

**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 past year has been the most difficult in living memory for the visible church. The Covid-19 pandemic has been a judgment on the nations of the world for their departure from the one living and true God and its effect has been sorely felt within the church. In the United Kingdom, two lockdowns, with their prohibitions on public gatherings, and limited freedoms at other times, have made public worship impossible or extremely difficult. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper has not been held within the bounds of the church in the UK for the past twelve months to the grief of the Lord's people. Many prayers have been offered up privately, publicly and at a day of Humiliation and Prayer, and repentance for personal, ecclesiastical and national sins has been sought at a Throne of Grace. At the time of writing, we are still in the grip of the pandemic and much prayer is still needed. May the Lord give us true repentance and have mercy on us. "Yea, in the way of Thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for Thee; the desire of our soul is to Thy name, and to the remembrance of Thee" (Isaiah 26:8).

We have ongoing reasons to be concerned about the religious and moral life of the nation. A new law on "hate crime" has the potential to criminalise ministers of the Gospel who remain faithful to the Word of God. The Convener of this Committee sent in submissions to the Scottish Government during the two consultations on this legislation. Many other representations have also been made and we await the final wording of the Bill.

LGBT issues continue to dominate headlines as these people become ever more strident in their demands. They clamour for their "rights" which appear to take precedence over the rights of other members of the community.

We live in a very troubled and godless society which, no longer having the Word of God as its guide, has lost its way and the consequent chaos is evident on every hand.

### ***THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC***

War, famine, or pestilence were judgments upon Israel of old for the sins of the people and their rulers. Such judgments have by no means been confined to those days, but it has been a long time since a judgment has been felt so widely and powerfully as the present pestilence. Even World War II was not felt so widely, for the daily life of the great majority of the world's population has to some extent been affected, and many greatly so, with over 2.5 million deaths (March 2021) and many more cases of serious illness.

China, which exports much of the products that feed the consumerism of today, was the source of the Covid-19 pandemic. Given the lack of openness

and honesty of the Chinese Government, it seems unlikely that the true source of the virus will ever be known. Second causes, however, are of far less moment, for this judgment is a manifest token of divine wrath upon a wicked and adulterous generation, and most particularly on western and westernized nations. To date, these have been most keenly affected, whereas many Asian and African countries have escaped the worst consequences. No doubt there were cultural and competency factors involved in the response of both peoples and governments, but also the Lord's kind providence to the East, in preparing them by exposure to past epidemics like SARS, which meant they were ready to tackle the present pandemic in a way that the West was not.

#### ***A judgment upon the present generation***

A disease that affects all nations on earth with such tumultuous consequences together with widespread loss of life cannot be viewed as an ordinary event in providence like anything else. Sadly, however, many are inclined to consider it in this light even though Scripture exhorts us otherwise (Amos 3:6). The man of wisdom must hear the Lord's voice in the rod (Micah 6:9). There is no doubt that it is a voice calling every one of us to repent as individuals, churches, and nations. Appearances suggest, however, that we are disinclined to respond to that voice, perhaps because we are so comfortable and crave comfort so much.

The ways of the Lord are equal (Ezekiel 18:29). According to scriptural principle, we are to expect an equivalence, so that judgments or chastisements are suited to the nature of specific sins. As nations we have long used China to support our materialism, despite its oppressive and persecutory character. Even the majority of Bibles in the world are printed there. Now we find the prosperity that we have idolised as nations being threatened. We have been lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God and these pursuits have been reduced to a great extent in recent months.

But it is also a chastisement on the Church. Most solemnly of all, public worship had more than once been removed, together with the ordinances of the Lord's Supper and church government to a greater or lesser extent. We must ask the serious question, Why would the Most High remove that by which He receives greatest glory? The only possible answer is that He is not truly receiving that glory when ordinances have been profaned by human invention or formalism. A church that had left its first love was warned of the danger of the candlestick being removed. The chastisement and warning are comparatively mild according to the Lord's forbearance, but they must be heeded.

"O remember not against us former iniquities: let Thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low" (Psalm 79:8).

#### ***Response of churches***

In previous generations, a time of national calamity would have been marked by regular days of earnest public fasting, prayer and repentance. It is very revealing that such a response has been virtually non-existent amongst all

churches, suggesting a degree of hardness of heart. At the most extreme end, leaders of most of the churches in Scotland (among them the Church of Scotland, the Free Church, Quakers and the Roman Catholic Church) issued a joint call to pray on 21st February, clearly intended to mark the beginning of Lent. There was no mention of repentance, eternal realities, or even the solemn consequences of the coronavirus.

An unknown disease that seemed to threaten severe consequences to public health understandably caught the churches by surprise and they needed to act quickly in response. Perhaps for this reason, the churches have consistently responded to Covid-19 with the same fear of death that has driven the government reaction. The elimination of all risk has been the overriding principle, with churches often striving to go beyond official guidance. Safety and public health are key (albeit not sole) concerns and churches must take them seriously. Yet while it is understandable that these would be the main message of government, we should not expect them to be the main message of a church. Another fear was loss of reputation if the church claimed exceptionalism for itself. Thus, the activity in the nation that brings greatest glory to the Lord, the public worship of God, was quickly sacrificed. Secular commentators were not slow to deride the absence of spiritual and moral leadership in a life and death situation. Where people might have expected a beacon of courage and hope in churches, they merely heard government slogans being echoed. Individual ministers of course worked hard within impossible constraints to continue their role and pastor individuals. But on a less local level, an overwhelmingly managerial rather than spiritual response is very revealing about the degree of conviction in spiritual realities and how far we have been influenced by the priorities of the world.

“O Lord, why hast Thou made us to err from Thy ways, and hardened our heart from Thy fear? Return for Thy servants’ sake, the tribes of Thine inheritance” (Isaiah 63:17).

### *Secular response*

The significant challenges of the pandemic have been met by governments with varying degrees of readiness and competence. Western countries were largely unready, and a reluctance to acknowledge the danger precipitated a tardy, and at times, ineffectual response. However, lessons were learned, and more effective regulation and practices eventually implemented. By and large the general population has been responsible and obedient to government diktats concerning social restrictions, even when the logic behind such restrictions was often far from clear. However, the behaviour of some, particularly in the latter part of last year, did increase the fatality rate of the second wave which, combined with a particularly virulent strain in the UK, made it worse than the first. Given the way the virus moved in families, many people must have been the means of bringing death to loved ones. The scale of the financial cost of the pandemic is such that it has been acknowledged that it will take decades to pay it off, effectively putting the burden on the next

generation; whilst at the same time increasing the risk of sovereign debt creating an economic catastrophe. This may well effectively prolong the crisis for some years to come. The financial and health toll of the long-term effects on survivors (so called long-Covid), the effects on mental health, and deleterious effects on the education of the young, are not yet well understood. Another great danger is that elected and unelected officials, having gained vastly greater powers during this crisis period, may be reluctant to let citizens return to private judgments concerning aspects of their own lives.

So effectively has the voice of the righteous been silenced, that calls for national prayer and repentance, which often accompanied such judgments in times past, have not been heard in the UK. In the USA during March 2020, President Trump declared a National Day of Prayer (albeit on the Sabbath), declaring that: “We are a country that, throughout our history, has looked to God for protection and strength in times like these.” His announcement was generally met with disdain or indifference in the media on both sides of the Atlantic.

How can people be brought to consider and repent when there is no voice of instruction, of right reason, being heard? The media, both broadcast and in print, is a means of doing great mischief in that regard, by refusing to give a public voice to those who would willingly use it to the glory of God. What it will take to penetrate the thick darkness of unbelief that pervades our land is hard for us to foresee. But when the light of the church is so dim, He who is “the light of the world”, can banish that thick darkness in a moment.

### ***Vaccine development***

Over the past 200 years, vaccines have obtained an excellent reputation as a means of saving lives and preventing suffering from otherwise fatal, dangerous or debilitating pestilences. The virtual eradication of smallpox, diphtheria and polio, and the suppression of mumps, measles and rubella, are well known success stories. Even the more deadly consequences of the common winter flu are held in check by the flu vaccine. Therefore, from early in the pandemic, hopes have been high for the development of a vaccine that would significantly curtail it. Huge resources have been poured into vaccine development, and the outcome has been an unprecedented effort in both the scale and speed of that development. It was felt to be an answer to prayer when several vaccines were seen, first as very promising, and then rapidly moving on to proven success, regulatory approval and public distribution. Early results of the vaccination programme in the UK appear to show that the pandemic has been effectively curtailed by it. Even the Queen, not normally one to speak unofficially, chose to remind the nation personally that we had a duty to others to get vaccinated ourselves. Taken together, all of this would make it an easy choice, not whether, but only when, one would be able to be vaccinated. However, there was a fly in the ointment.

It was heard with dismay amongst those who understand the great evil that abortion is, that many of the vaccines, in their development, used cell products



originally derived from an aborted foetus. This news came through a widely circulated communication from the Charlotte-Lozier Institute. Two such cell lines have been used – the HEK293/HEK293T and PER.C6 cell lines. According to the journal *Science*, HEK293 is a kidney cell line that comes from a foetus aborted in about 1972, and PER.C6, owned by a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson, was developed from retinal cells from an 18-week-old foetus aborted in 1985. Both cell lines were developed at Leiden University, in the Netherlands. They may be used in any or all of the design, production, and testing processes, but are not part of the final production vaccine. Of the 12 vaccines that have been approved in at least one country to date (March 2021), only two Chinese ones (approved for use only in China), are known to have not used any abortion derived cell lines, and likewise the German Curevac vaccine, which is still in development. The approved US PfizerBioNTech and Moderna vaccines have used the HEK293 cell line only in the confirmatory testing process but were developed without their use. The worst offenders of the approved vaccines are the UK Oxford, Russian Sputnik V, and the US Johnson & Johnson ones, which have used abortion-derived lines in design, in production and in confirmatory testing. All the many other vaccines that are in development have either used one of them, in one or more processes; or there is as yet no complete information. The previous US administration banned the use of new cell lines derived from an aborted foetus in any research to which it contributed funds; but it did allow the continued use of such cell lines as were already established and did contribute substantially to a number of these vaccine programmes through their Operation Warp Speed.

The issue is that abortion is a fearfully wicked business. Harvesting of abortions is a practice that is used by bio-resource companies to obtain cell lines which they sell on to pharmaceutical or scientific research organisations. Very disturbing news emerged last year concerning Planned Parenthood, an American organisation which runs abortion clinics, being involved in the selling of organs and tissue to such organisations who were seeking to obtain organs and stem cell lines. Testimony under oath revealed that in rare cases, embryos had survived the abortion itself and were still living when they were harvested, although there is no evidence that such is the case with anything that was used with respect to vaccines. Some argue that because there is a comparatively long separation in time between the abortion and the use of the cell lines, it renders their use less of an ethical problem. Others maintain that to use any products derived from abortion encourages the abortion industry and is a missed opportunity in witnessing against it. One of the authors of the above study, Dr David A Prentice, who is a vice-president of the Institute, acknowledges that using these cell lines only for confirmatory testing is less unethical, in that the developer has responded in some measure to concerns, and sourced alternative means for manufacture. He points out there are alternatives available for all processes; and alternative means for confirmatory testing have been used by both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, in addition to that which involves the abortion-derived cell lines.

If there was a free market in vaccines, the solution would be to obtain one that was ethical, or at least, less unethical. Even in countries where there is a free market in healthcare, vaccines are not yet available on demand. In the UK, where there is effectively a state monopoly in healthcare, it may never do so. The choice then is either to accept the offered vaccine or not. This is not an easy matter to deal with, but it is a decision we ought to take by prayerful consideration, and in the light of our own conscience. This is one of those difficult and complex matters this pandemic has, in providence, set before individual consciences, as it has also set difficulties before churches and nations in other ways. The pope has stepped in and taken it upon himself to absolve his followers of any blame for taking such a vaccine where there is no alternative. He puts himself in the place of God (2 Thessalonians 2:4), effectively ruling out the need for conscience.

However we view the matter, we ought to be grateful to the Charlotte-Lozier Institute for setting before us the facts of the case, which they have done so carefully and responsibly that none have legitimately cast any aspersion on their findings. This Institute is an anti-abortion thinktank of medical professionals, part of the Susan B Anthony List, an organization focussed on influencing the electing of officials who will bring abortion to an end. Such organisations thrive in America, where the opposition to abortion has been far more effective than it has in the UK. Indeed, this matter had not been known in Britain otherwise, and has been given no visibility in the media, despite anti-vaccination issues, such as safety concerns, being well aired.

### ***“The Finger of God”***

During a severe outbreak of foot and mouth disease in 1865, Bishop J C Ryle wrote a booklet with the above title. The booklet was reprinted during a severe outbreak of the same cattle plague in 1967 which affected several counties in England, including Cheshire and Shropshire, which lasted nearly a year and caused great financial loss. These words were spoken by Pharaoh’s magicians when the third of ten plagues hit the land of Egypt, that of the lice infestation which was upon man and beast. Ryle asks the question, “From where does the plague come?”. He then enumerates a number of Biblical plagues: Noah’s flood, Joseph’s famine, the ten plagues in Egypt, the disease of the Philistines when the ark was among them, the pestilence in David’s days, the famine of Elijah and the storm upon Jonah. They were all sent by God – “This is the finger of God”. He then lists seven national sins in England which he believed were the cause of God’s displeasure. These were: (1) covetousness; (2) luxury and love of pleasure; (3) neglect of the Lord’s Day; (4) drunkenness; (5) contempt of the Seventh Commandment; (6) looking favourably on the Roman Catholic church; and (7) scepticism and infidelity. Ryle contended that the nation was visited with the plague because of these sins.

How much more should we in 2020 and 2021 see the chastisements of God in bringing the plague of Covid-19 upon the nation and all the nations of the world, in view of the fearful breaches of God’s law being committed at the

present time? All the ones mentioned by Ryle are present in our day but to a much higher degree; for example – (1) The Sabbath Day has been totally abandoned as a day of worship and rest, with multiple shops trading, sporting activities throughout the day, and instead of it being God’s holy day it has become man’s day to do whatever he wants; (2) The murder of innocent babes in the womb due to the 1967 Abortion Act, with over 9,000,000 abortions to date. Politicians complain of shortage of workers and an ageing population – millions of the murdered children would have by now been in the workforce; (3) Ryle complains of contempt of the Seventh Commandment 156 years ago. How much worse it is in 2021, with legislation in favour of the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, with same-sex marriages and transgenderism, and insisting that these be taught in the schools! There is much denigration of marriages, with innumerable numbers now co-habiting and more than half of children being born out of wedlock.

The saddest and most depressing aspect is that our rulers and scientists do not see or believe that it is the Finger of God and deservedly so because of our sins and iniquities. During the present time, when thousands have already died and hospitals are filled to overflowing, time and effort is being wasted in going ahead with the Hate Crime and Public Order Bill which will prevent ministers and others criticising those who engage in the sins of Sodom. Repeated calls for a National Day of Prayer have been totally ignored. When the Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonah the judgement threatened did not come: “And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that He had said that He would do unto them; and He did it not” (Jonah 3:10).

What a need there is for fervent prayer for days of revival. “O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy” (Habakkuk 3:2).

“Thou hast an arm that’s full of pow’r,  
Thy hand is great in might;  
And Thy right hand exceedingly  
Exalted is in height.”  
(Psalm 89:13)

### ***Dangers of Erastianism and the spiritual independence of the Church***

The Scottish Church has had a long history of resisting the attempts of civil government to dominate and control the Church. The spiritual independence of the Church was asserted from the time of the Reformation and constantly challenged until the time of the Disruption of 1843. Erastianism is the view that gives civil government the right to exercise power in Church matters. Christ as the only King and Head of the Church has, however, only ever delegated church authority to the office-bearers He prescribed for His Church in His Word. They have exclusive jurisdiction in Church matters. They exercise this power without any dependence on the state; church

decisions cannot be appealed to civil courts nor can civil government rescind those decisions.

Civil government can exercise some power *about* church matters but not *in* church matters. It has no right to administer Christ's ordinances, including church government. The state ought to defend the Church (Isaiah 49:23) and may exhort the Church to do her duty or to give consideration to important matters which may arise. It can confirm the acts of church courts and give them the force of civil law. The church's office-bearers are not, of course, exempt from the rule of law in relation to criminal actions. Decisions of church courts may not be appealed to civil courts for review, but the civil consequences of those decisions may be considered.

The state has gained considerable authority in almost every area of life in recent generations. In recent years it has aligned itself with militant ideologies that seek to suppress opposing views. For instance, the recent Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill claims such a broad and generalised application and there could be danger of courts reviewing the content of sermons and other material if it passes into law. Churches may be criminalised for presenting the Bible's teaching on biological sex.

The state may also take to do with the civil dimensions of church matters such as aspects of health, safety and property within the limitations of legislation. Clearly public health is an area that rightly falls within the responsibilities of civil government in preserving life. Necessary action is required to contain the impact of a pandemic disease.

In recent months, the state in various nations has, however, entered the realm of spiritual things. It has sometimes claimed the right under public health concerns to determine whether the Church can gather for worship, how any kind of worship may be conducted and what elements of worship are authorised. In Scotland it has criminalised any gathering for worship in any location and under any circumstances other than a funeral or wedding. The government claims to decide whether churches can gather for worship and for how long their decision applies, according to their own defined but not disclosed criteria. They have been allowed to decide that other activities are more vital than worship and can take place within a church building. They also now define the nature of worship, i.e. whether a broadcast service is a worship service (whatever the conclusion, this is not a matter for the state to determine). It has directed that certain activities are essential and may even take place within a church building with less restriction, but that public worship (however small the gathering) may not. The state, however, was not able to indicate clear evidence that church buildings are unsafe when following the restrictions. It did not give guidance for making them safe. Instead, a blanket ban on any gatherings for worship served to forbid churches from assessing the reasons and evidence to ensure reasonable adjustments. The government was unable to assess each individual location, but this revealed a lack of trust in churches to make reasonable adjustments which is contrary to all the evidence. Clearly certain other activities were treated differently, such

as elite football and filming which could occur freely without even much social distancing.

It is plain that civil government is not only failing to defend the church and its worship, but also invading its exclusive jurisdiction. This does not merely exceed the bounds of their God-given authority to punish wrongdoers and reward those that do well. It is not merely injury to the Church and the spiritual good of the nation, it is robbing Christ of His kingly prerogatives. “Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little” (Psalm 2:10-12).

### ***ANTI-SEMITISM***

Anti-Semitism is hostility to, prejudice against, or discrimination towards Jews and is generally considered to be a form of racism. Anti-Semitism may range from expressions of hatred or discrimination against individual Jews to organised pogroms or attacks on entire Jewish communities. The term did not come into use until the late 19th century but there have been many examples down through the centuries.

### ***The Middle Ages***

During this period persecutions and expulsions of Jews were frequent throughout Europe: in England in 1144 the Jews were accused of using the blood of Christian children for their Passover (this “blood libel” continued to be widely circulated for a long time); Jews were blamed for the Black Death; in 1290 Jews were expelled from England (a policy which was reversed by Oliver Cromwell in 1655); the Spanish Inquisition came into being primarily to identify heretics among those who converted from Judaism and Islam to Roman Catholicism. The Inquisition intensified its activities after 1492 when Jews and Muslims were ordered to convert to Catholicism or leave Spain and its colonies. They were subsequently expelled from Spain and later from Portugal in 1555. In 1555 Pope Paul IV renewed anti-Jewish legislation and subjected Jews to religious and economic restrictions.

### ***Martin Luther***

The Reformer, reflecting the times in which he lived, preached sermons vilifying the Jews using theological arguments and the Jews’ rejection of Christ to suggest they were incapable of conversion. His stance appears to have mellowed, however, as shortly before his death he said, “We want to treat them with Christian love and pray for them, so that they may be converted and would receive the Lord”.

The historian, Reinhold Lewin, said regarding Germany in more modern times, “Whoever wrote against the Jews for whatever reason believed he had the right to justify himself by referring triumphantly to Luther”. And it was said that just about every anti-Jewish book printed in the Third Reich, contained references to and quotations from Luther.

### ***The Roman Catholic Church***

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries the RC Church incorporated strong anti-Semitic elements, despite attempts to separate anti-Judaism from racial anti-Semitism. Pope Pius XII is on record as stating in the summer of 1942, “Jerusalem has responded to His call and to His grace with the same rigid blindness and stubborn ingratitude that has led it along the path of guilt to the murder of God”. This was at a time when the Nazis were murdering millions of Jews, and when it was said that he knew about the death camps.

### ***A change in attitude***

In 1965 the Second Vatican Council sought to bring about a reconciliation with the Jews, and in 1971 an International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee was established. The Church resolved that it would change the way that the subject of Judaism was dealt with in its seminaries and schools. In 1982 the Lutheran World Federation issued the statement, “We Christians should purge ourselves of any hatred of the Jews and any sort of teaching of contempt for Judaism”.

### ***Anti-Zionism versus Anti-Semitism***

Following World War II and the creation of the state of Israel, Anti-Zionism has arisen. Opposition to the policies of Israel should not be confused with anti-Jewishness which is racist and anti-Semitic. The two, however, are often conflated; supporters of the Palestinian cause use anti-Israeli feeling as a bitter argument against the state of Israel and this often deteriorates into anti-Semitism.

### ***The current situation***

As can be seen from the foregoing the Jews have been persecuted down through the centuries, and it is a lamentable fact that anti-Semitism is still evident in the 21st century. Many Jews have expressed a fear of continuing to live in the United Kingdom; a country which we fondly believe to be the most tolerant in the world. We have recently seen sad evidence of anti-Semitism in leading UK politicians. Left-wing parties have viewed Zionism as inextricably linked with global capitalism and American imperialism and suggest there is a Jewish conspiracy to control the world’s financial markets. In UK universities, speakers who are supporters of Israel or are prominent Jews have been “non platformed”. A contributory factor to outbursts of anti-Semitism in the UK is the growing population of Muslims, and the radicalisation of so many of their youth. Being against Israel and America is what brings the far Left and radical Islamists together.

It has been said that seeking to convert the Jews to Christianity is antisemitic. But far from showing hostility or discrimination to the Jews, this is lovingly seeking their spiritual and eternal good. As Paul said, “Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. . . . For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? . . . And so all Israel shall be saved” (Romans 11:1, 15, 26). It is God’s

eternal loving purpose to recover the Jews, to graft them back into their own olive tree, and this is something we should be earnestly praying for; all anti-Semitic attitudes and behaviour should be held in abhorrence by the Church of Christ.

#### **UNION PROPOSAL**

Two separate but related sets of documents were received by a number of office-bearers in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in 2020. The documents sought for “reformed men to form a united army and subsequently to use all the divine strength and power it can receive from Christ to influence the reformation of all non-reformed ministers and spread its influence into England and beyond” and “the possible reunification of the Scottish Presbyterian Churches”.

The principle of unity in the Church of Christ is biblical and desirable and one that we must strive towards. Yet faithfulness to Christ and His Word must be maintained. We must retain these ancient landmarks and teach them to our children: “Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set” (Proverbs 22:28). “That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones?” (Joshua 4:6).

The documents themselves are too extensive to deal with in detail. However, the following criticism of the principles outlined can be made.

There is a measure of contradiction in the documents. The “unification of the Scottish Presbyterian Churches” is proposed and yet the authors of the documents have already judged what denominations are worthy of inclusion in the scheme and which are to be excluded. Yet, the same unreformed practices would appear to be accepted in all the other included denominations.

Any such reunification would by necessity require compromise of doctrine, worship and practice. Who is expected to compromise their position? Experience teaches that positions move to the lowest common denominator.

Such a call to reunification, and by default compromise, is in reality a call for Free Presbyterian office-bearers to break their ordination vows and contradict the formula they signed at their ordination. They are being asked to take a new course or route and to move the Free Presbyterian Church in that direction. The vows ask the new office-bearer to assert that they “shall follow no divisive courses from the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of this Church”. This is confirmed in the formula.

The call to reunification also sows discontent within denominations. Implicit criticism is made by these documents of the doctrine, worship, discipline and government of Churches. Any involved in the suggested meetings and conferences for reunification may be unduly influenced by the critical company they keep.

The proposal is aimed at individual office-bearers as opposed to a specific Church Court. This would seem to be divisive in its very nature – the individual office-bearer being asked to act in a unilateral or independent way

apart from formally constituted Kirk Sessions, Presbyteries and Synods. The Lord hates “he that soweth discord among brethren” (Proverbs 6:19). “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Romans 16:17-18). The correct procedure for those seeking such reunification would be to apply to the appropriate Church court.

In conclusion, it must be made plain that as a Church we have always looked to and prayed for the day when a true and an uncompromised unity will be seen within the Scottish Church. A day when, by the blessing of the Spirit of God, the distinctive scriptural testimony of the Free Presbyterian Church and its principles will become the testimony and principles of the whole Church in Scotland. This was, we believe, the view that the founding fathers of the FPC had in 1893 and should not be lost sight of. “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1).

#### ***POPERY (ROMANISM)***

In March 2017 the Vatican claimed that there were more than 1.285 billion papists worldwide, of whom about 40 per cent resided in North and South America. In 2015 Popery comprised the pope, that antichrist and blasphemous priest, akin to the one described in Scripture as “full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness”; a perverter of all the right ways (especially the way of salvation); cardinals; and about 5,304 bishops, 415,650 priests, 54,229 religious brothers, 45,255 deacons, and 670,320 professing women. The figures for Scotland in 2009 indicated that out of a population of 5.1 million there were an estimated 850,000 papists, including 8 bishops and 740 priests, which amount to 16 per cent of the Scottish population or almost 1 in 6 Scots. Popery has such a formidable presence today, despite the First and Second Scottish Reformations and it being outlawed for a time in 1560, as well as 480 years of preaching, exposing and condemning it as Satan’s masterpiece, and of prayer by the truly godly for its fall.

Popery in Scotland is overseen by the Bishops’ Conference, a body that is endeavouring to excite the pope’s devotees to advance his false gospel. The bishops recently exhorted their followers to “deepen their faith, maintain strong communities but ones equipped and confident to go and evangelise, and to transform society with the gospel”. These deluded bishops manifest a strange blindness in their directive, which evidences a dangerous ignorance, even to the first principles of true religion; that is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”. They ignorantly assume a saving faith, and an enlightened apprehension of the true gospel in those to whom they so write. The horrifying reality is that popery has concocted a damnable heretical dogma regarding faith (saving), and the Gospel (true and pure); resulting in the eternal damnation of countless souls: in consequence all that the bishops’



dupes can do is peddle a false way of salvation by baptismal regeneration, and another cursed gospel (Galatians 1:6-9), both of which, when employed, condemn the declarers, and lead receivers to hell.

The pope in the context of the wider world has had his usual personal contact with his idolising admirers severely restricted by the emergence of the deadly coronavirus plague. However, through the use of social media he has continued to make public hollow pontifications on some matters, such as fraternity with Mohammedans, the prospective peripheral involvement of women in the performance of the devilish mass, the possibility of women becoming deacons, fighting religious extremism, opposing the rise of far-right nationalism, same sex civil partnerships, the evil of gossip, and the selfishness of those travelling abroad to escape coronavirus lockdowns. The pope dabbles mainly in, and babbles much about, relatively trivial and worldly matters, whereas, that true minister of Christ, the apostle Paul, determinedly concentrated upon preaching Christ and Him crucified, proclaiming all the counsel of God, and prayer.

Satan is having a field day in Scotland at present, and the conspicuous and influential presence of popery testifies to that. It is the second largest religious organisation in the land, behind the so-called Church of Scotland; the former accounting for about 16 percent of the religious population, and the latter 24 per cent. However, despite its obvious present prominence, popery is doomed, and shall fall in due time: “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird” (Revelation 18:2). The truly godly in Scotland have been praying for almost 500 years (the prayers of John Knox and other notable Reformers are a sweet savour before God in heaven and are still to be answered) for the destruction of popery, that is, the fall of the vicious and tyrannising Antichrist. The Lord’s dear ones crave, pray for and look for the better days, when popery shall be swallowed up, and the glorious Militant Millennial Church shall dawn and flourish, in palpable evidence of the saving, quickening and sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost, for a thousand years or a long period of time upon this earth (Revelation 20:2).

#### ***REBELLION AGAINST AUTHORITY***

One evidence of the growing sinfulness of our society is the increasing disregard of the 5th Commandment in its broadest application. God-given authority in the family, the church, the government, and other institutions such as schools, is a foundation for order and peace in society. This authority is being rebelled against more and more, and it is an expression of enmity against the God who delegated it to men.

One of the most notable instances last year was the civil unrest in the USA which spread to our own nation. The “Black Lives Matter” movement led to calls for the abolition of police forces and was a popular uprising which claimed “social justice” as its moral basis. Whatever injustices there are in society, no justification can be made for violent, anti-establishment, protests

which claimed lives, damaged property, and caused significant disruption in some places. The origins and aims of the Black Lives Matter movement are far more sinister than the emphasis on social justice suggests. It has a decidedly anti-Christian, anti-family, and pro LGBT bias. Civil magistrates receive their authority from God and so we are bound to honour them as our superiors; “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation” (Romans 13:1, 2). Civil magistrates in turn have a duty of care to those under their authority as a father to his children, and their laws are to be governed by the Word of God, so that any injustices ought to be remedied.

The feminist movement is another example of the sustained attack on the 5th Commandment, and it is aimed at overturning the divinely ordained headship of the husband over the wife, and the duty of mothers to “love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed” (Titus 2:4, 5). Feminism despises the scriptural idea of a wife and mother yielding obedience to her husband and remaining at home to perform the honourable duties of motherhood. The result of despising these God-given roles must be unhappiness and disorder in the family unit, and confusion in society in general.

The attempt by the transgender movement to blur all gender distinction is a further breakdown of the 5th Commandment. While feminists themselves react against this movement, yet their own stance has paved the way for it. The blurring of roles between male and female, visibly seen in woman wearing men’s clothing and cutting their hair short contrary to express Scripture proof (Deuteronomy 22:5, 1 Corinthians 11:15), has opened the door for the attempt to blur the genders themselves. Even natural conscience and reason know that the perversion of transgenderism is wrong, and the Satanic influence behind it is plainly manifest. It seems to be the ultimate attempt to undermine the distinctive roles of male and female in the family, the Church, and society. The movement is a direct rebellion against the truth that “God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them” (Genesis 1:27).

The smacking ban imposed by the Scottish Government recently is yet another interference with the 5th Commandment. For parental authority to be upheld, the scriptural method of physical punishment is necessary at times; “Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell” (Proverbs 23:13, 14). The effect of this unscriptural law will undoubtedly be dire both in the family unit and in society, and will be no little contributor to the further breakdown of law and order in society. It should be noted that no Christian is obliged to yield obedience to the civil magistrate in this instance, and indeed it is their duty to obey God rather

than man by continuing to use loving and restrained physical punishment where necessary.

#### ***HOMOSEXUALITY AND TRANSGENDERISM***

The homosexual movement has been so successful in Britain that it is rare now to hear any public voice expressing disapproval of sodomy. Nevertheless, the consciences of many evidently testify loudly in their ears against sodomy, and homosexuals continue to portray themselves as a suffering minority who require the most favourable treatment to make up for the hostility they encounter. It seems that it is easier to change laws and paint rainbows on steps than it is to silence the conscience endorsing the Word of God. People “shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another” (Romans 2:15).

The transgender movement continues its surprising progress. A court in Cambridge referred to a male rapist pretending to be a woman as “she”, and further legislation supporting transgender ideology is under discussion in Westminster and Holyrood. Unlike homosexuality, however, the transgender movement finds vigorous critics among healthcare professionals, feminists, and enthusiasts for women’s sport (a six-foot-five male student at Trinity College, Dublin, made a point by coming second in the women’s 5km, having simply declared himself female to the startled race organisers). The transgender movement received a severe setback when a judicial review at the instance of Keira Bell required the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust “Gender Identity Development Service” to stop giving puberty blockers to children under 16, but this case has now been appealed. The Lord seems to be using the transgender movement to make utter fools of many prominent people in Britain. “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Romans 1:22).

#### ***ORIGINAL PROGRAMMING ON ON-DEMAND TELEVISION***

In May 2020 Netflix was said to have over 12.5 million subscribers. This number dropped slightly over the widely reported controversial screening of a film called “Cuties” which sexualised very young children. Controversy over this film has diminished over the past months and is almost forgotten. However, a more fundamental concern is the streaming service’s ongoing promotion of the LGBT+ agenda.

It has been noted that original programming commissioned by Netflix has increasingly promoted this agenda. It is suggested that the formula used on planning a new series will include LGBT+ members, either as single or in a relationship. Where in a relationship, that relationship will be harmonious, whereas any “straight” character(s) will be in a tumultuous relationship. The idea of being “straight and happy” will not exist. An online article from July 2019 states: “In a letter sent by Netflix to leaders of a Straight Pride event, the internet giant said, ‘You should know that we’re unafraid of bullies. Our legal department is here, it’s queer, and it’s telling you to steer clear’.”

A further streaming service is that offered by Amazon which has over 7 million subscribers. As with Netflix the LGBT+ agenda is heavily promoted. However, there seems to be a clear anti-Christian agenda with the promotion of adaptations of books by Mr Neil Gaiman. In one book Mr Gaiman gives what we believe to be his view of religion: “Religions are, by definition, metaphors, after all: God is a dream, a hope, a woman, an ironist, a father, a city, a house of many rooms, a watchmaker who left his prize chronometer in the desert, someone who loves you even, perhaps, against all evidence, a celestial being whose only interest is to make sure your football team, army, business, or marriage thrives, prospers, and triumphs over all opposition. Religions are places to stand and look and act, vantage points from which to view the world. So, none of this is happening. Such things could not occur. Never a word of it is literally true.”

As well as this, we are told that the Amazon Prime video library contains a lot of material based upon the teaching of various sects and cults, such as offshoots of the Watchtower (Jehovah Witness) movement.

#### ***FILM AND TELEVISION CERTIFICATE GUIDANCE***

Film Certificates are decided and awarded by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) with the intention of protecting children from unsuitable and harmful content. If used correctly, it is meant to give consumers appropriate information about a particular film or video before deciding whether or not to view it. All films and videos are reviewed by the BBFC before release.

The BBFC professes to consider such issues as discrimination, drugs, horror, dangerous and easily imitable behaviour, language, nudity, sex, and violence when making decisions. The context, the theme, the tone and impact of the film or video on the potential audience is considered.

There are five different categories:

- U – the film should be suitable for audiences of 4 years and over.
- PG (parental guidance) – the film is suitable for general viewing, but some scenes may be unsuitable for younger children. A child over 8 should not be disturbed by this film.
- 12A – the film is suitable for someone over 12 years of age.
- 15 – the film is not suitable for anyone under 15 years of age.
- 18 – the film is not suitable for anyone under 18 years of age.

However, in practice the standard applied to films and videos is dictated by the standards of society. A “child’s programme may be given a PG rating and yet contain adult jokes, sexual innuendo and gestures, feature both a bisexual character and a same-sex couple and use blasphemous words and phrases”.

In general, the PG rating supports the LGBT+ agenda and disregards the offence that blasphemous language may give.

We would strongly advise parents to take time to review that what their children view is indeed suitable, remembering the Scripture: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). The young people of the Church are reminded that “evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Corinthians 15:33) and that they are to “remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

### ***HATE CRIME BILL***

The Scottish Government intends to pass the Hate Crime Bill into law by 22nd March 2021. When first proposed, the Scottish Government were very vague about what the proposed Bill would mean for most people. As the Bill currently stands (February 2021) the proposal is that if someone said something considered to be offensive, even at their own dinner table, in their own home, they could face up to seven years in prison if reported. Faithful gospel preaching would become illegal “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2).

The Bill is supported by MSPs from the Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green Parties. The Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party is the only party who do not support the Bill. The Bill is opposed by Police Scotland, the Roman Catholic Church, the Free Church and many humanist groups as well as comedians and journalists who fear they could be targeted. J K Rowling, the author, spoke out on this issue and found herself at the receiving end of a dishonest and misogynist hate campaign. Historian Neil Oliver and author Stephen King also spoke against it. It is believed that Andy Wightman of the Green Party resigned over this issue.

If it becomes law, the dramatic influence on society:

1. It is likely that affirming that there are only 2 genders would become illegal and that Primary School children would be taught that there are 27 plus genders. What a child says outside of the home could also potentially mean that social services would become involved in their family life, as was proposed under the Named Persons Bill.
2. There is a child safety risk associated with the Bill. A key sign of sexual abuse of a child is the child knowing too much, too young. With all school children being taught inappropriate material at a young age, child abuse may easily go undetected.
3. There is also a provision in the Bill for “transgender” men to be given access to women’s safe areas such as toilets. A man will be required to “live as a woman” for only 3 months before he is entitled to access a female bathroom or prison. No visit to a doctor is required.
4. The inclusion of “transgender” men in women’s sport is also likely.

The Bill will ultimately lead to a change in the legal definition of a woman. This would be degrading to women and go against the UK Equality Act. The definition of what a woman is would be changed to a mere cosmetic appearance. It would contradict the biological meaning of being a woman. Midwives would be forced to refer to the mother as birth person and call breastfeeding chest feeding which is biologically incorrect. This is clearly unscriptural and irrational. "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:27).

It can be easily seen that Christianity will be particularly targeted as it:

- excludes any other way of salvation: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12);
- reproves sin and expressly the sin of sodomy; "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20). "Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God" (*Shorter Catechism* Q14).

The Bill is a clear infringement of free speech and our Christian and Civil liberties. The Bill is to further the LBGT+ agenda. The age-old right of thinking and saying what we believe to be true will be lost. Although the Bill claims to give certain groups protection, it is inevitable that Christians will be targeted. If a case arises between a "transgender" person and a Christian the "transgender" person will no doubt win as the Bill has been framed to protect them. "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you" (1 John 3:13). "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also" (John 15:18-20).

The proposed Bill is against the laws of nature, the Creation ordinance of marriage and the 7th Commandment and is clearly an unlawful ordinance of man. It falls to the Church of Christ to continue to fulfil the great commission: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." (Matthew 28:19-20). Trusting to the promises of God's Word, "Thou shalt not be affrighted at them: for the Lord thy God is among you, a mighty God and terrible" (Deuteronomy 7:21) and "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 54:17).

## CONCLUSION

At a time of degeneracy in Israel the prophet Hosea was moved by the Spirit to record the Lord saying, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early" (Hosea 5:15). The nations of the world must repent of their sins else it will be said of them, as it was of Israel: "A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the Lord their God" (Jeremiah 3:21).

We have abandoned the Word of God and, as is evidenced in this Report, we are left to a desperately low state of religion and morals.

"Turn us again, O Lord our God,  
And upon us vouchsafe  
To make Thy countenance to shine,  
And so we shall be safe."

(Psalm 80:3, metrical)

Only then will we return to the faith of the Word of God and have it as the sole lamp to our feet and light to our path. Only then will we be enabled to rejoice and say,

"And blessed be His glorious name  
To all eternity:  
The whole earth let His glory fill,  
Amen, so let it be."

(Psalm 72:19, metrical).

## SABBATH OBSERVANCE COMMITTEE'S REPORT

**Convener: Rev R MacLeod**

THE last year has seen the lowest levels of public Sabbath breaking for decades. Sadly, this was not due to any religious regard to the claims of the 4th Commandment, but as a result of the Covid-19 restrictions which, as a judgment from God, forced the land "to have her Sabbaths".

As previously reported the Committee has authorised the publication of a volume of anecdotes promoting a love for the Sabbath Day. The book is called *The Day God Made*. Typesetting is completed. The final step is proof-reading which is in hand. Rev I D MacDonald has provided text for the back cover. We are indebted to Mr Roy Middleton and the Publications Committee for their advice at various stages of publication but especially to Mr MacDonald for the time and energy he has put into this project. The Committee met in March via the internet. Mr Alan Boyd's resignation as Clerk of the Committee was accepted with regret at that meeting. His contribution to the Committee over the past years was noted with appreciation. Rev I D MacDonald was appointed as the new Clerk *pro tem*.

The UK Statistics Authority was approached to express our concern that the 2021 Census day was a Sabbath. Their response, though polite, showed little if any regard to the claims of God's holy day even when presented with them.

A meeting was arranged in April to discuss how the Committee might address the retail industry regarding the requirements of the 4th Commandment, as they begin to open for business again. The fear is that this industry will bring more wrath on our cities, and that the church ought to speak as Nehemiah did, "I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath" (Nehemiah 13:17, 18).

Due to the Covid-19 restrictions, it has not been possible to arrange meetings for the Committee's Speaker, since the last Report.

## **JEWISH AND FOREIGN MISSIONS COMMITTEE'S REPORT**

**Convener: Rev D A Ross**

IN presenting this 2021 Jewish and Foreign Missions Report it is with a degree of sadness we do so, due to the retiral of Rev John MacLeod from his position as Convener of the committee. He showed much warm-hearted care for our missions in Africa and Israel, and we hope that the committee will continue to have his professional and experienced input to its work. While serving on the committee, his opening prayers at our meetings demonstrated a deep sense of goodwill towards and concern for the work and for those engaged in it.

This report is just an overview of the Church's foreign mission work. The in-depth survey of the work is to be found in the reports of congregations and institutions sent by Rev S Khumalo and institution heads.

The main concern of our Church is, of course, the spiritual prosperity of the people. The work of the institutions – the schools, the hospital and the orphanage – shows that we are deeply anxious for the temporal well-being of the people, but especially that they would experience a saving interest in Christ as they come into contact with the gospel. Indeed this has happened time and time again, which more than anything else gives the committee deep satisfaction and thankfulness to the God of mercies.

In comparison to the size of our Church in different parts of the world, the Church in Zimbabwe, it seems, is the largest numerically. Our prayer is not only for the continuing increase of people attending church and for their conversion, but also that they would be experimentally grounded in the doctrines of the faith. For many years, the Church there has had the benefit of the summary of these teachings in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the



*Shorter Catechism*, both which are most useful for deepening understanding of the doctrines of Scripture.

At the moment, our Church in Zimbabwe has only one pastor, the Rev S Khumalo, assisted by 35 elders. There is much need therefore for prayer, that the Lord of the harvest would send forth labourers into the harvest so that the enormity of the task on the shoulders of Rev S Khumalo would be lessened somewhat. If all goes as planned and prayed for, we hope that this year, God willing, Mr T Mwedzi, one of our students, will be ordained and inducted to the work of the gospel on our Mission.

Mr Khumalo had an able colleague in the person of Rev N Sibanda, who was the minister at Mbuma, and had also the oversight of Zenka and Nkayi, both very large stations. Sadly for us, he died unexpectedly while making a seemingly good recovery from illness. It was a bitter blow for the Church, particularly in Zimbabwe, but we know the good Lord can make this sad loss work out not only for the good of the mourning family, but of the Church also. To date, this has left the Zimbabwe Presbytery inoperative but due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we have not yet been able to rectify this problem.

The closure of our Mission stations in Kenya and Malawi some years ago, also came across as a serious setback. However, we should not forget that the precious seed of the gospel was most certainly sown there, and it remains to be seen what spiritual good may yet come from these places. Indeed, Mr Nedson Banda, now resident in his own country Malawi, having been trained in our own Church in theological subjects, continues to express the great benefits of his theology course, and is now communicating the same teachings to his fellow Malawians as he engages in mission work. At present we supply him with literature and an abundance of *Shorter Catechisms* which he highly values for his work of spreading the truth.

The three institutions under our governance in Zimbabwe, the schools, the hospital and the orphanage, would never have grown to such an extent, nor be maintained, were it not for the extraordinary bounty from our friends in Holland, Mbuma Zending and its supporters. Their generosity has also contributed in part to maintaining our Church buildings and resulted in other material benefits. Of course there is also considerable help received from the home Church and beyond, but we, being comparatively few in number, are limited in what we can do and give. I suppose we can never appreciate sufficiently the goodwill of our friends in Holland. What makes it more wonderful is, we believe, that the Lord has put it into their hearts to donate, and thereby to help forward the greatest of blessings for mankind, the gospel of God's grace, as well as to facilitate the temporal blessings which result from the work of the mission institutions. The personnel of the institutions, while attending to the temporal welfare of the people, are diligent also to make time for the sound teaching of Scripture knowledge, with the help of the Church and through catechists, teachers and other staff.

We have made advances lately by appointing a Religious Education Officer for the primary schools and adopting more transparent regulations for

communicating religious knowledge. The result is that this department of the work is more streamlined than previously. We pray that much good will follow.

The sheer volume of work done by the hospital and outlying clinics, the schools and the orphanage, is a credit not only to those who have leading roles but to all those who labour there. Indeed, our institutions there are held in great regard not only locally but at government level, and their services are sought after, prized and spoken highly of. Of course, sometimes there are problems, upsets from unexpected sources, confrontations which leave staff and others staggering, but these drive us to that sure place of refuge, the Throne of Grace. Wonderfully the Lord continues to leave with us these institutions for the welfare of the people and as a means to add to the Church in Zimbabwe.

The coronavirus resulted in the closure of our churches and schools; the hospital and orphanage had to battle on as best as possible for the sake of patients and children. The children who live in the hostel at John Tallach High School and who were in residence at the time of the lockdown were not permitted by Government officials to return home. This put tremendous pressure on the skills of Mr B Ncube, the Headmaster, and his staff. Miss N MacLean, the Deputy Head, writes, “Both the spiritual and educational work were negatively affected as no gatherings were allowed during that time. Thankfully, most positive cases had no symptoms and all those who were symptomatic recovered at school.”

Our Church people also were spared serious harm but the public means of grace were greatly missed by them. Rev S Khumalo writes, “What we miss is a time when we will meet fully in the worship of God and the dispensing of the Sacraments of the New Testament Church worship as appointed by Christ the Head of His church”. These restrictions were trying for the whole mission. Thankfully the mission is largely back to normality, despite some continued restrictions.

Another plague was the famine of last year. Our congregations throughout the world responded extraordinary well by generous donations, thus alleviating the grave situation of many who were in dire straits. The extent of their contribution enabled the Head Office in Bulawayo and Deacons’ Courts to organize a second round of provisions for those in need among our own people.

We remember also those who give themselves for the work of the Mission. The first to do so was the Rev J B Radasi, an African from South Africa, who in the providence of God was the person used to begin our work in Africa. Our mission has survived there for over 100 years and many others from different parts of the world have gone to give of their talents for the spiritual and temporal needs of the people. At present, Miss Norma Maclean from Scotland, as the Deputy Head of the John Tallach High School, Ingwenya, has for many years selflessly served the Mission. Also Maria Kerkhoff from Canada has done sterling work at the Secondary school. Dr Anneke Snoek from Holland has had the oversight of Mbumba Hospital since 2005, helped by her compatriot Willie Geurtsen. Our latest addition of a professional worker on the mission is

Dr Carolien Janse who, with her husband and their young family, has come from Holland. We trust she will be fully settled at Mbumba Hospital shortly. Miss Margaret Macaskill from Scotland and Miss Petra Beukers from Holland, despite busy lives in their homelands, give a portion of their time and skills year by year to help forward the needs of the children in the Orphanage. We are grateful to all of them as they give themselves for the furtherance of the Kingdom of Christ in Africa.

We are grateful also to Mr Hugh Mackenzie our Mission Co-ordinator. His work has proved invaluable for both the committee in Scotland and the mission in Africa. His organizational skills have resulted in large monetary savings, reduction in expensive manpower and other inefficiencies. His readiness to travel to Zimbabwe and spend much time away from his family and home and then to continue work on his return through the internet and other means is deeply appreciated by the Committee.

Positions in mission work which at one time were filled by Europeans are now being filled by Africans who are ably overseeing the work; for example, Mr M Mpofu, the Administrator Treasurer in Bulawayo, Mr B Ncube, the Headmaster of John Tallach High School, Mr B Maphala, the Superintendent of the Thembiso Orphanage, and many others in highly skilled posts. We are deeply thankful to the Most High for local personnel able to carry out important functions in our mission.

The committee also oversees the excellent work done in Israel by the Rev J Goldby. Although Mr Goldby, due to the coronavirus restrictions and other providences, is unable to travel to Israel, he continues to advance the work of translation there, notably the revision of the Delitzsch Hebrew New Testament and the translating of the *Shorter Catechism* into Hebrew. Mr Goldby has a considerable team of helpers working on the Hebrew NT revision, which meets each week by Skype. This important work is also under the oversight of the Trinitarian Bible Society. He is deeply appreciative of the help of Dr D Somerset, a member of the Jewish and Foreign Mission Committee, and Mr A Hembd, a communicant in our Church and a member of the revision team, who both contribute to our work in Israel. Mr Goldby writes: "Currently fourteen New Testament books have been completed and six are in process. The work should be complete by 2024, God willing".

We are pleased also that Mr Goldby is arranging, with the help of others, to have audio recordings in Hebrew of the revised New Testament, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and other documents, made available on the internet. We are glad that our Church's interest in the Jewish people is being advanced in these ways, not least because we are of the mind that they as a nation will yet outstandingly shine on the side of our Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus. We covet to be part of that.

In connection with all Christian endeavour, Paul reminds us in Galatians 6:9, "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap if we faint not" — an excellent reminder for our committee and all those engaged with our missions.

## **ZIMBABWE MISSION REPORTS**

**Rev S Khumalo**

### **BULAWAYO REPORT**

WE have reason to be thankful to the Most High, especially when we look back. Many fell on the way, but we are still spared in the land of the living and in the time of mercy.

The year 2020 was a very difficult year, when the coronavirus, which began in China in December 2019, swept through the whole world. Governments were forced to introduce lockdown restrictions, which affected church gatherings. It was at the end of March that church gatherings were banned here in Zimbabwe. It was a solemn moment when the Lord by His Divine Providence withdrew the means of grace from us. The congregants were encouraged to visit the church website on Saturdays and download sermons. Efforts were also made to relay sermons through electronic means like WhatsApp.

Whenever the lockdown restrictions were relaxed, church services were resumed in all our preaching stations in Bulawayo, albeit under strict regulations. I am thankful to the elders and professing men, who are of great help in keeping the doors of the means of grace open. Since the outbreak of Covid-19, communion services have not been held in all our stations in Zimbabwe. We pray that the Lord in His good Providence will open up that opportunity once more to us and that the sacraments will once more be administered as per the worship of the New Testament church.

At present, the lockdown restrictions have been relaxed, allowing a maximum number of 50 people to meet for worship and we hope as time goes on, following the commencement of the vaccination drive, the situation will improve to allow for the return to normality.

### **INGWENYA MISSION REPORT**

Like all other preaching stations, Ingwenya was equally affected by the lockdown regulations. It happened on the week we were preparing for the March 2020 Communion that the lockdown was announced and the communion services suspended. On the 13th June 2020, the lockdown restrictions were relaxed and services resumed, albeit under strict protocols. As time went by, the rules were relaxed, allowing up to 100 congregants to gather. This brought hope that things were getting back to normal, not knowing the worst was yet to come.

When schools were opened, some students were infected with Covid-19. The whole mission was put under quarantine and lockdown, with nobody allowed in or out. Services were immediately suspended. However, other stations were not affected and services continued at Gadadi, Inyathi, Cameron and Insiza.

When the week services were given a green light to resume at Ingwenya, the second lockdown was announced. I am, however, thankful that as I write this report, lockdown has been relaxed and services have resumed. Like in all our stations, the labourers are few; may the Lord send more labourers into His harvest.

#### **MBUMA MISSION REPORT**

It was during the lockdown in July that Rev N Sibanda was removed from the congregation by death. The charge was left vacant and the burden placed on my shoulders to have an oversight of the Mbuma congregation. It was not the minister alone who was removed by way of death as there were a number of deaths within the congregation that included two elders and one deacon.

In all its numerous preaching stations, services were resumed whenever the Covid-19 regulations were relaxed. Supply to all the congregations was arranged in order that the doors are kept open for worship on the Lord's Day.

I am very thankful to the office-bearers, the catechists and professing men for their assistance. We entrust all the care of the congregation in the hands of the Great Shepherd of the Church and that He would raise one up to take care of His flock.

#### **NKAYI REPORT**

Services continue in all the six stations and I am thankful to the elders and professing men in keeping the doors open in all the preaching stations. I would like to give special thanks to Mr. J B Mpofu who, despite his age and loss of sight, takes an active role in ensuring that all stations are supplied. He still takes some services.

Nkayi and its stations have lost quite a number of members through death. We pray that, as many as are removed to eternity, many will be called by grace to take their place – especially young ones that they will see the light and flee to Christ for the salvation of their souls, and that they be not carried away by divers and strange doctrines.

#### **ZENKA MISSION REPORT**

Zenka has five preaching stations and is a vacant charge. The congregation has remained intact despite all the disturbances. I have visited Zenka more than once and the attendance has always been encouraging. Services are held in all the preaching stations with the help of elders and professing men, who work to keep the doors open for worship. We pray that the Lord will provide them with one who will be their pastor.

#### **GWERU REPORT**

Since the lockdown there has not been much activity in Gweru and the shortage of manpower and transport has been a big challenge. It is our earnest

desire that, if the current situation improves, services would be resumed regularly again. The cry “Come over and help us” is loud.

### **NEW CANAAN REPORT**

In our Mission in Mashonaland, the charge has been vacant since the death of Rev Z Mazvabo and I have been interim moderator since. Two home missionaries were engaged to assist in the supply of the numerous congregations. In 2019, Mr. N Siziba, one of the home missionaries, resigned, but thankfully he has remained active in helping in the supply every Sabbath.

I would like to thank the JFMC for granting the request to engage a mission worker to help in the supply duties. It is hoped that Mr. T Mwedzi (divinity student), will be completing his studies soon and that will be a great relief in this great work.

Services are being held well in almost all the preaching stations with the exception of Mnaka where, during the rainy season, access to the church was made difficult by the flooded Runde river. This prevents preachers from supplying the congregation.

Finally I would like, on behalf of all our congregations in Zimbabwe, to thank the JFMC, Mbumba Zending, church people and friends for their coming to our rescue during the difficult time of drought that we faced in the country by supplying us with food and seed in our time of need.

Above all we would also like to thank the Most high for the good rains we received this year, which have given us a hope for a good harvest.

Hebrews 13:20-21: “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

### **JOHN TALLACH HIGH SCHOOL REPORT**

**Miss Norma B MacLean**

THE school report usually begins by confirming that the Scripture programme has continued as in years past. Sadly, this year, that is not so. The impact of the coronavirus pandemic which advanced throughout the world during 2020 and is still disrupting everyday activities at the time of writing in March 2021, meant that all aspects of the work of the school were negatively affected.

Zimbabwe entered a strict lockdown during the last week of March 2020 which brought Term 1 to an early close. Term 2 was cancelled because this lockdown lasted until September. The restrictions were then gradually lifted, allowing a staggered return to school with different groups of learners arriving over several weeks. As the final group of learners arrived at school, the first

coronavirus cases were confirmed and that was the end of formal teaching for the rest of the year. The whole school was declared an emergency quarantine centre and was monitored by a Ministry of Health team which were deployed to Ingwenya to manage the situation. The virus of course raged through the school in waves and hundreds of children tested positive, although only 4 members of staff did so at that time. To say that it was a tense time is an understatement: staff were not permitted to leave the premises for a period of 5 weeks and many of them naturally found this enforced separation from their families to be traumatic. The vast majority of the children, however, who tested positive, were asymptomatic or had very mild symptoms, and all of the children and staff who were sick recovered with medical care at school.

The public examinations did continue during this time with staff invigilating in full PPE clothing and children who had tested positive writing in isolation. It was a tense situation and credit is due to the teaching and boarding staff who continued to attend to the needs of the children.

Another lockdown was declared early in January 2021 with only examination classes allowed back to school to complete their public examinations. Term 1 did not start until 22nd March so the 2021 academic year is also shorter than normal.

Before the pandemic took hold, Miss Kerkhoff facilitated an exchange programme with Mount Cheam Christian School, her former school in Canada. The much anticipated arrival of the Canadian contingent in Zimbabwe took place in March and they had a very successful visit. The return visit to Canada by the John Tallach High learners was due to take place in August 2020 but, to everyone's great disappointment, this obviously was not possible.

### ***Enrolment***

Enrolment in Term 1 of 2021 was 607 learners: 316 girls and 291 boys. Day learners were 42 and boarders 565. Two boys in Form 4 suffer from visual impairment, one of whom uses braille. Due to the delay in issuing the "O" Level examination results, the Lower Six classes have not yet enrolled.

### ***Examination results***

Even although education was so significantly affected by the restrictions imposed to try to control the pandemic, ZIMSEC, the national examinations board, did proceed with the 2020 "O" and "A" Level examinations. These examinations began later in the year than normal and carried over into January/February 2021. The results have not yet been published.

Cambridge International Examinations proceeded as normal. However, due to the financial challenges which the majority of parents now face, there was a significant reduction in the number of candidates enrolling for both the "O" and "A" Level examinations.

### ***“O” Level CIE Results (Cambridge International Examinations)***

In 2020, the JFMC agreed to pay for all learners to sit the Cambridge Religious Studies examination as there is no longer a suitable equivalent offered by ZIMSEC. We were very thankful for this as the children do learn much more willingly when they have an examination to focus on.

#### ***Religious Studies:***

No of candidates: 136      Pass rate: 72%      No of A\*: 10      No of As: 24

Given the reduced learning time during 2020, this was a much better result than expected.

#### ***Only 15 candidates registered for other subjects:***

No of subjects written: 93      Pass rate: 93.5%      No of A\*: 9      No of As: 31

Again, given the adverse circumstances, these results were a credit to the candidates and the teachers.

### ***“A” Level Results***

Only 6 candidates registered for the Cambridge “A” Level examinations in 2020: a total of 18 subjects were written with 17 passes and only 1 fail. The passes were graded as follows:

A\*: 2      A: 2      B: 8      C: 5

### ***Finance***

The state of the school finances for Terms 2 and 3 in 2020 can only be described as chaotic. Parents of course did not pay any fees during the total lockdown in Term 2. The reopening of schools in Term 3 was staggered over several weeks, so the amounts payable by the different groups of learners had to be adjusted accordingly. The cancellation of classes during the quarantine at Ingwenya from October through to December also complicated the issue as refunds then became payable. It was only possible to maintain a minimum maintenance programme during the year but it was possible to continue paying wages to staff.

Hyper-inflation continued apace: the full boarding fee in Term 1 of 2020 was set at \$6,430 per boarder. This has spiralled to \$28,700 per boarder in Term 1 of 2021.

### ***Developments***

The development programme more or less came to a standstill in 2020 as few firms were able to operate during the lockdowns.

#### ***1. Installation of rainwater collection systems at teachers’ cottages***

This extremely useful project was completed by the end of 2020.

#### ***2. Construction of paved fireguards round all teachers’ cottages***

This project was also completed by the end of 2020.



### *3. New house for the Matron*

The plan to build a new house for the Matron which will incorporate a small sick bay for the girls and an office for Matron has had to be carried over to 2021.

#### ***Conclusion***

As we look back on 2020, the difficulties which we experienced become very small when we think of the wonderful mercy of God. How different everything would have been if the Lord had not set bounds to the effect of the virus on our children and staff. We are so very thankful that everyone who was affected recovered without any loss of life or any serious after effects. We have to seek to praise the Lord for His goodness, “How excellent in all the earth, Lord, our Lord is thy name. . . . What is man, that he remember’d is by thee? Or what the son of man, that thou so kind to him should’st be?” To be delivered and protected from illness is indeed a great blessing but what we all need at Ingwenya is to be delivered from sin and brought to salvation in Christ Jesus. May the Lord grant that greater mercy.

## **MBUMA MISSION HOSPITAL REPORT**

**Dr. A. Snoek**

THE year 2020 has been a year in which the Lord showed that He is God. The whole world was shaken by a small virus. Throughout all ages there have been two reactions to such events: either it brings God near or it takes further away from Him. Even at Mbuma this was visible: some people clearly witnessed of their trust in God alone, others went back to ancestor worship or put their hope in man-made securities.

The Covid-19 pandemic caused a huge blow to the already weak Zimbabwean health system. Although compared to other countries Zimbabwe has been greatly spared from the illness and death due to Covid-19, overall morbidity and mortality due to other diseases steeply increased. The real causes were the official and unofficial industrial actions of nurses and doctors (which left the entire hospitals and clinics greatly understaffed) and added to that were the travel restrictions due to the lockdown. The industrial actions were mainly motivated by the massive inflation of salaries, together with a fear for Covid-19 infections due to the initial scarcity of protective clothing and unavailability of intensive care ventilation.

With thankful acknowledgement to the Most High and help from overseas for staff support, Mbuma Mission Hospital has been one of the few hospitals which continued to deliver the expected medical, social and spiritual care throughout the year. The committed and caring attitude of the staff amidst the country-wide turmoil has been an encouraging witness.

Despite the lockdown restrictions, Mr M A Mpofu managed to organise the community in such a way that the building of Simbo clinic could take place. Most of the buildings being erected, it now awaits the final touches and furnishing, which is expected to be finished in the first half year of 2021, whereafter this 3rd clinic will become operational.

The Lord is God and He moves in a mysterious way. Great was the dismay when, on the 24th of July 2020, Reverend N Sibanda passed away at the age of 57 years, after having served the Mbuma congregation for 6½ years. The last Sabbath before his death he preached in Bulawayo from Song of Solomon 8:5: “Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?”. He was enabled to speak about the great joy of the spiritual Bridegroom who is travelling with His bride to heaven. A wonderful farewell sermon.

#### ***Administration and Finance***

As expected, the achievements of the past years, like the increase in local income and the decrease in donor dependency, were being wiped away by the deteriorating economic situation. However, thanks to the stable revenue income and several donations, we managed to run the hospital as usual.

From the government we received a large amount of protective clothing and infection control material with an estimated value of \$78,467.49.

The JFMC assisted with an extra donation of \$19,983.88, which was used for the purchase of oxygen concentrators, extra oxygen cylinders, Covid-19 Antigen rapid tests, beside other necessary infection control items.

From World Vision a lorry load full with useful hospital items was received, and ZACH donated a tent, stationery and infection control items. World Food Programme supplied the waiting mothers with food, Zimtech gave protective clothing and a container from the Netherlands, received in December, provided us with suitable hospital goods and furniture.

#### ***Maintenance and Capital projects***

##### ***Buildings***

The Isolation ward, which always mainly has been used for the isolation of TB patients, proved to be very useful as a Covid-19 ward. After a few amendments were made and the neighbouring gatehouse converted to a changing room, the complex met the Covid-19 requirements very well.

The Covid-19 outbreak also required more space in between the beds in the Antenatal Dorms. To that effect, a building which was originally meant as a kitchen, but not in use, was refurbished and prepared as the 3rd dorm. Extra shelves for storage were added to the other 2 dorms.

Due to the steady increase of the number of staff members, there was need for extra accommodation. This was realised by building two family units in the area in between the church and the school and an extra thatched hut in New Makhaya.

Two Blair toilets were built at Mbuma and Lutsha.

The visitors' house was repainted in preparation for the arrival of the new Doctor. The official commencement of the Vova bridge, which makes Vova RHC accessible even during heavy rains, was celebrated on the 11th of February 2020 in the presence of the Chief and local leadership.

#### *Transport*

The absence of public transport put a heavy strain on our fleet, since staff members had to be transported from town to work and vice versa. Thanks to the new Landcruiser, received in December 2019, it however was possible.

It took another 9 months to get the Lorry repaired. The electronic pump, which needed replacement, could not be found anywhere and was finally substituted by a manual injector pump.

The engine of the Landcruiser ambulance, which had been involved in accidents with cows, was replaced by a new engine in 2019. For one part however, a leaking water reservoir, no replacement could be found. Even a reservoir ordered from Dubai did not fit. It finally was replaced by a locally made iron exemplar, but sadly enough this did not prevent the engine from overheating and getting damaged again.

The old Landcruiser ambulance needed the replacement of a half-shaft, but otherwise continued to provide indispensable service to the work in the community.

#### *Electricity and generators*

The very useful solar field on the hospital roof was extended, beside the installation of solar systems for the fridges in management houses and two solar powered water pumps.

24 solar powered street lights were added to the Mbuma compound, besides 6 solar street lights for Zenka, Lutsha and Vova.

The alternator of the hospital engine was replaced. This, however, did not improve the instability of the voltage output, which continued to interfere with the working of sensible apparatus like the solar system.

Since ZESA, the local electricity provider, experienced an increasing lack of transportation possibilities, the hospital had to assist with its own transport in case of any fault due to fallen poles or stolen wires.

#### *Staffing*

The following staff changes took place in the course of 2020: 9 new staff members were appointed: 4 Registered General Nurses, 2 General Hands, 1 Procurement Officer, 1 Procurement Assistant and 1 Laboratory Technician.

6 staff members resigned: 2 Registered General Nurses, 2 Primary Care Nurses, 1 Nutritionist and 1 Data Clerk.

4 Registered General Nurses transferred out to other institutions. ZACH deployed staff was shifted: 3 Councillors transferred out to other institutions, while 1 Registered General Nurse, 2 Primary Care Nurses and 2 Councillors

transferred in. The number of staff members for Hospital and Clinics at 31st December 2020 was as follows:

<b>Payroll</b>	<b>Number of staff members</b>	<b>Payroll</b>	<b>Number of staff members</b>
Government	91	ZACH	5
Mission	10	Global fund	2
		<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>

Due to the travel restrictions, few people came to visit us in 2020.

Rev B Jardine paid a much appreciated visit as JFMC representative and stayed in Mbumba from 27th-29th January.

In February Hannah Wemmers and Gisanne Zwijnenburg came. They were nursing students from the Netherlands who were intending to do an attachment of 4 months at Mbumba and Mpilo, but had to leave already after 6 weeks, due to the Corona situation.

Dr Jack and Dr Maria Baaij stayed with us in February for 2 weeks and assisted Dr H Dube, during the 3 weeks leave of Dr Snoek.

Clara Boer, a nurse from the Netherlands, came in November for 3 months and assisted with the Holiday Bible days in December, which were held in the 11 outstations of Mbumba.

#### ***Hospital and Clinic services***

As mentioned earlier, the rural areas of Zimbabwe have been spared very much from the Corona pandemic. During the whole year of 2020, only 9 people tested positive at Mbumba. All got infected somewhere outside Nkayi District.

<b>Covid-19</b>	
Number of patients/staff members tested for Covid-19	575
Number of patients tested positive for Covid-19	2
Number of patients who died due to Covid-19	0
Number of staff members who tested positive for Covid-19	7
Number of staff members who died due to Covid-19	0

The workload in the hospital reduced by approximately 20% compared with previous years, travel restrictions most likely being the main cause.

	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
<b>Admissions</b>	1,862	2,010	1,548
General	789	898	553
Paediatrics	232	211	191
Maternity	778	837	736
Neonatal	63	64	68

	2018	2019	2020
<b>Deaths</b>	117	129	87
General	105	122	76
Paediatrics	6	1	9
Maternity	0	0	0
Early Neonatal	10	8	2

<b>Out Patients Department</b>	2019 All	2020 Mbuma	2020 Lutsha	2020 Vova	2020 All
New Clients	<b>8,707</b>	4,816	1,428	934	<b>7,178</b>
Repeat visit/Chronic Clients	<b>7,418</b>	4,621	1,032	1,178	<b>6,831</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,125</b>	9,437	2,460	2,112	<b>14,009</b>

<b>Preventive services</b>	2019 All	2020 Mbuma	2020 Lutsha	2020 Vova	2020 All
Antenatal/Postnatal Clinic attendances	<b>2,606</b>	1,200	663	555	<b>2,418</b>
Child Welfare Clinic attendances	<b>10,020</b>	4,444	2,111	3,102	<b>9,657</b>

<b>Total Births</b>	2019 Mbuma	2019 Lutsha	2019 Vova	2020 Mbuma	2020 Lutsha	2020 Vova
Live births	830	59	32	720	48	29
Still births	9	1	0	8	0	0

<b>2020</b>	<b>Still births</b>			<b>Early Neonatal Death</b>			<b>Maternal Death</b>		
	Fresh (FSB)	Mace-rated	<b>Total</b>	<2.5kg	>2.5kg	<b>Total</b>	Hospital	Home	<b>Total</b>
<b>Hospital</b>	4	4	<b>8</b>	2	0	<b>2</b>	0	0	<b>0</b>
<b>Clinics</b>	0	0	<b>0</b>	0	0	<b>0</b>	0	1	<b>1</b>

<b>Theatre/Labour ward</b>	2019	2020
Caesarean section	122	118
Other major operations	111	91

Due to the testing for Covid-19 and the receipt of another new analyser, which among others offers better follow-up of Diabetes patients and screening of Prostate cancer, the number of lab tests increased.

	2019	2020
<b>Radiology services</b>		
Number of X-rays taken	1,639	2,034
Number of Ultrasound Scans taken	677	728
<b>Laboratory services</b>		
Number of lab tests	9,125	10,500
Number of HIV tests	1,312	1,805
HIV incidence in ANC	2.6%	1.3%

The HIV programme continued as usual. The annual survival rate for our patients on Antiretroviral Treatment for 2020 was 99.4%. An increasing number of patients, however, is presenting us with long-term complications like heart and kidney failure.

Tuberculosis remains a very present disease, but continues to be underdiagnosed in many health facilities. Out of the 134 patients who were diagnosed at Mbuma, 77% was originating from other facilities or outside the district. The late presentation is causing that we are still not reaching the national cure rate target of 95%, but still are at 86% only.

<b>OIC and TB services</b>	<b>Mbuma</b>	<b>Lutsha</b>	<b>Vova</b>	<b>All</b>
Total number of patients on ART	837	448	440	<b>1,695</b>
Total number of patients diagnosed with TB	127	1	6	<b>134</b>

2020 was set as the year in which we were supposed to reach a 100% coverage of toilets for all households. Due to the lockdown, the programme came to a near standstill and this makes that we are still far away from our target.

<b>Sanitation</b>	<b>Mbuma (Wards 14, 15, 27)</b>	<b>Lutsha (Ward 24)</b>	<b>Vova (Ward 25)</b>
Total coverage at end of 2020	56%	69.9%	37.2%
Number of new toilets built in 2020	9	9	3

The increase of patients with cancer remains worrying, especially because the treatment options are limited. The cervical cancer screening programme, however, found 40 ladies with treatable precancerous lesions, which is a great gain. Only 55% of them were treated in 2020, due to unavailability of Nitrogen oxide, but this has been solved in 2021, after we received a thermo-ablation machine.

<b>Newly diagnosed Non Communicable diseases</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
Hypertension	45	45	25	26
Diabetes Mellitus	14	18	25	7
Cancer	24	22	49 <sup>1</sup>	41

<b>Type of cancer</b>	<b>Percentage of total cases diagnosed in Mbuma</b>	<b>Type of cancer</b>	<b>Percentage of total cases diagnosed in Mbuma</b>
Urogenital female	43.9%	Oropharynx	4.9%
Gastro-Intestinal	14.6%	Breast	2.4%
Skin	14.6%	Urogenital male	2.4%
Lymph node	7.3%	Other	9.8%

<b>Cervical Cancer Screening (VIAC)</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>%</b>
Number of women screened	1,135	818	
Number with precancerous lesions	78	40	4.9%
Number treated for precancerous lesions	75	22	55.0%
Number with cancerous lesions	35	8	1.0%
Number with cancerous lesions transferred in		11	
Number of biopsies done	32	19	100.0%
Number of women referred for treatment (outcome not yet known)	21	19	

Sometimes cancer is a blessing. Not the pain and suffering it brings as such, but the time which people get to prepare themselves for eternity. In 2020 we saw a remarkable change in one of our patients who was admitted for weeks in the hospital with advanced cancer. Belonging to a Pentecostal church, he came with the conviction that his faith would be strong enough to overcome the cancer. It, however, did not. Faithfully the Catechists pointed him to the Saviour of sinners. More and more convinced about the truth of being a sinner, he denounced all his earthly riches and help and, as we hope, fled to Christ alone. Where at first he angrily complained about the “lack of faith” he found at Mbuma, some of his last words to one of the Catechists were: “Do not leave Mbuma, all what you told me about life and death is the truth.”

The Lord is God. To him be the glory and thanks for His manifold mercies.

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<sup>1</sup> In the 2019 report 65 patients were mentioned. However, only 49 patients had cancerous lesions, while 16 patients had precancerous lesions.

## **THEMBISO CHILDREN'S HOME REPORT**

**B Maphala, Home Superintendent**

IN spite of man's desires and aspirations, there is a time frame set before him by the Almighty. Solomon had this to say: "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). A lot was expected to happen across the global village but alas it did not, due to the ravaging pandemic which swept across the entire world and the people's expectations came to a halt. Nevertheless, we thank the Lord for keeping us safe to this day through His mercies and unwavering love, though we are sinners and don't deserve it.

### ***Home***

The Word of God is the cornerstone of the home, day in and day out. Family units have a schedule to follow on a daily basis in the mornings and evenings. The workforce begins with the Word of God before engaging into different fields of work within the home. The Home Superintendent ensures that on a daily basis without fail.

### ***Children***

We have a capacity of 54 as an institution when in full swing. At present we have 29 children in total, 21 boys and 8 girls. Their age range is from 4 to 17 years. Four family units are operational out of five. Three of the four units are feeder points to the newly established youth house formed in 2019. Most of our children are well behaved and attend schooling of one kind.

### ***Formal education***

All our children are doing formal education, save for one who is attending a special skills training institution, specialising in welding. The rest are doing formal education ranging from Early Childhood Development to Form 4. They are doing well in their respective spheres.

### ***Youth House***

The family Unit 2 was turned into the youth house in 2019 to accommodate the 16- to 18-year-olds. It was felt they needed to be taught survival skills before they are integrated into society. They are under the tutelage of a guardian for guidance in moral upbringing. There are various projects undertaken there in order to empower them before they leave. There is broiler rearing, road runners and rabbits. They are taught how to take care of these and sell them for a profit. Gardening too is pivotal in their course. Sister Petra Beukers and Margaret Macaskill help a lot in the shaping of these children. The Word of God directs us in that regard: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).



### ***Staff***

We have a staff complement of 19 from 21 personnel. We recently lost 2 gentlemen, one in January and the other in February 2021, a driver and a watchman. We are greatly saddened by this loss; His will was done though.

### ***Covid-19 update***

We are grateful to the Almighty for keeping us safe from this pandemic. Everyone is safe at the moment. We strictly follow the laid down protocols and disinfect the home every 30 days.

### ***Conclusion***

Although we experienced some disappointment and anxious moments during the course of the year these were overshadowed by our successes. We continued to forge ahead and took a lot of strength from the Holy Word of God. "In my distress I cried unto the Lord, and he heard me" (Psalm 120:1).

## **ZIMBABWE MISSION ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT**

**Mr M A Mpofu**

IN submitting my report for 2020 I feel I have much cause for gratitude to the Almighty who controls the affairs of all men and who so directs the lives and concerns of all who trust in Him.

The year 2020 was a difficult one. Three things come into mind in that regard:

1. The passing on of Rev N Sibanda of Mbumba Mission.
2. My own ailment due to kidney failure.
3. The Covid-19 outbreak and the subsequent lockdowns that affected all activities, including going to worship.

Despite these experiences we are sincerely thankful to the Lord who has spared us in the land of the living when others have been ushered into eternity through the Covid-19 pandemic (Psalm 24:1). Personally I have reason to be thankful for the recovery I experienced from my illness.

### ***Board Meetings***

Due to the lockdowns caused by Covid-19 the board meetings were affected. Fewer meetings were held. Mission business was dealt with and wheels were kept rolling. The use of technology made it possible for me to chair board meetings from the Mission head office without unnecessary travel to outer Mission Stations like Mbumba. Other members of the boards would also be connected through Skype from Scotland.

We have three boards, namely Mbuma, Thembiso and Ingwenya, and there is also the Head Office Committee, chaired by Rev S Khumalo, which oversees the affairs of the Mission Head Office. The Mission Administrator chairs the three boards.

### ***Staffing***

The Mission has 34 employees on its Head Office payroll. These include watchmen, catechists, Bible knowledge teachers and office staff. Since our employees are paid in US dollars we have had no salary-related complaints or disputes.

Rev N Sibanda passed away in Harare where he had gone for a knee operation. His death seriously affected church work in Zimbabwe. Rev Khumalo remained as the only minister in the whole of Zimbabwe and consequently the Zimbabwean Presbytery became defunct.

Our prayers are that the Lord would raise young men who will labour in His vineyard.

### ***Expatriate staff***

Miss N B MacLean went to Scotland on furlough but her return to Zimbabwe was delayed because of the lockdown and the non-availability of flights. Miss Kerkhoff, the mathematics teacher, continued to labour at John Tallach High School.

Staffing at Mbuma remained the same with Dr A. Snoek as Medical superintendent and Sr Geurtsen as Matron.

### ***Deputies***

During the year under review Rev B Jardine visited Zimbabwe as a Deputy. He was able to visit all Mission Stations and congregations had an opportunity to sit under his preaching. We trust that some were blessed by his sermons.

### ***Finances***

The General Treasurer continued to remit funds to the different mission institutions. Each board is responsible for managing its own funds.

The Mission funds were audited and reports sent to the JFMC. A special forensic audit was carried out at Head Office and a report sent to Scotland. Similar audits have been done at Mbuma and Thembiso. The reports were delayed by the Covid-19 lockdown. It is hoped the Ingwenya forensic audit will be done in this current year.

### ***Sustentation fund***

Despite the depressed economy and a myriad of challenges facing the people, there was a slight improvement in the contributions, bearing in mind that people were contributing in US dollars which has more value when compared to the local currency.

1. Ingwenya..... \$562.36
2. Mbuma ..... \$1,533.28
3. Nkayi..... \$45.00
4. Zenka..... \$1,175.00
5. Bulawayo ..... \$1,209.23
6. Zvishavane ..... \$360.00

**Schools**

The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the primary schools’ activities for most of 2020, resulting in the planned programmes not being done. Learning was further disrupted by industrial action by the teachers at the beginning of both the first and the third term.

The review of the Bible Knowledge syllabus was completed, and it is ready for use beginning in Term 1, 2021. The Bible Knowledge teachers had monthly meetings with the Education Officer and Rev Jardine (via Skype), where the various text books to be used in the new syllabus were discussed. Lessons on the Books of the Bible (starting with Genesis) and on the *Westminster Confession of Faith* were also given during these meetings.

To ensure improved and uninterrupted communication with schools, internet services were provided for Ingwenya and Lutsha Primary schools. The other schools already had internet connection. To ensure limited disruption, due to power cuts, all schools were provided with solar or UPS back-up.

**Schools statistics**

School	Enrolment	Staffing	Grade 7 Results	
			2020	2019
Ingwenya	316	10	6%	59%
Lutsha	560	12	13%	8%
Mbuma	707	18	17%	46%
Thembiso	455	16	73%	96%
Zenka	732	24	58%	51%

In the Grade 7 examinations Zenka and Lutsha performed better than in the previous year, Zenka having the best results in Nkayi District. Though Lutsha’s pass rate remains low, the improvement is encouraging. Thembiso, Mbuma and Ingwenya fared worse in 2020 than they did the previous year. All the same, Thembiso had the best results of the five schools, with an overall pass rate of 73%, and Ingwenya had the worst, at 6%.

## **OVERSEAS COMMITTEE'S REPORT**

**Convener: Rev D A Ross**

THIS report, as well as reports from ministers and others labouring in our overseas congregations are, of course, required by the Synod. Our previous Overseas Report, due to the lateness of the Synod meeting in October, arrived late for distribution to our people. God willing, should our Synod meet as normal in May, we have the continuation of reports over a short space of time. Overlapping there will be, no doubt; nevertheless we trust the reports will be useful to our people.

Some previous reports from overseas originated from the early attempts of different people to establish the worship of God in their country of residence and to identify with the doctrine, worship and practice of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Since then, reports have continued to come regularly to the Synod about these movements and we have seen a measure of pleasing success in most cases of our gospel witness in these countries.

There are a variety of spiritual and practical uses to be made of reports from these congregations; for example, sustaining the gospel bond between congregations, helping to maintain a prayerful interest in all parts of our Church, and indicating the need to help financially.

One tremendous expenditure, which needs to be constantly brought to our attention is the vast distances to be travelled, especially by members of the Asian Pacific Presbytery, in carrying out their gospel activities. The main weight of these costs is carried by the congregations, but some office-bearers do so privately. We are thankful that there is a readiness by the Synod to contribute towards such costs.

As we are aware, the coronavirus has adversely affected travel; visits were restricted or not possible; with one exception, when an elder from Chesley, Mr Gilbert Zekveld, braved the problems associated with travel to attend our last Synod. In the enforced absence of so many others, it was pleasing to have one elder from these distant parts. Such face-to-face visits highlight and strengthen our ties with congregations abroad. Although we do not have reports or updates at hand from interim moderators, Revs R Macleod and D Campbell, of the state of our congregations in North America, we appreciate that through the elders and others the glorious gospel continues to be declared – that being, of course, the pre-eminently important activity in all our congregations.

Rev G MacDonald, the clerk of the Asia Pacific Presbytery, has, with information from Presbytery members, supplied reports about our congregations in Australia, New Zealand and Singapore. There are slight differences in Covid restrictions between the three countries, but one of the more problematic restrictions is border crossing, making it impossible for a full Presbytery to meet. However, most of their congregations are able to engage in public worship. For this they are deeply thankful to the Most High.

There is a report also from Mr Calvin MacKenzie, Sydney, the clerk of the Website Committee, telling us that the “Website Committee has been working hard on the translation of the main website into Chinese and it is almost ready for a ‘soft’ launch. We owe a considerable debt of gratitude to Bernard and Lai Yee Yong for their efforts along with other helpers in Singapore.” It certainly cheers our hearts to hear of these successful endeavours to publish and promote Bible principles which alone will make sinners of all nations wise unto salvation.

Our congregation in Odessa, Ukraine, at the moment can meet publicly for worship, albeit with restrictions. There is, however, a ban on visitors to the congregation. Sadly, some congregations there, outwith our own Church, did not take seriously government regulations regarding the coronavirus and consequently many people were infected. Some made a good recovery, others continue to suffer long-Covid and many have died. Rev D Levytskyi has given only in part the different activities of the Mission and his own involvement. One aspect of their work is the ongoing interest in reformed literature, as well as a genuine understanding of these precious doctrines. For this we are deeply thankful to the Lord, and to all those who constantly labour to spread the Word of God, and in particular Mr Igor Zadorozhnyi diligently engaged in the heavy duty of distribution.

It is good therefore when reports enlighten our people regarding this and other burdens of our Church overseas, helping to stir up a spirit of prayer and practical contributing for those congregations in other parts of the world. It is not only coronavirus problems which call for our prayers for our churches abroad, but also that in Ukraine there would be the cessation of the ongoing brutal war.

Personally, having travelled considerably to congregations abroad, there is one thing which struck me forcibly while listening to the prayers of the Lord’s people in our congregations – and that was the oft-repeated petition for the welfare of the Free Presbyterian Church in Scotland and elsewhere. I could not help but value this in light of the truth which says, “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16). We trust therefore that reports from overseas congregations will be for the good of the cause of Christ among us; strengthen our bonds in the gospel; further the bringing of the gospel to a lost world; advance the glory of God and move us to prayer for our brethren throughout the world. “Brethren, pray for us” (1 Thessalonians 5:25).

## **AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND AND SINGAPORE REPORT**

**Rev G B Macdonald**

THE year 2020 will long be remembered for the pandemic of coronavirus which swept the world. As I write, in January 2021, our congregations in the Asia Pacific Presbytery have been mercifully spared the sickness itself but have been much impacted at times by the government measures to suppress or seek to stop the spread of the disease.

Like our brethren in Scotland, we were subject to lockdown and travel restrictions. In Australia and New Zealand the borders remain largely closed and travel is severely curtailed. In 2020 we suffered the solemn providence, shared by others in many lands, of the closure of places of worship and the loss of the precious privilege of public worship for a time. Doubtless, we must see all these events in light of the providence of God who is a God who judges in the earth.

In late March 2020, as events were unfolding, we had a sermon in Sydney on the subject of “Divine Judgment Acknowledged” from Exodus 8:15-19 where we find even the wicked magicians of Egypt admitting, “This is the finger of God”. Sadly, we cannot report any such solemn admission by our national leaders. In Pharaoh’s case we go on to read, in spite of this startling admission by his own magicians; “Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said”. Has this hardening not been the case with many in our day?

Due to travel difficulties and the presence of Covid-19 in Sydney, the Presbytery was unable to meet with a quorum of members on the 4th September 2020 and thus needed to be revived in a constitutional manner at a meeting in Gisborne. A report will be presented to the Synod on this matter, DV. The ongoing difficulties in attending and arranging meetings of Presbytery have continued in 2021.

We are thankful that for the greater part of 2020, most of our congregations have been able to meet in their places of worship. The Presbytery are thankful to record, despite communion seasons being unable to be held throughout the church, that these were able to continue in New Zealand and Sydney in the latter half of the year. When we think of our own sins and the sins of our nations and see the troubles in other lands caused by Covid-19, we wonder that the Lord has so largely spared life among us. Of course, the reality that is lost sight of year by year is that multitudes are passing daily into eternity, whether prepared or not. The pandemic has brought men to see their mortality but perhaps only few have been brought to repentance. This teaches us that we are utterly lost without God’s mercy and the work of the Holy Spirit granting repentance unto life. What a wonder though if such events should be blessed to even one soul! Sometimes the Lord brings troubles into the lives of comfortable sinners to awaken them and, if He pleases, to draw them by His Spirit to Christ for salvation from sin.

Our life is frail and we are weak and needy. May we heed the loud voice of God in the providence of the pandemic and seek to be found in Christ and so have a good hope for heaven.

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Revelation 14:13).

## **EASTERN EUROPE MISSION REPORT**

**Rev Dmytro Levytskyi**

THE beginning of 2020 in Ukraine was marked by the Covid-19 pandemic. The State reacted to the new threat very carelessly, not paying enough attention to the fact that this judgement of God was coming swiftly and taking over the whole nation. The State has been barely coping with the consequences of the pandemic; first it announced quarantine measures and then a national lockdown.

The common question of the people is, When will we get a vaccine? However, as probably it is in the rest of the world, so there are a lot of individuals here who deny any threat of Covid-19. At the same time, for us, the prospect of receiving a vaccine still is very distant since the Government, having promised to begin vaccination by the end of last year, has not even begun. The heavy Government requirements concerning wearing masks and social distancing made people to some extent use masks for protection, but the different restrictions have brought tensions into society.

The Odessa Congregation is still worshipping regularly but under various restrictions. We must wear masks, apply disinfectant and use a bactericidal lamp before and after worship. According to present Covid prevention requirements, we can have only up to ten persons present at worship, the minister included. Our congregation has been reduced in number; sadly, one communicant member was removed from our midst to her eternal rest after a long illness. Two adherents were diagnosed with Covid-19 and had a slow recovery. We are thankful to the Lord that He in His kind providence preserved us and that we are still able to perform our duties.

During the year, our mission work was hindered by the lockdown. In these circumstances, the internet was most useful and necessary, since most of the requests for literature were coming by email. Some other requests came by surface mail (now slower than it was) and phone.

At the end of the year, the Mission started two printing projects: *Memoirs and Remains of Rev Donald Macdonald*, by Rev D Macfarlane, and *Line Upon Line*, by F L Mortimer. This is the second FP issue of *Line Upon Line* in the Russian language. May the Most High bless all those who contributed to the publishing of these editions, and may the seed of the precious teaching of the Word of God be sown in the hearts of those who will read them.

The adapting of the prose Psalms for singing is still in progress and we have another five metrical Psalms in the Ukrainian language added to our collection.

We continued distributing literature (Bibles, Christian books and calendars) during the year. Our literature was requested by people from all over Ukraine, mainly from those who live in rural areas. Requests were also made by soldiers, officers, and chaplains of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, which have been defending the country from Russian occupation for seven years. Also, ministers of the Gospel of various denominations have been posted literature in response to their requests.

All this literature was sent free of charge by mail and was as follows: 628 Ukrainian Bibles (large format); 27 Russian Bibles (large format); 18 copies of *Sermons by Rev D MacFarlane*; 99 copies of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Russian); 65 copies of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Ukrainian); 82 copies of *A Catechism of the History and Principles of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland*; 63 copies of *An Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith*, by Robert Shaw; 69 copies of the book for children, *Line Upon Line*, by F L Mortimer.

Altogether, 177 parcels of Christian literature were sent out. Voluntary donations continue to come to the Mission office and the total amount sent from Ukrainian correspondents for reimbursement of postage in 2020 was £82.07. These funds were sufficient for paying postages and stationery. The balance in our Distribution Fund at 1st January 2021 was £289.70. (Church door collections amounted to £582.71.)

The staff of Odessa Mission Station also hand out copies of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and other theological literature among ministers of Christian congregations in Odessa. For example, a pastor of a newly organised Baptist congregation, Mr Alexander Boychenko, requested 30 sets of Presbyterian literature for their preachers. Also, he asked one of our missionaries to explain to preachers who adhere to Arminianism what is the substance of the Reformed Faith. Mr Boychenko, after reading Chapter 21 of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, "Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day", sent us the following thankful letter:

*Peace be to you, brother in Christ! May the Lord strengthen you in following Him. Thank you for the literature that you presented to our congregation and I do share your view on keeping holy the Sabbath Day. I was brought up in a family and Church where it was counted as an offence to the Lord . . . if Christians are neglecting the Fourth Commandment. In our family it was censured and counted as unworthy of the life in Christ. For us it was the day of Resurrection and the Sabbath Day. However, since that time many things have changed in the beliefs and practice of the Christians. The present-day congregations were flooded by modernism and liberalism. In their worship they are using music, drums, puppet theatre, soap bubbles etc but I keep in*



*my heart and regard with awe the Commandments of God, in which I was instructed since my childhood in accordance with the Word of God! May the Lord preserve you! . . . Alexander Ivanovitch Boychenko*

During the days of the earthly life of Jesus Christ, many of the leaders believed in the Messiah, but for the sake of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, so as not to be excommunicated from the synagogue (John 12:42). The same is happening now with the ministers and preachers of the Arminian congregations in Odessa. Baptist pastors study the legacy of Calvin with great interest, read Thomas Boston's *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*, the brochure, the *Five Points of Calvinism*, by W J Seaton, and consult with us by phone on what they cannot understand of certain spiritual issues, and they in their hearts agree with the doctrines of Predestination and Sanctification, but they do not correct their doctrine and worship because of the fear of being excommunicated from the Baptist Union.

We ask you to continue to pray for such and for our Ukrainian people, that the eyes of their understanding would be opened and that the glorious Gospel of Christ would shine in the hearts of Ukrainians. We ask you to pray also for peace in Ukraine and an end of the war in eastern Ukraine.

“How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light” (Psalm 36:7-9).

## **TRAINING OF THE MINISTRY COMMITTEE'S REPORT**

**Convener: Rev J R Tallach**

THOUGH a period dominated nationally and internationally by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Church's three-year Theology Course moved into its final year with our three students, Messrs J Campbell, J Morrison and T Mwedzi, under the tuition of Rev R MacLeod, Glasgow. We pray that their studies may be blessed to them and that they may be like the leaven (Matthew 13:33) to the church at large. The subjects studied were Systematic Theology, Apologetics, Church Principles and Bible Instruction.

### ***British Accreditation Council***

The Interim Inspection planned for April 2020 in Aberdeen was cancelled due to Covid-19 and an Interim Inspection took place over two days on 21st and 22nd November 2020. The inspection was conducted remotely, first with Mr W Campbell and Rev J R Tallach and then with Rev R MacLeod while he conducted a class with the three students, Mr Mwedzi joining from Zimbabwe.

The Inspection concluded with further discussion with Mr Campbell and the Convener. Interim Accreditation, covering the next two years, was awarded.

***Training of Missionaries***

Due to the pandemic, no further steps have been taken in providing a course for home missionaries in the Church.

***Mr Trycot Mwedzi***

It was hoped that Mr Mwedzi would be with his fellow students in Glasgow for the latter six months of the academic year but plans had to be changed because of coronavirus and Mr Mwedzi had to remain in Zimbabwe, working from the Mission house in Zvishavane.

***Theological Conference***

No Theological Conference took place in 2020. It is hoped that, with some changes, the 2021 speakers will be as planned for 2020.

<b><i>John MacLaren</i></b> .....	Rev A W MacColl
<b><i>Justification</i></b> .....	Rev D Campbell
<b><i>Romanism, Changing and Unchanging</i></b> ..	Rev J B Jardine
<b><i>Union with Christ</i></b> .....	Rev I D MacDonald
<b><i>Application in Preaching</i></b> .....	Rev D A Ross

Dr Somerset has agreed to chair this Conference which will take place in Inverness on 26th and 27th October, the Lord willing.

It is hoped there will be a good attendance and profitable discussion.

The barrel of meal is low but the Lord promises it will never be empty. See 1 Kings 17:14.

**THEOLOGICAL TUTOR'S REPORT**

**Rev R MacLeod**

***Systematic Theology, Scripture and Apologetics***

The classes began on 8th September 2020 at 9.30 am with Messrs John Campbell and John Morrison present in person and Mr Trycot Mwedzi present online. The plan was that the classes meet, four days a week, for two terms of 15 weeks each. We are on course to achieving that. The second term began on 5th January 2021 and will end with the last of the final examinations on 16th April, God willing. Because of the Covid-19 restrictions we have met online since the end of September.

There was a class exam in each subject on week 15 and there will be an exit examination in each subject on week 30. It was arranged for Mr Morrison and

Mr Campbell to sit the class exam in the Church Library. Mr Mwedzi sat the examination at home in Zimbabwe. The students did well in these tests.

### ***The parts of the course***

#### ***1. Scripture***

I understand that the aim of this part of the course is to give the students an opportunity to increase their knowledge of the Authorised Version of the English Bible. I trust this has been done, partly by pacing their work in constructing outlines of the portion of Scripture assigned for this part of the course (Job to Malachi); and partly by writing an essay a month on some aspect of the assigned books.

#### ***2. Apologetics***

We used R C Sproul, *Defending your Faith*, again for part of the course, but if we were to continue, an alternative approach would be desirable. We leaned heavily on Rev D MacLean's excellent "Lectures" on Apologetics. Other material was drawn from various sources, including Dr. Norman Geisler's *Encyclopaedia of Christian Apologetics*. In February Dr Alex Ross gave a most useful and interesting paper on "Evolution's Deceits" which highlighted seven deceitful elements in the presentation of evolution in institutions of learning and the media.

#### ***3. Systematic Theology***

The books used for the systematics were parts of A A Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*; of L Berkhof, *Manual of Christian Doctrine*, and of Thomas Boston's Volumes 1, 2, and 8. Rev K M Watkins also gave a paper on the Five Solas.

The tutoring method has been as before: 1. A reading is assigned, 2. Questions are appended to the readings; 3. Questions are answered in the class the next day by the students, turn about. I have attempted to probe the answers with a brief discussion about the responses. I like to think that this was the most rewarding part of the course for me and the most profitable for the students.

It was difficult to get into the way of the work after an absence of nine years. It was like beginning all over again. But once I got into it, I found it very stimulating. I hope the students did too. They have worked very hard. By the end of the course, they will have read, summarised and commented on between 750 and 1,000 pages of theological text alone, that is apart from the work they did in Apologetics and Scripture.

#### ***4. Practical***

I heard Mr Morrison and Mr Campbell preach only two times before the lockdown. It remains to be seen if an opportunity will arise to hear them again before the end of the course.

I am grateful for the opportunity and honour to be involved in the training of the students. In the name of God the Lord we do wish them to be blessed.

## WELFARE OF YOUTH COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev J B Jardine

It is the remit of the Committee to promote the spiritual interests of the young people of the Church. This is particularly necessary but also increasingly difficult in a society that is becoming more and more secular in its outlook.

One aspect of the work of the Committee is to oversee the setting and marking of the Scripture and Catechism Exercises. In 2020, 95 young people in the UK and 45 from overseas received Prizes and Awards. This number is complemented by the larger numbers doing the exercises in Zimbabwe, 2,500 in the 5 Primary Schools and 630 in the John Tallach High School. Mr T B Mpofu, our Education Officer in Zimbabwe, ended a recent report by saying, "It is our prayer that the Almighty God grant all the learners the grace to seek wisdom in the Word of God as they would seek silver".

We would take this opportunity to thank those who set and mark the Scripture and Catechism Exercises in the UK and Zimbabwe. The time and effort that they put into the work is greatly appreciated. "Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God" (Proverbs 2:3-5).

A second aspect of the work is the annual Youth Conference. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown, the Conference for 2021 has had to be cancelled. The Committee are looking at ways to bring online papers to the young people. This involves developing online Safeguarding policies and protocols for the Committee's use. The Committee would encourage the young people of the Church to come forward with any ideas that they might have to make the Conference more beneficial to themselves, including ideas for papers.

A third aspect of the work is providing suitable material for the young people of the Church. To this end the Committee hope to develop a dedicated Web page on which relevant articles will be made available to the young people. The Committee would welcome any suitable material or suggestions from parents.

The late Dr MacSween, elder in the Glasgow Congregation, when speaking of his contribution to the book, *One Hundred Years of Witness*, commented that the Rev Donald Macfarlane had shown a real regard for the spiritual welfare of the younger generation and that this had partly formed his motives in standing for the truth in 1893. We hope and pray that the Lord would enable us as a Committee and Church to follow in the footsteps of Mr Macfarlane and seek that the young people of the Church would be blessed. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

## **BALLIFEARY CARE HOME REPORT**

**Convener: Rev J R Tallach**

THE coronavirus outbreak has brought Care Homes to the public eye over the past year. We are thankful to the Most High that no Covid-19 infections have been experienced in Ballifeary Home throughout this pandemic. This reflects well on the kindness of the Lord and the level of care and attention which has been exercised by the staff throughout.

The isolation and, in particular, the difficulties over visits by loved ones, bound up with the pandemic, has been mitigated by the use of electronic tablets to keep those fit to use them in touch with their family and friends. Family worship is kept twice daily, Sabbath services and weekly prayer meetings are relayed into the Home. We are grateful for the men who maintain the daily worship among the residents. A room near the door is also designated as a meeting place for relatives to spend time with residents when it is clinically feasible.

Sadly, during the past year, 6 residents passed away, 5 new residents were admitted and no residents were admitted for respite.

In September 2020, the Matron, Mrs Jackie MacKenzie, retired having been in the post since April 2015. The position of Matron is not an easy one at the best of times but, with Covid-19 and her own deteriorating health, this last year was particularly stressful. We are very indebted to our Matron for the warm manner in which she upheld standards in the Home over the years and wish her well in her retirement.

Mrs Catriona MacLean, who was of great assistance in the financial management of the Home, also resigned. We recognise the expertise and faithful spirit she brought to the work of the Home. Both these loyal workers will be greatly missed.

Normal inspections were suspended in view of Covid-19 but a Care Inspector conducted a teleconference inspection monthly and declared herself satisfied with the level of provision. An audit was carried out by a Health Protection Team working in conjunction with NHS Highland. This audit was satisfactory. In early March 2021 the Home had a Quality Insurance visit from a team of three from the Local Authority. The inspection included the care plan and welfare of residents, health protection regarding the cleanliness of the Home and infection control measures, and checking care plans were being implemented. They also spent time interviewing residents and staff. A very positive verbal report was given after the visit and the written report is awaited.

We have been advertising for a new Matron for some time and the present staff, particularly Lorna Davies our Assistant Matron, with assistance from the Administrator Roz MacLean, have been diligently holding the line in difficult circumstances. Interviews have been conducted and we expect, the Lord willing, another matron to take up the post in Ballifeary in the next three months.

In addition to Government legislation pertaining to Covid-19, staff have been variously trained in Emergency First Aid, Moving and Handling, Fire Prevention, Medication, Administration and Care Planning

Our prayer is that the Lord would bless his Word in Ballifeary House and that the Home would continue to provide a conducive environment to His people in their final years.

“Salvation doth appertain  
Unto the Lord alone:  
Thy blessing, Lord, for evermore  
Thy people is upon.”  
(Psalm 3:8, metrical)

## **LEVERBURGH CARE HOME REPORT**

**Convener: Rev J R Tallach**

THE past year has been a difficult and challenging time for the Care Home sector and Leverburgh Home has been no exception. Twelve months ago the Covid-19 pandemic took hold and it is still a source of anxiety for the Committee and the staff on the ground. For much of the past year no visiting at all has been allowed and a marquee, borrowed from Harris Marina, was used to enable controlled outdoor visiting. Residents were kept in touch with relatives by letter, telephone and virtual visiting using ipads. All new residents are tested for Covid-19 prior to admission. At the present time controls have been relaxed such that indoor visits are allowed by a designated person. Strict monitoring and infection control measures are still required. The paperwork involved in this has added considerable weight to the already heavily burdened staff.

In June the Home had a “walk through” inspection using ipads by a Health Protection Team and several more meetings followed. The Team was satisfied with the systems in place. The usual Council inspection is expected soon. Staff are tested for Covid-19 three times a week; twice by Lateral Flow testing and once by the more reliable PCR test. All staff have had their Covid vaccinations.

Over the past year there were, sadly, six deaths in the Home. Four residents were admitted and the room reserved for respite care was in frequent use throughout.

The Covid-19 restrictions have meant that job opportunities locally have decreased. This has helped ease the staffing situation in the Home.

The Handyman at the Home, Mr John Morrison, became ill very recently but is now improving and hopes to resume his duties at the Home.

The manner in which the staff in the Home have responded to the difficulties and anxieties of Covid-19 have put us peculiarly in their debt and we acknowledge this and thank them sincerely for their loyalty.

“Oh give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever” (Psalm 107:1).

## **OUTREACH COMMITTEE’S REPORT**

**Convener: Rev D A Ross**

IT is with a great degree of sadness that your committee compiles the 2021 Report. While the Covid-19 pandemic affects every corner of our country and indeed the whole world, it restricts our freedom to spread the Word of God, though not altogether.

For example, we have not been able to do book van work at agricultural shows where thousands of people would see our displayed Scripture texts from a considerable distance. We cannot claim great successes by way of people showing much genuine interest due to our presence at these events, but we do know from experience in the past that there is something truly gratifying in doing our duty of going out with the Word of God, which is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes, displaying it, contacting people and seeing some interest being shown, albeit at times in a limited manner. The first step to believing is that people be confronted with the Word of God. True, many who pass by may have seen the displayed Word already but their seeing it yet again may be the time, in the good mercy of God, when it will be as a sharp two-edged sword, bringing about needed awakening and leading to the cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner”.

We know too from past experience that some of those professing faith in Christ have made their way to our book van to express their appreciation on seeing us once again in the open spreading the Word, which has been encouraging.

We do indeed miss the privilege of those experiences, but we pray that the Lord will in His kindness open this door again, and even more widely. Who can tell but the coronavirus crisis may have been blessed to some to create an interest in eternal issues? This we hope. We do hear of a revived interest in Christianity in some parts of the world due to the virus, resulting, for example, in Christians engaging in more Bible reading as well as an increase in the sale of Bibles.

While we are hugely restricted in our outreach work, we continue where possible to engage in postal work. One person, a Muslim, sought contact with us to speak about religious matters and took willingly the Authorised Version of the Bible, the *Shorter Catechism* and a tract. We wait prayerfully that the Holy Spirit would mercifully convince of sin, righteousness and judgement to

come. Sowing beside all waters involves also praying that the seed sown would be multiplied.

One of our first recollections of book work at agricultural shows was of a middle-aged man, rather the worse of drink, gazing intently at a Trinitarian Bible Society poster with the Ten Commandments. Taking some time to read the poster, he eventually went his way. We think his being the worse of drink a barrier to his ability to absorb what he read, and so it is. But who can tell? We are confident God is able by His written Word to break through hosts of barriers to reach sinners, even of this sort.

A grant from the Outreach Fund was given towards distribution of TBS *Words of Life* calendars to all homes in Harris and North Uist. This was done by post because door-to-door distribution was thought inadvisable due to the coronavirus. Preparing for posting them was exceedingly time consuming. Let our prayers accompany the labour of our friends who so diligently spread the Word to these homes.

In other areas, distributors went from house to house but avoiding face-to-face distribution. However, each calendar, in this case a TBS *Golden Thoughts* calendar, was enclosed in an envelope with the message, “Wishing you the Lord’s blessing for 2021”. There was only one negative – some objecting to our distributing because of the pandemic. However, one person wrote back and said, “I suppose this must be the best calendar in the world”. Our prayer is that it will be just so to many who will read it and come to a sense of sin and salvation in Christ.

Looking at the long list of possible areas in which action is required by the Outreach Committee, we are a long, long way from the target. Yes, the pandemic has set constraints, but the lack of manpower is a great concern. Christ, having seen this in His time of labour in this world, directs us, “The harvest is truly plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth labourers into the harvest” (Matthew 9:37, 38). We hope this year will in God’s ruling bring further openings which we prayerfully crave.

“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 endlessly. 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.

## **PUBLICATIONS AND BOOKROOM COMMITTEE’S REPORT**

**Convener: Rev. Kenneth D. Macleod**

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

### ***Magazines***

Whilst we record each year, with thankfulness to the Lord, that the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* and the *Young People’s Magazine* have continued to be issued each month, we are particularly thankful that this has been the case during the past year due to the lockdown of much business activity in the United Kingdom in consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic. The printers of the magazines came in to their premises just to print our church magazines and one other monthly publication.

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:

- “Saving Faith – The Marrow standpoint”, by the Rev Keith M Watkins;
- “John Kennedy of Dingwall”, by the Rev Kenneth D Macleod.

In addition the *Young People’s Magazine* has printed three papers during the year that were given at the Young People’s Conference in Scotland and Australia:

- “Justification”, by the Rev James R Tallach;
- “The Tabernacle and the Temple”, by the Rev J Bruce Jardine;
- “The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland – Past, Present and Purpose”, by the Rev J D Smith.

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 2021.

### ***Publications***

The Committee have recently published during the year a book mainly for teenagers and young adults, by the Rev. Alexander McPherson 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 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. In addition there have been re-issues of three valuable books that had been out of print. Two of these are by the Rev Donald Beaton, a former editor of both the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* and the *Young People’s Magazine*. They are the volume that he both contributed to and edited, *Memoir, Biographical Sketches, Letters, Lectures and Sermons of the Rev. Neil Cameron* and *The Reformed Faith*, Mr. Beaton’s exposition of the “Five Points of Calvinism”. Both have been reprinted in attractive new editions. The third reprint during the year is the *Mother’s Catechism*.

### ***Bookroom***

Christian bookshops are facing challenging times and many continue to close; the enforced closure of bookshops to the public for the greater part of the year has added considerably to these difficulties. The Free Presbyterian Church is the only denomination in Scotland that continues to operate its own bookshop. As we stated last year, 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 increased during 2019 by nearly £8,000. However, this included £9,176 from two large orders for Bibles for the Mission in Zimbabwe. Sales in 2020 were just less than £20,000 compared with the previous year’s sales of £34,500. Discounting the orders for Bibles for the

mission, the sales have reduced during the year by £5,500, some of which is very probably due to the lockdown. Congregational contributions to the Bookroom have only reduced slightly and the Committee are thankful for the continued support of the people of the Church.

Following a great deal of work by the Website Committee, for which the Publications committee is very grateful, it is envisaged that the new website will be operative by the time of the 2021 Synod and able to be accessed at the following link: [www.fpbookroom.org](http://www.fpbookroom.org).

It is the Committee's hope that now it is possible to purchase books on-line from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom that its deficit may begin to reduce. The Committee view the Bookroom as a ministry not only to Free Presbyterians but to the wider church and urge prayer to the Lord for His blessing on every part of the production of Magazines month by month and the publication and distribution of Christian literature.

## **WEBSITE COMMITTEE'S REPORT**

**Convener: Rev C J Hembd**

“BLESSED are ye that sow beside all waters” (Isaiah 32:20). This promised blessing is one encouragement for the Church to spread the truth through channels such as the internet. Of course, the Church's time for such endeavours is limited, since her main work must ever be the preaching of the gospel – the principal means of conversion and sanctification.

During the year 2020, the website received 407,000 page views, a substantial increase above the 342,000 page views in 2019. The months of March and April saw especially high increases, no doubt due to the pandemic and consequent lockdowns throughout the world.

Throughout the year, the Committee sought to provide relevant written material for people affected by the pandemic. The material included a series of sermons by John Flavel on Isaiah 26:20: “Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast”. Earlier this year (2021), John Owen's treatise, *An Humble Testimony unto the Goodness and Severity of God in His Dealing with Sinful Churches and Nations*, based on Luke 13:1-5, was placed on the website in multiple sections. Each section was headed by an introductory note that summarized the content. An article drafted by the website editor, Rev K Watkins, and reviewed by the Committee, was also placed on the main page for several months; it emphasised that the pandemic is a judgment from God and a loud call to repentance.

A test launch of the Chinese website was launched in February, 2021 after considerable work by Bernard Yong and his wife Lai Yee, along with others from Singapore. A significant amount of content has already been translated, but Mr. Yong continues to edit the translation for accuracy. He hopes to have

the website fully running by the time of the Synod, DV. With the Lord's blessing, the truths for which we contend could reach many thousands of immortal souls.

The Committee has discussed creating a dedicated webpage for our young people and providing more information about our mission in Zimbabwe. The Committee continues to work with the Bookroom Committee to make it possible to purchase books online from the Bookroom in the future. The website, of course, is closed on Sabbaths, so no shopping would occur on the Sabbath.

The Outreach Committee also makes use of the website, with the offer of a free Bible. Most requests continue to come from the UK.

## **ARCHIVES COMMITTEE'S REPORT**

**Convener: Rev D Campbell**

THE Committee has only met remotely on a few occasions. Having appointed Mrs Anne Macdonald as Church Archivist, considerable work has been done by Mrs Macdonald in preparing a template archive of records and the draft of a policy for maintaining the archive. Further work on these is required, but this professional approach to the work is a major step forward. Mrs Macdonald has however intimated that she is unable to take up the duties of Church Archivist as initially hoped, due to other commitments. It is hoped that informal and occasional advice will still be obtained from Mrs Macdonald in future.

The Committee still intends to publish the historic minutes of the first Presbytery which have now been fully transcribed in electronic format. These important records require considerable work to identify persons mentioned and to provide a wider historical context to matters identified in them. They form part of the historic testimony of the Church, and bear witness to the indefatigable labours of those who established congregations in all parts of the country over a short period of time following the constituting of the first Free Church Presbytery of Scotland in 1893.

The Committee would like again to take this opportunity to remind Clerks of Church courts throughout the Church of the importance of securing the records of the court they are responsible for and the importance of obtaining a digital version of these records. It is similarly emphasised that any old records or documents of interest, including audio, video and photographic materials that anyone wishes to have preserved in the Church Archive, or which may be of historic interest and importance, is eagerly sought by the Archives Committee. The Committee Convener is very glad to report that a considerable quantity of such documents, preserved by the family of the late Rev D B MacLeod, is due shortly to come into his possession for safe keeping, God willing. Such materials, which include the labours of deceased ministers of the Church who served their Master faithfully, are worth preserving and making available for the present and future generations.