

FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

**REPORTS OF
STANDING
COMMITTEES
OF SYNOD**

Submitted to Synod in May 1999

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Report of the Religion and Morals Committee..... | 3 |
| Sabbath Observance Committee's Report | 12 |
| Jewish and Foreign Missions Committee's Report..... | 15 |
| Report from Zvishavane..... | 16 |
| John Tallach Secondary School Report | 17 |
| Mbumba and Zenka Missions Report..... | 21 |
| Mbumba Mission Hospital Report..... | 22 |
| Building and Transport Report..... | 27 |
| Zimbabwe Mission Administrator's Report..... | 29 |
| Dominions and Overseas Committee's Report | 36 |
| Australian Report | 37 |
| New Zealand Report | 39 |
| Eastern Europe Mission Report | 40 |
| Report of Visit to Odessa | 43 |
| Report of Deputy to USA and Canada — Rev. K. M. Watkins..... | 46 |
| Report of Deputy to USA and Canada — Rev. J. Goldby | 48 |
| Report of Deputy to Ontario, Canada — Rev. J. MacLeod..... | 51 |
| Training of the Ministry Committee's Report | 51 |
| Theological Tutor's Report | 52 |
| Welfare of Youth Committee's Report..... | 53 |
| Ballifeary Residential Care Home Committee's Report..... | 55 |
| Leverburgh Residential Care Home Committee's Report | 56 |
| Outreach Committee's Report..... | 57 |
| The Free Presbyterian Magazine Report..... | 58 |
| The Young People's Magazine Report..... | 59 |
| Publications and Bookroom Committee's Report | 60 |
| Kenya Mission Caretaker's Report | 61 |

REPORT OF THE RELIGION AND MORALS COMMITTEE

Convener: Rev. R. MacLeod

Religious Education

Higher Still, a set of new syllabi and examinations for all subjects, in the later stages of secondary schools, is being introduced in Scotland. A document which provides course materials to support the teaching of “World Religions: Christianity at Higher and Intermediate 2” has caused particular concern. The document is anything but supportive of biblical Christianity and discusses biblical doctrine and history from the perspective of liberal theology. The Genesis record of creation and of the fall of man are not to be regarded as the revelation of God but merely “part of the mythology of the people of ancient Israel”. Adam and Eve are not to be regarded as historical persons but as mythical progenitors of the human race. The document slavishly follows the modern way and speaks of evolutionary theory as established fact in spite of the fact that, in recent years, many reputable scientists do not accept the theory as a basis for explaining the origin of life. The biblical doctrine of the fall of man and the origin of sin and the involvement of the serpent are spoken of in a derisory manner and the document states in a categorical way that, “‘Sin’ is a human responsibility, not a demonically inspired pre-historical fall”.

God has greatly blessed the preaching of the Gospel: that preaching which addresses man as a sinner and directs him to Jesus Christ. By means of this ordinance, God has changed the face of whole nations. Let any bring to mind the sermons of the Reformers, the Puritans, Whitefield, Spurgeon, and count-less others who were used of God for the conversion of souls, and they shall find that the sermons which reformed millions of lives was the preaching of law and gospel. “World Religions: Christianity at Higher and Intermediate 2” mentions this preaching, this most interesting fact of our religious history, only to dismiss it scornfully as unworthy of the students’ further consideration.

This document creates the impression that the main objective of the authors was to deride the scriptural doctrine of original sin, the true nature of evangelical repentance and the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Without controversy this document is full of the seeds of unbelief, which, if sown in the fertile ground of young minds will bring forth a harvest of doubt in the truth of the Bible as the Word of the God. We would earnestly advise parents to ensure that their children are not exposed to this soul destroying teaching.

The Alpha Course

A large advertising programme introduced the Alpha course. It has now reached the extremities of the British Isles. The *Evangelical Times* says of this programme that its manuals “promote decisionism, and low views of human

depravity. They contain minimal teaching on God and His sovereignty, on Christ, the cross, justification, regeneration, faith and repentance. There is a disproportionate emphasis on Satan, and seriously flawed teaching on guidance.” There is an emphasis on healing and tongues – “go with the flow! Open your mouth and begin to speak” – being an example of the teaching. “Try [speaking in other languages] on your own, in your room” is the kind of teaching found in the movement’s youth magazine. We are reminded of the Biblical test: “To the law and the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20). Furthermore, a Roman Catholic Cardinal has described the Alpha teaching as “a remarkably effective course”, stating that it does not contradict the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church.

Prophecy Today says: “The most worrying aspect of the Alpha course is that it is structured, and is being received in a way which shows that the [supposed] experience of the Spirit, particularly in a tangible, felt, visible, manifest encounter, is becoming the heart of the Christian faith rather than salvation by faith in the finished work of Christ.” The author states that he was startled to discover that none of the new “converts” he questioned, who had professed to come to faith through the Alpha Course, described an experience of conviction of sin and salvation through the redeeming work of Christ. It is the preaching of Jesus Christ and Him crucified that will draw poor sinners to Christ. “And I,” said the Saviour, “if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32). Paul said, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8).

Associated Presbyterian Churches

Though they often made the claim at the outset, that the Associated Presbyterian Churches (APC) was the true Free Presbyterian Church, that claim it seems has since been dropped. Few of those who left the spiritual oversight of the Free Presbyterian Church in 1989 had any idea that APC ministers, and elders whom they looked to for spiritual guidance, would depart so radically from the “old paths” (Jeremiah 6:16), and prove so conclusively that they were very far from being the heirs of Mr. MacFarlane and Mr. MacDonald. Those who profess to care for the souls of these people should encourage them to return to the Free Presbyterian Church of their fathers, after ten years in the wilderness.

The Free Church

The division of opinion which plainly exists in the Free Church seems to have increased in the past year. A Highland paper reported recently that senior figures in the Free Church feared that relations between parties within the Church were so bad that the church would soon fall apart. Some attempts at reconciliation have succeeded only in strengthening the roots of disunity. Symptomatic of the malaise within the Free Church are the writings of one of

her Professors in a Highland newspaper, and in other publications. The Professor writes of the most solemn matters with expressions which are often offensively frivolous or erroneous, such as one would not expect to hear from a professed exponent of the Reformed Faith. Further division was caused in the Free Church, when it was discovered that the College Board was holding confidential talks with the University of Edinburgh. The aim of these discussions was to upgrade to degree status the qualification gained in the Free Church College. There were fears that the proposal would inevitably lead to the teaching of modern critical views of the Bible.

The Church of Scotland

In May the Church of Scotland at its General Assembly reaffirmed its opposition to gambling in all its forms. At the same time the Church of Scotland decided, despite the opposition of many Assembly members, to permit its congregations to apply for Lottery funding. The principle behind this confusing situation is said to be, that this is a way of “putting bad money to good use”. This concession is but the thin end of the wedge. By November we read that the Edinburgh Presbytery has voted to question the gambling ban.

In April the Press informed us that the Kirk has a consultative committee on artistic matters, and its secretary, Douglas Galbraith, has blamed drab Kirks for turning off parishioners. Innovative design it is said, is the way to pull in the worshippers. We read that the Church of Scotland is considering including ideas from other religions to make its services more interesting. There is no person who will not admit that this generation has little interest in religion. What the visible Church needs is that the Holy Spirit would bless the divinely ordained means of grace. We have to ask why has the Lord not made us to prosper? Does not the spiritual darkness of our land cry out for reformation and repentance amongst its clergy?

The New Scottish Parliament – no room for the King of kings

We are very alarmed that it has been suggested that Christian prayer should not begin the day’s deliberations in the new Scottish Parliament. If those who oppose Protestant worship in the Parliament of a Protestant nation succeed in this matter, they will not rest until the Protestant nature of the Constitution of the nation is changed. Indeed we fear that this movement, carried to its logical conclusion will require that Protestantism itself will be ousted in Scotland. This step is a most solemn rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ, all the more poignant because it is a breaking with the precedent of the Westminster Parliament. Is it the case that Christ is no longer the King of kings in the land of the Covenanters?

The Church of England

August saw the ten yearly Lambeth Conference in the Church of England, and the decision “to adopt a strongly conservative line on homosexuality”. The liberals wanted the “most ambiguous resolution” they could get, which would

have “left the door open to gay marriages and ordinations, and would have led to a commission being set up, along the line of the commission which paved the way for women bishops. The conservatives were determined to oppose this,” says *The Times*. A three hour debate led to a resolution that “homosexual practice was contrary to Scripture and that practising homosexuals should not be ordained, nor their unions blessed”.

The decision seems to have been swayed by the African bishops’ votes. It was reported that if the vote had gone the other way that the African bishops intended walking out in protest. The decision stirred up very strong opposition. The Bishop of Edinburgh, The Right Reverend Richard Holloway, reacted angrily. He described Dr. Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury, as “pathetic” accusing him of failing to give adequate leadership. He said that “the church was proceeding down the path to fundamentalism, and that it was in danger of losing its traditional Anglican identity”. He spoke of “fundamentalism as being attractive in the same way that fascism was attractive”. In a most telling comment, he said: “The thing that is most heartbreaking is not so much the same sex angle, it is the sense of a new prevailing attitude to scriptural interpretation which I do not recognise as Anglican.” He complained that the Church of England made it “difficult to be lesbian and gay Christians”. More ominously for those north of the border he is reported to have said: “This will not affect us in our province of Scotland.”

In 1995 the Pope expressed his wish for the churches to be united by the turn of the century. Recent headlines tell their own story. In February of this year (1999) Archbishop Carey visited the Vatican. He held “Millennium talks” with Pope, seeking a “big push for union”.

There is a proposal to replace the coronation service with a multi-faith installation ceremony for the next monarch. The former Bishop of Durham, the Rt. Rev. David Jenkins, is leading a group that has, over the past 18 months, discussed the reform of the 1,000-year-old service. The group wants leaders of the Roman Catholics, Methodists, the Chief Rabbi and a representatives of other religions such as Islam to play a role. In 1953, the Queen swore in her Coronation Oath to “maintain in the United Kingdom the Protestant Reformed Religion established by law”. Has not the Church of England a responsibility to do so also?

The Papacy

The Pope issued a Bull last year in which Indulgences are offered. The Indulgences are defined as a “release from temporal punishment due for sins already forgiven”. This means that one may obtain release from purgatory, but only for sins which have been confessed and for which penance has been done. The indulgence can be earned for oneself or for another soul, which is thought to be in purgatory. We have come round to the great spiritual darkness of pre-Reformation times. The Satanic lie of purgatory, and the sale of

Indulgences was one means used by God to open the eyes of Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries to the evil and greed of Popery.

National newspapers have taken a great interest in the Vatican purse. A great deal of attention has been paid to the Wartime history of the Vatican. An attempt to discover the whereabouts of works of art and gold plundered from the Holocaust victims by the Nazis during the Second World War have been hampered by the Vatican's unwillingness to open its archives. Lord Janner, a member of a forty-one nation conference trying to unravel the jigsaw, voiced suspicion that the Vatican may be covering up details of its involvement in the plundering of Jewish-owned art by the Nazis during the Holocaust. He said: "We are certain that into the Vatican came not only human beings, SS people on their way out; but property, art, assets. We have no idea what; and we're saying to them, as we do to every other country and authority, please tell us what happened. Please tell us the truth."

The immoral behaviour of some priests is frequently reported in the Press. A newspaper reported that the Archbishop of Cardiff, despite being arrested over allegations of sexual assault, is not facing suspension by the Roman Catholic Church in Wales. The allegations date back to when the archbishop was a parish priest and school governor in Peckham, South London, in the early 1960s.

The Times recorded that by June 1998, thirty-one Catholic clergymen in the Irish republic and Northern Ireland had been convicted of child sexual abuse since 1980. One of the most disturbing cases of this kind was of a priest accused of sex attacks on orphans. The court was told that boys as young as six were abused, and then beaten by nuns for complaining about their ordeals. There have been reports in the national Press of the cruel torture of orphans, flogging, and sexual abuse at the hands of Roman Catholic nuns.

In spite of, or perhaps because of, all the information now available on the nature of Popery, the propaganda machine runs on: *The Times*, 25th September 1998: "Pontiff 'ponders general apology'", for the Crusades, the Inquisition, the persecution of alleged heretics, and for their failure to counteract anti-Semitism and to prevent the Holocaust. True sorrow for sin includes a turning from sin with grief and hatred of it unto God, as well as confessing it without reservation. The information now available on the iniquitous nature of this system, discredits this Papal "pandering" as mere worldly politics. One is reminded of the utter execration of Popery expressed in the Bill of Rights and the Act of Settlement: "It hath been found by experience that it is inconsistent with the safety and welfare of this Protestant Kingdom to be governed by a Popish Prince or by any King or Queen being married to a Papist".

Alarming increase in the Persecution of Christians abroad

There have been reports of Chinese police in a crackdown on underground Protestant Churches arresting worshippers and beating up their leaders. The leading article in *The Times* expressed fears at the upsurge in violence against

Christians. The editor wrote: "Mahatma Gandhi expected the India of his dreams 'to be wholly tolerant, with its religions working side by side with one another'. For India's Christians, those expectations have been brutally betrayed since last March, when the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) formed a new Indian Government. The mob murder in Orissa of the Australian evangelical missionary Graham Staines, incinerated in his car with his two young sons by Hindu extremists, brought to 109 the recorded acts of violence against Christians in ten months. That compares with 50 in the entire half-century since independence."

The Millennium Preparations

ACTS (Action of Churches Together in Scotland) is proposing to deliver leaflets to every home in Scotland, asking that millennium parties be halted for a few second's silence, to light a candle and say a prayer – a ritual intended to be enacted in pubs and parties, as well as churches.

Schools are to receive teaching packs to help teachers explore the meaning of the millennium with pupils. The prayer, if it can be called a prayer is, "Let there be respect for the Earth, peace for its people, love for our lives, delight in the good, forgiveness for past wrongs, and from now on a new start". Those who see through the froth of all Protestant and Papist man-made religion, long for the revival of true religion. In place of the spiritual death that reigns around us, and in us, we would then find a reviving of true spiritual Christianity.

The Vatican is preparing for the year 2000. They anticipate 30 million visitors to their small but powerful state whose sovereign assumes the title of the Father of Princes and Kings. It is said that they hope to provide hopeful pilgrims with identity cards, a pilgrim database and a pilgrim Web site. Organisers plan to issue at least 12 million of the cards, expected to cost users between \$5 and \$28. Many hope that the dawn of the new millennium will bring in the spiritual reign of Christ in the world, and the end of the reign of the Antichrist. If that be so, then there will soon be heard the cry, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" (Revelation 14:8). "And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more" (Rev 18:9-11).

The Family Unit

According to official figures, marriage, the foundation of the stable family unit, is rapidly becoming unfashionable. In parts of Britain the number of people cohabiting had risen and the trend appears to be still upward and it is predicted that by the year 2021 about three million will have adopted this

lifestyle. Recent government statistics have revealed that the number of couples giving the same address when getting married at a civil ceremony has hit an all-time high of 80%. Even where marriage is still in vogue, four out of every ten of these are ending in divorce. It is to be feared that these trends will not improve when articles, such as appeared last August in the Church of Scotland's *Life and Work* magazine, reported that Mr. Gerald Barlow, vice-chairman of Marriage Counselling Scotland, suggest that the Church should encourage couples to experiment with living together before actually entering into a marriage commitment. Mr. Barlow stated that the Church needs to move with the times and accept that living together in a sexual relationship before deciding whether or not to marry can have positive and beneficial results. Sadly, Mr. William Hague, the leader of the government's opposition, and his wife have by their own very public premarital conduct, given an apparent credibility to such a philosophy.

With contraceptives being made freely available in some of our schools, to children as young as eleven, immorality is being encouraged from a young age. This, to the exclusion of any moral guidance, is producing a generation of teenagers with little appreciation of real family values. Teenage pregnancies continue to increase and young single mothers are given every incentive to set up home alone. Britain has now, according to an Office of Population survey, the highest rate of unmarried teenage mothers in the world. Data from fifty-three countries show that the only other country to come close to British statistics is the South African state of Botswana. 85% of babies born to girls between the ages of 15 and 19 are born out of wedlock in Botswana while in Britain it is 87%. One explanation, given by Mrs. Barbara Littlewood, a lecturer in sociology at Glasgow University, for the increasing number of single women, "choosing single motherhood," is "the rising number of women in employment and a decline in the number of working men." The old adage, "the hand that rocks the cradle, rules the world," quite obviously does not impress the female social climber in our modern, high flying, and social status orientated society.

Changing attitudes towards the orthodox family unit are further evidenced by the fact that alternative lifestyles, so called, are given favourable publicity so that the unnatural behaviour of homosexuals and lesbians is no longer considered, by an increasing number, to be an obstacle to their adoption of infant children. Political correctness requires that such "families" be given the same status and rights as the orthodox family unit. The strong representation of sexual deviants within government ranks ensures an increasing support for those pressing for legislation in favour of their perverted practices. "Human rights" has become the excuse for the legal increase of sexual and moral perversion. Such are the predictable ills resulting from the present state of the family within our society, that Home Secretary, Jack Straw, has been pressurised into attempting to introduce measures to limit the damage. It is to be feared, however, that the root cause of our ills is neither understood nor does the moral will to tackle it exist. The Home Secretary appears unwilling to

be involved in proper moral decision making. In an attempt to evade the issue over homosexuals being allowed adoptive parental status, he was reported as saying: "We must be careful never to appear to be judgmental by implying that some family structures are intrinsically better than others from the point of view of supporting children."

Homosexuals and the Age of Consent

The House of Commons voted to lower the age of consent for homosexuals to sixteen, legalising an increase of these unnatural activities, which are an abomination to God. By doing so they have not only invited further judgements from God upon our nation but they have further endangered the lives, physically and morally, of many vulnerable young people. As Baroness Young stated in the House of Lords, reducing the age of consent for homosexuals would be "the thin end of the wedge". Throughout the year, representatives from the Royal College of Nursing and the National Union of Teachers have given support not only to the lowering of the age of consent but also for the repeal of Section 28 of the Local Government Act which bans the "promotion of homosexuality in schools". If these bodies who represent the caring and teaching professions are expressing genuine support for freedom to promote homosexuality among the youth of our society as though it was normal behaviour, the question arises, what else will the taxpayer be required to fund?

It is sad, to say the least, that thousands of sexual perverts, to the disgust of large numbers of ordinary citizens, are permitted to march through the streets of London with all the police presence required. At the same time a few hundred British citizens are banned from going by their traditional route to and from church in order to remember the fallen British servicemen who died at the battle of the Somme, because some Irish republicans object, although taking place on British territory. Our government is quite obviously spiritually abandoned, morally bankrupt, politically anaemic, and shows no regard for the imperatives of God's holy law.

Rising Number of Abortions

Life has become increasingly cheap and the rise in the number of "unwanted pregnancies" and resulting abortions bears witness to this fact. In 1996 there were, in the United Kingdom, 177,495 abortions carried out, 12,307 of these in Scotland alone with very little condemnation. If just a small fraction of these numbers were to be killed as a result of a terrorist bomb or in a war situation in this country, there would be expressions of outrage from a multitude of sources, and all sorts of assurances would be issued and measures taken to ensure that it would not happen again. The deaths of the unborn, because unseen, obviously do not merit any such concern. They are just ink-on-paper statistics to be preserved on file as far as many are concerned. Their innocent cries nevertheless are heard on high and sooner or later God shall demonstrate his holy anger at these murders. As the calls increase for "surgery abortions"

performed by local GPs, we fear that the present numbers of terminations of life in the womb are set to increase alarming. Already one charity, the 'Marie Stopes International' which has clinics in London, Leeds and Manchester, claims that 7,000 women used its "lunch time abortions" (taking less than five minutes) facilities in its first year.

The Issue of Cloning

With the successful cloning of sheep, cows, pigs and mice, the race now seems to be on to do the same with human organs. The demand for replacement body parts for transplant surgery, along with the insistence of some wealthy individuals to have the right to clone children, is leading to a more flexible approach, by government, to cloning technology. As things stand, the possibility of human cloning is, according to a number of scientists, within reach. Scientists in America are believed to be presently leading the race to produce the first cloned baby. Claims to have created the first human embryo clone have come from South Korea, indicating that if the embryo had been planted in a womb instead of being destroyed it could have grown into a healthy baby. British scientists, not wishing to fall behind the rest, want the law to be relaxed in this country allowing them to fertilize eggs, in order to produce embryos which would then be destroyed before they reached the foetus stage, at 14 days.

While acknowledging that many people find the idea very offensive, Dr. Wilmut, from the Roslin Institute near Edinburgh, has stated his own personal willingness to engage in such a programme. Any moral or ethical questions arising out of these experiments do not appear to matter. The central issue about the actual nature of a human embryo, spiritually as well as materially, is simply ignored. The ambition to clone human embryos for commercial exploitation can only be arrested in this country if the relevant government bodies act immediately. So far this seems most unlikely since the government's watchdog on these matters has recommended a relaxing of the rules to allow more embryo research. The stakes are potentially high and it seems that the commercial gains will outweigh the ethical and moral arguments to call a halt to experiments.

Religion Among the Young

Almost a third of the children in Britain now live in single-parent households. In addition to this, many children who live in two-parent households are not living with their physical parents but sometimes with one parent and a move-in partner. A large percentage of the rising generation are being raised in an amoral society, which disregards God and His Commandments. The majority of teenagers throughout the nation have no Church affiliation at all today. Most have no understanding at all of the Christian Faith. If they possess any concept of God, it is extremely vague, usually unrelated to scriptural truth and as far as they are concerned, irrelevant in their lives. Lack of instruction in religion and morals, leaving the rising generation of teenagers with little sense of personal

responsibility or accountability has, we believe, contributed much to the increased crime and violence in school classrooms and playgrounds. A commonly expressed view among the young is that they are not interested in religion because the “churches” cannot agree. This they take to be evidence that the truth is unknown. Those whom they perceive to be representatives of the Church’s teaching have no credibility because they present conflicting views of what is truth and error or right and wrong. When, for example, someone like Bishop Holloway takes it upon himself to present to our society a supposedly Christian point of view in which immorality and depravity are condoned, it is not to be wondered at that our rising generation consider the Church to be an irrelevant and antiquated institution.

SABBATH OBSERVANCE COMMITTEE’S REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. J. MacDonald

IN PREPARING this annual report the Committee cannot but note that it is doing so in the midst of increasing and flagrant departures from God’s Commandment, “Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy”. While this is a sentiment voiced in many such reports to the Synod since the establishment of this Committee, it is right and proper to look at the matter in the light of observable historical fact. In this light we are prepared to state strongly that at no time since the Reformation has there been such widespread Sabbath desecration in our land. The reasons for this are not hard to find, for we as a nation have rejected the Word of the Lord. Perhaps this is nowhere to be seen more clearly than in the National Church. A recent poll by a reliable organisation concluded that only 14% of people in Scotland attended church regularly. This underlines the frightening statistic that on any given Sabbath 86 out of every 100 people in Scotland choose to ignore God’s Word as He says, “Ye shall keep my sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord”. Who can measure what harm sinners are doing themselves by ignoring the established means of grace and so bypassing the ordinary means of obtaining salvation and by disregarding the duty God has laid upon them: “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God.”

It is alarming to read in reports such as this one that our godly forefathers warned of the impending judgments of the Most High against this nation unless there was a turning back from Sabbath breaking and its associated sins. One writer, reporting some 30 years ago, says, “One wonders for how much longer the Lord will stay His hand from taking vengeance on His enemies”, and a truth often quoted is: “Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?” (Jeremiah 5:29). If

such warnings were timely a generation ago are they not even more so now when Sabbath profanation has reached heights almost unimagined then? Very few would have thought, say thirty years ago, that there would be the present Sabbath breaking in having shops and shopping centres throughout the land open seven days a week with the resultant increase in activity, not only in the major towns but stretching into our country towns and villages. In the Highlands of Scotland much of this has come about to make the Highlands more attractive to tourism which is now a major source of income. Those who have surrendered their principles for the visitors' money may truly be compared to Esau who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage.

The history of the world, as it is recorded in sacred and secular history, teaches us that when a people or a person turns their back on the one living and true God, the void left in their hearts and lives is soon filled by a false god. One of the leading idols of this generation is sport, and more and more the day for it is the Lord's Day. Every Sabbath Day there is an "important" football match staged and it is televised live nationwide. For example, in recent weeks a football match was played in Glasgow. According to newspaper reports, 50,000 spectators were present and the estimated television audience ran into millions. This is how our nation is spending its Sabbath. We have no doubt that this is all driven by commercial interests who have little interest but monetary gain, but what it is saying to the people is: "These be thy gods, O Israel."

A brief quotation from a popular newspaper will highlight how Sabbath Observance has been neglected and how the present is different from the past. The writer says: "Observance of the Sabbath was at the heart of Presbyterianism. It put its stamp on the nation. Nothing moved in the streets of a small Scottish town but the silent procession of worshippers to and from the Kirk. . . . In a nation of golfers even the golf courses were abandoned. Nobody under the age of 40, perhaps 50, can know the full and ponderous solemnity of the Scottish Sabbath. That has all gone. 'Sunday' is the day for shopping, not sermons. Scotland has changed. It is a very different country from the Scotland of my youth." While we write from a very different standpoint from the writer quoted, we have to agree sadly that the facts are as he states them.

Protests against Sabbath desecration on any scriptural basis has always met with opposition, for men set on their pleasure or profit will not abide opposition from any quarter. This attitude has not changed with the years, but the Committee cannot but notice more and more the seemingly total ignorance of the Fourth Commandment. Of course this ignorance is not confined to the Fourth Commandment but to most of the Moral Law, but it does compound our difficulties in protesting against Sabbath breaking when the offenders are not aware of their offence. We can echo the words of the writer quoted above, "It is a very different country from the Scotland of my youth" – indeed of a generation ago – but these are facts which confront our Committee in seeking to testify on the side of a scriptural Sabbath observance. It is with sadness we

have to note that we cannot find another Christian denomination or society that wholly agrees with us on Sabbath observance, and that is not because we have changed our attitude to the Lord's Day.

We cannot live in any society without in some way being influenced by it, and we fear that our own people are being influenced by the spirit of the age to the Sabbath. One obvious example of this is the increasing use of the word "Sunday" for the Lord's Day. This is but a copying of the world and is to be condemned as such. Are we ashamed to use the scriptural names for it? If not, why is there so much leaning to the worldly generation in which our lot is cast in this matter? It is our concern that Sabbath keeping is not the hearty exercise it was in the past in our own midst as a Church. Let us each one seek for a more spiritual keeping of the Sabbath in our hearts as well as in our actions, "refraining from unnecessary labours, ordinary recreations and all worldly thoughts" and speech, remembering the scriptural exhortation, "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

We append an extract from a letter written by our Clerk to the Department of Trade and Industry as an example of the basis of our protesting against Sabbath breaking.

"We believe that the Lord's Day, or Christian Sabbath, should be the compulsory day of rest, except where works of necessity and mercy are involved. We submit the following reasons:

1. Ours is a Christian nation. The Lord's Day is the public emblem of the Christian religion. As far as the demands of Trade and Industry are permitted to encroach upon this day, so far the detrimental effects on Christianity will be.
2. The Lord's Day is a day for instructing the people in the doctrines and practice of the Christian religion. This instruction fosters an uprightness of life and conduct – a quality much needed in our society. We fear that these proposals will make it unlikely that a moral recovery will be effected in our nation; rather the opposite. It is not a turning away from the Christian Sabbath that we need but a return to it, and the instruction of God's Word, in the preaching of the Gospel.
3. Those wishing to keep the Lord's Day according to the Fourth Commandment (Exodus 20:8) will be obliged to work on that day, depending on his or her employer's wishes. Many faithful Christian men and women will feel obliged to leave their employment rather than live in systematic breaches of the Fourth Commandment.
4. Those who do not wish to work on the Lord's Day will be deemed less employable.
5. The Christian Sabbath is governed by the Fourth Commandment: 'Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour,

and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it' (Exodus 20:8-11). We believe that the strength and stability of our nation and Government lies as much in the honouring of God's authority respecting the Fourth Commandment, as it does in upholding principles of human authority summarily comprehended in the Fifth Commandment.

Yours faithfully,

R. Macleod (Clerk)"

Conclusion

It must be obvious to all who have any knowledge of seeking to witness on the side of Truth and especially to testify to the binding nature of the Fourth Commandment, which so directly cuts across man's carnal desires and ambitions, that the work of this Committee is not easy in such a generation as ours. We must beware of despondency in seeing how little we are able to achieve and would ask our praying people to support the Committee's work with prayer.

JEWISH AND FOREIGN MISSIONS COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev John MacLeod

THE COMMITTEE has to report that it has over another year, and to the best of its ability, attended to the duties devolving upon it. The financial difficulties, which confronted the Committee in 1998, were resolved as a result of the generosity of the Mbumba Zending Board. The Convener travelled to Dordrecht in September to attend a Board meeting and having explained the situation to our Dutch friends they undertook to increase their givings and meet whatever deficit there would be on the Foreign Mission Fund at the end of the year. We have to report that they have been as good as their word.

Kenya

The Sengera Mission compound was evacuated after the Synod decision to cease work in Kenya. The Rev. John Goldby and Dr. Ewald de Jong, with their families, Miss Catherine MacKenzie, Miss Truus Ringelberg, Miss Celia Renes, Miss Jessie Coote, Miss Peta van Ridder and Miss Henrietta Burggraaff, all returned home in June, leaving Mr. Ian MacLean as caretaker. Two

months later he was joined by his wife and children. We are deeply grateful to all of them for diligently carrying out their duties over the period of their stay there. It was a matter of considerable regret to the Committee that so efficient a team had to be disbanded. The Committee much appreciates the manner in which they conducted themselves in the midst of the difficult and trying circumstances through which they were called upon to pass. There have been no further robberies or threats of violence. The Mbuma Zending Board have expressed their sorrow over the decision taken to close down the Sengera mission and have indicated their willingness to clear any outstanding debt and provide full financial support were the Kenyan mission re-opened.

Zimbabwe

The Church services continue to be held in all the five areas of Zimbabwe where we engage in missionary work – Mbuma, Zenka, Ingwenya, Bulawayo and Zvishavani. On this occasion, because of ill-health, the Rev. A. B. Ndebele asked to be excused from having to submit a report to the Synod. It is a matter of thankfulness to the Most High that he has recovered to the extent that he is able to attend to his ordinary ministerial duties. Two men – Manford Mloyi and Siphon Khumalo – have expressed a desire to enter the ministry. Neither of them is, at present, qualified academically to begin the prescribed course of study. They are, however, both endeavouring to obtain these qualifications.

The educational work continues under the supervision of Miss Graham and her staff at Ingwenya. Mr. Teus Benschop joined the staff in February 1998 and Miss Sheena Ross in January 1999. Miss Rhoda MacKay was of great help over a period of six months from May onwards. Miss Norma MacLean arrived home on furlough in October 1998 and Miss K. M. MacAulay followed her in April. Through the year Miss MacLean used her training in business administration to good effect as administrator *pro tempore* in the Bulawayo office. On her departure from that post, Mr. R. A. Campbell took over supervision of the office for a period of six weeks and over December the Ingwenya teachers kept an eye on things until, in January, the newly-appointed Mr. Edward Zikhali took over his duties as permanent Administrator. Mr. Zikhali had previously held a responsible position in the Ministry of Education and he has also been an elder in the Bulawayo congregation for several years.

Mbuma Hospital has continued to function under the supervision of Dr. Hak with Miss Margaret MacAskill as Matron. Dr. Ewald de Jong expressed an interest in labouring at Mbuma but as the Zimbabwean immigration authority would not agree to grant a work permit to a teacher for the de Jong children it was not possible for the Committee to avail themselves of his services. This was a matter of great regret as Dr. de Jong had given excellent service at Sengera. Miss Lia Terlouw went on furlough in January 1998. Dr. Hak was home from April to September and Miss Louise Leiper arrived home on furlough in November. Miss M. A. J. van de Graaf was engaged as a nurse for Mbuma in June 1997, but she has yet to be granted a work permit.

The Thembiso Home continues to function as an invaluable refuge for orphans and other abandoned children. Mr. Stanford Mpofu was appointed to the post of Superintendent and took up his duties in September. Mr. Mpofu has been an elder in the Bulawayo congregation for a number of years and held responsible positions as a teacher before applying for this post. To increase efficiency, the separate Thembiso Committee responsible for running the Home was disbanded and the Field Committee now handles all matters relating to it.

The Committee appointed Mr. Jake van Praag, one of the elders of our Sydney Congregation, as assistant to Mr. James Mpofu, the Transport and Building Manager, but the Zimbabwean government refused to grant him a work permit. An appeal against this decision has been lodged and we await the result.

Huge fluctuations in the value of the Zimbabwe dollar have occurred over the past year and accordingly it is almost impossible for the mission to draw up a realistic budget. As always, we have to acknowledge the generous support of our Dutch friends whose interest in the work continues unabated.

The work in Africa is commended to the prayers of the Lord's people throughout the Church.

JOHN TALLACH SECONDARY SCHOOL REPORT

Marion Graham, Headmistress

JANUARY 1998 saw me return from leave straight into school work and with a number of changes to get used to.

Houses

My house, which was being demolished just before I went away, was still under construction and the contractors were not doing a good job. However, when the work was handed over to our own men, much more progress was made and eventually a very attractive, pleasant-to-live-in bungalow was completed. This was despite much work having to be done again and the firm supplying some kitchen units going bankrupt.

We also managed to save about \$50,000 on the contractors' price, although our cost included the plumbing and electricity and other internal fittings which the contractors' did not.

By the end of August, a year after the project was started, I was able to move back to my own house.

We are very grateful to the donors who made this possible. We just wish they could see how well their money was used.

Miss MacAulay's house: Both of our houses were over 50 years old and largely made of mud brick kept together latterly by layers of plaster. However,

we began to notice that the cracks in Miss MacAulay's house were becoming ever more obvious. On investigation it became clear that tree roots had invaded the foundation and the white ants (termites) had attacked the walls through the cracks made by the roots. The house was no longer safe to live in and it was providential there was no tornado at that time. Soon the house will be demolished and two small single units built in its place.

Finance

This year we have encountered a new problem. Because of the devaluation of the Zimbabwe dollar, while we have less problems with projects financed from overseas, we have had serious difficulty with the payment of running costs in the school. These are covered by school fees, but by Term 3 (September to December) the huge price increases in basic commodities meant that we had to go into deficit to the Mission.

We hope to repay this money during this coming year and if prices do stabilise to break even by the end of 1999. However, just last week we were charged \$4,400 for a tonne of maize and our last purchase price was about \$3,000, so we are not at the end of the road yet!

Usually by the end of the year we try to have a little over to cover maintenance costs but every cent has been swallowed up this time simply by basic needs.

Staff

Permits: We are still having trouble getting these and we find it difficult to understand why. Overseas staff, rather than costing Zimbabwe anything, bring much needed currency into the country.

When I returned in January Miss Maclean had still not received her permit to allow her to teach and had only monthly permission to stay in the country. She was, however, doing a very important job as she, albeit reluctantly, had taken over the running of the town office. Her business expertise was invaluable at this time as there were many changes in the labour laws and other organisational items which required to be rationalised and she was ideally suited for this task.

While we were despairing of ever getting through all the bureaucracy it was suggested that we use the "African way" and discuss the permit problem with someone involved with whom we had a point of contact.

Mr. Dumiso Dabengwa, the Minister for Home Affairs, who deals with Immigration, is a former pupil of Ingwenya Primary School. We have had contact with him before and through his cousin, who is one of our teachers, we asked to see him.

Unexpectedly we were invited to coffee one Saturday morning and he listened intently to our problems and asked for certain information to be sent to his office. Of course, he does not deal himself with what to him are minor details, but within a few months both Miss Maclean's and then Miss Sheena Ross's permits were given to us.

Other permits have still not been given and we may have to ask him to intervene again. He also passed on for us an appeal concerning the tax we are required to pay as all officials we have spoken to agree that we are being unfairly dealt with but a solution has not been found so far, as there is no Statutory Instrument to cover Missions.

Staff Movements

Mr. Teus Benschop, who had earlier been granted his permit as one of his teaching subjects, Science, is in a "shortage area", arrived at the end of February and has spent the year getting used to teaching Science and Bible Knowledge to a variety of classes. He also, like all of us, takes one Form of 160 pupils for Sabbath school each weekend. We added a small kitchen onto the bathroom attached to the former Guest House and made a neat little bachelor flat for him.

Miss Maclean finally went on leave at the end of October and we expect her back in April 1999, when Miss MacAulay goes on leave.

Miss Sheena Ross has now joined us and is getting ready to start in school this week. The Government has finally agreed to give a grant for Mr. Benschop and we hope to get the same for Miss Ross.

We are entitled to grants or salaries for 24 teachers and in the past even Mission staff have been included in this. If they refuse to pay this time we will appoint a local teacher who will have to be paid and Miss Ross, as an extra teacher, will be able to concentrate on teaching Bible, though at present she is also required to teach Science which she is able to do.

Pupils

This past year very few pupils left school during the year and we will have very large classes in 1999.

Forms 1, 2 and 3 are all over 160 for 1999 and Form 4 is about 150. About 100 of these are local day pupils. Our teachers, therefore, have to cope with classes of 40 or 41 pupils, even in subjects like Science and Agriculture.

The Government exam results are not out yet. We had 163 Form 2 and 142 Form 4 pupils sitting in 1998.

Visitors

When I returned from Scotland, Rev. D. Ross and Rev. K. Watkins were here for a short visit. I am sure when they returned to Britain it took them quite a few days to recover from the amount of work (especially travelling) they did here in a limited time.

Most of the year was very quiet. For six months from May we were pleased to have the company and help of Miss Rhoda Mackay. Despite having been away for about 20 years, Rhoda quickly involved herself in the work of the school and the Mission so that her "holiday" was very much a helping and working one!

We are very glad that Mr. Edward Zikhali has now taken over as Administrator and relieved us of the oversight of the town office.

We were also very thankful that Mr. R. Campbell was able to give us six weeks of his time, keeping in touch with his home office by Internet – quite amazing to us! It was a useful as well as pleasant interlude for us and for him and it was a pleasure to entertain Mrs. Campbell as well.

Gifts

This year we received a number of useful gifts for the school. The firm in Holland for which Teus Benschop had worked, first of all sent us a number of second-hand computers and other equipment and then donated money to help replace our very old, rather dirty and slow Gestetner duplicator. We bought a digital printer which, though more expensive to use, does a perfect job in seconds. Since then the same firm have also donated money to build an extra classroom.

Some other friends also organised a consignment of used computers and a school donated quite a number of Science textbooks. We would like to thank all these donors and assure them that we will make good use of their gifts.

Examinations

It is now the first week of February and the exam results are out much earlier than usual. There are rumours that the Form 2 Government exams are to be stopped as almost all pupils go on to Form 4 and this exam is really a waste of time and money.

However, despite a number of obvious inaccuracies in the results our passes were as follows:

Form 2 Level Results

122/159 pupils achieved 6 or more passes out of 8 subjects, giving a percentage pass of 77%.

131/159 pupils had 5 or more passes, i.e. 82%.

The passes for the Resource Room pupils were not given correctly so these are not counted.

Form 4 "O" Level Results 1998

120/142 achieved 5 passes in A, B or C, i.e. 85%.

1 girl got 9 A passes and 2 pupils got 8 A passes.

27 pupils got 5 points worked out on their best 5 subjects (A=1, B=2, etc.)

We do not know yet our position among the schools in this region but in 1997 we presented the largest number of candidates at O Level and came 4th after three much more selective schools. We hope the same will be true this year and it is due largely to the hard work of all the teachers, both local and from overseas.

MBUMA AND ZENKA MISSION REPORTS

Rev. P. Mzamo

THE LORD in His kindness and forbearance has spared us and given us some measure of health to carry on the day-to-day duties. Sometimes we feel tired, but not tired of the work. The Lord's grace is sufficient and His strength made perfect in weakness.

Many false teachers are rising up in the communities deceiving the ignorant and deceiving themselves. All these are the signs of the end of times, for the scriptures must be fulfilled. The fulfilment of the scriptures should be a comfort to the Lord's people and we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.

The Church work continued throughout the year undisturbed by the forces of the enemy – godlessness, worldliness and materialism are all on the increase. We held Church services in all our preaching stations and in some congregations new faces darkened the door of the church and have continued. The elders went out every Lord's Day. May they grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The sacraments of the Lord's Supper and Baptism were administered. Baptism was administered to adults and children in different congregations. Funerals were conducted and marriages performed throughout the parish.

We were encouraged and strengthened by the short visit of two ministers and an elder from the home Church – come again and make your visit longer! May I express my sincere thanks to the home Church at large and friends in Holland for the support of the work in the Mission field. Your prayers, substance and personnel constitute a great blessing, both spiritually and bodily.

Zenka

Church services – all in the hands of the Church elders – were held every Lord's Day at all preaching stations and weekday prayer meetings at Zenka and Katasa. From time to time I take Sabbath services at Zenka.

The sacraments of the Lord's Supper and Baptism were administered and funerals were conducted in the community.

The elders of the Church have kept the congregation together in the midst of false prophets going about desiring to devour many – as a roaring lion.

Nkayi

Church services at the five preaching stations were held every Lord's Day, taken by the elders. There were also prayer meetings at Nkayi, Mathetshaneni and Donsa, which is in the Midlands in the Kwekwe District.

The sacraments of the Lord's Supper and Baptism were administered at Nkayi and Donsa. Both adults and children were baptised at both places. The

elders were out every Lord's Day to declare the Gospel of the eternal Son of God. As Peter said: "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk."

Binga

For a few years, Binga was monitored by Bulawayo Kirk Session – this was done to ease the burden on my shoulders. But as there was now only one elder in that Kirk Session, the minister's duties were much curtailed. Then Binga was returned to Mbumba Kirk Session. Binga is now monitored and supplied from Mbumba and Nkayi.

We supply Binga every second Sabbath of each month and take church services at two places. At Semende we have a church building and at Senka we worship in a classroom, paying a rent of \$5 every Lord's Day. This rent is paid by the congregation.

We hope to have a Kirk Session in July to examine those who want Baptism. We are looking for a Tonga man who has a good knowledge of Ndebele and Scripture to translate the psalms in metre to the Tonga language and also the *Mother's Catechism*.

Our aim and purpose is not to give out food or clothes but to preach the everlasting Gospel of the Son of God. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

MBUMA MISSION HOSPITAL REPORT

Dr. J. Hak

"IT IS OUR DESIRE that the means used may be blessed to our patients spiritually, which is the ultimate purpose of the work here" – so the previous report was concluded. Maybe it would be good to indicate what work actually is being done in this respect.

Patients are expected to attend the Sabbath services when not too ill, and the Thursday morning prayer meetings. We are very thankful for the assistance of Mr. M. Mloyi, who will take worship with all the patients and staff morning and evening. This means reading a portion of Scripture and praying. Three times a week this is concluded with a short address. He then goes to the wards to read and pray with those who are too ill to attend worship. There is also teaching of different groups who are in hospital for a longer period, e.g. the mothers of malnourished children in the paediatric ward, the TB patients, who spend two months in the hospital for their intensive phase of treatment, and the

expectant mothers in the waiting mother's shelter. The Gospels and the *Shorter Catechism* are mainly used in teaching.

The need for literature in their own language is immense. A simplified version of the *Holy War* of Bunyan has been translated into isiNdebele. For a start a number of copies were made of the chapters to see how the patients would respond. They were given chapter by chapter which was very much appreciated! It is difficult to get them to church, but they like reading (as long as it is in their own language) and they are obviously enjoying the *Holy War!* The *Mother's Catechism* has been made available in their own language, which will be very useful for teaching.

Some years ago Bible classes for children were started up in all the places around Mbuma where church services were held. This work is still continuing after local members have taken over. Only one class at Singwangombe could not be continued because of lack of a teacher and it proved too much for us to continue ourselves.

Our input into these classes now are small books for the children, which contain parts of chapters of Scripture, and simple questions concerning the chapters. The book also gives verses of Scripture and a few psalm verses which they have to learn by heart every week. If possible an interesting religious story is also added, translated into their own language (a good source being the *Young People's Magazine*). The children send back their papers with the answers for correction and are then given a postcard for encouragement. For so many correct answers they receive a psalm book or a nice reading book. The children seem to enjoy this. Although this part of the work had come to a temporary standstill, it is hoped that it will be continued.

A class is held weekly for all interested women among the staff at the hospital.

Many patients are addressed individually in the outpatient clinics when there is need for counselling, which also provides an excellent opportunity for touching the more serious matters of life and death.

All this is so little in comparison with what could be done if there was more manpower. But the Word is being sown – may it fall on good ground! It is often felt that so much more should be done and a thorough knowledge of the language is part of it as well!

Medical Report

The statistics are appended at the end of this report. The most noticeable is a sharp increase in the *bed occupancy* from 131% in 1997 to 196% in 1998 on our actual beds. This means an average of 116 in-patients a day against 77 a day in 1997. The total number of admissions has also gone up, but not in comparison to the bed occupancy. This means that patients are on average admitted for more days than before, which is easily explained by the increased number of chronically ill patients (TB+HIV). Of the 148 deaths, at least 66% were HIV related. On average there were 17 TB patients a day, compared to

14 patients in 1997. The bed occupancy for TB went up from 23.6% to 29% of our 59 actual beds.

The sharp increase in the *number of deliveries* from 1996 to 1997 stabilised in 1997. This is probably due to more mothers coming to Mbumba in order to avoid the high fees in city clinics. The year 1998 showed the same high figure. Compared with the previous year there was a dramatic increase in the perinatal and neonatal mortality rates. However, comparing these figures with those of other hospitals it appears these are the normal rates for the whole province.

The still birth rate went up to 14.29 per 1,000 births, compared to 7.05 in 1997. The maximum has been 15 in 1993 – the year of the drought.

The perinatal mortality rate (the number of still births and early neonatal deaths per 1,000 total births within the first week of life) was 41.43, compared to 21.16 in 1997. The maximum has been 43 in 1993. The average for the other hospitals in the province in 1997 was 40 per 1,000 total births.

The neonatal mortality rate (early plus late neonatal deaths within the first month of life) went up to 30.43 per 1,000 live births, compared to 19.89 in 1997. The maximum has been 33 in 1993.

The infant mortality rate, against the number of births at the hospital: 49.28 deaths within the first year of life per 1,000 live births compared to 34.09 in 1997 (maximum 55.07 in 1993 and in 1995).

Because these figures approach the percentages in the year of the drought, the question arises if there was more malnutrition than was apparent – maybe enough starch, but little proteins and vitamins. This would affect the vulnerable groups like antenatals first. Another reason could be the increased number of STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases) and HIV infection. Despite the risk of HIV, STDs have now gone up to the second place on the list of the five major health problems for adults! It would be interesting to compare this with other hospitals in the province.

The maternal mortality rate was 1.43 (1 death in 1998).

The malnutrition rate was very much the same as before –13.5%.

Staff

We were very dismayed and shocked about the sudden death of one of our youngest nurse aids, Lynette Ncube, on 16th June 1998. Also Julia Masuku, one of the “dependents” on the Mission, died on 13th May.

Much support was given during the year by relief nurses from government institutions, first during the absence of the doctor from April to August, then during a holiday of Sister Lia Terlouw, and during the period of leave of Sister Louise Leiper, from October.

Communication

In addition to an external phone line for the hospital, a PABX system plus the necessary solar panels and batteries was installed in April for internal

communication. We have never regretted this, as the communication by the old system had become extremely difficult. The new system has proved to be excellent, except that in the cloudy rainy season it can happen that the phones cannot be used part of the night. However, on the whole these days are few – and the problem can easily be solved by adding some extra batteries.

Hospital

The laboratory has been extended with an extra room and a safety cabinet, according to government regulations, especially for investigation of sputums for TB. Funds were made available by a donor via the Ministry of Health. Because of an enormous surplus of available money it was at once decided to use the money for installation of solar panels, to which they agreed, and batteries for lights in all the wards at night. Two inverters convert the low voltage to 220 Volt for the microscopes and the centrifuge in the laboratory, and for the computer in the office. These panels have proven their worth, for the laboratory work is no longer dependent on the hours that the engine is on, so that more work can be done. The system has been very successful!

A visitor from South Africa, Mr. W. van den Berg, who came in November, managed to repair the DC system, which had not been working for a long time, whereas the local companies here had failed to do so! The DC is now mainly used for the staff accommodation and for the toilets, so is still very useful – but the solar system is clearly superior. If funds would be made available more panels and batteries could be added for all the staff accommodation so that the generator would be needed only for the X-ray machine and for the photocopier. It would be cheaper in the long run, as a lot of money is spent on diesel for the generator every month.

The dispensary had to be renovated, which was a considerable job.

Transport

The ambulance has been in the garage frequently, and is due for replacement. The Mazda has been very reliable so far, doing us a good service in transferring patients.

Accommodation

Staff accommodation has not yet been improved due to lack of funds.

Conclusion

We very much appreciate the continuing support by Mission friends overseas. We would like to encourage those who have the right qualifications to also give themselves up personally to this work of the Lord. Much work is to be done. We often feel there is much resistance to the Word of God, especially where church services are concerned. But of great encouragement are these

words of David: “Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them” (Psalm 68:18).

STATISTICS

| | |
|---|--------|
| Admissions | |
| General | 2,445 |
| Maternity | 855 |
| T.B. | 100 |
| Discharges | |
| General | 2,125 |
| Maternity | 856 |
| T.B. | 84 |
| Bed Occupancy | |
| General | 32,344 |
| Maternity | 3,697 |
| T.B. | 6,215 |
| Deaths | |
| General, including neonatal deaths | 133 |
| Maternity | 1 |
| T.B. | 14 |
| Outpatient Attendances | |
| New cases | 19,657 |
| Total cases | 24,123 |
| Confinements | |
| Live Births | 694 |
| Still Births..... | 690 |
| Neonatal Deaths (first month)..... | 10 |
| Caesarian sections | 21 |
| | 3 |
| Antenatal Clinic Attendances | 5,537 |
| Child Welfare Clinic Attendances | 5,297 |
| Major Operations | |
| General | 4 |
| Maternity, including caesarian sections | 5 |
| Minor Operations | |
| General | 208 |
| Maternity | 184 |
| X-Ray | |
| Number of patients | 832 |
| Number of films taken..... | 1,183 |

Ambulance

| | |
|--|--------|
| Number of trips (referrals only) | 178 |
| Distance covered in kilometres | 35,387 |

Five Major Health Problems

In the age group below 5 years:

1. Acute respiratory infection
2. Skin disease
3. Diarrhoea
4. Malaria
5. Eye disease

In the age group of 5 to 14 years:

1. Acute respiratory infection
2. Skin disease
3. Injuries
4. Malaria
5. Eye disease

In the group of 15 years and over:

1. Acute respiratory infection
2. Sexually transmitted disease
3. Skin disease
4. Dental conditions
5. Malaria

BUILDING AND TRANSPORT REPORT

Mr. J. B. Mpofu

IN OPENING I would quote from Ezekiel 33:11: "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

Transport

Transport is one of our biggest problems on the Mission. Our cars are in and out of the garage because of problems with spares which make repairs difficult. This means frequent delays and occasionally we have to take the car out and use it.

1. Rev. P. Mzamo's Ford Courier has a problem in fifth gear, but on the whole it is still doing well.
2. The Doctor's Mazda is a very reliable car and it is still in good condition, serving the Hospital well.

3. The Hospital ambulance has not been doing well as a result of its accident and is frequently in the garage.
4. The Ford Triton lorry is now getting old because of bad roads.
5. The brown Nissan, used by the Manager, is still giving good service.
6. Rev. A. B. Ndebele's Mazda is still going well, despite covering many miles.
7. The John Tallach School Bus (Ford Triton) is still able to do the orders for the school. It has been involved in several accidents due to the carelessness of other drivers.
8. The Leyland Comet lorry is very reliable and serves all our stations.
9. The Toyota Venture, which is used by the Ingwenya ladies, is still in good condition.
10. Rev. Z. Mazvabo's Ford Courier is still of good use but will soon need replacement.
11. The green Nissan, used specifically for office work, is still doing well.
12. The Thembiso Mazda is still doing very well.
13. The Volkswagen Kombi for Thembiso was also involved in an accident, and the back part was damaged, but can be repaired. It is now an old car but is still very useful at the Childrens' Home.

Building

1. *Mbumba Mission:*
 - (a) The Teachers' Cottage was completed last year and the teachers are now using it.
 - (b) The extended laboratory was also completed and is in use.
 - (c) We made more "pole and mud" kitchens for the nurses as they were having problems in cooking, so these are already in use. Plastering has been done in one kitchen and they are in the process of finishing the last kitchen with plaster.
 - (d) Maintenance, which is always done in the Hospital, like mending wall cracks and painting the wards, is also being undertaken.
2. *Binga Church*
has been completed with two toilets ready for use. The only thing remaining for the Binga Church is benches, which the carpenter is presently making.
3. *Zenka Mission*
has no project presently. The repair of the fence around the Mission is carried out under maintenance.

4. *Ingwenya Mission:*
 - (a) The new Teachers' Cottage is now being plastered and ceiling material is on site ready for putting up. Electricity is being fitted and we hope it will be finished soon.
 - (c) Mr. Benschop's boss donated money to be used where needed. The School Headmistress thought of a classroom and the money will be used for building this. The men have started digging the foundations.
 - (d) Miss MacAulay's house is being cleared with a view to demolishing it.
5. *Bulawayo*
currently has no work to be undertaken
6. *New Canaan*
also has no projects waiting.

I will end with these words from 1 Timothy 6:12: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."

ZIMBABWE MISSION ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Miss N. B. MacLean, Administrator *pro tem*

THIS WAS A BUSY and at times difficult year in the Administration Office of the Zimbabwe Mission. The economic background to our work was very uncertain: towards the end of 1997 the value of the Zimbabwe dollar fell rapidly so that it started the year at around \$30 = £1 and, by the end of the year, had fallen further to about \$60 = £1. Inflation was forecast to reach 32% by the end of the year but there is no doubt that it exceeded this rate: by September/October some prices were jumping by thousands of dollars each week; for example, in January the cost of a Landrover ambulance was estimated at \$600,000 but in October the estimate had risen to over \$1 million. In this climate financial targets and budget costings became meaningless and expenditure in all departments increased significantly.

Field Committee

The Field Committee continued to oversee the work of the Mission Departments which this year included implementation of the recommendations for improved administrative and financial procedures as proposed in January by Revs. D. Ross and K. Watkins. In line with these recommendations the Thembis/ESM Committee was disbanded and the composition of the

Field Committee was altered to incorporate the Superintendent of Thembiso/ESM. It was hoped that greater integration with what we call the General Mission would result in improved management of the ESM departments and better streamlining of Mission affairs. This has been a happy and effective union resulting in greater involvement of ESM in Mission affairs and increased understanding by General Mission of the particular problems of ESM. The executive members of the Field Committee were as follows: Rev. Mzamo (chairman), Rev. Ndebele, Rev. Mazvabo, Mr. J. B. Mpofu, Mr. S. Mpofu, Miss Graham, Dr. Hak and myself (replaced by Mr. R. Campbell in November). Miss Macaulay and Sister Macaskill deputised when necessary for Miss Graham and Dr. Hak. During the year the Field Committee met on seven occasions to supervise the implementation of the new procedures, to make management decisions and policy suggestions. Regular reports were sent to the Foreign Mission Committee and the General Treasurer.

An important development this year was the move to encourage the congregations to accept greater responsibility for the maintenance of their church buildings and for a proportion of the fuel needed by the ministers. From January, Deacons' Courts became responsible for at least one third of the ministers' fuel requirements and from April, they took over entire responsibility for the running costs of their church buildings. Total responsibility for ministers' fuel is to be devolved to the Deacons' Courts over a 3 year period: in January 1999 they are to assume responsibility for two thirds of the fuel cost and, from January 2000 they will be responsible for the total fuel bill.

Staff

Local Staff: A considerable number of local staff are employed at the various Mission departments. Mbumba Hospital has 47 government paid employees on the payroll supplemented by a further 15 paid from Mission funds. This figure fluctuated throughout the year because nursing sisters and other relief staff (employed by the Mission to help alleviate staff shortages) are not always available. A further 7 staff are employed by the Mission at Mbumba. In addition to the teaching staff at John Tallach Secondary School, which are all paid by the Ministry of Education, a further 21 are employed from the School account, i.e. at no expense to the Mission. A further 9 men are employed from Mission funds at Ingwenya, some of whom are temporary workmen employed on building projects. In the Zvishavane area, 7 men are employed by the Mission and in Bulawayo 12 staff are employed including the 2 managers: the Administrator and the Building Transport Manager. The total number of staff paid from General Mission funds is 50.

Mr. E. Zikhali, an elder in the Bulawayo congregation, was appointed as the new Administrator but, due to difficulties in being released from his post at the Ministry of Education, he was not able to start until January 1999. This meant that I had to continue until the end of October when Mr. R. Campbell came to supervise in the office for about six weeks. The members of the Field

Committee were very grateful to the Church in Scotland for releasing Mr. Campbell for this task.

Zimbabwe has very specific laws governing Labour Relations and trying to ensure that these are met takes up a lot of time. The labour market is divided into different sectors and all the work in each sector is graded by the Ministry of Labour. Each worker has to be placed on the appropriate grade for the tasks which he performs and paid accordingly: minimum wages are published each year for each grade. Wages and conditions of service are negotiated nationally at National Employment Councils and are legally binding. No worker may be dismissed for any reason without written permission from the Ministry of Labour and no workers can be laid off without permission from the NEC, so a lot of paperwork is involved. In this scenario it is very important that contracts are up-to-date and accurate so a lot of time was spent during the year assessing the gradings of all the workers. Contracts were then updated to bring them in line with existing Labour legislation.

At the beginning of the year all of our unskilled workers were on the minimum wage for their grades but, given the economic climate of the country, many of them were experiencing difficulties in making ends meet. We were therefore thankful that the recommendation by the Deputies in January that a 20% increment be applied from March was accepted by the FMC, this was further enhanced by the additional 30% awarded in the national wage negotiations in July. Our workers were very thankful although, even with a 50% increase over the year, wages are by no means extravagant: one tyre for the Leyland truck costs \$7,000 which is more than twice the monthly wage of the driver. Our lowest grade worker earned only \$1,373 per month (at \$60 = £1, that is about £23).

Expatriate Staff: During the year eight expatriate staff were employed at the various Mission stations: Miss Graham, Miss Macaulay and Mr. Benschop at John Tallach Secondary School; Dr. Hak, Sister Macaskill, Sister Terlouw and Sister Leiper at Mbuma Hospital; and I was transferred from John Tallach School to Bulawayo to act as Administrator until a local appointment could be made and until my teaching permit could be renewed.

Immigration regulations in Zimbabwe are very strict: no-one is allowed to work in Zimbabwe even on a voluntary/casual basis without a temporary employment permit and it is proving to be increasingly difficult to establish a need for expatriate staff. Any potential applicants need to exercise a great deal of patience as applications usually take at least 6 months to process. Mr. Benschop's permit was granted in January so that he was able to take up teaching duties in February. Miss Sheena Ross's permit went through very smoothly and was granted in August: she was due to take up her teaching post in January 1999. Serious difficulties have been experienced with Miss Maike van den Graaf's application to nurse at Mbuma. Miss van den Graaf was accepted by the FMC in June 1997 but it was January 1998 before her forms were ready for submission. The paperwork, however, was deemed incorrect by the Health Professions Council in Harare and some forms were eventually

returned to her for amendment. This application was still ongoing at the end of the year. An application from Mr. Jacob van Praag from Sydney to come as assistant building/transport manager was refused by the Immigration Department but an appeal has been lodged.

Finance

Until April 1998 the funding of the Mission operated on the Imprest system: a ceiling of £15,000 per month was set for expenditure on running costs and approved capital projects were financed in addition to this. Due to the anticipated huge deficit in the Foreign Mission Fund it was necessary for our funding to be cut back significantly: the Imprest system was discontinued and the ceiling for expenditure was lowered to £11,000 which was to cover ordinary monthly expenditure and capital projects – this represented a 26%+ reduction in the funding which was available prior to April. The Field Committee had to carry out a stringent review of Mission expenditure in order to ensure that it remained within the new limits and this necessitated restrictions on capital expenditure and a reduction in the workforce: we had to lay off twelve men, which was not an easy task. The first few months of the new programme were extremely difficult, with the main Mission account operating on an overdraft until the next monthly payment was received from Scotland, and it was at times difficult to know how to pay bills. We were very thankful, therefore, when \$360,000 was released from the Mbumba Zending Fund in Holland to act as a float and so avoid these cash flow problems. By the end of June the financial situation improved: because of the falling dollar the value of our £11,000 per month increased more than inflation so our monthly income was significantly boosted. It was, however, decided that, given the uncertain economic climate, the expenditure controls should continue with the result that we began to build up a healthy surplus in the savings account for expenditure on existing and future capital projects. The two biggest single areas of expenditure were Wages and Salaries and Motor Repairs.

Three groups of accounts are operated: the General Mission Accounts (which are the central accounts), John Tallach Secondary School Accounts and Mbumba Mission Hospital Accounts – these bank accounts are distinct from each other in order to illustrate the performance of the departments.

Mbumba Mission Hospital: Monthly salary grants were received from the Ministry of Health for 47 personnel at the Hospital and a total of \$450,890 was received in the year for running costs. As in previous years this was totally inadequate to cover the expense of running the Hospital. The deficit recorded in the Hospital account (\$326,705) reflects the amount injected from the General Mission account to meet this shortfall. This is given to the Hospital in the form of a regular monthly grant topped up as necessary when there is a cash flow problem.

John Tallach Secondary School: The school is expected to meet its running costs from income from school fees and fees are carefully set in order to ensure

this. However, spiralling costs in Term 3 and a major repair bill for the school bus played havoc with the budget so that the fees collected in Term 3 were insufficient to meet the needs. By the end of the year there was no money left in the School account to pay the bills, so a \$230,000 loan had to be injected from the Mission account to ease the cash flow problem. This amount is to be levied from the children and to be repaid to the Mission in 1999. The Ministry of Education pays for all the teaching staff but no other funds are remitted to the School so all support staff, all educational and boarding expenses and all maintenance are normally financed by the income from School fees.

Capital Programme

The following projects were carried forward from 1997:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| Zenka Primary School Toilets – | completed |
| Mbuma Primary Teachers' Cottage – | completed |
| New Mission House, Ingwenya – | completed |
| Binga Church – | completed |
| Ingwenya Teachers' Cottage – | still ongoing |

The building of the new mission house at Ingwenya (occupied by Miss Graham) proved to be fraught with serious problems since the work done by the contractors was not of the required standard. After various discussions it became necessary for us to discontinue our contract with the contractors and take over the project ourselves. Mr. Ian MacLean, Kenya, conducted the negotiations with the contractors when he visited Zimbabwe in January and again in March. His building knowledge and expertise were crucial in knowing how to deal with them and Mr. MacLean put all complaints meticulously in writing for which we and the lawyer were very thankful when the firm subsequently threatened legal action. Since our own work squad were moved on to this project, all other building projects at Ingwenya were unavoidably delayed.

The small church at Binga was completed using finance from special donations for Binga. Toilets were started to satisfy public health regulations.

New projects for 1998

Kitchen extension to Guest House at Ingwenya: this became necessary in order to accommodate Mr. Benschop and was completed in time for his arrival in February.

PABX for Mbuma Hospital: in view of the budget cuts this was the only new capital project approved for 1998. Previously there was only one telephone at the Hospital but the introduction of a new telephone system in the region made it possible to improve the facilities. The benefit to the Hospital staff of having extensions in various Hospital departments and in the homes of the doctor and the nursing sisters is incalculable.

Emergency projects which became necessary during the year

Replacement of Landrover ambulance: the increasing unreliability of this vehicle caused a crisis in the transport situation at Mbumba as it is the only ambulance. At one point in August/September it was off the road awaiting repair for 4 weeks, it was then roadworthy for only a fortnight before it was back in the garage again and the repair bills were becoming difficult to meet: 22% of the total repair bill for 13 vehicles was spent on this ambulance but there was insufficient finance available in Zimbabwe to replace it. It was a matter of great thankfulness, therefore, to learn that extra funds were to be released from the Mbumba Zending Fund for the replacement of the ambulance. As a result of investigations by Mr. R. Campbell it was decided to place an order for a modified Mazda Pickup which is less expensive than a Landrover. Delivery of this vehicle was still awaited at the end of the year.

Replacement of Mission house, Ingwenya: this old mud-brick house, occupied by Miss Macaulay, developed serious structural faults in September and it became clear that it was unsafe. The house was subsequently evacuated to await demolition and rebuilding has become a priority project. Again, our Dutch friends at Mbumba Zending showed their great generosity by promising to provide the extra finance necessary to replace this house.

Capital projects still outstanding

In January 1998, some projects were earmarked by the Deputies as having priority status and needing the attention of Mr. Ian MacLean, Kenya:

1. Improvements/Replacements – Girls' Dormitories, Ingwenya
2. Improvements/Replacements – Nurses' Dormitories, Mbumba
3. Maize Storage, Ingwenya
4. Kitchen Staff Changing Rooms, Ingwenya

There has been no progress on these projects because, with the developments in Kenya it was naturally no longer possible for Mr. MacLean to be involved in projects in Zimbabwe. In addition, items 1 and 2 would require massive finance which is presently not available. Items 3 and 4 are smaller projects which can be financed from funds in Zimbabwe once the building programme at Ingwenya allows, probably when the replacement for Miss Macaulay's house has been completed.

The condition of the fleet of vehicles is giving us increasing cause for concern. At least five of our present fleet are now 7 years old and in that time they have been driven for many miles over very rough roads and have often had to be used to carry heavy loads; they are becoming unreliable and repair bills are increasing. It is now costing a lot to keep Rev. Mazvabo's car on the road and the Hospital lorry and the School bus, which are essential lifelines to these institutions, have been giving a lot of problems: it is now difficult to source spare parts for them in Zimbabwe so when faults develop they can be off the road for weeks.

Other Projects

Solar Power, Mbuma: the installation of solar lighting at the Hospital was made possible by unexpected funding from the Netherlands Embassy through the Ministry of Health. This was a truly wonderful provision as the DC lighting had broken down early in the year and all attempts at repairing it were futile so the Hospital staff were back to the days of nursing by candlelight. Like the PABX, the solar lighting has transformed life at the Hospital. The DC lighting was eventually repaired later in the year making life easier in the accommodation blocks and the nurses' homes.

E-mail: when the fax broke down, the Mission Office was gifted e-mail by a donor from Holland. This has revolutionised our communications with the FMC and the General Treasurer in Scotland and was a source of great wonder for several weeks after installation.

Famine Relief: the 1998 harvest was fairly poor in most areas and, by September, many people had used up all their maize, so maize distribution was necessary among our people in order to help them survive until the 1999 harvest is gathered in.

Dutch Clothes Parcels: we continued to receive these valuable parcels during the year although a change in import regulations in 1997 limited any one consignment to 1,000 kg as opposed to the 6,000 kg consignments we had been receiving. This considerably increased the expense involved in sending the clothes but after discussions with Customs and Excise officials we were able to revert to the 6,000 kg consignments as each of our Mission stations is permitted to receive 1,000 kg. This considerably reduced the transportation costs from Holland.

•

As always the work in the Administration Office of the Mission has been very varied and the staff in the Office have had a difficult year implementing improved financial and administrative procedures under an inexperienced and temporary Administrator.

Mr. C. Moyo, the Finance Supervisor, who has been working in the Office for nine years, had the additional task of training two new Accounts Clerks: Mrs. S. C. Mpofu, who transferred from John Tallach School Office, and Mrs. Senzeni Mpofu, who transferred from Thembiso/ESM. Their patience, co-operation and application is to be commended.

In spite of all the difficulties of the year we have to acknowledge that our most urgent needs were met according to the promise: “. . . my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” We record our heartfelt thanks for the continued generosity of the people in Holland, in Scotland and elsewhere. The Saviour Himself said: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

DOMINIONS AND OVERSEAS COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. A. Ross

PART OF THE WORK of the Dominions and Overseas Committee is to ensure that deputies be sent to our congregations abroad. This is not always easy and particularly at such a time when ministers are few. We were not able to send a deputy to Australia and New Zealand in the current year. Nor were we in a position to send a deputy to the Vancouver people. We regret being unable to do so, but hope, God willing, that shortly we will be placed to send deputies to these congregations.

However, we were in a position to send a number of deputies to Canada and Texas. Both congregations deeply appreciate visits from deputies. The Texans continue to express a genuine wish to belong to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Three persons in the congregation are in full communion with the Church.

Rev. J. MacLeod visited Chesley in July, supplying the congregation for three Sabbaths. On the occasion of his visit, there were two baptisms. Rev. J. MacLeod reports that one family has drifted away, otherwise our people meet regularly at the means of grace and the elders, Mr. G. Schuit and Mr. D. Kuiper, continue to keep the services.

Rev. K. M. Watkins visited Chesley and Texas on two occasions, in the months of July and August 1998 and February 1999. In the Chesley congregation there was one person accepted as a member in full communion and six baptisms. In Texas there is a gathering of around 30 people, while in Chesley 30 to 40 meet regularly. Mr. Watkins informs us of continuing problems in the Texas group and that a slow and cautious approach is necessary. The family of Mr. Jan de Wit, Mount Elgin, were visited, and a weekday service had 60 persons present.

Rev. John Goldby also visited Chesley and Texas in October, and was accompanied by Mr. G. Schuit during his visit to Texas, and nine children were baptised. Rev. J. Goldby relates that the writings of Owen, Edwards, the Erskines, Boston and suchlike are much appreciated by the people.

While we were unable to send deputies to Australia and New Zealand it is cause for thankfulness to the Most High that we have two active ministers there. Their labours are not without spiritual success and appreciated by the congregations. Both ministers remind us that they have had no deputy for a long time. They express their appreciation of overseas visitors. Rev. van Dorp tells of the edifying address of the Secretary, Mr. Paul Rowland, Trinitarian Bible Society, to the Gisborne congregation. The cry of the vacant congregations there is that the Lord of the harvest would send them pastors after His own heart. May the Lord be gracious to hear their prayers.

We were very pleased that Mr. Lucio Strata was able to visit the small group in Fornaci di Barga in May 1998 and conducted two services on the Sabbath and one during the week. He felt the visit to be most encouraging and informs us that the people very very receptive to addresses based on the Word of God.

Two weeks before his arrival there was a sad bereavement in the Campani family, their eldest 37-year-old son died suddenly. Mr. Lucio Strata says the death had a solemnising effect on the gatherings. The small gathering of people gave generously to the Church, sufficient to cover the hotel bill and other expenses.

The work of spreading the Word of God in Eastern Europe continues on a regular basis. There were three visits with aid, two to the Ukraine and one to Romania. There were a further two visits when Revs. D. A. and N. M. Ross visited the Odessa group.

Due to threats from civil authorities a number of the Odessa congregation dispersed. However, the few families who, despite these threats to abandon their Gospel activities, are nevertheless in good heart, for which we are thankful to the Most High. The translating of sermons has hitherto been undertaken by a young lady in the congregation. Now she has the assistance of her husband who has, over the last two years, become sufficiently proficient in the English language.

Rev. Neil Ross was to spend two Sabbaths in April and May 1998 in Odessa preaching and lecturing, but due to illness was unable to do so. However, he was in the kind providence of the Lord able to go this year. The reports on Eastern Europe will give an update on the work there.

Lastly, there is a plea from a small group of worshippers in Singapore who subscribe to the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and worship according to our standards, who wish to be received into the fellowship of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The matter is under consideration by the Committee.

We look to the Most High to guide us in all our concerns and activities for the maintenance and furtherance of His cause in these different countries. "In thy light shall we see light" (Psalm 39:9).

AUSTRALIAN REPORT

Rev. E. A. Rayner

AS ANOTHER YEAR PASSES there is much reason to render thanks. With a good measure of health and strength I have been enabled to continue with all the regular duties in Grafton and Sydney as well as all the usual visits to New Zealand for Presbytery meetings and communion seasons. It is now almost a year since the visit of Rev. K. D. MacLeod. I was privileged to be with him when we assisted at the Auckland communion. We were also glad of his assistance at the January Presbytery this year when Mr. Christopher Tuck was examined as an applicant for the ministry and noted the deputy's thoroughness, exactness and fairness in dealing with his case. Since then Mr. Tuck has supplied our congregations with appreciation expressed for his services. We trust that as he continues his studies in Scotland, D.V., that the Lord will fit and prepare him to be a useful servant of the Lord.

The Grafton congregation suffered the Loss of Les Kroenhert early this year after being only approximately two years amongst us. He proved to be most diligent in his attendance at all services and prayer meetings until he was physically incapacitated. He constantly expressed thankfulness that the Lord led him to our Church where the whole counsel of God is still proclaimed. After he came amongst us he was constantly reading books, although he was not a natural reader, which gave him a background to the position of the Church which he greatly appreciated. The text which was so often before his mind was: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." This was his constant testimony to one and all. One of our elders learned that when a brother was tragically killed some years ago, while operating their sawmill, a large crowd of an estimated 1,500 people attended the funeral at the Grafton Anglican Cathedral. As a result he had the foresight to arrange for a marquee to be erected on the lawn behind the church to accommodate some hundreds of people with speakers to relay the service. Even so, it was estimated that around a hundred people were still outside the front of the church. Never before had our little church had so many in attendance. Many of those present were entirely ignorant of the Gospel and of the solemn realities of death, judgment and eternity. May the realities of eternal truths at such a time go home to at least some for their eternal good.

There was only one baptism from the Grafton congregation, that of Joshua Kidd, son of Geoff and Marion. The usual communion seasons were well attended with visitors from Sydney, Brisbane and Wellington. I am thankful to have had the continued assistance of Mr. van Dorp. A retired couple have been attending for many months, travelling all the way from Lismore, a distance of 1¹/₂ hour's drive one way each Sabbath. They appreciate our stand with regard to the A.V. and the Reformed truths preached, as well as the stand taken by Mr. MacFarlane against the Declaratory Act of 1893. Another encouragement was the application of the Bartons from Rockhampton, Queensland, to become members in full communion. After some years of consideration regarding the position of our Church this step was taken. When two other families in the group that met with them for public worship, after leaving the E.P.C. decided to become identified with the P.C.E.A., Stephen Barton and family resisted the pressure to also follow them, being clearly aware of the backsliding in that denomination. Hence they travelled over 1,100 km to be at the May communion. He has a physiotherapist practice in Rockhampton. Two of his children were baptised on the Monday of the Grafton communion.

Besides the two Grafton communions, the Sydney communion is held once a year as well. Mr. Tuck, student, assisted with two services very acceptably on Thursday and Sabbath evenings. There were no new communicants. There were two baptisms in Sydney. On my last visit on 6th December there were 62 in attendance at the morning service. This included Mrs. N. Ross with Sheena and Martin from Scotland. Also present was the Williamson family with Mrs.

Williamson's mother. They endeavour to travel about two hours from beyond Woollongong once a month. The children keep up with the Sabbath school exercises so that when they are able to attend they are kept in the picture. The congregation is comprised of young families but many of them are now becoming young adults. These have all grown up without a minister of their own and the burden of this weighs heavily on the elders in particular who have maintained the services and have the oversight of the congregations. Their constant prayer is that the Lord of the harvest would raise up a pastor for their needs.

Though it is a day of small things, the Lord still has His little flock amongst us and we continue to pray that the Lord will arise and plead the cause which is His own until He cause the little one to become a thousand.

NEW ZEALAND REPORT

Rev. J. A. T. van Dorp

THE ORDINANCES were again dispensed this year as in former years in the four congregations where services are maintained under the auspices of this denomination. Tauranga continues as a preaching station where Dick Vermeulen is resident who conducts the services there. The Lord's Supper was dispensed in Gisborne, Auckland and Wellington according to the list of communions published in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*.

The congregations here greatly appreciate the visits by overseas ministers and other guests. The first visit in 1998 was from Rev. K. D. MacLeod, Church deputy, whose visit to these distant parts had actually commenced in December 1997. He was kept very busy with services in each congregation, including the communion season in Auckland. This was followed by the visit of Mr. Paul Rowland, Secretary of the Trinitarian Bible Society, to the Gisborne congregation. He gave an edifying address on the principles and present projects of the society. The New Zealand congregations have been supporters of the TBS since the formation of the Free Presbyterian Church here and are highly appreciative of the valuable work done now for many years in publishing and circulating faithful copies of the Word of God.

One aspect of Bible dissemination that ought to concern us is the fewness of the peoples that up till now have the Bible in their own language so that a vast amount of work remains to be done. Mr. Rowland pointed out that the Bible is available in only 363 languages out of a total of over 5,000 known languages. Truly the harvest is great but the labourers are few. Some of the peoples without a Bible in their own language are no doubt within our own mission area in Africa. "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest" for the labourers – labourers to translate, print and circulate the Bible and labourers to preach the Word. And let us not forget the labourers needed to support these schemes, financially and especially prayerfully.

In 1998 we also had visits from Tom Maton, Alisdair McPherson and George Harvey, who had come to visit family in New Zealand. These elders were able and willing to help with some of the services in the various congregations. As there are four places here where worship is conducted under the auspices of this denomination we are very dependent on the assistance of the elders to keep the door of worship open. It is a matter of thankfulness that we have nine elders in New Zealand, seven of whom regularly take services.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand (PCANZ), was this year again rent by controversy between the liberals and the so-called conservatives. The conservatives have a motion on the table of the Assembly calling for a ban on the licensing and ordaining of homosexual and lesbian ministers. Although a majority of the office-bearers (54.5%) are in favour of this scriptural ruling they failed to reach the required 60% of the vote and consequently the issue was left undecided again until the next meeting of the Assembly. The Assembly also decided to impose a year-long moratorium of all discussion of the subject. The comments of the outgoing Moderator, the Rev. Peter Willsman, was: "We will either move into a new phase or the dying process will accelerate." The words and actions of the present Moderator, the Rev. Bruce Hansen, of Christchurch, are equally disturbing. He caused a stir when he announced that he would sign the register of dissent for "the disadvantaged". Delegates took this to mean he was favouring the liberal lobby.

This dismal state of affairs in a large Christian denomination is no doubt indicative of a rapid moral slide towards a national Sodom and Gomorrah mentality. This whole tendency is much accelerated by the bad example of persons in high places, the Prime Minister, Jenny Shipley, amongst them. She and some other members of Parliament accepted an invitation to view a parade of homosexuals in Auckland city in the beginning of this year (1998). This is indicative of the continued need of the separate position of our denomination in New Zealand and the need of faithful persons not only on the Church scene but also in the national sphere of government. We, like other nations, have great need of those like the men of Issachar, who had understanding of the times, to know what ought to be done in these circumstances.

EASTERN EUROPE MISSION REPORT

Rev. D. A. Ross

ALTHOUGH A NUMBER of disappointments have occurred in connection with our small mission endeavour in Eastern Europe, nevertheless in the good and merciful purpose of the Most High the work continues.

One great concern is in connection with the group of believers in Odessa who have been threatened with reprisals should they continue to meet for public worship. This threat was publicised we are told by means of a

programme on television. The result was that some of the group dispersed. However, three families continue to meet regularly.

We little realise the trauma some believers have to endure when threatened in one way or another as they seek to worship the Most High. While we sit in the comfort of assurance that our meetings will not be disturbed or penalties imposed, we perhaps forget those who are not as blessed with peace as we are. How we should seek to bear their burden in prayer at a Throne of Grace, and to help in whatever way opens in providence.

Another disappointment was the refusal of customs in the Ukraine to allow the reception of 12,000 Ukrainian Bibles forwarded by the Trinitarian Bible Society for free distribution throughout the Ukraine. The Bibles arrived at Odessa at considerable cost to the TBS, where the intention was to distribute these, mostly by post and other means. However, there was a demand for taxes which amounted to £8,000 and, as far as we know, uncalled for, since the Bibles were for free distribution only. In the event of not receiving this amount of money, custom officials eventually expelled the Bibles from the Ukraine, again at no small cost to the TBS. However, despite setbacks in the spread of the Gospel, we are assured that the Lord reigns, and has permitted this for good and wise purposes.

The printing of the *Confession of Faith* and the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms* in the Ukrainian language proved to be a slow process. This was done by printers in Odessa and now the finished project has just come to hand. I am told by the Rev. Neil Ross (who is presently in Odessa), that it is of a very high standard. The total cost of printing 5,000 was £3,854. Over and above this there are many other costs prior to coming to the printers. One great advantage of printing in the Ukraine is that it cuts out the enormous task of transporting the literature into the Ukraine had these been printed outwith the Ukraine. The cost of printing the *Confession* and postings throughout the Ukraine was donated by a friend.

Our next project is a reprint of 20,000 of the *Mother's Catechism*. At the moment the Rev. Neil Ross is negotiating with a printer in Odessa so as to proceed with the work. After this it is our intention, God willing, to go ahead with printing in one book the *Confession of Faith* in Russian, with the *Catechisms*, the *Sum of Saving Knowledge*, the *Directory for the Public Worship of God*, the *Form of Presbyterial Church Government* and the *Directory for Family Worship*. A friend has donated money for the specific purpose of printing these. Mrs. Hopkins in England is presently busy with the work of translation, and tells me that this large undertaking is near completion. The Reformation Christian Ministries have given us permission to use their translation of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Mrs. Hopkins translating all other works including the addition of proof texts to the *Confession of Faith*.

We have also been requested by a group of young men in Hungary if we would consider printing the *Confession of Faith* in the Hungarian language. The request is being considered.

The work of posting literature by Miss Norma Morrison from the Church office continues. These are in reply to requests from Eastern Europe. From

November 1997 to the same month in 1998 Miss Morrison posted to Eastern Europe 376 Bibles, 2,600 Gospels of John, 287 *Confessions of Faith*, 267 *Shorter Catechisms*, 2,350 *Jehovah's Witnesses – Their Lies Exposed*, 1,600 *Mormons – Their Lies Exposed*, as well as many other pieces of literature. The total cost of postage for 120 parcels of Bibles and literature was £624.99. Comparing this cost with transporting Bibles and literature and the aid we take on one journey, the cost of transporting is less than posting. We are grateful to Miss Morrison for her work.

A sample of what was transported on the last three journeys by truck is: 1,095 Bibles, 4,000 Gospels, 24,500 *Words of Life* Calendars and many other pieces of literature, which included a great variety of books in England, much of which was purchased from our own Bookroom, and a large quantity of books and leaflets donated by a friend. A large consignment of Reformed literature in English went to the library of a Theological Institute in Miskolc, Hungary. There has also been a request for such literature from a Theological Institute in the Ukraine.

Igor Zadoroshney in Odessa is a very busy man, constantly posting Bibles and literature. For example, from the month of August to the month of January he has posted to different places in the Ukraine 244 Ukrainian Bibles, 1,496 *Confessions of Faith*, 1,496 *Shorter Catechisms*, and 8,401 *Mother's Catechisms*. These are requested in reply to adverts which Mr. Igor Zadoroshney inserts in the local papers. His main means of transporting these to the Post Office is with a bicycle, and we are indebted to Mr. Alistair MacRae, Inverness, for obtaining, through a friend, a new bicycle for Mr. Zadoroshney to replace his old, well used cycle.

We are again indebted to the Trinitarian Bible Society, for grants of Bibles as well as Scripture calendars in Russian, Hungarian and Romanian. These beautiful calendars are eagerly received each year and those who receive them anxiously enquire each year for a new supply. Unhappily on this occasion one lot of calendars which were left with a Pastor in Kiev (and due to customs regulations) were not released till late into the year, although delivered in early November. However, the bulk of the calendars were delivered in ample time for the ensuing year.

We are also indebted to the men who give of their time for the maintenance of the truck: Mr. George MacAskill, Mr. Alistair MacRae, and Mr. Calum MacAskill. A sincere thank you also to the drivers to Eastern Europe on the occasion of three visits: Mr. Alistair MacRae, Mr. Edward Ross and Mr. George MacAskill, and especially when giving of their holiday time and working time to assist with the work of Eastern Europe.

The sorting of clothing in preparation for distribution is now done by the ladies of Inverness congregation with Mrs. Helen Fraser kindly overseeing the work. We thank each and all for their labour. Friends donate furniture, agricultural equipment, etc., to take to Eastern Europe, and some of this we are able to take, but have to dispose of some to salerooms, not being able to carry all that is given. We are indebted to Mr. A. MacRae for looking after this side

of the work and many other activities connected with the work. However, as noted in other reports on the work, these are only handmaids to the Gospel, just as on our Mission in Africa.

The all important work is spreading the Word of God and the spiritual wellbeing of the small group of believers in Odessa who, as far as I can judge, are sincerely anxious to be part of the Free Presbyterian Church and have requested on numerous occasions, if possible, when the time is ripe, that they be granted the ordinance of baptism as a beginning to being established properly. This is no small step for them, having come from a Baptist background to a Paedobaptist position, and our desire is to encourage them every step of the way. The regular Sabbath services are usually led by Igor Zadoroshney, and many of the discourses are readings from the *Confession of Faith* and the *Shorter Catechism*, Vincent on the *Shorter Catechism*, translated into Russian by his son-in-law and daughter, or parts read from Boston's *Fourfold State*.

I have visited Odessa twice this current year, and as previously reported, taken services and given lectures on different subjects. Rev. Neil Ross visited Odessa for two Sabbaths in March of this year and as well as taking services and giving lectures, assisted in printing projects and in the purchase of a computer for Mr. Igor Zadoroshney to facilitate the work of spreading the Word of God among the Ukrainian people. Mr. Ross will give a report of his visit.

We are under no doubt as to the source of true spiritual prosperity in this work. It does not lie in the hand of man but in the hand of God. Nothing less than the work of the Holy Spirit will bring about a saving change in the dark heart of man. That the glorious Head of the Church, our Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus, may bring about this change by His Holy Spirit, He lays on us the responsibility to go out with His Word. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). We cannot expect the conversion of our fellow sinners without this – the seed must be sown. "Behold a sower went forth to sow . . ." (Matthew 13:3). The Holy Spirit will in His time prepare the "good ground", and cause that it bring "forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold" (Matthew 13:8).

REPORT OF VISIT TO ODESSA

Rev. Neil M. Ross

OUR CHURCH decided at its 1975 Synod to "to take steps to provide material help and reliable versions of the Scriptures for persecuted Christians in Communist Countries". The Synod of 1986 decided to go further and establish personal contact with persecuted Christians behind the Iron Curtain, and accordingly, two ministers of the Church were sent to Hungary and Romania.

Since then, visits have continued, contacts were established in Moldova and the Ukraine also, and considerable amounts of material aid and Bibles were delivered to them. The work became easier when communism fell in 1989, and it was hoped that a truly Reformed witness would one day be established in the Ukraine. It was also hoped that a small step in that direction was taken when we conducted services very occasionally in Kiev and Odessa.

When I arrived in Odessa on Friday, 5th March, I found the core of the group there, Mr. Igor Zadoroshney, his wife Tanya, Mr. Dimitry Levitskey, and his wife Inna, in good heart. Mr. Zadoroshney and his wife have no English, but Mr. Levitskey and his wife, who have a little daughter, speak English. It was in 1995 that Mr. Zadoroshney's name and address were given by a woman in Simferopol, Crimea, to Rev. D. A. Ross, who sent him Russian Bibles and gave him advice. It was about this time too that he and his family came to know that there is such a thing as the Reformed faith. After looking in vain in Odessa for a reformed Church, and on the advice of Rev. D. A. Ross, they began to meet for public worship in their own home, and also studied the *Shorter Catechism* and the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. When Mr. Edward Ross and myself visited them in November 1996, there were about a dozen of them gathering each Sabbath. I preached to them on Luke 1:1: "Those things which are most surely believed among us."

However, although our friends were in good heart when they met me on my arrival, they had disappointing news. The other members of the group did not appear in church the previous Sabbath because of the threats of the Director of Religion for the Odessa Region, Mr. Nicolai Adonin. On the previous Friday, 26th February, in a television interview, he spoke about unregistered Churches and said: "In making application for registration it is necessary that their Church Rules and Confession of Faith be submitted, which we will check carefully to see that they are not against the law of Ukraine, and do not bring harm to our people. If we find in their Church Rules or Confession of Faith something that is not satisfactory to us, we will correct it. If that gathering of believers refuses to amend the unsatisfactory paragraphs, we will not register it. If a Church is not registered it is impossible for it to carry out any spiritual work. For example, there are some unregistered Presbyterians who gather in a private house, and who invite foreign pastors to keep worship. These pastors have no right to do any spiritual work: to pray, to preach, to spread their literature, to administer sacraments." [This is obviously a reference to the Free Presbyterian Church, for there is no other such unregistered Presbyterian group known in Odessa but ourselves.] Adonin continued: "For doing spiritual work, foreign pastors should receive the permission of the Council of Ministers of Ukraine, which can be given to them if their denomination is recognised as being safe for the Ukrainian people. They will have to wait for three months to one year for permission. Congregations will have to answer for breaking our laws."

At this announcement, more than half the group took fright and told the Zadoroshneys that they could not come to the services in case the KGB would

visit them. Indeed, on Sabbath, the few who still remained thought it wiser not to meet in the Zadoroshney home at present, but in the Levitskey home, which we did.

Dark as the religious scene is, our friends in Odessa go on in hope. Mr. Zadoroshney, with the help of his family, continues to reply to requests for Bibles and literature. His diligence and meticulous care in doing this work is most commendable. During the last eight months, August 1998 to February 1999, he has packed and posted 567 Ukrainian Bibles, 1,205 copies of the *Confession of Faith* in Russian, 1,205 of the *Shorter Catechism*, 8,820 of the *Children's Catechism*, plus numerous tracts. Now that the *Westminster Confession of Faith* in Ukrainian has arrived (5,000 copies), he will be busier than ever. There is such a great demand for the *Children's Catechism* that it became necessary to order a reprint of 20,000 copies, this time at the reduced price of 7 cents per copy. Mr. Zadoroshney also answers questions from enquirers, especially about baptism. Mr. Levitskey has translated Shaw's commentary on the *Confession of Faith*, chapter 28, "Of Baptism", into Russian to send to some of these enquirers.

It is a great help to them in their work that they now have a modern computer, which was given to them by the Church while I was there. Not only will it aid them in producing letters and pamphlets but also will be of much assistance in translation work. They are proceeding with translating (or rather transforming) more of the prose Psalms into metre and storing them in the computer. (So far they have 21 metrical Psalms, 13 of which they have printed and distributed.) They also hope to build up a stock of answers to certain questions which they are repeatedly asked by post. They also have several sermons written out in Russian which they hope to put on disk and print as necessary. For example, they asked and got my permission to print and distribute a sermon on the new birth which I preached on this occasion. The computer will also enable them to have speedy and secure e-mail contact with the Church in Scotland and will obviate the occasional interference with, or theft of, mail which we send to them.

They also wish to publish books for children and have asked permission to translate and publish my little book, *Nehemiah – Builder for God*, and similar books. Another project they have in mind is to translate and distribute two tracts, which they hope would be produced by our Church in simple language, answering the questions, What is the Reformation? and, What is Presbyterianism? Mr. Levitskey continues to translate pieces which they hope to publish later. He has also requested permission to translate and publish the Scripture and Catechism Exercises in the *Young People's Magazine* in the expectation of getting children to do them.

The group meets every Sabbath morning and Wednesday evening. While I was there they met on Sabbath evenings also. Their order of service is Free Presbyterian, including the singing of Psalms in metre. Mr. Zadoroshney reads a sermon to them or addresses them on a passage of Scripture. They have translated some of Rev. D. Macfarlane's sermons, which they have read more

than once, and have also re-read the sermons of visiting ministers. I hope to send them some sermons of our ministers for translating and reading.

Whatever may develop, in the providence and grace of God, in connection with their relationship to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, they are engaged in a work of Bible and literature distribution and translation, which is very worthy of our whole-hearted support. They feel very isolated and long for more contact with us in spiritual matters. On one occasion, Mr. Zadoroshney described themselves as “orphaned children”, and on another occasion Mr. Levitskey said, “We live in a wilderness where there is no water”.

I felt very much having to leave the little group of friends. They are seeking by grace, I believe, to walk in the path of righteousness. Our prayer is that they would be preserved in a hostile environment, and that their endeavours to bring their fellow Ukrainians to know the truth would be greatly blessed. As the Lord in His providence has brought us together, I believe that it is our duty to continue doing what we can to help them, and, the Lord willing, to bring them within the fold of our Church in a more formal way.

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO USA AND CANADA

Rev. K. M. Watkins

AS A DEPUTY sent by the Dominions and Overseas Committee, I enjoyed the privilege of visiting North America on two occasions since the Synod last met, in August 1998 and February 1999. I must acknowledge the Lord’s mercies in many journeys, together with His help in many varied duties, both “publicly, and from house to house” (Acts 20:20). The kind welcome that I received from so many people, especially those who were so ready to open their homes, leaves me with many a warm memory. Like the woman who made a chamber for Elisha (see 2 Kings 4:10), the Lord’s people will not be without their reward – every cup of cold water given for the sake of His cause will be remembered by the Saviour.

The first visit took me to Chesley, Canada, and to Houston, Texas, where I was joined by my wife. I supplied two Sabbaths in each place, together with the usual midweek meetings. It was good to be back in Chesley among the people whom I had first come to know five years before. I was able to visit all but one of the families in their homes. There were between 40 and 50 at most of the services.

On the second Sabbath in Chesley, with the usual services of a communion season before and after, the Redeemer’s death was remembered by His people in the scriptural way that He appointed in the night in which He was betrayed. A great encouragement to the people was the receiving of Mrs. Jenny Bouman as a member in full communion on this occasion. Mrs. Bouman had been baptised a few weeks previously by Rev. John MacLeod. In addition, the

sacrament of Baptism was dispensed to the six children of Clifton and Susan Townsend, from the state of Illinois in the United States of America. The Townsends have been in contact with the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland for several years. Both Texas and Chesley friends have enjoyed Christian fellowship in the Townsends' home. They drove for more than ten hours to be in Chesley on this occasion. Our prayer is that God would add His own blessing to the two sacraments of the New Testament instituted by Himself.

From Chesley I went to Texas, conducting two services on each of the two Sabbaths, and also three midweek services. It was heartening to see a small number of visitors supplementing the basic group at some of these meetings. These were the first Sabbath services to be held in a new location, in a rented building in Richmond, near Rosenberg. The people have continued to meet there ever since. It is more of a midway point than previously. This was my second visit to Texas, and it was good to be among the people again. The Texas group is drawn from three geographical locations. The kindness of the people meant that we were able to stay in all three areas, and I was thus able to get more of an on-the-ground understanding of the whole situation there.

My second visit to North America, in February 1999, began with a visit to the Townsend family in Southern Illinois. My wife and I enjoyed their warm hospitality for three nights. On the second evening a worship service was held in their home, to which another family came – Roman Catholics – making 18 in all. There are few Reformed Christians in this part of the United States, but the Townsends are encouraged from time to time by visits from Chesley and Texas people. Mr. Al Hembd, a Chesley member for several years, lives in the neighbouring state of Indiana, and has visited with his family, but the driving distance between them is still long. I was sorry that time constraints made it impossible to meet up with the Hembd family.

From Illinois we proceeded to Texas for one week. Once again Carol Richards and her daughter Tamara opened their home to us. Throughout our short stay their welcoming kindness was much valued, especially in the midst of much business for me. Two prayer meetings as well as two Sabbath services were held. In addition, on 16th February, it was my pleasure to conduct the marriage of Kenneth Metcalfe (from Barnoldswick, now living in Glasgow) and Patti Moline (from Texas). We wish them the Lord's blessing as they set up their home in Glasgow. Because of the wedding, a good number of friends and family from the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada swelled the numbers. In spite of some sickness, there were at least 50 present at most of the services.

As I said in my report last year, it is still early days for the Texas situation, and very real problems affecting the work exist. After three visits to Texas and in the light of numerous communications and conversations, sadly these problems still manifest themselves, making a slow and cautious approach essential. Between my two visits the group's meetings for worship on Sabbath days have been reduced from two to one. Meanwhile, we look to the Lord to build His Church, so that the gates of hell could not prevail against it. Spiritual

vines have tender grapes and, however promising at the beginning, the fruit can be so easily spoiled.

Five of the young people from the UK who had attended the wedding accompanied us to Canada, and stayed with us in the Chesley manse. There we all received the usual warm welcome from the loyal Free Presbyterian friends. In particular, their readiness to make numerous journeys to and from Toronto's airport, as well as making their vehicles available for our use, was much appreciated. On the two Sabbaths public worship was conducted morning and evening, as well as the senior Sabbath School catechism class. Two prayer meetings were held as well. The services were well attended, with about 50 souls the first Sabbath and more than 40 the second (by which time the UK visitors had returned home).

The visit of the young people from the UK was an encouragement to the Chesley congregation. I am sure that it would be of much benefit if more of our people from home were able to visit and support Chesley, especially at their communion seasons. It is difficult perhaps for us at home to appreciate the spiritually isolated position of the Chesley people, and the encouragement that visitors can bring.

A renewed invitation from Mr. Jan de Wit and the friends in Mount Elgin led to a weekday service there at which more than 60 souls were present. Once again we were pleased to be among this people, who are so like-minded to ourselves in many ways. The encouraging attendance underlines the need for the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland witness in Canada.

On the way to Mount Elgin we made a short visit to Anne Reynebeld (née Zekveld), who had spent over five years nursing on our Zimbabwe Mission, now married and living in Canada, who just eight days previously had given birth to her first child, a daughter.

As a member of the General Committee of the Trinitarian Bible Society, I had been asked to speak on behalf of the Society's Ontario Auxiliary at a meeting in Dundas Free Reformed Church. About 150 people were present that evening, which was heartening to see after the troubles that the Society has experienced in Canada in recent times. In the face of much opposition, we rejoice that support for the publishing of sound Bibles in the languages of the world is being maintained. Worship was conducted singing exclusively the inspired Psalms without musical accompaniment.

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO USA AND CANADA

Rev. J. Goldby

A FIVE WEEK VISIT to Chesley, Ontario, was followed by seventeen days with the group of persons meeting under the auspices of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in Richmond, Texas. The deputation began on the 29th of October 1998 and ended on 17th December.

Ontario

The Chesley church and manse are situated near the town's main street where between thirty and forty persons gather for Sabbath services. A small Sabbath school meets in a well equipped basement of the church prior to the Sabbath morning service. The congregation has two elders, Mr. G. Schuit and Mr. David Kuiper. Mr. Rick Bouman, a deacon, is the only other office-bearer, who, with the assistance of his wife, runs a well stocked Church bookstall for the benefit of the congregation and other interested persons.

During my five weeks in Chesley I stayed in the manse but was kindly entertained in turn by the various families in their own homes. This arrangement gave me a good opportunity of getting to know the congregation. Many families in the area and indeed in North America as a whole have, for various reasons, opted for home schooling their children with varying degrees of success. Almost all of the children in the Chesley congregation are being home schooled by their parents, mainly in order to minimise the influence of the world during childhood development and to assist in the instilling of Christian principles.

Without a resident minister for a number of years the local congregation has declined somewhat. In the wider sphere matters seem to be more promising as Chesley is gathering members and adherents of the Free Presbyterian Church not only in Canada but also in the USA from as far afield as Illinois, Indiana and Texas. It was a pleasure, on one of the weekends in Chesley, to meet Mr. Hembd, who is a member in full communion. He had driven 500 miles from Indiana along with two of his children.

With modern communications our ability to maintain fellowship with people in distant places has been much improved. There is a great deal of contact by e-mail between our Ministers and people in Scotland and our friends in North America. Telephone charges from America to the UK are very cheap and a great deal of useful interaction is taking place by these means. The office-bearers and members of the Chesley congregation have been zealous and diligent not only keeping up written and spoken contact with others but also in making regular visits to the United States. These visits involve journeys of three to four thousand miles at a time. The low price of petrol in the USA and Canada is helpful in keeping travel costs down. A gallon of petrol in the USA is about one fifth the cost of a gallon in the UK. Owing to these recent developments it is likely, God willing, that Chesley will have increasing numbers of visitors to their communion seasons from all over North America.

Texas

On Monday, 30th November, Mr. Gerrit Schuit and I proceeded from Chesley to Texas, a distance of some 1,500 miles. The congregation of 30+ persons meeting regularly in Richmond, Texas, comprises five families and two single men. Three of their number are members in full communion on the roll of Chesley. Half of the congregation reside in Santa Fe near Galveston on the Gulf of Mexico, whilst the others live in the vicinity of Bellville some 100 miles inland to the northwest. A suitable meeting hall is rented by the

congregation at a cost of £300 per month in a place approximately midway between Santa Fe and Bellville. The nearby city of Houston, Texas, is a centre of commerce and industry and one of America's busiest ports. Houston is perhaps best known for the Lyndon B. Johnstone Space Centre but also boasts at least two world-famous medical institutions, the Texas Medical Centre and the Anderson Cancer Centre. Houston is one of America's larger cities, with a metropolitan population of almost four million souls. Situated within twenty miles of Richmond it is within easy driving distance for anyone living in the west Houston area.

The people have an experimental and spiritual knowledge of the Bible and of reformed doctrine. They meet together in Richmond for public worship on Sabbath morning and on Wednesday for the prayer meeting. On Sabbath evening public worship is held in Santa Fe whilst in Bellville the families worship in their own homes. If a visiting minister is present they meet together twice on Sabbath in Richmond. Although the drive to Richmond means a journey of fifty miles for all, travelling is made easy by good straight roads. Most of the journey time is spent profitably with Psalm singing and discussion of spiritual topics. The Sabbath meetings are conducted in the usual way with one of the male members reading a prescribed sermon. During my stay in Texas the ordinance of Baptism was administered to nine Texan children from the families of the two male members. Frequent trips to the UK are being made by members of the group in Texas in order to attend communion seasons and to gain familiarity with the home Church. Some of their young people attended last year's Youth Conference and hope to do the same this year also, God willing.

Before coming into contact with the Free Presbyterian Church (initially through the Internet) the families in Texas had almost given up hope of ever finding a sound Church. Some have been worshipping in their own homes for as long as twelve years reading the sermons of John Owen and similar authors. A minister to labour among the people of Texas is necessary if the Church there is to progress. Meanwhile, it would be beneficial if deputies could visit the Texans for longer periods than has been the custom in recent times. This would also be of great assistance to the Church in assessing the prospects in this region. The Rev. John Owen believed it to be the duty of ministers to extend their labours beyond their own congregations and in "The Duty of a Pastor" (*Works*, Vol. 9, page 461), he says: "It is the duty of particular Churches (one end of their institution being the calling and gathering the Catholic Church) to part with their officers for a season, when called to preach in other places for the converting of souls to Christ." Whilst we do not forget other needy congregations both at home and abroad it is clear that the Lord has opened a door of opportunity in North America and it is highly desirable that the good work done so far be continued. I am indebted to our friends in Canada and USA for the kindness and hospitality shown to me during my visit. On their part I know that the assistance and support given by our Church through the Dominions and Overseas Committee is very much appreciated indeed.

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO ONTARIO, CANADA

Rev. John MacLeod

OVER THE COURSE of my visit to Chesley in July I took the services on the first three Sabbaths of the month and also the three weekly prayer meetings. In between, I tried to visit as many of the families as I could. The manse was fully prepared beforehand by the ladies of the congregation and it is there that we were comfortably ensconced over the period of our stay. The services were, on the whole, well attended, especially on the second Sabbath when, in the course of the morning service, I baptised an adult – Mrs. Jenny Bouman – and Samuel, the infant son of Gilbert and Doreen Zekveld. On that occasion there were around 80 souls present including four young Smith brothers who had travelled all the way from Texas to attend the services, a round journey of around 3,000 miles.

In the absence of ministerial supply, the Chesley elders – Gerrit Schuit and David Kuiper – continue to conduct public worship in the church, reading suitable sermons when the congregation assembles on the Sabbath and midweek. The need for a pastor to be settled over them is great and we hope and pray that the Lord of the harvest will soon supply their need. Meantime, an effort should be made to send deputies at frequent intervals.

We would acknowledge the goodness and kindness of the Most High in taking us in safety from destination to destination and, as in the past, we have to express our gratitude to the Chesley congregation for all the kindness shown to us over the period of our stay.

TRAINING OF THE MINISTRY COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. J. MacDonald

IN THE YEAR just ended, one student, Mr. D. Campbell, Balgowan, Struan, attended the Divinity classes under the tutorship of Rev. J. MacLeod, the Church's tutor in New Testament Greek and associated subjects. Mr. MacLeod will be presenting his own Tutorial Report to the Synod. On passing his Exit Examination, Mr. Campbell will proceed, D.V., to Leverburgh for the second year of his course with the Rev. K. D. Macleod, who tutors the students in Old Testament Hebrew and cognate subjects.

Dr. Douglas Somerset, Aberdeen, is due to take his Entrance to Divinity Examinations in August and on passing these will join the class at Leverburgh, God willing. The Committee will be making special recommendations to the Synod to decide the future course of studies to be followed by Mr. Christopher Tuck, of Brisbane, Australia. The Committee will also be submitting to the Synod a report on Mr. Manford Mloyi, the student of the Zimbabwean Presbytery.

Our students, like us all, live in perilous times and have need of giving diligence to equip themselves for the onerous task of preaching the Gospel in a day of backsliding and apostasy. We recommend our students to the grace of God and to the prayers of the Lord's remnant in our midst.

The Theological Conference

The annual Theological Conference was held in Glasgow on Tuesday 1st and Wednesday 2nd December 1998. The following papers were read:

1. *Princeton Theology – the Scottish Connection* Rev. J. MacLeod
2. *A Reformed Exposition of the Book of Revelation* . Rev. D. M. Boyd
3. *The Place of the Sacraments in Worship*..... Rev. K. M. Watkins
4. *Stevenson on the Offices of Christ*..... Rev. J. R. Tallach
5. *The Puritans on Prayer* Rev. R. MacLeod

Rev. D. MacLean, Glasgow, acted as chairman. The Committee was heartened by the good attendance from every part of the Church and intend to have a Conference this year in Inverness in the first week of December, God willing. It is hoped to have a full programme in place before the Synod.

THEOLOGICAL TUTOR'S REPORT

Rev. J. MacLeod

THE SESSION commenced on Tuesday, 8th September and the classes were held in the vestry of the Stornoway church. There was but one student attending – Mr. David Campbell, M.A. – and ordinarily we met each day, except Monday, at 10 a.m. The subjects covered were as in previous years.

New Testament Greek and Criticism

The Gospel according to Mark was read through and for exegetical purposes J. A. Alexander's *Commentary* was mainly used, but we also had occasion to refer to other helps such as Wuest's *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* and Robertson's *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. We also gave close study to the Epistle to the Galatians using Ridderbos's *Commentary* as well as the forementioned helps. Wenham's *Elements of New Testament Greek*, with which the student was already familiar, was thoroughly revised and often consulted when reading and studying the prescribed portions of the Greek New Testament. Following the advice given by Wenham at the end of his book, Metzger's *Lexical Aids for Students of New Testament Greek* was recommended to the student as useful for the purpose of extending his knowledge of Greek vocabulary.

In our study of Textual Criticism we mainly consulted J. H. Greenlee's *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, Edward Miller's *Guide to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* and Edward F. Hills' *King James Version Defended*. We also referred to some of the useful literature published by the Trinitarian Bible Society.

Catechetics

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* was given close study using for the most part A. A. Hodge's *Commentary*. We also referred to the expositions of Robert Shaw and John MacPherson.

Church Law and Polity

John MacPherson's *Presbyterianism*, Thomas Witherow's *The Apostolic Church: Which is it?* and the Church's own *Manual of Practice* were all consulted.

Scripture

The portion of Scripture prescribed for study was the whole of the New Testament. J. G. Machen's *Introduction to the Literature and History of the New Testament* was used as a general study guide.

We have reason to be thankful to the Most High for granting both tutor and student health of body and mind throughout the course of the session. I am grateful to Mr. Campbell for his willing help in supplying my own pulpit from time to time, and also for his willing help in connection with taking services in other congregations, especially those without a pastor. He applied himself with diligence to his studies and our desire is that the Lord would make him an able, faithful minister of the everlasting Gospel.

WELFARE OF YOUTH COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. A. Ross

THE DUTY of attending to the spiritual needs of young people is the constant concern of the Committee, and in the kind providence of the Most High we have continued with this work for another year.

We are deeply indebted to the ladies who continue to prepare and correct the Catechism and Scripture Exercises for the several age groups of children. The distribution of prizes and awards was done by the Clerk of the Committee, the Rev. G. G. Hutton.

The number of children doing the exercises is much the same as last year. However, as the children grow older it is noticeable that the number doing the exercises decreases. This is a great pity, as their need to be exercised in the

things which concern their souls in no way diminishes as they become older. Of course, it is the duty of parents, by the help of God, to lead their children in the study of the Word of God. Rev. John Willison of Dundee, writing to parents on the subject of instructing children, said: "My dear friends, the care of precious souls is a great trust committed to you by God, and to Him you are accountable for it. The instruction of youth is not to be left wholly to ministers, to schoolmasters or mistresses. No; parents ought to be installing good principles into children, and masters into servants, as they have occasion, which might serve to leave abiding impressions on them many years thereafter; and so you would become 'fellow-helpers in the truth' as in 3 John 8."

It is hoped that the book *Line Upon Line*, which has been edited by the Rev. K. MacLeod, will shortly be ready for printing. There are other books under consideration for reprinting, but pressure of other work has prevented much progress being made.

The 1999 Youth Conference from Tuesday, 6th April, to Thursday, 8th April, is to take place, God willing, at Bonskeid House, Pitlochry. The venue, a well known conference centre, is in a quiet country place surrounded by beautiful woodland. This will be our first ever visit to this centre and indeed to the Pitlochry area. The Convener is to be the Chairman on this occasion.

The papers and speakers are:

1. *Keeping God's Commandments – Christian Behaviour in Today's World* Rev. D. J. MacDonald
2. *Christ's Will for the Church – What the Bible Says About Church Government* Rev. H. M. Cartwright
3. *Christ Jesus Came Into the World to Save Sinners – The Atonement and the Free Offer of the Gospel* Rev. D. A. Ross
4. *Some Places of Religious Interest Around Pitlochry – A Historical Tour* Rev. H. M. Cartwright
5. *From Patrick to the Present – The Story of Irish Christianity* Rev. G. G. Hutton
6. *"He Trusted in the Lord God" – Lessons from the Life of Hezekiah* Rev. D. J. MacDonald

We are always grateful to all those who so willingly give of their time and effort in preparing and delivering lectures at the Conference. Through the pages of the Synod Report we thank the speakers of last year's Conference at Craibstone, Aberdeen: the Revs. J. MacLeod, G. G. Hutton, J. R. Tallach, K. Watkins, and Dr. D. Somerset, for their much appreciated contributions.

We also thank the house mothers, Mrs. C. Ross and Mrs. G. Ross, for their untiring care and attention in looking after the young friends, and also for their attending to various duties, before, during and after the Conference. The

staff of Sutton Hall, Craibstone, showed us much kindness and provided excellent meals.

May the Most High in His sovereign mercy, bless this work to the spiritual good of our young friends to whom we have the privilege of giving instruction in the things of God. The promise is: "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 RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Alistair N. MacRae

WE ARE THANKFUL to the Lord that this year has been very successful in terms of occupancy. The occupancy rate was 98.5% which, in view of the present situation regarding Local Authority funding, is most gratifying. We understand that many of the homes in our area are operating at 50% and below.

We record with sorrow that during the year the following residents passed away, Mrs. A. MacFarlane on 7th April; Mr. A. Matheson on 26th April; Mrs. J. Grant on 6th June; Miss C. MacKenzie on 29th September; Mrs. M. Gillanders on 13th October and Miss J. J. Sinclair on 15th November. We extend our deepest sympathy to all their relatives.

Three legacies, amounting in total to £51,246, were received for which we are most grateful. As a result of receiving these legacies the Committee took the decision to replace the existing Garden Room which is in a dilapidated condition and not in keeping with the character of the building. Planning permission for alterations to a listed building has been granted and the work is now out to tender. Building will commence D.V. in February/March 1999. All external paintwork was carried out and all necessary repairs completed. Some 50% of the perimeter paling was replaced and the rest brought up to standard.

All the inspections carried out by the various authorities have been satisfactory.

The disciplines now in place enabled the Home to continue to operate without any financial burden on the Church and for this we give thanks to the Most High.

We have to report with regret that Mr. Donald Dunbar and Mr. Angus MacKintosh, Auditors, both felt unable to continue with the work. We thank them most sincerely for all they have done in the past and wish them the Lord's richest blessing in the future. Mr. J. Fraser and Mr. J. G. MacLeod have undertaken to carry out this task.

The Committee wish to express their grateful thanks to the Matron, Miss C. Tallach, and all her staff for the efficient and kindly manner in which they

carry out their duties, thus creating the homely atmosphere for which the Home is well known.

We thank all who through the year took the time and trouble to call on the Home, especially those who conducted family worship. Their personal interest is very much appreciated.

Finally we commend the residents and staff to the prayers of the Lord's people.

LEVERBURGH RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev K. D. Macleod

THE WORK OF THE HOME has continued for another year, providing care for up to fourteen older people who no longer feel altogether able to care for themselves. We are thankful that the Home was full for most of the year. This is reflected in the satisfactory financial outcome for the year, a surplus of nearly £38,000. This has eliminated the accumulated deficits of the early years of the Home's operation and leaves the Fund with a credit balance of around £18,000. We cannot, however, expect the situation to be so healthy in the next financial year as the Local Authority will not be increasing the rates they pay for residents, the vast majority of our residents being funded by the Local Authority.

Last year the computerisation of the accounts was completed and we have to thank Mrs. Catriona MacLean, Inverness, for her help and support. However, current and future issues of the software being used are beyond the capacity of the existing computer, and it has become necessary to invest in a new, and more powerful, machine.

While we report with thankfulness that the affairs of the Home have run smoothly over the past year, we are conscious that such a remark ignores the solemn fact of death. A Home run for old people will be visited more or less frequently by death and by the sadness which it brings in its train. In the past year Miss Mary Ann Morrison, Mrs. Giovanna Halford-Macleod, Mr. Murdo Macdonald and Mr. Neil Morrison have passed away. We extend our sympathy to their relatives.

The Committee would again express its sincere thanks to the Officer in charge and her staff for the consistent care they are giving to the residents in the Home. The unstinted service given by the staff to the residents is indeed worthy of our sincere gratitude, and we wish them all the Lord's blessing. We again commend the work of the Home to the prayers of the Lord's people.

The Committee have reason to mourn the passing of Rev. Alexander Morrison, a former convener of the Committee, and one who shared the responsibility of setting up the Home. Our sympathy goes out to his family.

OUTREACH COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. G. G. Hutton

THE YEAR 1998 witnessed the successful launch of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland on to the Internet, thus bringing our denomination's testimony and ministry within reach of a global audience. The encouraging initial response to the Church's website was reported to last year's Synod. After nine months in operation, the Committee believes that the website has proved effective at publicising the principles of the Church to a worldwide audience. At the time of writing, there have been over 4,600 visits to our site, and at present about 500-600 people look at our website each month. We have had visitors from America, Canada, Holland, Australia, Japan, Norway, Germany, Sweden, Denmark and other countries. In a comparable period of time, we could not expect this number and variety of visitors to cross the threshold of our churches to hear the Gospel.

The website does not only publicise the Church's witness, but it generates enquiries which need replies. Resources are being built up in order to respond to these in an efficient manner. About 350 e-mails have been replied to, some of them needing considerable research. A number of enquiries are redirected to the Free Presbyterian Bookroom which result in some sales, and some enquiries are redirected to the Dominions and Overseas Committee. The website is set up in such a way that enquirers can send an e-mail directly to the Clerk of Synod, the relevant Committee of Synod, or the General Treasurer's office, so that the Outreach Committee cannot report on how often such facilities are used, but the Committee would welcome feed-back on this. The *Free Presbyterian Magazine* appears monthly on the website, and a free sample of the magazine is offered to enquirers. Ballifeary Residential Care Home for the Elderly has its own page which carries a colour photograph of Ballifeary House. The Committee hopes to be able to develop this aspect of the website to enhance its usefulness and appeal.

The website was also used to generate interest in the Church when deputies were overseas. On one occasion, an opportunity was afforded to some interested parties to hear the Rev. Keith Watkins while he was in Chesley. New contacts were made through the website which may yet develop further, not only overseas but also in the United Kingdom.

The Committee is grateful to those who responded to the request for help resulting from the article in the May 1998 issue of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*. The Committee would like to thank Mr. Kenneth Campbell and Dr. Boyd who developed and maintained the website over the past year. Mr. Campbell went to some effort to chose a suitable Internet provider for the Church. For the past seven months, our service provider, Rednet, has been judged first in computer magazines as the most reliable and the most consistent Internet provider, and the best value for money.

The website is proving to be a cost-effective method of advertising the Church's witness and it has already generated business for the Free

Presbyterian Bookroom which, as well as enhancing sales, should also prove a more cost-effective method of transacting overseas business.

New opportunities have come through this modern method of communication to explain who we are as a Church and why we adhere to what we do.

The gospel tracts produced by our Committee are continuing to meet a need. Within the last year around 8,000 have left the Bookroom in Glasgow. About 6,000 of these have been sent out in response to requests from various parts of the British Isles to as far away as Australia. The rest have been taken away in small quantities from the Bookroom.

As always, we commend the work of the Committee to the prayers of the Lord's people.

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

THE FREE PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE REPORT

Rev. Neil M. Ross, Editor

HAVING OBTAINED HELP of God we have sent out the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* for another year. It has gone not only to the people of our Church but also to a considerable number outwith the Church. It is indeed a privilege when we are able, as a branch of the Church of Christ, to reach many readers in this country and abroad with material which, we prayerfully hope, is informative, instructive and spiritually profitable. Occasionally we receive letters from readers which indicate that our efforts are helpful to them and appreciated by them.

Our desire is that the Lord would bless our endeavours to the edifying of His people and the arousing of sinners from being at ease in their sins. We hope too that our observations on topical issues, secular and ecclesiastical, will be a witness to the world and an encouragement to those who cannot but be cast down at the signs of the times.

With the growth of political correctness, and the increased acceptance of Roman Catholicism and multi-faith religion, one wonders for how long we will be able to witness against false religions without hindrance. The religion that is truly Protestant and Reformed is being increasingly denigrated, and we cannot discount the possibility of that denigration leading one day to the adoption of repressive measures. Our duty is to work while it is day, and to maximise the opportunities given to us to be witnesses in, and to, the world.

The thanks of the Church are due to the Rev. John MacLeod for issuing yet another four issues of the quarterly *Gaelic Supplement* of the Magazine, which, we are informed, is much appreciated by its readership.

I am very grateful to those who have helped me during the past year, especially the Rev. K. D. Macleod and Dr. J. Mitchell. I greatly appreciate also

the help given by Miss Norma Morrison in the Church's Administration Office. Editing the Magazine would be impossible without the assistance of these and other helpers. Indeed, at present, it is a task which consumes a great number of hours each month. We enjoy a good working relationship with the printers, and we are grateful for their friendly and efficient co-operation.

As I enter the last year of my appointment for five years, I ask that my brethren and others would remember the work of the Magazine in their prayers – seeking not only that the editor would be upheld in his onerous responsibilities but also that the Magazine would be a blessing to many.

THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S MAGAZINE REPORT

Rev. K. D. Macleod, Editor

TWELVE MORE ISSUES of the magazine have been sent out since the last report was written. They have followed more or less the same pattern as in previous years. They have included comment on current issues, especially as they affect today's young people. All issues have contained accounts of conversion or other narratives which contain some degree of teaching. Other articles have given direction on practical issues; in particular, Rev. Keith Watkins' series on the Book of Ruth has drawn, from the Scripture narrative, useful lessons for young people. The needs of younger children are not forgotten with material being published every month under the headings "For Junior Readers" and "For Younger Readers". Space also continues to be made available for the Scripture and Catechism Exercises.

I would like to thank those who have provided articles for the magazine over the past year, especially the regular contributors. It is also appreciated when people point out material from other sources which may be useful in the pages of the magazine. My thanks again to Dr. J. Mitchell for his continued willing help in checking the magazine in the final stages of editing.

It would appear that sales of the magazines are relatively stable at present, but the Magazines Committee found it necessary to increase the print run of the *Young People's Magazine* by 100 copies per month from the beginning of 1999.

There is much need for prayer that, as the Magazines go out to various parts of the world, the material presented in them would be applied by the Most High to the readers. Only His blessing will make the work truly worthwhile.

PUBLICATIONS AND BOOKROOM COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. K. D. Macleod

THIS IS THE FIRST REPORT of the combined Committee. For convenience, the report describes separately the two parts of its work.

Publications

The main publication issued since the last meeting of Synod was the *Larger Catechism* as a 48-page booklet. Also produced was *One Day in Seven*, a four-page leaflet by the Convener, which deals with Sabbath observance. Another short run of *Sermons of Noted Ministers of the Northern Highlands* was necessary last year. The following books are in various stages of preparation and are D.V., to be published as hardbacks over the coming months: *Memoirs and Remains of Rev. Donald Macfarlane*, *The Tree of Promise* by Alexander Stewart, *Sermons of John Love, Ministers and Men of the Far North* by Alexander Auld. Only short runs of these volumes are to be printed. We are grateful to Dr. J. Mitchell for preparing the text of these volumes for printing, and to those who have undertaken the work of proof-reading.

When the hardback edition of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* was last printed, at the end of 1997, 40% of the copies were left unbound with the printer until they would be required. At the beginning of 1999 we had to arrange for these copies to be finished, as existing stocks were completely sold out. It is likely that a further printing will have to be arranged within the next year. Including the booklet edition, almost 3,200 copies of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* were sold in 1998.

Total sales of books were significantly higher last year, up by over £4,000 to more than £17,800. This was due to a very large order for each of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the *Larger Catechism*.

We are very thankful to be able to report that a distributor has now been found for Free Presbyterian Publications books in the USA. This is Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, whom some members of Synod may know as book publishers. They also distribute books from other publishers to a large number of retail outlets and individuals. We are hopeful that this will result in a significant increase in sales, but we have not yet seen any benefits as the books were only dispatched in early 1999. We are grateful to Evangelical Press for co-operating in the transport of the initial stock of books for the USA, and particularly to Mr. Alasdair MacLean for making the arrangements with Presbyterian and Reformed, having previously made unsuccessful attempts to interest other organisations.

Bookroom

Total sales for the year in the Bookroom were up by £9,500 in 1998 to £62,600, a commendable increase, although a significant part of this is accounted for by the increase in sales of Free Presbyterian Publications books.

We are thankful that the Bookroom generated sufficient income last year to cover all the running costs.

Only one secondhand booklist was produced last year, and the books were sold very quickly. There is clearly a demand for such books, but it is difficult to obtain stock. The Bookroom is always happy to obtain sound secondhand books and will pay fair prices to secure them. A catalogue of new books stocked in the Bookroom was sent out in November to customers on the mailing list. This resulted in a considerable number of sales at the time, and orders have continued to come in as a result. It is planned to repeat the exercise regularly in the future.

The Committee are very grateful to the manager, Miss Marion Morrison, for her diligence and efficiency in running the Bookroom. We are also grateful to the men who keep the Bookroom open on a Saturday morning, or stand in to cover the manager's holidays, etc.

In conclusion we would request the prayers of the Lord's people for His rich blessing on the work of the Church in trying to put good literature into the hands of readers throughout many parts of the world.

KENYA MISSION CARETAKER'S REPORT

Mr. I. MacLean

FOLLOWING the Synod's decision of 21st May 1998 to close the Mission at Sengera, I returned from Scotland, being given the unenviable task of "winding-up" operations, disposing of the Church's assets and "caretaking" the property until a suitable body would be found to take over. Although duty compels, my task was begun with a little less than eager enthusiasm.

A total of 86 Mission staff were made redundant at the end of June and thereafter 13 persons were re-employed on a temporary basis until such a time as the property could be disposed of. Three vehicles were sold in July for a value of £9,000.

In line with the Synod's ruling, meetings were held with various organisations interested in taking over the Mission's activities but all proved to be unsatisfactory. Advice was sought regarding the de-registration of the Church. This is a lengthy process involving liaison with Government departments at both local and national level and it was advised that for obvious reasons a "takeover" body must be found before proceeding to de-register. To date no suitable organisation has been found and our Church is still recognised by the Registrar of Societies in Kenya.

As a "caretaker" of our Mission at Sengera, my work, although primarily caring for property, does of necessity involve caring for people. Each Sabbath at 9.30 a.m. around 50 adults meet for the catechism class. At 10.30 a.m.

170 people on average meet to worship God, with a further 100 gathering at 2 p.m. for the same exercise. Over 100 children come to the Sabbath School at 3.10 p.m. On other days of the week morning worship is held at 8 a.m. for the workers.

It was a happy discovery to find that although the Mission was officially closed, the people were yet willing to attend the worship of God.

I am persuaded that our Church people sincerely wish the Gospel to remain with them.

“This day is a day of good tidings” – and shall we hold our peace?