks to some elders and a few men who took turns to exhort brethren at these stations. I was able to visit the stations at least once a month. Plans are on hand to translate sermons by renowned reformed preachers, such as J C Ryle, R M McCheyne and others, into the local language. These sermons will be read to the congregations on Sabbaths.

The rainy season was poor this past year; as a result people experienced serious food shortages. The drought also affected livestock: a lot of cattle died as a result of an outbreak of a disease related to the drought. "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Habakkuk 3:17, 18).

The church building in Somakantana is badly damaged, with the roof trusses eaten by termites and the walls cracked. The Deacons' Court will attend to this building in the coming year, DV.

I was appointed Interim Moderator for the Zenka congregation when the charge fell vacant in October 2019. This development meant that I am also Interim Moderator for Nkayi extending as far as Donsa. "Brethren, pray for us" (1 Thessalonians 5:25).

MBUMA MISSION HOSPITAL REPORT

Dr A Snoek

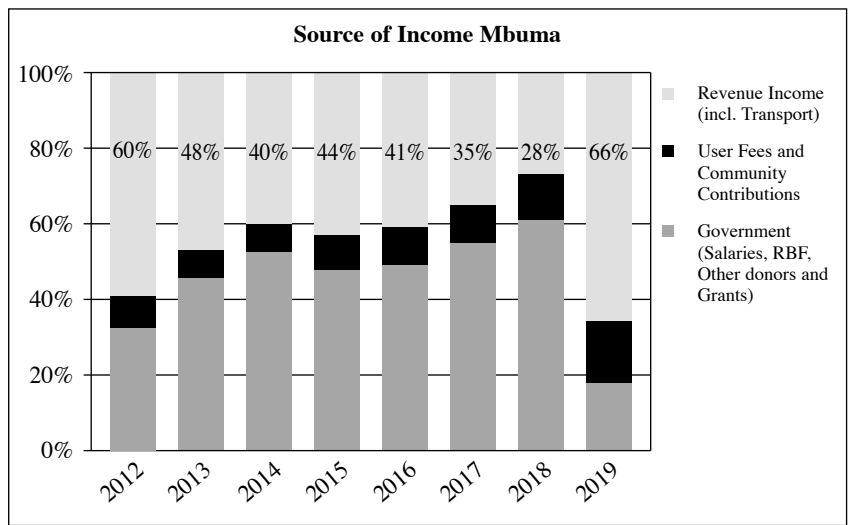
2019 will be remembered as a turbulent year. The year started with a strike and unrest in the main cities in January, the cyclone Idai in the eastern part of Zimbabwe, followed by inflation and evaporating salaries, shortage of food, and ended with a strike by doctors in Government hospitals for over four months, resulting in overloaded Mission hospitals.

It is of the Lord's mercies that we were enabled to continue the medical and spiritual work. Large numbers of patients and their carers heard the generous invitation of the great Physician. Eternity will reveal the fruit of it.

The building site for the third clinic was changed from Sagonda area to Simbo after ample considerations. Several months of lobbying and waiting, later, permission to build the clinic in this new place was received by the local authorities. This is expected to take place in 2020.

Administration and finance

Due to inflation, Government salaries dropped significantly, wiping away the entire achievement of reducing the dependence on overseas donations, which we have been aiming for since the Options Appraisal in 2012.



The following other donations in kind were received in the course of 2019: free supply of TB medication, Antiretroviral Therapy and several other types of medication via National Pharmaceutical Supplies, Bedlinen and Bathroom tiles from World Vision, besides hospital supplies, furniture and a new Ambulance from the Netherlands.

Thanks to the monthly remittance from overseas, the hospital was able to continue to deliver its normal services. Commendable and faithful has been the attitude of the majority of our staff members who, despite a salary reduction of almost 80%, continued to deliver quality care, even though the workload nearly doubled during the last months of the year. To assist our staff, the hospital started to give food packets from September on, besides providing transport from and to town.

Maintenance and Capital projects

Buildings

The main road from Mbema to Vova Rural Health Centre goes through a valley which becomes inaccessible during heavy rains. In 2018, with the help

and advice of a District Engineer, a bridge was built, but despite several promises from the local authorities the bridge was left unconnected to a road. To prevent the erosion of the work done, it was decided to finish the work ourselves. A donation was received from a Primary school in Holland. Under the guidance of Mr Ndlovu and with the help of a retired Council builder, the community realised the construction of a relief bridge and the filling and gravelling of the road. A nice example again of how joint efforts can result in great successes.

The Antenatal dorms in Lutsha and Vova Rural Health Centres were completed in 2019 and are in full use now.

Equipment

In January and December 2019 a container from The Netherlands with useful hospital supplies, (children's) books, Bibles and furniture was received. From World Vision we received 8 large rolls of bedlinen and 25 m² bathroom tiles.

Transport

The transport situation remained fragile throughout the year. The Nissan lorry was off the road the greatest part of the year due to lack of spare parts. The tractor thankfully continued to function well and has been of great help, especially during the time of the building of the Vova bridge. The Ford Ranger staff car was finally repaired in August and since then has been used for transporting staff from and to town, since public transport became very expensive and erratic. The new Landcruiser Ambulance was involved in an accident with a cow again in September. It took 3 months to get it repaired. The old Landcruiser continued to limp along, but prevented the hospital getting stranded.

Therefore a new Toyota Landcruiser ambulance, purchased by businessmen and friends from The Netherlands, which arrived in December, was most welcome and gratefully received.

Electricity and generators

In June, rewiring of the major part of the hospital was done and connection to the new solar field. It has greatly improved the working conditions during the night and is functioning very well so far. Finishing of the rewiring is expected to happen in 2020.

To improve the security and to comply with the Environmental Management Agency requirements, an underground fuel tank with pump was built with the help of South African friends. It greatly relieved the transport burden and eased the fuelling of the cars, which all along had been filled with the use of buckets and a funnel.

Staffing

In the course of 2019, 1 Microscopist, 3 General Nurses and 1 Health Information Clerk were added to our staff complement, besides 2 Environmental Health Technicians and 4 Primary Care Nurses who were deployed

from Nkayi District and Hwange District respectively. ZACH (Zimbabwe Association of Church related Hospitals) appointed 2 extra cadres: 1 Counsellor and 1 Primary Care Nurse (VIAC).

1 Primary Care Nurse resigned and 1 General Hand was dismissed.

1 Nurse Aide and 1 General Hand moved from the Mission to the Government payroll, leaving us with 6 Mission paid General Hands. The number of staff members for Mbuma and the Clinics is currently as follows:

Payroll	Number of staff members	Payroll	Number of staff members
Government	88	ZACH	4
Mission	10	Global fund	4
		Total	106

The following persons paid a visit or stayed with us for some time in 2019: Annemieke Jongeneel and Elma van Stee (student nurses) did an attachment of 5 months. Two of their teachers from the Hoornbeeck College in the Netherlands, Jacoline Voets and Johanneke de Braal, came to assess them and the hospital. Maria Kerkhoff, her parents and sister visited us in April. Reverend and Mrs Van Voorden, Mr and Mrs Barth and Mr Leendert Boon stayed with us for 3 days during their visit to Zimbabwe as representatives of the Mbuma Zending, Clara and Andrea Boer came for 5 weeks in August and assisted with the Holiday Bible days, which were attended by over 1,400 children. Along with them came Roelof Siebert, a medical student-to-be, who stayed for 2 weeks. Jannieta van Raai and Nienke van de Kieft, 5th year medical students, did an attachment of 12 weeks from September till November and were of great assistance during this busy period. Nienke Hak and Marianne van Zwienen came as visitors for 4 weeks. Dr Janlouis Bezemer was prepared to use his off days to come and help out for 10 days in November, for which we are most grateful. Dieke van de Windt, a medical doctor from Driefontein Mission, paid a visit of 3 days at the end of the year.

Hospital and Clinic services

As mentioned above, the number of admission and deaths increased, mainly due to Industrial actions by doctors in Central hospitals, which were held in the second half of 2019. The overall general death rate for the year remained at 11.2% (10.9% in 2018).

	2017	2018	2019
Admissions	1,753	1,862	2,010
General	755	789	898
Paediatrics	257	232	211
Maternity	681	778	837
Neonatal	60	63	64

	2017	2018	2019
Deaths	109	117	129
General	100	105	122
Paediatric	4	6	1
Maternal	0	0	0
Early/Late Neonatal	5	10	6

Out Patients Department	2018 All	2019 Mbuma	2019 Lutsha	2019 Vova	2019 All
New Clients	9,797	5,513	1,869	1,325	8,707
Repeat visit/Chronic Clients	5,814	6,714	325	379	7,418
Total	15,611	12,227	2,194	1,704	16,125

Preventive services	2018 All	2019 Mbuma	2019 Lutsha	2019 Vova	2019 All
Antenatal/Postnatal Clinic attendances	2,368	1,054	880	672	2,606
Child Welfare Clinic attendances	8,501	4,914	1,353	3,753	10,020

Total Births	2018 Mbuma	2018 Lutsha	2018 Vova	2019 Mbuma	2019 Lutsha	2019 Vova
Live births	723	38	35	830	59	32
Still births	3	0	0	10	0	0

2019	Still births			Early Neonatal Death			Maternal Death		
	Fresh (FSB)	Mace-rated	Total	<2.5kg	>2.5kg	Total	Hospital	Home	Total
Hospital	3	7	10	4	2	6	0	0	0
Clinics	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0

Theatre/Labour ward	2018	2019
Caesarean section	95	122
Other major operations	138	111
Assisted deliveries (Vacuum extractions and Symphysiotomies)	121	128

	2018	2019
Radiology services		
Number of X-rays taken	2,558	1,639
Number of Ultrasound Scans taken	675	677
Laboratory services		
Number of lab tests	9,681	9,125
Number of HIV tests	2,675	1,312
HIV incidence in ANC	0.4%	2.6%

After years of decline, the HIV incidence in ANC (a clear indicator for HIV trends) increased again from 0.4% to 2.6%. There is no apparent reason so far.

The HIV/AIDS programme continues to be a significant part of the daily work in hospital and clinics. The 1,812 patients on treatment are doing well, with an annual survival rate of 98.2%. The percentage of HIV related hospital deaths reduced from 60% in 2018 to 52% in 2019. However, we did not yet reach the national target¹ of 90-90-90: currently we are at 89-85-83.

During the year 2019 no major outbreaks were reported in our catchment area. 6 patients were found to have Malaria. Since Nkayi District is in a so-called pre-elimination phase, any malaria case is called an outbreak, but thankfully all patients recovered well. During 3 weeks of the year the alert threshold for diarrhoea was surpassed, but this turned out to be scattered cases, most likely related to the harvesting of water from shallow wells at the beginning of the rain season.

The increase of patients who are newly diagnosed with Diabetes Mellitus, but especially with cancer is alarming.

Newly diagnosed Non Communicable diseases	2016	2017	2018	2019
Hypertension	36	45	45	25
Diabetes Mellitus	10	14	18	25
Cancer	15	24	22	65

Although part of the increase of cancer is due to increased screening and due to improved access to Pathologists' services, it is still worrying.

¹ It is aiming that by 2020 90% of all people living with HIV will know their HIV status, 90% of all people with diagnosed HIV infection will receive sustained antiretroviral therapy, 90% of all people receiving antiretroviral therapy will have viral suppression.

Type of cancer	Percentage of total cases diagnosed in Mbuma	Type of cancer	Percentage of total cases diagnosed in Mbuma
Skin	17%	Breast	4%
Lymph node	10%	Oropharynx	3%
Urogenital female	48%	Other	11%
Gastro-Intestinal	7%		

The limited treatment options for cancer patients and the impaired logistics in the country make it a deadly disease in over 40%, often after a time of intense suffering.

A welcome development therefore in this field has been the Cervical Cancer screening clinic, which was started in Mbuma in October 2018.

Cervical Cancer Screening (VIAC) 2019	Number	%
Number of women screened	1,135	
Number with precancerous lesions	78	6.9%
Number treated for precancerous lesions	75	96.0%
Number with cancerous lesions	35	3.1%
Number of biopsies done	32	91.0%
Number of women referred for treatment (outcome not yet known)	21	60.0%

Humanly speaking the programme prevented 78 women from developing cervical cancer, which is a great gain.

Looking back on 2019 and its turmoil, it might fill our hearts with thankfulness and humbleness that we were enabled to do our work. To the Lord be all glory.

BULAWAYO MISSION REPORT

Rev S Khumalo

WE have a reason to say like the Psalmist that the Lord hath been mindful of us. When we look back at the past year with its ups and downs, it has not been an easy one to go through as the economic situation has not been favourable, compounded with the drought that has affected the whole country. Despite all these challenges, the work of the gospel continued and the doors of gospel ordinances in all our congregations were kept open every Sabbath, for which we have a reason to be thankful to the Most High.

Some of the difficulties we encountered over the course of the year were the means of mobility as fuel is not easily available and people have no cash, with very little cash in circulation, thus affecting what people were giving to the cause of Christ. We appreciate the effort the people are putting in, showing that the will is there. We pray that the Lord would have mercy on us and that the economic problems we are encountering together with the drought would pass. In this farming season, the rains have not been good and, despite the onset of heavy rainfall in the later weeks of February, the cropping situation was dire, compounding the fears of another drought again.

In spite of all this, the preaching of the gospel goes on in all of our congregations in Bulawayo; namely Lobengula, Nkulumane, Mahatshula and Mguza, with prayer meetings at Thembiso, Mguza and Lobengula.

The Bulawayo communion was held at Lobengula in June and December. It was pleasing that the attendance was good and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and baptism were administered during the course of the year. We were pleased to receive visitors from Holland, who are members of the Mbema Zending Committee. Their visit was not a long one but was greatly appreciated by all of us.

I would like to thank the JMFC, the Mbema Zending Committee and the church abroad and all those whose desire is to see the prosperity of the work of the gospel, for their prayers, financial and material support to the cause of Christ in our part of the world.

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalm 126:6).

THEMBISO CHILDREN'S HOME REPORT

B Maphala, Home Superintendent

Introduction

We have witnessed the marvellous things God has done for us in His mercy during the trying times in this world. One can conclude that it was not an accident but His providence and wondrous works. Hence the Scriptures say: "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Luke 10:19). Certainly, we are still limping on under His watchful eye and have that assurance of victory in His name.

Home

Each day begins with the Word of God and ends with it. The Home Superintendent presides over the morning prayers on a daily basis. In the evenings, house mothers conduct prayers in their respective family units. Sabbath schools are undertaken by house mothers on a rotational basis. Rev S

Khumalo assists in that regard. At times T Ndebele and N Khumalo, church deacons, come into the fold during weekends to assist in Scripture teachings.

Children

Currently, there are 33 children in total. There are 23 boys and 10 girls. These children are living in four family units which are currently utilised. One family unit is under-utilised at the moment.

Youth house

A Youth house was created in the year 2019. It has 6 children in it, 4 boys and 2 girls. It comprises children who have reached the mandated age limit (16) at Thembiso Children's Home. These are 16-18-year-olds. They are taught survival skills before they are integrated into the society. They are engaged in projects that are intended to generate income so that they can pursue them after leaving the Home.

Formal education

We have eight senior children at secondary level. One is in lower sixth form and one is at "O" Level. The other six are at junior secondary level. At primary level we have 21 children right across the spectrum from E.C.D to grade 7. It is pleasing though to note the effort being put by some of our children into their lessons. Of special mention is Mekeliah Nyakai, grade 7. She is constant in her performance.

Staff

There is a staff complement of 20: ten females and ten males. One of our long-serving guards, Obert Mpofo, retired in October 2019. We did not replace him as per mission policy. Re-shuffling was done within. It would be very hard to find a man of his calibre. We wish him well in his future endeavours.

Expatriate staff

Sister Petra Beukers and Margaret MacAskill have been visiting Thembiso to assist in the re-shaping of the Youth House. They have done well in that area. Currently they are following up former pupils who used to stay at Thembiso, for further assistance in re-shaping their lives outside the institution, insofar as the Gospel is concerned. The Lord Jesus had this to say: "And other sheep I have; which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold; and one shepherd" (John 10:16). We hope and believe in bringing them back into our church for sound scriptural teaching.

Conclusion

Thembiso Children's Home continues to work hand in glove with the Ministry of Social Welfare and more so with the Board Members at a professional level. We are indeed grateful to our benefactors, the Free Presbyterian Church of

Scotland, for their continued support to the Home. God answers prayers: “Call unto Me and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not” (Jeremiah 33:3). We believe God is on our side.

ZIMBABWE MISSION ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT

Mr M A Mpofo

DAVID, the man of God, was taught of the Holy Spirit to understand the brevity of time, hence his prayer: “Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Psalm 90:12). God in His divine grace and forbearance has allowed us to see another year in a measure of good health and peace, although there have been a number of deaths in our communities and congregations.

Board of Governors

Our three Boards and Head Office Committee continued to meet as regulated by their respective constitutions. Matters that have to do with the running of the Mission were dealt with in a professional manner. The Mission Administrator chairs all the three Boards while Rev S Khumalo chairs the Head Office Committee.

Finances

The Zimbabwean economy is still under severe stress, inflation is very high and the costs of goods and services are on the rise every day. Sometimes one wonders how the people manage in this environment, where the wage hardly buys anything. We are thankful though that our remittances still come monthly from the General Treasurer and we are able to withdraw the money in USD. This set-up gives all staff on the Mission payroll a great relief when purchasing basic household necessities.

The audit firm that we engaged a year or so ago is efficient and we are now able to dispatch reports early for circulation before the Synod meetings.

There have not been good rains in Zimbabwe for the past two seasons, consequently there is famine in the whole country and our own people are also affected. We are thankful that our friends and other godly people overseas have sent some food aid relief. This is greatly appreciated. The rains finally came late and some people planted their fields but there is no hope of a reasonable harvest from this late-planted crop.

Sustentation Fund

This fund is severely affected by the depressed economy; some people have nothing to give due to unemployment, and the failure by banks to disburse any cash to their customers.

Below are the figures (in US dollars) from the various stations:

Ingwenya.....	2,192.80
Bulawayo	3,065.92
Mbuma	1,672.95
Nkayi.....	112.00
Zenka.....	1,209.55
Zvishavane	390.00

Schools

The JFMC approved the appointment of an Education Officer who is now in charge of all the Mission Primary Schools. This appointment has made the supervision of these schools much easier and more meaningful and effective. Bible Knowledge teachers have also been recruited for all the schools, with Zenka and Mbuma having two teachers and the rest one each. A Committee has been set up to review the Bible Knowledge syllabus.

Schools statistics

School	Enrolment	Staffing	Grade 7 Results	
			2019	2018
Ingwenya	316	10*	59%	44%
Lutsha	571	18*	8%	23%
Mbuma	730	20*	46%	46%
Thembiso	455	16*	96%	88%
Zenka	732	23*	51%	72%

* This includes 2 Bible Knowledge teachers each, for Zenka and Mbuma, and 1 Bible Knowledge teacher each, for the other schools.

OVERSEAS COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev D A Ross

THE spirit of the gospel among early Christians in the time of the Apostles moved them to communicate with and support congregations which embraced the truths of the Scriptures. That spirit is among us still and the several reports which come to the Synod through the Overseas Committee do assuredly show the strong bonds which are between congregations worldwide which heartily receive and cleave to the Word of God.

There is the usual Report from the Asia Pacific Presbytery about the congregations in Australia, New Zealand and Singapore, seven in all. The Report, ably put together by the Rev G MacDonald, and drawn from material

from ministers of the Presbytery, also mentions a presbyterial visitation by the Asia Pacific Presbytery to the Grafton congregation in Australia.

We were sorry to read of the serious illness of Mr Calvin MacKenzie, an elder in the Sydney Congregation. Mr MacKenzie is well known among us from his visits during Synod meetings. Despite his serious illness he continues attending the means of grace and even carries out eldership duties in the congregation.

It is encouraging also that the Youth Conference Committee managed yet again to have a Youth Conference which had the Rev J D Smith as its convener. It was good to note that one paper, "The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland – Past, Present and Purpose", dealt with the principles of our Church. Not only our young people but all of us need to be reminded of these biblical principles which are sadly being eroded at a great pace in many of the denominations professing to be Reformed and Protestant.

Singapore, being twelve flying hours and more from Australia and New Zealand, is somewhat out on a limb; yet the ties of gospel fellowship between our congregation there and the other congregations in the Presbytery are strong. The burden of taking services continues to fall on the shoulders of Mr B Yong, which ought to make us more prayerful for him.

There are no reports to Synod about the Chesley and Vancouver congregations in Canada nor the Santa Fe congregation in Texas because no deputies were sent to them. It was hoped that prior to the Synod, Rev W Weale would visit Chesley for two Sabbaths but that was not possible due to the coronavirus pandemic. Nevertheless we have verbal reports of the spiritually healthy state of these congregations and of additions to their membership, which is cause for rejoicing throughout the church. The bringing of sinners to the feet of Christ – the remarkable end of preaching – is infinitely greater than owning the whole world. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" The Church is deeply indebted as ever to the two interim moderators, Rev R MacLeod for Chesley and Vancouver and Rev D Campbell for Santa Fe, who labour diligently in overseeing these congregations. We know a little of the burden of being interim moderators for congregations in this country but how much greater is the burden when congregations are far overseas; therefore we should carry these ministers often on our spirits at the throne of grace. We also mention the appreciation of congregations for the constant diligence of their elders in taking public worship services; no small task when they also have their secular duties to attend to. May the Lord graciously give them all grace and strength to continue doing so.

There is a small group of believers in Vancouver, WA, USA, who have expressed an interest in making their ecclesiastical abode in the Free Presbyterian Church. They hope to visit some of our congregations in the USA and Canada to find out more about our Church.

Rev D Levytskyi has given a most interesting report of the work of the gospel in Eastern Europe. The fact that he does not keep well brings its own

problems, but nevertheless he is a very busy person, as is his elder, as can be seen from his report to the Synod and the news article in the April issue of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*. Bibles are much sought after and we are able to supply that need readily from the generous grants of Bibles from the Trinitarian Bible Society. Some people come directly to the Mission building for a Bible and thus an opportunity is afforded to speak to them face-to-face regarding the Reformed faith. We look to the Lord to graciously bless this ongoing spreading of his Word, as He assures us He will. “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy” (Psalm 126:5).

AUSTRALIA. NEW ZEALAND AND SINGAPORE REPORT

Rev G B Macdonald

Introduction

As I begin this report to the 2020 Synod, we have some welcome rain falling in Sydney. Much of the State of New South Wales (NSW) has suffered from a prolonged drought and the grass in many parts is burnt dry, so the rain is truly refreshing. In the Book of Psalms we read of the delight that the Psalmist took in the blessing of rain. In Psalm 65 David writes: “Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it . . .”. Rain is a blessing from God, and this is truly noticeable in lands that suffer drought from time to time.

In Australia and New Zealand we have experienced some solemn national events. Bush fires have ravaged large areas in Australia and several lives were lost and many hundreds of homes destroyed. Thankfully, all our people in Grafton and Sydney have been spared. In New Zealand the eruption of a volcano on White Island, off the coast of the North Island of New Zealand, resulted in the deaths of a number of sightseers and two guides, a number of others were left with serious burns, with some succumbing to their injuries in hospital. Men may attribute such events to “nature” but the Christian will surely consider the voice of God is heard in such fearful calamities. Both of our nations have added in the past year to the wicked and God-dishonouring laws that accumulate on the statute books of these lands.

A youth conference was held in January 2020 in the town of Alstonville in northern NSW. This is around a two-hour drive north of Grafton. Twenty-two young people attended the conference, some travelling from Queensland and others from New Zealand as well as a good number from Grafton.

Rev J D Smith, Chairman of the Youth Conference Committee reports:

On Tuesday 7th January the Conference began with Mr. Optland's paper on “Genesis: The Beginning of Lessons for Christians”. He focused on Creation principles, and applied these to the current generation and the abounding departures from God's unchanging

Word. In the evening a paper was given by Rev. Hutton on the subject of "Biblical Repentance", in which the various elements of repentance were brought out. On Wednesday the writer presented a paper on "The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland – Past, Present and Purpose", focusing on the formation of the Church in 1893, the principles stood for, and the ongoing need of faithfulness and perseverance. The young people had the afternoon to themselves, and in the evening Rev Caleb Hembd gave his paper on "Christ's Ordinary Method of Building His Church". He presented an outline of certain revivals in history to demonstrate the various conditions of the Church preceding a spiritual revival. It was with great sadness that the Committee had learned some weeks before the Youth Conference that Calvin MacKenzie had taken ill and was therefore not able to give his paper as expected. As a result it was arranged for the Rev Khumalo to give a paper on the subject of Aaron as a type of Christ, but his flight from Africa was delayed and so was not able to give his paper. The speakers then decided that since Hank Optland had given a paper before on "Why We Use the Authorized Version of the Bible", and that nearly all of the young people had not heard this paper, he would therefore present it on this occasion. The discussion following each paper was thorough and edifying, the young people showing great interest in the subjects, for which cause thanks is to be given to the Lord.

Grafton

The Grafton congregation meets on Fitzroy Street not far from the Clarence River. On 31st October 2019, Rev G G Hutton marked 5 years of ministry in our congregation in Grafton. He notes that he feels privileged to be the minister to a praying congregation. In 2019 bush fires raged all round Grafton, but the town itself was spared and we are thankful that the minister and congregation were kept safe during what was an anxious time. Even in such practical things, it is a great blessing for any community to have a praying people in its midst, though the world thinks nothing of it.

A Presbytery visitation was undertaken to Grafton in August 2019. The Presbytery was able to meet with the minister, elders and a number of the members of the congregation. The Moderator of the Presbytery, Rev C J Hembd, preached from Jeremiah 42:10 and, in keeping with such visits, the Presbytery gave some encouragement and advice.

Grafton and the Clarence Valley were areas settled by Scots Presbyterians in the past. Sadly it seems that few of their descendants have followed on in their footsteps in the things of God. Previously Rev Hutton has commented on the grip that the Church of Rome retains on some in the area.

The congregation was pleased to have had two weddings in 2019 and we wish the young couples well. Mrs Flora Kidd, a longstanding member of the congregation, passed away in December 2019. She was a much-loved member and struck one as a very patient and kindly Christian lady. Sadly, in recent

years, the Grafton congregation has lost a number of its older members. One generation arises and another passes away.

Sydney

In Sydney, we continue to meet in a very suitable place of worship in the suburb of Riverstone. This suburb is located in a high growth area of Western Sydney and in recent years many homes have been added. I sometimes meet with people who indicate that they assume that our congregation will grow simply because there are more homes being added in the area. However, this is not the case. Those who do attend a place of worship often prefer such churches as offer much social entertainment. Those who attend our congregations tend to do so out of conviction and sympathy with the reformed faith.

On a recent visit over the Blue Mountains to the plains beyond, my family and I noted that even small communities almost invariably had a stone-built church. It seems that those who established communities in the harsh conditions of the past were careful to build a place of worship. What a rebuke to those in our day, where large housing estates are built with no thought of a Christian church being built, and certainly not with the aid of the State according to the Establishment Principle.

In 2019, the Sydney congregation was dealt a blow in a sudden serious affliction that came upon our elder Mr Calvin MacKenzie. We hope and pray that the Lord may yet be pleased to strengthen and recover him to health. It was cheering to see him attend the worship service on the first Sabbath of 2020 after a long stay in hospital. He is grateful for those who remember him in prayer all around the Free Presbyterian Church and elsewhere.

There were two baptisms in 2019 and a Sabbath School has resumed in the congregation now that there are school-aged children. One family moved to Carterton and we wish them well in their life in New Zealand. Thus, a congregation changes over the years and people come and go from time to time. We must acknowledge though that "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us".

Auckland

Auckland is the largest city in New Zealand and is a popular place to live and work. Rev J D Smith and his family reside in the pleasant suburb of Conifer Grove, which is around a 20-minute drive to the church building.

In 2019 there were two baptisms as well as the usual two communion seasons. The congregation is blessed in having a number of young families and it is always a pleasure when visiting Auckland, or indeed any of our congregations in these parts, to see the little ones in public worship and sometimes to endeavour to speak a seasonable word to such after the worship service.

The minister, elders and congregation were sorry that one family left to worship elsewhere. However, they were heartened that a family from the South Island of New Zealand has started attending on the Sabbath, having moved to a location between Auckland and Tauranga.

Readers of previous reports may remember that a few Korean students have attended the congregation and this is still the case, though the actual students may have changed from those who originally showed an interest.

Tauranga

The small congregation in Tauranga continues to meet on the Sabbath and at the prayer meeting. Mr Jim Haringa, an elder, moved in recent years from Gisborne to Rotorua, which is around one hour by car from Tauranga and so he is able to assist in taking some services. The congregation lost Mr D Vermeulen, who died in 2019 and had been a very useful elder among them, who took many services over his years in Tauranga. He had moved south to be with his family and latterly was in a nursing home near Wellington. As noted above, one family has moved to a location between Auckland and Tauranga, and they attend the Tauranga prayer meeting. The communion season in the congregation has been changed to September.

Gisborne

In Gisborne, the Rev Caleb Hembd continues to minister. Although the Cause of Christ seems low in Gisborne, Mr Hembd maintains a hopeful witness and contributed the following for this report:

We trust that the Lord has carried on His work of sanctifying His people, who are precious in His sight and loved with an everlasting love. The delight that Christ has in them should make us glad to serve them in whatever way we can. In an increasingly wicked age, we should marvel at the divine power that is displayed in regenerating His people, preserving them, and preparing them for glory. The congregation witnessed such power in the life of Jacob Geuze, who faithfully served as an elder for more than 40 years and entered into the rest that remains for the people of God last December.

The same month also saw a number of visitors to the congregation, who were in town for a family reunion. Many had been baptized in the congregation. Hearing the stories of the past was a reminder that a small congregation in an isolated place can be a means of blessing for the rest of the Church. For example, a number of men who are currently elders in the church were either born or brought up in Gisborne. Others gratefully recount times when either they or others received spiritual blessing at communion seasons. We lay these facts before our people, as a plea that they would pray for the Lord's cause in Gisborne, which is now very low.

Carterton

We continue to be encouraged by the development of the Carterton congregation. This congregation formerly met in Tawa near Wellington but, as the members of the congregation lived in Carterton, a place of worship

was purchased and fully renovated with work concluding in 2017. This former bank building is in a very prominent location in the town. The interim moderator of the Kirk Session is Rev Hembd and he was delighted to have the assistance of Rev D Ross (Laide) at the communion season in February 2019.

When a minister is visiting on the Sabbath and even on a prayer meeting, a number of people from the local Netherlands Dutch Reformed Congregation attend when the service time does not clash with their own. Thus, at the afternoon service, the congregation can be doubled or more by the visitors.

Mr Hembd writes:

Members of the congregation have demonstrated an appreciation for the scriptural principles which the Church stands for. Its situation is promising. Two people were received as members in full communion and an infant was baptized in 2019. Another person has transferred her membership to Carterton after moving from Sydney with her husband and two children. Two men were elected to the office of deacon and will be admitted in February, DV.

The congregation, which has more than a dozen children and young people, has a strong desire for a pastor to be settled over them. To that end a manse fund has been established and already significant donations have been received. However the congregation still has large debts and will need substantial assistance before it can purchase a suitable manse – or property for building one. We desire to place their spiritual and temporal needs before the Church, so that our people can be specific in their petitions at the throne of grace. The prayers of only one believer, who is righteous by imputation, “availeth much” (James 5:16).

Singapore

Rev G G Hutton serves as interim moderator of the Singapore congregation. He notes that it is still maintaining its witness for the truth. The congregation enjoyed supply preaching from Rev Hutton, Rev Bruce Jardine and Rev Donald Ross as well as the writer who also visited and took services in 2019.

Mr B Yong continues to serve faithfully as the ruling elder of the congregation. There are two deacons – Mr A Lau and Mr S Y Yong. At present, the congregation is still looking to purchase their own place of worship. Mr Hutton notes:

Thus far nothing is available. Because of government restrictions, worship services and prayer meetings cannot be convened in private homes, and thus, however few may meet for the midweek prayer meeting, it has to be convened in some sympathetic business premise, which is not always very convenient. The friends in Singapore value the prayers and support of the home church on their behalf.

Conclusion

I would thank my brethren for their contributions to this report. We all have need of prayer in the gospel ministry, and the Presbytery in this part of the world faces the added difficulties of the distances between its congregations, which can result in feelings of loneliness and isolation at times. As in previous years, we would value the prayers of our brethren in Scotland and other lands where we have a witness that the light of the gospel of Christ would shine in our congregations and nations. “Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12).

EASTERN EUROPE MISSION REPORT

Rev D Levytskyi

ANOTHER year has come to an end and it is time to give a summary of the mission work done in the past year. The situation in Ukraine for any unprejudiced observer would seem to be better since the previous year. However, there are things that have not changed for the better, but in the good providence of the Most High the Eastern Europe Mission of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland is still present on Ukrainian soil and works from its Mission here in Odessa.

During the year, the Mission was engaged in some printing projects and the distribution of the Scriptures and sound biblical literature. We have translated into the Ukrainian language and published *The Shorter Catechism* and *The Children's* (or *Mother's*) *Catechism*. (We have, of course, already published them in the Russian language.) At present, we are able to get good quality printing of literature at a reasonable price. These latest editions, as people's requests show, have generated interest among the Ukrainian speaking part of the population. Bible distribution is continuous, as Bibles are always in great demand and Ukrainians are sending their requests to the Mission by post, email, phone or simply by coming to the Mission building gates. It is a great encouragement when they come in person to the Mission with their requests, especially when some of them ask for an explanation of the different doctrines we believe.

In October 2019, the Odessa congregation was once again privileged by having the sacrament of remembering the Lord's death. The deputies who came from Scotland to the communion season were Rev Donald Ross and assessor elder Mr Edward Ross. Also, we had visitors from Scotland, Mr and Mrs David Norris and some of their family. The small gathering of local people enjoyed the preaching of the Word of God during the communion season.

The enjoyment of this privilege is a reminder that it is 25 years ago that the Most High in His kind providence, through the Free Presbyterian missionaries

from Scotland, sent us a copy of *The Shorter Catechism* and then *The Westminster Confession of Faith*. This made a great change in our lives and brought us to a right understanding of scriptural doctrine, worship and practice. Before then we were tangled in the tenets of Arminian theology and practically did not know anything about the fundamental doctrines of the Reformation. Since then, missionaries from the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland have used the preaching of gospel of Christ as the main direction of their activity in Eastern Europe for the enlightening of the people who sit in the spiritual darkness of superstition and prejudice.

The distribution of Bibles and literature is a secondary but most important work. We are greatly indebted to the Trinitarian Bible Society for its generous help and are especially grateful for its gift of 5,000 copies of the Ukrainian Bible in the Kulish translation. In addition, we were able to purchase 139 copies of the Bible in the Russian language in the local Christian bookshop at a reasonable price.

Those who receive Bibles and literature from the Mission express their gratitude. For example, one lady in the city of Kharkov wrote: "I have received a parcel from you, with the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. Thank you very much! I hope that through this literature God will work in my heart. I am glad that I have obtained such literature." A student of the theological faculty of Poltava Bible Seminary wrote: "I am very grateful for the invaluable works that you have sent me! Your books are a valuable contribution to our family library. My daughter is getting older and I will read to her with pleasure the book *Line Upon Line* by F L Mortimer and teach her the *Children's Catechism* . . ."

During the past year, professing Ukrainian believers, living mainly in rural areas and among them soldiers, officers and chaplains of Ukrainian Army Forces, as well as ministers of the gospel of different denominations, were sent by post and free of charge the following Bibles and literature: 400 Ukrainian Bibles (big format); 41 Russian Bibles (big format); 22 copies of *Sermons by Rev D MacFarlane*; 228 copies of *The Westminster Confession of Faith*; 146 copies of *Catechism of the History and Principles of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland*; 2,448 Scripture calendars for 2020 in Russian and Ukrainian; 1,234 Russian *Golden Thoughts* calendars; 94 copies of *An Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith* by Robert Shaw; and 130 copies of *Line upon Line* by F L Mortimer. We sent 204 parcels throughout the country.

Total donations from Ukrainian correspondents for the compensation of postal expenses in 2019 came to £102.29, sufficient for postage and distribution expenses. A new service has been introduced by the Post Office of Ukraine whereby recipients of our literature can pay postage at their local post office. Ninety per cent of correspondents have agreed to pay postage in this way.

The present situation in Ukraine can be described as an ongoing war which has now lasted for six years. Every day, one or two Ukrainian servicemen die,

shot by snipers or killed by exploding mines. There are also many injured among the civilians. But with regard to the spiritual situation in Ukraine, there are multitudes who are dead in their trespasses and sins. They need the gospel of Christ that they might live. It is our appeal to the Church – brethren, pray for the cessation of war in Ukraine, but especially for the blessing of God on our gospel work.

These activities of the Eastern Europe Mission, that is, the preaching of the gospel and the distribution of Bibles and literature, could not exist or continue without the Lord's blessing on those who support the Mission with their free giving, for which we are thankful. "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days" (Ecclesiastes 11:1).

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO ZIMBABWE

Rev J B Jardine

SINCE the day that the Lord opened the eyes and heart of the Ethiopian Eunuch, the Word of God has been preached in Africa. We believe that the small part played by the work of our Mission in Zimbabwe is testimony to the continued fulfilment of the promise, "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God" (Psalm 68:31).

I arrived at Bulawayo on Tuesday 21st January and was met by Rev Sibanda, Mr M A Mpfu, administrator, and Mr H Mackenzie. After picking up groceries, I drove out to the Ingwenya Mission, following Mr Ncube, Headmaster of the John Tallach High School. Rev Khumalo was on leave in Australia during my stay.

I was greeted by Miss M Kirkoff at the John Tallach High School who gave me my evening meal. Miss Kirkoff was a great source of advice and help over the three weeks of my stay.

On Wednesday 22nd January I was given a guided tour of the John Tallach School and met a number of the staff. It was clear that the increase in numbers attending the school would necessitate the upgrade of the mission's infrastructure.

I began Thursday 23rd January by taking the weekly prayer meeting at 8.00 a.m., where I met with the local elder, Mr Ncube. I endeavoured to speak on 2 Timothy 3:14. There were over 1,000 present, most of them young people and children, with Mr M A Mpfu interpreting. Afterwards I opened the Ingwenya Governors' Board Meeting with a short family worship. I had the opportunity to meet with Julian Scales of Kalahari Energy who were replacing the generator at the Mission. After the meeting I was shown around the Ingwenya Primary School by the Deputy Head Teacher and Mr T P Mpfu, Mission Education Officer. In the afternoon I was able to take a walk to one of the local villages and, on returning, took evening family worship for those children boarding at the school.

On Friday 24th January I travelled to the Thembiso Children's Home where I was given a tour by the Superintendent of the Home, Mr Maphala, who I had met previously at a Synod. During the tour I was able to meet the various members of staff, house mothers and several of the young people. I opened the Thembiso Governors' meeting with family worship.

After lunch I toured the Thembiso Primary School with the Headmaster. I saw all the classrooms and met with every teacher. I was left with a favourable impression of the school and that the teaching staff were providing a good level of education with limited resources such as electricity and water. The school would benefit from a fully equipped borehole and a smaller power unit.

In the late afternoon I met with Mr T P Mpofu and Mr Mackenzie at the Robertson Street Office to discuss the new Bible Knowledge syllabus.

Saturday 25th January was a study day and I was able to take family worship for the boarding pupils in the evening.

I had three services on the Sabbath. At 11.30 a.m. I spoke on Romans 1:15, at 1.45 p.m. on Matthew 11:28, and at 6.30 p.m. on Matthew 11:29-30. Over 600 were present at each of these services and I was able to meet with the congregation outside Church. I had dinner with the Headmaster in the evening and it was a profitable time of fellowship.

I left Ingwenya at 6.30 a.m. on Monday 27th January and was taken by Mr B Mpofu to Zenka. One of the tyres blew out at Queen's Mine and we were assisted in changing it by a passer-by. It seemed highly providential that this young man had been out collecting water as he knew exactly what to do and had the tyre changed in a very short period of time. We arrived late for the Prayer Meeting in Zenka, but the congregation had all stayed. I spoke on Romans 15:4 to a congregation of between 600 and 700, most of whom were schoolchildren and some of whom sat on the pulpit steps. The congregation gathered at the Manse afterwards to receive the first of the famine relief provided by the Home Church. Distribution was organised by Mr Mpofu and Mr Nkomo.

I then received a tour of the Primary School and met a number of the teaching staff. In one of the classrooms I found the teacher going over my sermon with the class and explaining some of the doctrines. This school would benefit from a small solar power unit.

In the afternoon we travelled into Lutsha, where I visited the school, and was taken round by the acting Head Teacher. This is a large school that has suffered from a lack of teaching staff in the last couple of years. I had the opportunity to meet with the parents on the School Development Committee who were meeting to set the school fees for the coming year. Before leaving I was able to have a look at the buildings of the Lutsha clinic. The school would benefit from a new water tank which would allow for the cultivation of the school garden.

I arrived at the Manse at Mbuma in the late afternoon and was greeted by Rev Sibanda and Nurse Willie, who gave us afternoon tea. We had dinner at 7.00 p.m. and this was followed by worship and a time of fellowship.

I held a prayer meeting at Mphakama and spoke on the first part of Acts 26:18. I was then taken to Vova clinic where I was given a tour by the sister in charge who explained the different aspects of the work carried out. This clinic provides an invaluable service for expecting mothers. I was then shown the new Vova bridge which was built by the local community with financial assistance from the Mission. The building of this bridge will help in the saving of lives, as it will significantly reduce travelling time to the clinic during the wet season.

On returning to Mbuma I was given a tour of the school by the acting Deputy Head. There are over 700 children attending the school with class sizes of between 45 and 50. The school would benefit from the provision of basic sports equipment and a small solar power unit. Dr Snoek provided lunch after the tour.

In the afternoon I took a prayer meeting at Simbo where I endeavoured to speak on the latter part of Acts 26:18. I was also shown the area of land that had been procured for building the new Simbo clinic.

In the late afternoon I attended the family worship taken in the Hospital by Rev Sibanda and was given a tour of the hospital by Dr Snoek and Nurse Willie. Rev Sibanda also showed me around the church building before having dinner at Dr Snoek's.

On Wednesday 29th January I took a prayer meeting at Lutsha on Acts 20:32. On returning to Mbuma I attended the Mbuma Board Meeting. I left for Ingwenya in the afternoon after lunch at Nurse Willie's. The journey home to Ingwenya gave an opportunity to see the poverty that is to be found in the rural areas.

When I returned home several of the Free Presbyterian teachers from the Primary and Secondary Schools came to the Manse for dinner. It was a very pleasant way to get to know them more. The evening was concluded with family worship.

I took the prayer meeting on Thursday 30th January and spoke on 2 Timothy 3:16. After the prayer meeting, I observed the slaughter of one of the cows which are bought in by the School and fed until they are ready for slaughtering and used as food for the pupils. This is one of the ways that the school seeks to reduce costs and to be as self-sufficient as possible.

In the afternoon I attended the school sports day which I opened with prayer. I endeavoured to set before the pupils the need to give priority to running the Christian race.

I had an informal meeting with the Bible Knowledge teachers on Friday 31st January at Robertson Street. The new curriculum was discussed, and it was agreed, where possible, to have regular study sessions via Skype.

Mr Mackenzie took me for lunch with Denis Paul who has undertaken a great deal of work for the Mission over the years. After lunch I met with Mr Price of Halsted Brothers (PVT) Ltd, who also carries out work for the Mission. Mr Price gave me a tour of his business premises and explained the

difficulties that businesses face in the current economic climate in Zimbabwe. I thanked both men, on behalf of the Committee, for their assistance.

Saturday 1st February was spent as a preparation day for the Sabbath.

On Sabbath 2nd February, I again preached at Ingwenya in the morning when I took Proverbs 3:5-6 as my text. In the afternoon I was taken to Cameron where I met with the local elder, Mr Mzamo, and preached on Ephesians 2:8-9. In the evening I preached on Isaiah 45:22. I dined with the Headmaster in the evening.

I opened the Head Office meeting with prayer on Monday 3rd February and afterwards travelled to Zvishavane, with Mr M A Mpfu, where I took a prayer meeting and met the local elder, Mr Siziba. My text was Psalm 119:11. I stayed in a hotel lodge in the evening.

I travelled to Chiedza on 4th February with Mr M A Mpfu and Mr Siziba, elder, where I took a morning service on the text Hebrews 4:2 and met the local elder, Mr Sibanda. After the service I travelled back to Bulawayo where I had lunch with Mr M A Mpfu and then back to Ingwenya.

On Wednesday 5th February, I met with Mr Ncube, John Tallach Secondary School Headmaster, for an informal meeting and a tour of places of interest at the school. We inspected the pig sty and water borehole and the Headmaster outlined his vision for the school and several of the problems faced. I was also able to visit the Primary School and see the children receiving their free school meal for the day. I then had lunch with Miss Kirkhoff and Mr Moyo, boarding master. It was Mr Moyo who took care of me daily during my stay at Ingwenya. After lunch I was taken to see new cattle being delivered to the school.

In the late afternoon I had the opportunity to give the first half of my Youth Conference paper on the “Tabernacle and Temple” to a good number of the young people. I then took family worship for the school. In the evening the Free Presbyterian teachers at the schools came for dinner and we had a pleasant time of fellowship and family worship together.

On Thursday 6th February I took the prayer meeting and spoke on 2 Timothy 3:17. I then took the Form 6 Bible Knowledge class. We went through Romans 2, reading the chapter, explaining the text and answering questions. I then had a short opportunity to speak with some of the Form 6 students. I was able to sit in on several of the classes; the Science class was a presentation by one of the learners on the law of motion, and taken by Mr Chokuda; the Bible Knowledge class, on the birth of Christ, was taken by Mr Khumalo; the Mathematics class, on probability theory, was taken by Miss Mulinga; and the History class, on the Matabele Kings, was taken by Mr Kawara. I felt that the quality of teaching was of a high standard throughout and that the student contributions showed a clear knowledge of the subjects being taught.

In the afternoon I was able to give the second half of my paper on the “Tabernacle and Temple”. There was an opportunity given for questions.

In the evening, for dinner, I was able to attend a school Braai (barbecue). The school uses such events to teach the young people some of the traditional skills which are being lost.

On Friday 7th February I took a trip to the Bulawayo Museum and although many of the exhibits were run down, I was able to obtain a good grasp of Zimbabwean history. In the afternoon I took a service at the Lobengula Church, Bulawayo. I spoke on 2 Timothy 1:13-14, which in providence seemed very appropriate, as most of the congregation was made up of the children from the Thembiso Orphanage. I also had the opportunity to meet with the local elder, Mr Mziya.

Saturday 8th February was spent studying for Sabbath and packing for returning home.

On Sabbath 9th February I took the services at Ingwenya, speaking on Isaiah 1:18, Romans 10:12-13 and Ecclesiastes 12:1. In the evening I had dinner with the Headmaster.

On Monday 10th February I visited the Ingwenya Primary School for a longer visit. I sat in on the Grade 7 Bible Study class who were revising the Fifth Commandment. The wording of the Commandment was memorised, and its meaning opened and then application made with various examples in the Bible. I was impressed by both the teaching and the knowledge the children had.

I then had an opportunity to meet with a Grade 3 class, where some of the children gave a demonstration of what they were learning. A lot of the material was similar to that which my own children are learning in Scotland.

I was then treated to a farewell tea by some of the John Tallach Secondary School teachers.

On returning home I was greeted with a very warm and loud welcome by my family at Stornoway Airport.

I believe that my time on the Mission was profitable to myself and I hope will be beneficial to the Mission itself and to the Committee.

I have been able to give presentations of my visit to the Primary and Secondary School in Tarbert.

It was a pleasure to meet with the Lord's people in Zimbabwe, and particularly with the numerous elders and individuals who made me feel so welcome during my stay. Thanks especially to Mr M A Mpofu, the Administrator, to Mr T B Mpofu, the Education Officer, and to those who acted as interpreters for me.

I look forward to future opportunities to visit the Mission, God willing. It is my prayerful desire that there would be some benefit to the students from my short time in Ingwenya, and I seek to uphold them in prayer. It is my desire that God would bless His Word to pupils and staff.

"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).

TRAINING OF THE MINISTRY COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev J R Tallach

THE work of the Committee continued with three students, Messrs J Campbell, J Morrison and T Mwedzi under tuition with Rev D W B Somerset in Aberdeen, studying Hebrew and Old Testament subjects, Church History, Pastoral Theology and Bible Instruction.

British Accreditation Council

As noted last year, we rejoined the British Accreditation Council and their regulations require an Interim Assessment in this, our first year following registration. This will take place in April this year in Aberdeen, DV.

Mr T Mwedzi

As happened last year, Mr Mwedzi's visa expired in February and he had to return to Zimbabwe. The remainder of this year's course will be completed by Skype so that Mr Mwedzi can continue his studies. Mains supply electricity is unreliable in Zimbabwe so arrangements have been made for Mr Mwedzi and his family to move into the manse in Zvishavane where there is solar power for the Skype meetings and night studying.

Mr Roy Bartle

Mr Roy Bartle has resigned as a student of the Church, though remaining a member in full communion.

Training for Missionaries

The Committee decided to look into the possibility of providing a training course for Home Missionaries. Dr Somerset agreed to carry this forward.

Theological Conference

The Theological Conference was held in Glasgow at the end of October last year and we trust the edifying papers presented will find their way into the pages of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* or onto the Church website and thus be more widely appreciated.

This year's Theological Conference was due to be held in Inverness. However, due to the Coronavirus pandemic it had to be cancelled. It is hoped, Lord willing, that the 2021 Conference will contain the following papers given by the stated speakers:

Gnosticism and Heresies in the Early

Church..... Rev A W MacColl

Justification..... Rev D Campbell

Romanism, Changing and Unchanging.. Rev J B Jardine

Thomas Boston..... Rev I D MacDonald
Application in Preaching..... Rev D A Ross

“And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children” (Isaiah 54:13).

THEOLOGICAL TUTOR’S REPORT

Rev D W B Somerset

THE Theological Classes in Old Testament Hebrew and cognate subjects commenced on Wednesday 3rd September 2019 and are due to continue to the beginning of April, DV, with final exams thereafter. The classes start at 9.30 a.m., Tuesday to Friday, and continue to about 12.30. The students attending are the same as last year: Mr John Campbell, Mr John Morrison, and Mr Trycot Mwedzi. As before, Mr Mwedzi was only able to apply for a six-month visa, so he returned to Zimbabwe at the end of February. Since then he has been joining the classes by Skype. Latterly, we have all been using Skype because of the coronavirus, an arrangement that has somewhat interfered with ease of discussion. The students have worked hard, and it has been a pleasure considering theological and historical matters with them, and studying some of the most important parts of the Word of God in the original tongue.

The subjects covered are Hebrew, Old Testament Criticism, Church History, Pastoral Theology, and Bible Instruction; and the syllabus has been similar to that followed in 2012-13 but with a few changes. For the Hebrew, we have looked at parts of the Hebrew Bible (Genesis 1-9; Exodus 12 and 20; Leviticus 1, 2, and 16; Isaiah 52-55; Psalms 1, 2, 8, 16, 22, 40, 45; and Zechariah 1), and an attempt has been made to use the Masoretic accents in translation. We have also been through most of Robert Girdlestone’s *Synonyms of the Old Testament*. For Old Testament studies we have read Walter Kaiser’s *Old Testament Documents* (supplemented with handouts prepared by the tutor), Louis Berkhof’s *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, Gerhardus Vos’s *Biblical Theology*, and large parts of Patrick Fairbairn’s *Typology of Scripture*.

For Church history, we have studied Owen Chadwick on *The Reformation* (not entirely satisfactory in its perspective, but it does condense a great deal of material), Thomas M’Crie (Jr) on *The Story of the Scottish Church History* (an excellent work), and the *History of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1893-1970*. The students are also required to produce two essays, one comparing Luther and Calvin and the other discussing the merits and demerits of the Secession of 1733. In addition we have been on historical tours of Aberdeen and St Andrews. Two chapters of William Cunningham’s *Historical Theology* (on Justification and the Atonement) have also been studied to show the connection between Church history and the development of doctrine.

For Pastoral Theology, we have looked at W G T Shedd's *Homiletics and Pastoral Theology*, Patrick Fairbairn's *Pastoral Theology*, and a part of Samuel Miller's *Thoughts on Public Prayer*. We have also been through the Westminster Assembly's "Directory of Public Worship" and the General Assembly's "Directory of Family Worship". The students have also been required to prepare a sermon outline once a week on a prescribed text or suitable for a specified occasion. For Bible Instruction, the students have to be left to their own preparations because of constraints of time. At the beginning of each class, we read aloud a few verses of the Greek New Testament, to help retain a knowledge of that language.

The students have assisted with supply, mainly in Dornoch, Perth, and Edinburgh, and the tutor has had opportunity of hearing them conducting prayer meetings in Aberdeen. We are thankful that the Lord has preserved us all in health thus far through the period of tuition, and we pray that the Lord will add His blessings to these studies that they may be profitable, both to the students and to the Church, in days to come.

WELFARE OF YOUTH COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener *pro tem*: Rev K D Macleod

VERY much before the Committee's thoughts in sending this report to the Synod is the loss the Church has sustained through the death of the Convener of this Committee, Rev Donald Macdonald. We sympathise with his widow, his family and also the Staffin congregation in their great loss. Mr Macdonald put a lot of effort into managing the work of this Committee and we very much appreciate what he did.

The Committee continues to be conscious of the spiritual needs of young people in an increasingly godless society. The preaching of the gospel is, of course, the main instrument that God has chosen to use for their spiritual good as well as that of older people. But other means, such as the Scripture and Catechism Exercises and the Youth Conference, have their place in what the Church may do for their benefit. These exercises continue on the same basis as in the past. We continue to be grateful to those who set and correct them, which involves considerable work, and we express our thanks to them all. It was noted last year that Mrs Christina Sutherland had retired from setting and correcting the Junior Section and we are grateful to Mrs Moira Logan, of the Edinburgh congregation, for agreeing to take her place.

A Youth Conference had been arranged for April this year to take place in Strathallan School, in Perthshire, the same venue as last year. However, in view of the serious situation that has arisen as a result of the spread of the Covid-19 virus, it has been decided regretfully to cancel the Conference for this year.

It is the Committee's prayer that the Lord would bless the young people of our Church, in particular, and that He would preserve them from the evil influences that surround them. It is our desire further that He would cause them so to remember their Creator in the days of their youth (Ecclesiastes 12:1) that they would look savingly to Jesus Christ as the Saviour of sinners, through the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts.

BALLIFEARY RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev J R Tallach

THE first commandment with promise, pertaining to the care of our parents, has a direct bearing on the existence of our Care Homes. These Homes, when run in the spirit of the gospel, present at once both a duty and a privilege.

We miss the presence of Mr Alexander MacLean who, first as a maintenance man, then as the Clerk of the Committee, gave such sterling support to the work of the Home.

While we are still urgently looking for a suitably qualified person to take Matron's place, the Committee is indebted to Matron for her loyalty and sense of responsibility to the Home. We acknowledge the dutiful work of the other members of staff through 2019. The use of agency staff rose over the past year. We sincerely thank the men who have so faithfully conducted worship in the Home.

During 2019, 7 residents sadly passed away. There were 8 new residents and 2 admitted for respite only.

Staff changes

Though vacancies occurred, these were filled and a full complement of staff was maintained throughout the year.

Staff training

Staff training continued as in previous years, with courses being completed on General Data Protection Regulations, Emergency First Aid, Moving & Handling, Duty of Candour, Medication Administration, Adult Support and Protection, New National Care Standards and Care Planning.

Environment

Upgrading of the Home continued with electrical refurbishment, 5-year electrical testing begun and a new fire panel board and Addressable Call System installed by Northern Security. Areas within the Home were painted and decorated.

Care Inspection

On 3rd April 2019 the Home had a Care Inspectorate Inspection and received the following grades in the areas examined.

How well do we support people's well-being?..... 6 Excellent

How well is our Care & Support planned?..... 5 Very Good

“The Lord of us hath mindful been and He will bless us still”(Psalm 115:12, metrical).

LEVERBURGH RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener *pro tem*: Rev J R Tallach

THE past year has been a difficult one for the Home. Our Convener for the past 14 years, Rev D A K MacDonald, passed away during the year. Mr MacDonald took a warm interest in the Home and his presence is greatly missed.

We are sorry to report that 4 residents passed away during the year. There was one admission.

Staff

All the Homes on the Island are suffering from a grave shortage of carers and Leverburgh is not immune. In normal times staff might be recruited from a Nursing Agency to meet an emergency but hardly a week has passed when it has been necessary to call on Agency staff for the Home. At the moment an Agency care worker is permanently engaged as part of the night staff. As a result of staff shortages the Home has had to reduce, from time to time, their operations to one bed less than full capacity.

Staff training

Three more staff have completed their SVQ 2 and are going on to level 3.

Building maintenance

The main sitting-room has been painted and papered and work has been done on the boiler-house.

We cannot close this report without recording our sincere thanks to all the staff at the Home for the manner in which they have, despite the difficulties experienced at the Home, and often beyond their stated hours, continued to deliver the kindness and care for which Leverburgh Care Home is noted.

“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men” (Galatians 6:10).

OUTREACH COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev D A Ross

“WHEN the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him” (Isaiah 59:19). We as a committee desire earnestly and strive to be one such standard. We labour, as before the Lord, pleading that our small work would be the means of putting to flight the enemies of the Lord; and more, to bring them to repentance and in subjection to the feet of Christ.

Iniquity abounds in our own land particularly, Church and State helping forward sins which not so long ago were treated with disgust and righteous anger. Instead of transgressors being called to account, it is those who protest against transgression who are thus dealt with. Indeed, it is a day of success for all manner of sin: sodomy, sexual misconduct, abortion, idolatry, disregard for the Lord's Day – and on it goes, it seems endless. It is only the Word of God with His blessing that can heal these spiritual diseases.

Those that peddle temporal wares have generally a steady flow of enquirers and buyers, but those who trade spiritual wares do not have that degree of success. Rather, many a time they are taunted by the world. Discouraging indeed, but nevertheless we continue to spread the Word of God, in the sure knowledge that the Word, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, convinces of sin, righteousness and judgement. The godly who had to endure captivity in Babylon were often taunted: “A song of Zion sing”. However, those pious people continued to stand on the side of the Lord and many of them did see better days. Whether we see better days or not, the lesson for us is to continue standing for what is right. Our outreach work is an attempt to do just that.

Our spending for the current year has been exceptionally high because we had to purchase a new book van. Inevitably, the time has arrived when we have to dispose of the old book van, because our continuing to maintain it is no longer practical. It is still fit for some kinds of work and is therefore offered for sale. It has served us well, not only by displaying Bibles and literature at agricultural shows but also by taking our Bible worker many thousands of miles as he went from home to home selling Bibles and books – and if having no sales, at least leaving suitable literature which was usually accepted. Who can tell what blessings follow, even at this moment perhaps, and will follow such work, considering that the parable of the sower shows that the spreading abroad of God's Word must bear fruit?

Due to our experience of the distribution of the Scriptures and Christian literature, the Committee is of the mind to continue book van work. The initial cost of a similar van to the previous one is about £20,000. However, fitting out the van for both display purposes and colporteur work will cost in the region of £7,000 extra. There being no side windows in the vehicle, there is excellent space for the display of the written Word. It is a great comfort to us to know that the Word of God read is used by the Holy Spirit for the awakening of sinners: “For 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 discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

Of the many contacts made through the book van work last year, there was a request, which we were able to grant, for a quantity of Bibles and literature from the Invergordon Mission to ships’ crews. We were told that the Bibles and literature were readily received by crew members.

The Committee is especially indebted to Messrs Edward Ross and Chris Lamont for their willing, efficient and hard work in manning the book van.

There are also outreach connections made through the Church website and these requests are managed by Rev Bruce Jardine. In one instance 300 Bibles were requested by a secondary school in the north of England. Indeed, Bibles are sent worldwide, with the assistance of the Overseas Committee and the Jewish and Foreign Missions Committee providing postage where appropriate. There are also requests for Bibles from atheists, agnostics, Roman Catholics and lapsed Christians.

Committee members also engage in Scripture calendar distribution. In South Uist the response was favourable. In another area, where distribution has been done over many years, the recipients have warmed more than ever to receiving these *Word of Life* calendars. One person, a Muslim, refused a calendar year after year but we left one in his hallway anyway each time. This year he cheerily received the gift, saying, “You have come with my calendar.” Who can tell but that here a little and there a little the Word of God begins to sink home?

We continue to produce reprints of tracts and other literature. We try to keep adding new material, and one of the latest is the tract, *The Highland Kitchen Maid*. There is in fact a steady, ongoing demand for tracts.

We have mentioned in this report only some of the work we do. We are certainly doing what we can to spread the Word of God but feel sad that it is so little in comparison to the extensiveness of the field for gospel work to a lost world. Christ said, “the harvest is truly plenteous”. We feel the force of this truth as we see multitudes of people on the move at agricultural shows seeking material happiness. Our hope and prayer is that some sinners through our sowing the seed of the everlasting gospel will bring forth fruit, “some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold” (Matthew 13:8).

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* and the *Young People's Magazine* continued to publish original material for a wider audience in the form of serialised papers that were given at the Theological and Young People's Conferences. Among those published during the year in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* were the following papers:

- “The Eternal State” by the Rev James Tallach,
- “Sanctification” by the Rev Roderick Macleod,
- “Robert Findlater and the Revival at Lochtayside” by the Rev Kenneth D Macleod,
- “Why we need Creeds and Confessions” by the Rev Caleb Hembd. This was a paper given at the 2019 Young People's Conference in New Zealand.

In addition the *Young People's Magazine* has printed three papers during the year that were given at the Young People's Conference:

- “John Calvin: His Life and Work” by Mr Frank Daubney,
- “Samuel the Prophet” by the Rev Neil Ross,
- “The Sons of God – Adoption in Romans 8” by the Rev David Campbell.

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 2020.

Until March 1979 the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* normally had an article in Gaelic in each issue. From April 1979 a separate *Gaelic Supplement* was produced quarterly and issued free of charge to anyone who wished to receive it. The first editor of the *Gaelic Supplement* was the Rev John Macleod, who held that position until 2011, a period of thirty-two years. The *Gaelic Supplement* became a highly regarded publication under Mr Macleod's editorship. In addition to his editorship he was a member of the Magazines Committee for thirty-six years. Having recently completed fifty years in the ministry in the Free Presbyterian Church, the present Committee would like to put on record their appreciation of Mr. Macleod's services to the work of the Magazines Committee. The *Gaelic Supplement* is now edited by the Rev A W MacColl, and continues to be issued quarterly and is sent free of charge on

request. It is available online at the Church's website along with the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* and the *Young People's Magazine*.

Publications

The Committee have recently published the *Memorials of the Life and Ministry of Charles Calder Mackintosh* as a substantial paperback volume. Mackintosh was a Disruption minister, the son of the eminent Dr Angus Mackintosh, the Church of Scotland minister of Tain and a close friend of John Macdonald of Ferintosh. His son was ordained as his colleague and successor and became the first Free Church minister of Tain at the Disruption, he was translated to Dunoon in 1854. The volume has been re-typeset and is the first re-print of this important volume since its first publication two years after Mackintosh's death in 1870.

A further volume that it is envisaged will be available shortly is a book mainly for young adults, titled, *From Shepherd Boy to King of Israel*. The material was first published as a series of sixty articles printed over a five-year period between January 1987 and August 1992 in the *Young People's Magazine*. The articles were written by the Rev Alexander McPherson. The book details David's life and the gripping events in which he was involved and draws from it many practical lessons. The material has been very slightly edited by the Rev Neil Ross in order to convert magazine articles into a book. The articles were based on a course of sermons that Mr McPherson preached whilst he was the minister of the London Congregation and then adapted for young people.

Bookroom

As we stated in our last report, Christian Bookshops continue to close; the Free Presbyterian Church is the only denomination in Scotland that continues to operate its own bookshop. Indeed, it is one of the very few Christian Bookshops still operating in the United Kingdom that is devoted entirely to distributing Reformed literature to various parts of the world. It, therefore, deserves the support of Free Presbyterians.

The Bookroom sales have increased during 2019 by nearly £8,000. However this includes £9,176 from two large orders for Bibles for the Mission in Zimbabwe towards the end of the year. We cannot expect orders at this level to be repeated in the coming year. Though the sales figures look encouraging there is actually no improvement in the underlying sales. The deficit for the year was just over £12,000. The Committee are thankful that Congregational contributions are up by nearly £500 which suggests a persisting level of support for the Bookroom.

Increased expenditure has hit the Bookroom Fund quite hard in 2019. Most of this is due to website development costs, but there were also increased repair and maintenance costs, along with the Organisation Fund charge. 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.

WEBSITE COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev K M Watkins

DURING 2019, visits to the Church website were up almost 10% on the previous year, at over 330,000, giving average viewings per day of about 900. Both Church magazines have been uploaded to the site, one month after the printed editions are published. Apart from just a few volumes, the website now has a run of back issues of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* from its inception in 1896 to 1956. The run resumes in 1998, continuing to the present, and the Committee would like to see the gap filled. Sermons from various congregations and communion seasons have been uploaded as before. The Bookroom's monthly offers and other sales literature have been uploaded as well, until its recent closure due to the Coronavirus outbreak. Before that, the project to establish a commercial website for the Bookroom was within sight of conclusion. Progress on setting up a Chinese version of the website continues, with a view to completion by the end of the year, God willing.

With the Coronavirus/Covid-19 spreading through the world and many people in different degrees of lockdown, we are encouraged, but not surprised, that so far in 2020 average daily viewings have risen substantially, to over 1,200. At the time of writing this report, public worship has been discontinued or curtailed in many places, preventing people attending the public preaching of the gospel. In these solemn circumstances, the more than 3,000 recorded sermons available on the website are a rich storehouse. The Church's website policy has always been cautious, for example by making the website inaccessible on the Sabbath, and the Committee has continued that policy during the past year.

In view of the impact that this crisis has had on churches and individuals, our prayer is that the Most High would use the materials on the website as one means to lead visitors to His truth, and even to Himself, revealed in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

CHURCH ARCHIVES COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev D Campbell

THE work of the committee in preserving the Church's archives has continued over the past year and is greatly assisted by the appointment of a professional archivist to progress this important aspect of the Church's witness.

In the past year Dr Anne Macdonald has agreed to work with the committee and has been formally appointed as the Church Archivist. Dr Macdonald is engaged to take forward four areas of the committee's work: (1) To prepare a full and accessible catalogue of the records of all church courts which are held; (2) To prepare a policy for the preservation of the records and regular updating of the catalogue; (3) To give professional advice on the storing of all the physical records of the Church; (4) To seek the best professional advice on storing digital archives. Dr Macdonald's professional contribution to the work of the committee will be invaluable. The committee would like to thank Dr Macdonald for the work already begun and her willingness to help in this important endeavour. The committee has also engaged others to assist with gathering and preserving audio and visual materials with other items of historic interest such as letters and photos.

The committee now has a transcription of the first Presbytery minute book (from 1893 to 1896) which is an invaluable source of Free Presbyterian history. It is proposed that this transcription be prepared for publishing with a full historical introduction and detailed notes on the individuals and events identified in the minutes. It is hoped that this publication will revive interest in, and knowledge of, the very considerable labours involved in the early years of the Church when congregations were established and provided for in very difficult circumstances. Such zeal as the founding fathers of the Church showed in these and other areas ought to stir up those who come after them to show the same love for the testimony of the Reformation in this generation.

The committee continues to strongly urge all church courts to ensure that their original documents are safely preserved. We also ask that the location and other details concerning the documents held are passed on to the archives committee so that changes in personnel do not result in the loss of valuable material. It is sadly the case that significant documents from the past are already lost. It is of vital importance that the Clerks of Church courts would in future work with the committee to progress this important endeavour.