

FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

**REPORTS OF
STANDING
COMMITTEES
OF SYNOD**

Submitted to Synod in May 2001

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REPORT OF THE RELIGION AND MORALS COMMITTEE

Convener: Rev. G. G. Hutton

IN the introduction to the Committee's Report to Synod last year it was stated that the Church's responsibility to confront the authorities and people of our land with the biblical position on matters of concern is part of the rationale for the Religion and Morals Report. We are up against the fact that in this reputedly tolerant, multi-cultural and multi-faith society which so repudiates "sectarianism" the only voice which will not be listened to by those in authority is that of the biblical Christianity to which the nation is still constitutionally committed. In spite of the professed desire of First Minister Henry McLeish for dialogue with the Churches it is significant that when copies of last year's Report were sent to all MSPs only seven had the courtesy to acknowledge receipt. Mr. McLeish was not one of them. The only acknowledgment of 19 copies sent to members of the Cabinet in London came from the Prime Minister's Secretary. Such unresponsiveness should not discourage us from endeavouring to bring the truth to bear on national life but should make us more diligent in our approaches to Him of whom it is said: "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; he turneth it whithersoever he will" (Proverbs 21:1). Foot and Mouth disease with all its ramifications (the full extent of which is not known at the time of writing this report) warns us how a touch of God's finger can soon cripple a proud, self-sufficient nation just as it brought confusion to the ungodly empire builders of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9). The inefficacy of representations made, the restraining of prayer before God amongst His people and the reduced number and influence in the land of faithful Gospel ministries indicate a judgment of God upon our nation more fearful than any temporal calamity. If few listen to the Lord's voice when He cries unto the city (Micah 6:9) the "afflicted and poor people" whom He leaves in the midst must "trust in the name of the Lord" (Zephaniah 3:12) and seek grace to enable them to heed the Apostle's exhortation that "supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings and for all in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

The National Covenant (1638) and the Solemn League and Covenant of the three Kingdoms of Scotland, England and Ireland (1643) regarded the rights and privileges of Parliament and the liberties of the kingdoms, the preservation of the monarch's person and authority and the maintenance of the true religion as inextricably bound together in the constitution of the Nation. A survey of the situation prevailing in the land today suggests that with the decline of national commitment to the Reformed Faith there is an alarming erosion of the rights and privileges of Parliament, the liberties of the kingdoms, the foundations of the constitutional monarchy, and the freedoms and responsibilities of citizens.

THE PROTESTANT THRONE

The Guardian newspaper, on 6th December 2000, called for a referendum on the future of the monarchy and announced a campaign against monarchy and for republicanism, together with the separation of Church and State and a secular constitution. Central to this campaign would be a legal challenge to the Act securing the Protestant succession – an Act described as “the crucial cornerstone of the British constitution”. The legal challenge would be based on the Human Rights Act and the European Convention on Human Rights, alleging that the Act of Settlement violates the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and discriminates against other religions such as the Jewish, Muslim and Hindu.

The Church’s principal concern is with the Protestant constitution of the nation, in which the monarchy has a crucial place. Undoubtedly the Cause of Christ will triumph whatever the form of government and whether or not Christianity is the established faith, but nations as such have a responsibility to recognise the claims of God and the Protestantism of the British Throne is of more than symbolic importance, as is very clear from the assaults made upon it.

Last year’s Report developed this theme and here we only record our deep regret that Her Majesty and her advisers did not heed representations against her state visit to the Vatican in October 2000. Dressed in black for her meeting with the Pope the Queen has again given recognition to that antichristian system which desires nothing more than the extinction of the true Protestantism which she has sworn to uphold and the subjugation to itself of all the nations of the earth. The disestablishment of the Reformed Faith and the destruction of the Protestantism of the Throne are objectives dear to the Papacy.

CIVIL GOVERNMENT AND RELIGION

John Calvin stated as a fact that “no polity can be successfully established unless piety be its first care, and that those laws are absurd which disregard the rights of God and consult only for men” (*Institutes*, Book 4, chapter 20, paragraph 9). Throughout another year our political leaders have continued to show their disregard for the laws of God in the laws they introduce and in their practice. They continued to show their regard for the political influence of Rome.

It seems that the worship connected with the funeral of First Minister Donald Dewar excluded Christ and was altogether man-glorifying. The leader in *The Scotsman* of 19th October 2000 claimed that “the Chancellor’s oration, the Moderator’s sermon and David Whitton’s reading from R. H. Tawney (reminding us that Donald Dewar was a genuine ideologue moved by notions of social justice) were the perfect blend of the Scottish democratic intellect and the Presbyterian notion of salvation through good works”!

Donald Dewar had agreed to participate in the celebrations of the 400th anniversary of the Scots College in Rome, a seminary for priests, in December

2000. A photograph of his successor, Henry McLeish, shaking hands with the Pope, and Cardinal Winning looking on, appeared in *The Herald* of 5th December 2000, entitled, “Scotland’s handshake of history”, and the same photograph in *The Scotsman* was entitled, “McLeish makes historic visit to Pope in wake of Section 28 row”. According to *The Herald*, “Henry McLeish, on his first official overseas visit as first minister, and John Reid, Scottish secretary, who led a 30-strong Scottish contingent which included the lords provost of Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen, described their papal audience a ‘a unique moment in history’ . . . Mr. McLeish said he extended to Pope John Paul the warm greetings from the people of Scotland and offered him best wishes for the future. ‘This was a unique experience for me. It was a tremendous honour to represent my country on the first visit abroad as first minister.’ . . . Cardinal Winning said yesterday’s events were ‘full of significance’. He added: ‘I think of 1600 and the Scotland of today. Then the Scottish parliament had outlawed the Catholic church. Today we are privileged to welcome the first minister as well as the Scottish secretary (*The Scotsman* report adds, ‘representing the British government’). The pope spoke of Scotland’s ‘glorious inheritance’ of the Scots College and of how he urged current students of the college to find inspiration in the example of their forebears. . . . Mr. McLeish said yesterday’s visit was an indication of Scotland’s post-devolution position in Europe. ‘The very fact that the first minister of Scotland and His Holiness the Pope are meeting in the Vatican symbolises the developing role that Scotland has in Europe’. He added: ‘The next few days will see a number of events to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the Scots College here in Rome and I think it is proper that the Executive recognises the importance of this event. As the Executive begins to establish a new set of relations with the European Union it is important to remember that Scotland has links with Europe that go back centuries. We must work hard to take Scotland forward in Europe but we should also take time to celebrate our historical ties.’” According to this report the moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and his wife were to join the politicians, the cardinal and bishops, as well as many high-ranking Vatican officials, for a special mass being held 400 years to the day of the foundation of the college.

The Lord Provost of Edinburgh, who is reported to have now had three audiences with the Pope, and who invited RC Archbishop O’Brien to pay tribute to the late Donald Dewar at a City Council meeting, presented the Scots College with a painting of Edinburgh and “pleaded for an end to the religious bigotry which has scarred Scotland’s history. . . . Mr. Milligan, who is in Rome with his wife, Janis, as a guest of the Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh, the Most Rev. Keith O’Brien, said: ‘Coming to the Scots College and being invited to take part in all the celebrations has been a great honour. And I would think that in doing so I have made a little bit of history as far as the Lord Provost of Edinburgh is concerned. We are all only too well aware of the religious upheavals which have dogged us in the past and we know that, not so very long ago, there was still discrimination and sectarianism in our

country. My hope is that in the new Scotland we can put all that behind us'” (*Edinburgh Evening News*, 4th December 2000).

Alan Crawford, in *The Scotsman*, 5th December 2000, reported that, “among the former students of the Scots college are Cardinal Winning, Bishop Tom Devine and Bishop Mario Conti. Cardinal Winning yesterday said he considered the Scots College in Rome to be the ‘most important institution in the Scottish Catholic Church’.” Allan Massie, in *The Scotsman* of 7th December 2000, thus represented the view of the Scots College entertained by our forefathers, though probably without sharing it himself: “When the college was founded, and for more than the first 100 years of its existence, it was seen by most Scots, and certainly by the Scottish establishment, as a dangerous and subversive institution.” To them, “the Scots College in Rome was an organ of the Counter-Reformation, created to train priests whose mission was not only to minister to the surviving pockets of Roman Catholicism in Scotland, but also to try to reverse the Reformation itself. In the eyes of 17th century Scots its graduates were in effect traitors, agents of a foreign power and propagandists of an alien creed.”

Religious indifference, political opportunism and the deceitful propaganda of Rome, not greater enlightenment, account for the change in perception. The participation of so many leading Scots in this event is indicative of the extent of the national decline. Representations were made to Mr. McLeish on behalf of the Committee regarding this visit.

THE UNITED KINGDOM AND EUROPE

The concern of the Church is primarily with the religious significance of involvement in the European Union, though we believe that participation accounted for by indifference to the Reformed heritage of the nation will have serious temporal repercussions. The late Lord Tonypanady, in his Foreword to *The Principality and Power of Europe*, by Adrian Hilton (Dorchester House Publications, 1997), wrote: “Deceit in high places has brought us to our present plight, and it is vital that a united endeavour to get out of the iron grip of European politicians should now be made. . . . It is clear that if we are to prove worthy of those men and women who laid down their lives to protect our right to self-government, we must call a halt to the defeatist submission to Herr Kohl’s openly avowed intention to gain by diplomatic intrigue an integrated Europe where Germany is dominant.”

In 1970 Edward Heath stated to the House of Commons: “There will not be a blueprint for a federal Europe.” At the time of the 1975 Referendum on Britain’s continued membership of EEC the electorate were assured that sovereignty would not be eroded. Heath assured parliament that “there was no question of any erosion of essential national sovereignty. There are some in this country who fear that in going into Europe we shall in some way sacrifice independence and sovereignty. These fears, I need hardly say, are completely unjustified.” In November 1991, in a BBC *Question Time*, Heath was asked: “the single currency, a United States of Europe; was that in your mind when

you took Britain in?" He replied: "of course, yes." (*Christian Voice*, November 2000). A leader in *The Scotsman* of 14th November 2000 claimed: "The European Summit at Nice in December is the culmination of a long road towards European political co-operation and economic integration. And very probably it is the beginning of a new path towards a federal Europe on the lines of the United States." A report in the same paper said that Tony Blair called for the EU to become a "superpower but not a superstate". His "vision for the future of Europe amounted to 'a third way' – between the federalist dream of pro-integration countries such as France and Germany and the free trade area envisaged by the Tories".

According to a *Christian Voice* briefing paper of November 2000, Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, said: "My aim is a European Federal State with, amongst other things, its own legal code." Tony Blair is reported to have said: "My ambition is to integrate Britain into the European Union, with all that this entails." The German Chancellor Gerhard Schroder told Polish leaders in December: "We should carry out our historic duty, the idea of constructing one Europe. I will tell my colleagues in Nice: 'Let's be brave. Let national interests remain in second place and European interests be the priority'" (*The Guardian*, 7th December 2000).

The integration of Britain in Europe proceeds apace. There are already uncertainties as to the effect of current European legislation upon Churches and individuals. In a European superstate Romanism would be the dominant religious and political force. The leader of allegedly a billion Romanists world-wide has political strength which his system uses to the full.

ROMANISM

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* provides us with a biblical definition of the Catholic Church when it asserts that "the catholic or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all these throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children" (XXV, i, ii). We ought not to follow the increasingly common practice of conceding the use of the term "Catholic Church" to that organisation which acknowledges as its head the Pope of Rome, whom the *Westminster Confession of Faith* describes as "that antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ and all that is called God" (XXV, vi).

The Pope continues to enjoy extensive favourable media coverage. The recently deceased Monsignor Tom Connelly was put in charge of the Church's media office as press officer to the Scottish RC bishops the year before the Pope's visit to Scotland and soon "was on first-name terms with journalists all over the country. The media coverage of the event was such a huge success that the Scottish formula became a blueprint for other countries to follow who

were to play host to John Paul II in the years ahead. Pope John Paul personally appointed Tom Connelly to the Pontifical Commission for Social Communication” (*The Herald*, 17th October 2000). Romanist propaganda continues to be skilfully spread in the media. On the occasion of the Pope’s 80th birthday Cardinal Winning, took the opportunity, in a *Scotsman* article, to promote the image of “this immense world figure” and in the process to tell that on his birthday he would be celebrating mass in the company of 1,000 of his fellow priests, “the largest number ever to offer Mass simultaneously in Church history”. The Pope’s belief in “the prophecy of Fatima”, his crediting of his survival of an assassination attempt “to the protection of Mary”, his arrangement “for the bullet which came within inches of killing him to be set into the crown of precious stones which adorns the statue of Our Lady at the Portuguese shrine” are presented in the same matter-of-fact way as the claim that the Pope will be remembered for “his key role in bringing down Communism” and “as the Pope who took the message of ecumenism and placed it at the heart of the Church. He has achieved so much in his pontificate to bring about greater understanding between the main faiths of the world – Judaism, Christianity and Islam. He has also struggled hard to reach out to the orthodox churches in the East so that, as he likes to say, ‘Europe can breathe with both lungs, east and west, once more’.” *The Scotsman* leader on 4th January 2001 is typical: “Since his election in 1978, he (John Paul II) has transformed the Papacy from a seemingly remote and Euro-centric office to a vital global mission to all mankind. He has done this through the sheer force of his own dedication and vocation. . . . His stance against abortion remains controversial, but he has campaigned tirelessly against racism, torture and exploitation of women and children.”

In August 2000 there was published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith the Papal document *Dominus Iesus* which claims that the Church of Rome possesses the “fulness of grace and truth” and is “the only instrument for the salvation of all humanity”. Rome has no sister churches and cannot sit down to negotiate union as an equal with other bodies claiming to be churches. Unity involves unqualified recognition of the claims of Rome. Yet the movement towards Rome continues apace.

Much publicity has been given to the fact that for the first time the Speaker of the House of Commons is a Romanist. So also is the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. To SDLP assemblyman Alban Maginness the first Roman Catholic appointment as head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service signalled a new beginning: “While there is no doubt that Gerry Loughran was chosen because he is the right man for the job it is also important that the public see that Catholics are no longer excluded from the highest positions of the Civil Service” (*Rome Watch International*, Summer 2000).

In Northern Ireland Protestants loyal to the United Kingdom continue to be demoralised. Martin McGuinness is in charge of their children’s education. Their Deputy First Minister has an audience with the Pope. They share the administration of the country with Sinn Fein/IRA who are intent upon

incorporation in the Irish Republic. They are expected to regard the inspection of weapons dumps belonging to the IRA by a former Finnish President and a former ANC leader as a very substantial step towards peace and to share the Prime Minister's amazement at the progress made, although the IRA are said to possess sufficient arms to sustain a campaign of terror for at least a decade. The bombing of the BBC in London in March 2001 is a reminder that terrorists will not cease their efforts until either they are dealt with as terrorists should be dealt with or they achieve their aim of removing British authority from Northern Ireland. The Queen during her visit to the Vatican thanked the Pope for his "support in the quest for peace in Northern Ireland".

The Roman Catholic Church holds on to its schools. When the Irish Prime Minister called off a planned visit to Carfin Grotto in Lanarkshire to unveil a memorial to victims of the Irish potato famine because of fears that it would provoke "sectarian violence" in the wake of a football match between Rangers and Celtic, Cardinal Winning said that the decision typified the problem of sectarianism in Scotland and expressed his astonishment that anyone would take exception to a religious occasion which he regarded as quite beyond reproach (*The Scotsman*, 8th February 2001). A week or so later the Cardinal complained that "there was still only a 'grudging' acceptance of the role of their schools in a devolved Scotland and called on the Scottish Executive to increase their support" (*The Herald*, 20th February, 2001). He said that "there has been too much said about the Catholic school being a source of division in society, but it simply does not stand up to scrutiny". Of course a spokesman for the Scottish Executive duly obliged with a statement that "the Executive recognises that Catholic schools play a full part in the school system. We believe they do a very good job and we have no plans to change their status" (*The Scotsman*, 13th February 2001). To describe the non-denominational schools and the religious education provided in them as Protestant is in the vast majority of cases completely unjustified as is the attempt to identify the mindless hooliganism of some football supporters with Protestantism. The principal sign of bigotry in Scotland today is the refusal to acknowledge as legitimate the concerns of those who adhere to the biblical Christianity which made this nation what it was.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

The period under review has seen the death of two former Archbishops of Canterbury. Donald Coggan, Archbishop 1974-1980, was professedly Evangelical but, as his obituary in *The Times* of 19th May 2000 put it, "like many Evangelicals he broadened out as his knowledge of the world increased". His chairmanship of the Liturgical Commission, "devising services which could be authorised as alternatives to those in the Prayer Book . . . did much to reassure Evangelicals that nothing heretical was being foisted upon the Church". He was involved in the *New English Bible*, "ardently advocated reunion with Methodism and the ordination of women to the priesthood", and while still Archbishop of York initiated a campaign of

Evangelism, together with the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool and the Free Church leader, Dr. John Marsh. He also visited the Vatican and in a sermon in Rome advocated intercommunion. Dr. Runcie, Archbishop 1980-1991, met the Pope in Ghana within a few months of becoming Archbishop and welcomed him to Canterbury Cathedral in 1982. In September 1989 he visited Rome for four days of talks with the Pope. He called for Christians to recognise the Pope as a “universal primate” and issued a statement “denying that the idea conflicted with the British constitution or would affect the Queen’s position as the Church of England’s supreme governor. Despite warm personal relationships the Pope failed to respond to Dr. Runcie’s pleas for greater unity between the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches. In their final statement the leaders recognised that the issue of women priests was the main factor barring the way. There was little to show for the visit.” Bishop David Jenkins of Durham said: “He certainly had faith, but I was not sure exactly where the heart of his conviction was” (*The Scotsman*, 13th July 2000).

The present Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey, has been presenting increasingly gloomy assessments of the state of religion in England. In March 1999 he said that “the Church is one generation away from extinction. It is precisely because we are in a society with something of an allergy to religion – even to serious thought – that mission is crucial”. Christians had to be honest in their evangelism and not disguise the fact that following God carried “radical implications” that were not “all cosy”. *The Telegraph’s* Victoria Combe reported that in a sermon on the Isle of Man in October 2000 he said: “A tacit atheism prevails. Death is assumed to be the end of life, bleak though that thought is. If we need hope to clutch to our breast at all it will be in such greatly scaled down forms, such as our longings for family happiness, the next holiday or personal fulfilment. Our concentration on the here and now renders thoughts of eternity irrelevant.” He said “modern assumptions” had abandoned the Christian teaching that “death is not the end but the door through which life in all its fullness comes to us”. Most people no longer believed in eternal life and desperately sought to postpone death by medical means. All life’s problems at the personal level have apparently become medical ills to be treated by medical means.” “Many people are acting as if doctors can cure all ills and even postpone death forever. But of course doctors know they can do no such thing. Only a society that has lost real hope could imagine that they could.”

Instead of calling the Church back to the Word of God Dr. Carey calls for change so that the Church does not become an unimportant sect on the edge of a rapidly changing and progressive society. He calls for more men and women to become monks and nuns: “They witness to values so often scorned by our society – poverty, chastity and obedience – a threefold protest against the threefold tyranny of materialism, sexual idolatry and unbridled individualism which oppresses so many today.” He calls on clergy to stop preaching in “ecclesiastical code” and instead to communicate the Gospel using pop music and poetry – “get out there and be with people” – consider holding services in

disused pubs and other non-church buildings to attract more young people – reach a society which was not antagonistic to faith, but “distant from the claims of organised religion” – enlist the help of novelists, poets, musicians and artists in finding a better way of communicating the Christian message.

With less than one million people attending Church of England services the Archbishop’s concern seems to be with the mode of communicating the Church’s message, but there is little concern to ensure that the message is that delivered to the Church in the Bible. The contemptuous repudiation of biblical Christianity characteristic of many ecclesiastics is illustrated by the Scottish Episcopalian Bishop Richard Holloway: “There are systems called religions that claim to be able to solve human discontents, the way engineers fix wobbly bridges or dentists fix broken teeth. They usually claim that they are the recipients of divinely revealed answers to human problems and they call upon us to submit to their programme. The trouble with religious systems of this sort is that they do not correspond to the confused and fractured reality of human experience: and they invariably come up with yesterday’s answer to today’s problem. . . . Although institutional Christianity is in decline in Britain, there is considerable evidence of spiritual hunger in the population at large. People want to learn something of the wisdom of the ancient spiritual traditions, but they also want to celebrate the truths and values of their own time” (*The Scotsman*, 13th July 2000).

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

The Church of Scotland continues to seek to meet its crisis in membership with attempts to revamp its structures and methods and image rather than return to its roots in the biblical theology and practice of the Reformation. “In an editorial in its latest issue the magazine (*Life and Work*) maintains 2001 will be looked back on as ‘the hinge in which the Church of Scotland’s fate swung’, if even half the reforms it is presently examining are put into practice. Claiming the face of the church as recognised for centuries might begin to change as a result of major debate over the next 12 months, it adds: ‘Rarely has the church been so immersed in self examination.’ . . . The Neilson commission . . . has been charged with re-examining the primary purposes of the church, looking at imaginative proposals for reshaping its operations to make them better suited to meeting future needs . . . the Rev. Peter Neilson, of St. Cuthbert’s parish church in Edinburgh . . . claimed the Kirk needed ‘an urgent and radical redesign’” (*The Herald*, 26th December 2000). In his opening sermon at last year’s General Assembly the new Moderator, Rev. Andrew McLellan, called on the Church, “to invite some shrewd analyst to put your dreams, your aspirations, your very life to exacting examination”. He said that the Church could call in outsiders to carry out an independent assessment of the state of the Kirk.

The kind of “reforms” under consideration include proposals to form one unified church including the Church of Scotland, the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Methodist Synod of Scotland and the Scottish Congregational

Church – which recently merged with the United Reformed Church. Attempts to reject the proposals of the Scottish Church Initiative for Union (SCIFU) or to suspend involvement in the initiative until the General Assembly had first approved a clear definition of the mission of the Church, were defeated at last year's General Assembly. SCIFU's report argued that Scottish churches should join forces to gain recognition in an increasingly secularised society, claiming that, "The Church has something to say to people who are searching for a way of articulating what they feel. But a church in fractions does not best serve the people of Scotland to meet these questions. . . . The message needs to be clearly expressed and simple. A united Church would be more effective in putting such a message across and in delivering against the message." Participating churches will be asked to decide on unification in 2002, with the actual date for union expected to be by the end of 2010.

Unwillingness to face the root problem appears in such ways as the overwhelming rejection of a mild move by a minister at last General Assembly to control which speakers would be allowed to address future youth assemblies of the Church of Scotland to ensure that they would represent orthodox Christianity. Alluding to Richard Holloway, Rev. David Randall said that he found it "disturbing that space was given in a Christian youth assembly to a certain speaker who has been named earlier today, and is well known as being unrepresentative of orthodox Christianity".

Instead of paying attention to the biblical criteria for the Church attention is given to a report from the Committee on Artistic Matters that "forbidding" interiors were responsible for dwindling church numbers. The year 2001 is designated the Year of the Child, and it is hoped to produce a "children's charter" aimed at giving them their rightful place in the church . . . congregations throughout Scotland will be invited to run children's ministry programmes and adopt a "vision for children" affirming that they can attend church from an early age and expect their views to be heard and considered. . . . Children's forums and other special events, local and national, are planned to ensure "children are heard in a way that has never been done before" (*Edinburgh Evening News*, 4th December 2000). A new hymn book is proposed in keeping with the "culture of political correctness" (Rev. Charles Robertson, *The Scotsman*, 3rd June 2000). Aberdeen Church of Scotland Presbytery organised "Faith in the Park" aimed at 13-30 year olds and hoped to create a fairground atmosphere, with clowns, stalls and attractions for younger children. There are proposals to reduce the numbers of Presbyteries in the Church of Scotland to perhaps as few as six.

In *The Scotsman* of 20th May 2000 a journalist wrote of "a Kirk struggling to define a role for itself" and claimed that "the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland is unlikely, these days, to offer certainty to anyone". A Church of Scotland minister wrote in that same newspaper: "The Church of Scotland has much to do to put its own house in order before being fit for the spiritual renewal of the people of our nation state. Above all it must recover and express and communicate what Christianity eternally is."

OTHER SCOTTISH CHURCHES

The Free Church of Scotland

The Ecumenical Relations Committee reported to last year's General Assembly that they had "met with representatives of the Associated Presbyterian Churches, with a view to closer fellowship with this denomination. The Committee is encouraging closer co-operation in supplying vacant congregations, and is also hoping to set up a small group to look at such differences as may exist between the Free Church and the APC, particularly in terms of the constitution and ordination vows of each denomination." Rev. David Meredith (*Monthly Record*, June/July 2000) has declared it a myth "that there was an ideological and a theological shift in the Free Church and that the young ministers in the Church were at the centre of it". Rev. David Robertson (*Monthly Record*, August 2000) has claimed that "The Free Church, as the largest evangelical Presbyterian denomination in the country, is undergoing a process of renewal and healing". American Professor Duncan Rankin (*Monthly Record*, August 2000) regards the split in the Free Church as marking "a difference not just in style but also in substance. From foreign shores perhaps it is easier to see the contrast between the caustic influences of English Separatism on the one hand and the more sane traditions of Scottish Presbyterianism on the other. . . . The recent split in the Free Kirk was not just a dispute over terms of evidence in a discipline case: it was the clash of two world-and-life views with two different models of spirituality." It is difficult to square the protestations of loyalty to Confessional ideology and theology and the traditions of Scottish Presbyterianism with activities reported or commended in the *Monthly Record*.

The Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)

By last year's General Assembly delegates were received from and appointed to the APC Assembly. According to a report in the *Free Church Witness* (July/August 2000) in his address to the Assembly Rev. Alexander Murray said that eleven years ago the APC had its beginning in a situation similar to that facing the Free Church. The APC claimed to be the true Free Presbyterian Church. The Free Presbyterian Church had failed to give due recognition to the chapters in the Confession on Liberty of Conscience and the Communion of Saints in more than one instance. There had since been a certain relaxation of authoritative control by the church courts. Numerically the APC were not great. Yet Blythswood Care and the Highland Theological College had been set up. He felt that the Free Church (Continuing) might wish to send its students to the Highland Theological College. Modules regarding church polity, etc., could be added to the College Course.

The Associated Presbyterian Churches

It is probably indicative of the trend within the APC that when ministers leave to take up charges within the Church of Scotland *APC News* articles reporting their inductions into the Church of Scotland ministry make no reference to

their obvious departure from the solemn commitments into which they entered when they were ordained to the ministry. Rather, the induction proceedings are referred to in fulsome terms and it is assumed that they have entered upon spheres of greater usefulness.

“SPIRITUALITY”, FALSE RELIGION, PAGANISM AND HUMANISM

In his review of *The Death of Christian Britain*, by Calum G. Brown (*The Scotsman*, 20th January 2001), Richard Holloway says that Brown “does not claim that we are all atheists now, but asserts that a massive shift in our self-understanding as a nation has occurred, which has reduced Christianity to the status of an eccentric and irrelevant sub-culture in a dynamically plural society. The book ends with this paragraph: ‘This is not the death of churches, for despite their dramatic decline they will continue to exist in some skeletal form with increasing commitment from decreasing numbers of adherents. Nor is it the death of belief in God, for though that too has declined it may well remain as a root belief of people. But the culture of Christianity has gone in the Britain of the new millennium. Britain is showing the world how religion as we have known it can die.’” Holloway comments: “Behind the statistics, all amply supplied in this text, there lies a massive shift in cultural attitudes that can be summarised as the ending of the evangelical Christian account of the meaning of life. . . . He says that it is the feminist revolution that has contributed most to the dramatic decline of traditional Christianity in Britain. . . . And it leaves the central question unanswered: can Christianity change radically enough to discover new life or is it destined, by desperately clinging to its old ways, to die?”

The state of the Christian religion in Britain is indeed serious if one goes by the finding of “eight religious experts” that “Tony Blair is the most powerful religious figure in Britain, outranking the Queen, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Pope in the influence his faith has on the nation. . . . Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, comes second, the Prince of Wales third, and Cherie Booth, QC, the Prime Minister’s wife and a Roman Catholic, fourth. The Queen, the Supreme Governor of the Church of England, comes 37th. . . . The panel said . . . it was ‘the first time since Gladstone that we have a Prime Minister who is so open with his religious convictions’. . . . The Prince of Wales was third because of his decision to become ‘defender of faith’ rather than just the Anglican faith. He was a strong proponent of a New Age and holistic way of life and accepted that there were many equally valid ways of exploring spirituality. . . . The Archbishop of Canterbury . . . was ranked sixth. . . . The panel decided that he should not be any higher because it was felt that he had little or no impact outside the Church” (*The Times*, 3rd March 2001).

Spirituality

The in-word now in many circles is “spirituality”. It is a word which has become void of any biblical content and embraces all kinds of religion. The Queen, in her Message to the Nation in December 2000, as reported in *The*

Times of 26th December 2000, expressed her belief in “the simple facts of Jesus’ life, . . . His death . . . the Resurrection and with it the foundation of the Christian faith”. She said: “To many of us our beliefs are of fundamental importance. For me the teachings of Christ and my own personal accountability before God provide a framework in which I try to lead my life. I, like so many of you, have drawn comfort in difficult times from Christ’s words and example.” Her Majesty revealed the influence of current thinking which denies the absolute truth of Scripture when she said of Christ: “His great emphasis was to give spirituality a practical purpose. Whether we believe in God or not, I think most of us have a sense of the spiritual, that recognition of a deeper meaning and purpose in our lives, and I believe that this sense flourishes despite the pressures of our world. This spirituality can be seen in the teachings of other great faiths. Of course religion can be divisive, but the Bible, the Koran and the sacred texts of the Jews and Hindus, Buddhists and Sikhs, are all sources of divine inspiration and practical guidance passed down through the generations.” As noted above, Prince Charles has been described, we believe accurately, as “a strong proponent of a New Age and holistic way of life” who “accepted that there were many equally valid ways of exploring spirituality”. It is in this context we must understand his claim in the 2000 Reith Lecture: “It is because of our inability or refusal to accept the existence of a guiding Hand that Nature has come to be regarded as a system that can be engineered for our own convenience, or a nuisance which can be evaded and manipulated. . . . Although it seems to have become deeply unfashionable to talk about the spiritual dimension of our existence, that is what I propose to do. I believe that if we are to achieve genuinely sustainable development we will first have to rediscover, or reacknowledge, a sense of the sacred in our dealings with the natural world and with each other.” A full page advertisement in *The Scotsman* of 30th December 2000, advertising the Vedic teachings of Shreela Prabhupada’s books, described a knowledge which “enables anyone to advance in his or her understanding of God without having to change current religious, national or cultural affiliations. The science of how to understand God, how to understand ones relationship with God and how to develop love for God has nothing to do with sectarian designations like ‘Christian’, ‘Hindu’ or ‘Jew’.”

False Religion

The growth of Islam in Britain is a matter of concern. According to an article in *The Scotsman*, 20th June 2000, “research has revealed that the bulk of the estimated 10,000 to 20,000 new Islamic converts in Britain are women. The Islamic Academy in Glasgow is among many to report a noticeable surge in white women attending conversion classes in the last two years. . . . Rose Kendrick, a religious education teacher, . . . author of a textbook guide to the Koran, . . . adds: ‘Within the next twenty years the number of British converts will equal or overtake the immigrant Muslim community that brought the faith here’.” This is in spite of the attempts of the British Muslim Parliament and the

Muslim Council of Britain to have polygamy legalised in Britain under European Human Rights legislation and the apparent demand “that in Muslim-ruled countries we should live by their laws but in Britain they should live by their own” (*Edinburgh Evening News*, May 2000).

Paganism

The growth of paganism properly so called is illustrated in an article from the *Edinburgh Evening News*, 26th February 2001, which claims that membership of one of the city’s leading witch covens has shot up from 25 to 100 in the past 12 months and that the number of covens in the Capital is also growing, with at least 20 believed to be active. “They include beauticians, mechanics and hotel porters and are earnest in their pagan beliefs. . . . The only tell-tale sign of most Wicca followers is the pentagram jewellery they wear, which is often hidden beneath their clothes. ‘ . . . there are thousands of witches in the city, but many are secretive for fear they might be attacked’.” They now have a shop and have noticed a large amount of children coming in and enquiring about magic. In the light of such facts it is indefensible to regard the portrayal of witchcraft in fictional literature provided for children in school as innocent or harmless.

Humanism and secularism

Avowed and organised humanists continue to take advantage of the secular mood of the age to promote their own philosophy of life, to protest against the Establishment of the Christian Religion and the propagation of Christian teaching in schools, to offer non-religious ceremonies at funerals, and so on. The secular mood of the age is pandered to by those in authority. “Parents who shun the idea of a church baptism for their baby could soon have the option of a civil ceremony to celebrate the naming of their child. The Scottish executive, following the lead of a number of English County Councils, is considering introducing the ceremony at registrars’ offices. As registrars already perform civil marriages, the government is hoping to extend their role to less formal events such as baby-naming and the renewal of marriage vows. A consultation process is underway to enable the executive to canvass the views of church groups and other interested parties. Last night religious groups broadly welcomed the plans. A bill is currently being drafted in the Scottish parliament to extend the range of venues for civil marriages” (*The Scotsman*, 28th November 2000). And the secular mood of the age continues to look for encouragement to scientific developments: “As the dust settled on yesterday’s announcement that the race to crack the human genetic code was almost at an end, observers around the world were rushing to hail it as mankind’s most significant breakthrough since the invention of the wheel. In future the data may make it possible to banish inherited disorders, screen people for their vulnerability to diseases, tailor treatments to an individual’s genetic make-up, create thousands of drugs and even repair faulty genes. Some predict that the genetic revolution will eventually lead to something close to immortality as

scientists now doubt there is a biologically programmed time limit to life span” (Andrew Denholm, *The Scotsman*, 27th June 2000).

This is the age in which we have to endeavour to maintain our witness to the truth as it is in Jesus. The situation is beyond human remedy. There is reason to fear that the Lord’s controversy with Church and Nation is approaching a climax. There is great need for the Truth to which we adhere and whether men will hear or not we must encourage ourselves in the Lord and seek to be faithful in our testimony and in our lives. “Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, and the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof” (Isaiah 6:11-13).

ABORTION

Until comparatively recent times abortion was regarded in a very serious light. Writers in the early years of the Christian era classed abortion along with murder, adultery, sodomy and fornication, as belonging to the way of darkness and as breaches of the divine commands as these are expressed in Matthew 22:37-39. From the Middle Ages, abortion, deliberately carried out, was illegal and under the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act was in some cases punished with a life sentence. In 1929 The Infant Life (Preservation) Act made it an offence to destroy the life of a child where there was the possibility of the child being born alive. The terms of the 1967 Private Member’s Bill, which came into force in 1968, were capable of such wide interpretation, that, in practice, the law, whatever the proposer actually intended, has come, in the popular mind, to be regarded as sanctioning abortion on demand.

In 1990, The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act amended the 1967 Act in certain respects. One important amendment was the reduction of the gestation age at which abortion could be “legally” carried out to twenty-four weeks. This restriction applies in cases, (1) where ending the pregnancy is regarded as essential to prevent serious injury to the mental or physical health of the mother, and (2) where termination is regarded as essential to prevent serious injury to any children of the expectant mother’s family. The 1990 law, however, placed no restriction on the stage of gestation at which abortion could be carried out if there was a strong likelihood that the child, if born, would be severely handicapped or if there was a serious risk to the life of the mother. With modern diagnostic methods it is possible to establish the existence of serious diseases such as cystic fibrosis and muscular dystrophy, etc., at an early stage in the development of a foetus. From a Christian standpoint it is surely morally wrong to abort in such situations. There are

many cases on record where a mother, having elected to have a child with one of these dreadful diseases, gave the child many years of loving care.

The statistics of abortions carried out since the 1967 Act came into force make horrendous reading. For example, in 1968, the abortion rate for young women in the 16 to 19 years old age group was approximately 2.5 per thousand. By 1998 the number had increased more than ten-fold. In the 20 to 25 years old age group the rise was almost as rapid over the same period. In the case of girls under 16 the number of abortions carried out in the same period has increased six-fold. The total number of abortions carried out from 1968 to the end of the year 2000 is reckoned to be in the region of 6 million. It has been estimated on the basis of official statistics that only about 4 abortions in 1,000 are carried out to save the life of the mother. The reliable figure for abortions carried out in England and Wales in 1998 (last updated on 8th February 2000) is reported by the Office of National Statistics to be almost 178,000. From this alarming figure it is evident that just under 500 annihilations of embryos at various stages of development are taking place each day. The biblical view with regard to the birth of a child makes it clear that the creative power of God is involved in every stage of the development of a child in the womb. The words of Psalm 139 illustrate this in a wonderfully comprehensive way: "For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them" (Psalm 139: 13-16).

What right has any human being to end the life of a human embryo? Even in the case of an unwanted pregnancy there are alternatives to abortion. In this day there are many childless couples who are anxious to adopt even disadvantaged children.

Over the last thirty years the number of abortions has increased dramatically, keeping pace with the national departure from respect for the sanctions of the infallible and inerrant Word of God.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Drug abuse continues to be a major concern, particularly among the young, in our society. In the period 1995 to 1996 the number of addicts rose by 9% to over 43,000 in the United Kingdom. Of this number 18,000 were new addicts.

Drug related deaths are also on the increase. According to the Office of National Statistics the number of drug related deaths in England and Wales increased by more than 33% from 1993 to 1997. The Registrar General for Scotland reported a large increase in the number of deaths as a result of drug abuse in 1998 as compared with the previous year. In the age group 16 to 29 years old the percentage of the population in England and Wales addicted

to drugs in 1998 was 21%. Tragically the number of teenage addicts is on the increase.

It is, however, a cause for thankfulness that the number of those arrested for drug trafficking and for targetting the young in pursuit of their nefarious trade is increasing significantly. The police and customs and excise officers, whose vigilance and devotion to duty has brought about this encouraging increase in the number of arrests and the confiscation of large quantities of hard drugs, are to be congratulated. What moral depravity characterises those who, in order to feed their own avarice and desire for ungodly gain, have no scruples in enticing children into drug abuse. All who have a concern for the moral and spiritual welfare of our children and young people ought to be exercised in prayer seeking the intervention of the Most High to curb and root out this fearful scourge from our nation. While we recognise that much is being done in many schools by dedicated teachers to enlighten the young to the dangers of drugs, it might be profitable for the Church to engage some of our medically qualified members (doctors, pharmacists, nurses) to prepare material to be distributed among our young people to inform them of the physical and spiritual dangers associated with drug taking.

It is not appropriate in a report of this nature to attempt to present a detailed statistical analysis of drug related problems. There are a number of societies and official bodies who do this. The Christian Institute and Care organisations provide a most helpful public service in preparing informative material regarding the incidence nationwide of drug taking and related problems and in providing well documented evidence on a large number of moral issues.

That alcohol abuse constitutes a serious problem in the United Kingdom is evidenced by the fact that, according to Government statistics, more than 4% of adults are alcohol dependent. The organisation Alcohol Concern, who are campaigning for the introduction of a National Alcohol Strategy, "aimed at countering the ravages of alcohol misuse in the United Kingdom", point out that the number of alcohol dependent people in the United Kingdom greatly exceeds the number addicted to other drugs. According to Alcohol Concern almost 900,000 children in Britain live in homes with a parent who is guilty of alcohol abuse. It is well known that children in such homes are often the victims of physical abuse. Alcohol abuse – it used to be called drunkenness – and the illnesses arising from it is, according to a recent medical report, costing the country over 9 billion pounds annually. Such a huge cost is a serious drain on the country's resources, but this pales into insignificance when compared with the dangers, for time and eternity, to which alcoholics are exposed.

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

All who hold dear the biblical principle of the sanctity of the marriage bond will be deeply disturbed by the recent Scottish Executive *White Paper on Scottish Family Law* which contains proposals which will, almost certainly, lead to an increase in the number of divorces in Scotland. According to the Annual Report of the Registrar General for Scotland issued in the year 2000

and referring to the year 1988 the total number of divorces in that year was 12,400, a rate of almost 2.5 per thousand of the population. In 1998 the number of marriages in Scotland was 29,600. It is worth noting that the divorce rate in Scotland has remained more or less steady since 1988.

At present the sole ground for divorce in Scotland is irretrievable breakdown of the marriage.

Irretrievable breakdown is regarded as established where there has been separation with consent, for a period of two years, or for five years without consent. In addition to these there are three fault grounds which also establish irretrievable breakdown; viz., adultery, unreasonable behaviour and desertion. Fundamental and far-reaching changes are proposed in the *White Paper* referred to above. Among these are the abolition of adultery and desertion as grounds for divorce, the reduction of the two-year period with consent to one year and the five-year period without consent to two years. The distinction between cohabitation and marriage will, to a large extent, be abolished. If the proposals in the *White Paper* become law the stability of family life will almost certainly be affected. It is estimated that the average duration of marriage in the United Kingdom is under 10 years. Little wonder that Britain has been nominated "The Divorce Capital of Europe".

The Scottish Executive and the United Kingdom government seem intent on moving away as far and as fast as possible from the sanctions of the divine law as these are clearly revealed in the Bible. The two biblical grounds for divorce are adultery (Matthew 19:8) and desertion (1 Corinthians 7:15). Chapter 24 of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* identifies the scriptural grounds for divorce with commendable clarity. It states that, "Although the corruption of man be such as is apt to study arguments unduly to put asunder those whom God hath joined together in marriage: yet nothing but adultery, or such wilful desertion as can no way be remedied by the Church or civil magistrate, is cause sufficient of dissolving the bond of marriage: wherein, a public and orderly course of proceeding is to be observed; and the persons concerned in it not to be left to their own wills and discretion, in their own case." We believe that marriage is an ordinance instituted by God and that nations which depart from the principles laid down to protect its stability inevitably incur the Divine displeasure. It is the duty of all professing Christians to exercise their democratic right to protest to their Members of Parliament and the appropriate government ministers against this latest attempt to erode still further the sanctity of the marriage bond.

The Conservative Government introduced the concept of no-fault divorce in 1996. For whatever reason the present Lord Chancellor has decided not to pursue this line any further. No doubt the Lord's people throughout the nation will feel persuaded that the abandonment of no-fault divorce is an answer to prayer.

HOMOSEXUALITY (SODOMY)

The homosexual lobby or the Gay Rights movement, as it is called, is becoming stronger and stronger. Even many ministers who profess the

Christian faith have declared themselves tolerant of homosexuality and, in many cases, admitted to being themselves practising homosexuals. It is heartening to hear that some church authorities have spoken out against homosexual behaviour. One English religious periodical has reported that the 1998 Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops pronounced homosexual practices as incompatible with Scripture teaching. The same periodical also reported that the Church of England Reform Group has called for freedom to "opt out of the jurisdiction of bishops who support the ordination of gay clergy". But surely the right course of action for such ministers is to consider their position in the light of scripture truth: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God ? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God," and cease to have any fellowship with those who follow the unfruitful works of darkness. According to the Registrar General for Scotland the cumulative total of AIDS cases in Scotland since December 1981 to the present is 950. The figure for Scotland shows an increase of 5.74 % over the figure for 1997. The cumulative total of cases showing a positive test for HIV antibodies rose from 1,259 in 1988 to 2,834 in 1998. Sadly the number of cases of AIDS and HIV positive cases continues to rise.

It is not possible to give an extensive survey of the many areas in which the Gay Rights movement is active and so the remaining part of this section will be devoted to a summary of those areas which give the greatest cause for concern.

Since last year's report, Section 28, which forbade local authorities from using, in schools, material promoting homosexuality, has been repealed by a large majority in the Scottish Parliament. It was, however, gratifying to learn that over one million of the Scottish people indicated that it was their wish to retain Section 28. The fact that the Executive was not swayed to any extent by the opposition to repeal of such a substantial proportion of the Scottish people does not augur well for the future of the nation. In the Westminster Parliament, the House of Lords, by a majority of 45, voted against repeal. At the second reading of the Bill in the House of Commons a majority of members voted in favour of repeal but the Lords voted again against repeal and this in spite of the fact that the Prime Minister appointed 30 additional Labour peers, no doubt to baulk effective opposition by the House of Lords.

For a number of years Stonewall UK, and the Gay Rights movement generally, have been strenuously advocating lowering the homosexual age of consent from the age of 18 years to 16 years. Although there has been strong opposition by Baroness Young and others, and opposition in the House of Lords against lowering the age of consent, the proposal is now law, but only because the Prime Minister invoked the Parliament Act to effectually negate the opposition of the Lords. The legalising of such unspeakably depraved acts is deeply grieving to all Christian people and is clear evidence that, as far as

our rulers are concerned, God is not in all their thoughts when it comes to consideration of moral issues.

Homosexuality (sodomy) no longer hides its face in shame and its practitioners are now making strenuous efforts to have “marriage” between same sex couples legalised. Although, thankfully, there are many voices raised against the place given to the homosexual lobby yet it is evident that there is much complacency throughout the world and throughout our own nation with regard to homosexual life styles which surely reflects the low moral state of our nation. It is remarkable that proposals to liberalise the law with regard to homosexual behaviour seem to have a relatively easy passage through parliament, in some cases the Prime Minister resorting to a dubious use of the Parliament Act to nullify the opposition of the House of Lords.

EUTHANASIA

Euthanasia has been very much in the public eye as a result of the decision of the Law Lords to permit the withdrawal of food and water in the case of Tony Bland, the young man who was severely injured in the Hillsborough disaster. As reported in a January 2001 issue of *Hansard*, the present state of the law in the United Kingdom is that euthanasia is illegal. In an attempt to block the apparent “loophole” in the law, Ann Winterton, Member of Parliament for Congleton in North West England, brought before parliament a Private Member’s Bill entitled, *Medical Treatment (Prevention of Euthanasia)*. In describing the effect of the Bill, if it became law, Ann Winterton said: “My Bill will make it abundantly clear to doctors that they cannot intentionally bring about the deaths of their patients either by action or omission.” Sadly the Bill was stopped on a mere technicality. The position now is that it is highly unlikely that this particular Bill will come before the House of Commons again.

Closely related to euthanasia is so-called physician-assisted suicide which has been defined as, “the deliberate assistance by a physician in the suicide of a patient who intends to end his or her own life”. The British Medical Association, in spite of the strong opposition of a substantial minority of its members, has recently agreed that the present state of the law, which prohibits assisted suicide, should remain unchanged.

One of the arguments used by those who support euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide is that man is autonomous and that he has a right to choose not only the manner but also the time of his death. It is passing strange that some in the professing Christian Church should support such a view which is diametrically opposed to the teaching of the Word of God in, for example, the words of the Apostle Paul: “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Another argument used by the protagonists of euthanasia, etc., is that it is the duty of the physician to relieve the suffering of his patient – but surely it is not his duty to relieve suffering by deciding to eliminate the sufferer.

If a patient is diagnosed as terminally ill by his or her physician, the diagnosis must be confirmed by a consultant physician. Such a diagnosis is based upon the opinion that the patient is likely to die within six months. At least one research study has shown that such diagnoses can be very far astray. Of the patients who were diagnosed as terminally ill, a significant number were still alive after six months and some after one year !

The clamour throughout the Western world for the legalisation of euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide is growing apace and, apart from divine intervention, it is to be feared that the supporters of these unscriptural practices will get their way. It is surely the duty of all who acknowledge the sanctity of life to pray earnestly that the principles of the Word of God would become, as they once were, the norms for deciding all moral issues.

It is well-nigh impossible to ascertain the extent to which these practices occur in our own country but that they do occur is evidenced by the admission by some doctors that they have carried out what are called "mercy killings".

CLONING AND OTHER ISSUES

Cloning has been described as the creation of a human being who is genetically identical to another human being. The subject is so complex and has so many serious physiological and moral implications that only the briefest outline can be devoted to it in a report of this nature. In fact it is true to say that the whole area of genetics and genetic engineering raises some of the most serious moral issues of our time.

Public interest in cloning was aroused when Dolly the sheep appeared on the scene in 1996. Unconfirmed reports have appeared claiming that human clones have been created. An Italian scientist has recently stated that he has plans to create a human clone within two years. His plans have been roundly condemned as reckless and morally irresponsible by religious groups and by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority of the United Kingdom.

It surely ought to be a matter of profound concern to all professing Christian people throughout the land that, in December 2000, the House of Commons voted by 366 votes to 174 to legalise human cloning and that the House of Lords ratified the Commons decision by the surprisingly and disappointingly high majority of 212 to 92. This legislation allows embryos to be cloned and experimented upon for research purposes for 14 days. Thereafter the embryo must be destroyed. As far as can be ascertained this legislation does forbid the development of a cloned embryo to the stage of a fully developed human being. Many are of the view that the recent legislation is just the thin edge of the wedge and that the time is not far distant when attempts to create a developed human clone will be legalised. We believe that a human embryo is a human being from the moment of conception, the fruit of a divine creative act, and that to use such embryos for research purposes or as a source of stem cells for organ or tissue replacement therapy is morally reprehensible and incompatible with biblical teaching. The Christian Institute, in a recent report, makes the very important point that, "legalising human cloning even for

research purposes still crosses a major moral Rubicon". The report goes on to say that, "there are huge commercial pressures from biotechnology companies because they believe that cloning embryos is more lucrative than adult stem research. Once humans are cloned many believe that reproductive cloning is inevitable."

In a recent review by the Chief Medical Officer's Advisory Group, stem cells, referred to above, are described as "unspecialised cells that have not yet differentiated into specific types of tissue". Stem cells can be obtained from a number of sources. These include, (1) from early embryos formed by in vitro fertilisation (IVF), and (2) from early embryos by cell nuclear replacement (cloning) by inserting the nucleus of an adult cell into an egg from which the nucleus has been removed. From a Christian point of view these methods are morally wrong for the reason stated above.

Current research is demonstrating that there are sources of stem cells which do not involve the use and subsequent destruction of young embryos. The most promising of these sources is adult tissue, for example skin, bone marrow and blood. It has been shown that when stem cells from an adult's own tissue are used for repair of organ or tissue damage, the likelihood of rejection is considerably reduced. The United Kingdom government, in responding to the above review, recommended that before licensing any research using embryos created by cell nuclear replacement, the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority should satisfy itself that there are no other means of meeting the objects of the research.

The trends in the field of genetic engineering are fraught with danger and Christian people who have the qualifications to appraise these trends should be vigilant and should be prepared to lodge objections in the appropriate quarters when unscriptural applications are reported.

OTHER SUBJECTS OF CONCERN

There are so many other areas of our national life which give cause for great concern but which, for lack of space, cannot be discussed in the present report. Some of these, however, will be referred to briefly.

With regard to crime generally, statistics recently updated and issued by the Office of National Statistics for notifiable offences in 1998 are virtually unchanged compared with the figure for 1991 for England and Wales, while the figure for Scotland over the same period shows a significant reduction. Crime among the young of the country has increased to an alarming extent. In 1991 more than 1,000 children between the ages of 15 and 16 were remanded in custody. By 1995 the figure had reached the horrifying total of 17,000. Many of these children were the victims of unscrupulous drug traffickers.

The promotion of promiscuity by making contraceptive pills available to 16-year-old girls is surely to be condemned outright. The recent budget announcement made much of the extra financial provision made for the family with the aim of nurturing family stability. How does this square the Government's decision to provide contraceptive pills to children? The

Christian Institute has recently drawn attention to the apparent success of Abstinence Education in the United States of America. Over a period of 4 years teenage pregnancies dropped from 54% to 34%.

The ready availability of pornographic material on video film and on the Internet is to be deplored. Apparently the Home Secretary is attempting to protect the young by regulating more strictly the availability of pornographic material but his laudable efforts have not been helped by at least one recent High Court judge who “ruled in favour of hard core pornography”.

Many years ago a former Prime Minister, in recommending the Premium Bond, encouraged the nation to have “a little flutter at the shrine of the goddess of chance” – an encouragement to indulge in gambling. According to reliable reports it appears that, at the present time, the majority of households in the country indulge in a weekly gamble on the National Lottery. Many Churches are reluctant to condemn the Lottery because they themselves benefit from its allocations to charities. According to a report in the *English Churchman* of 25th March 2000, a survey by the National Lottery Commission showed that an increasing number of children under 16 years of age are playing the Lottery. The survey reported that a “significant number of the 12-15 age group have a serious gambling problem”.

The occurrence of Child Abuse, which has become a serious problem in this country and worldwide, has been the subject of a number of reports and the dreadful findings of the *Waterhouse Report on Child Abuse* in Wales are well known. In spite of these reports the Government has legislated to lower the age of consent to 16 mainly in response to agitation by the Gay Rights movement. Clearly the government does not recognise that such a change in the law is providing what someone has called a predator’s charter.

This part of the report is concluded using the words written for a similar report some years ago by one of our ministers, now deceased. They are as applicable at the present time as they were in the year in which they were written.

“Moral degeneracy of a most alarming kind has set in which threatens the very existence of the nation and appears to signify that God has, in large measure, given us over to the lusts of our own hearts. The required remedy – the exposure of sin and the calling of sinners to repentance – is little heard of in the Churches of the land. Yet we must be brought as a nation to the acknowledgement of our sin and to turning from it unto God if we are not to perish in our sins as did Sodom and Gomorrah. Well do the strictures of the prophet Isaiah in the first chapter of his prophecy apply to us as a nation today: ‘Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward’ (Isaiah 1:4).”

SABBATH OBSERVANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. J. MacDonald

THE Committee's work throughout the past year continued along familiar lines. We as a Committee see it as our remit to bear witness to our particular testimony, as a denomination, to the need to maintain the sanctity of the Sabbath, as the Bible requires: "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8). The Committee has traditionally carried out its duties by making the Synod's views on the sanctity of the Sabbath known to Government ministers, members of the Royal Family, and to the commercial and recreational institutions which may encroach on the sanctity of the Sabbath.

As our nation and generation departs further and further away from God's Law and Word we have become more isolated as a denomination in the matter of Sabbath Observance, and find we have to take our stand alone on God's Word. It becomes us as a Church to stand by the "Only rule to direct us how we may glorify God". This is the work, not only of this Committee – it is a duty on all ministers, office bearers, members and adherents in the Church. Most of our work is done by protesting directly to Sabbath breakers, though, when opportunity arises, we seek to testify to the media. This year the Committee compiled an article, "Calling the Sabbath a Delight", which we trust will prove edifying and strengthening to readers of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*.

As in the previous years, the most frequent cause for protest was the playing of football on the Sabbath, and all football clubs in the Scottish Premier League were written to, not just once but some of them regularly with very little favourable response. Perhaps a list of the letters written will be of interest to the members of Synod and to readers generally. The main protests include the following:

1. 6th June 2000 – *Letter to H.R.H. Prince William re proposed attendance at rock Concert on Sabbath*. This letter was not acknowledged.
2. 15th August 2000 – *Letters to St. Mirren and Dundee United Football Clubs*. Both acknowledged.
3. 21st August 2000 – *Letter to Manager of Dunrobin Castle re Dunrobin Vintage Car Rally*. Acknowledged.
4. 28th August 2000 – *Letters to Dundee and Hearts Football Clubs*. Both acknowledged.
5. 21st September 2000 – *Letter to Managing Director of Caledonia MacBrayne re Sabbath work on ferry at Tarbert, Harris*. A favourable reply was had from Mr. Simpkin but we understand that he has now resigned or retired.
6. 4th October 2000 – *Letter to Caledonia MacBrayne re Sabbath sailings*.
7. 24th October 2000 – *Letter to Stornoway Gazette re debate on Sabbath ferries*. Sent by the Clerk.

8. 30th October 2000 – *Letter to Highland Railway Heritage re running of excursion steam-trains on Highland lines.* Not acknowledged.
9. 20th November 2000 – *Further letter to Stornoway Gazette re referendum on Sabbath ferries.* Sent by the Clerk.
10. 1st December 2000 – *Letters to Rangers and Celtic Football Clubs.* Both acknowledged.
11. 1st December 2000 – *Letter to the Right Honourable Tony Blair, Prime Minister, re proposal to hold General elections on Sabbath.* Not acknowledged.
12. 1st December 2000 – *Letter to Mr. Henry MacLeish, Scottish First Minister, protesting at his announcing his cabinet on the Lord's Day.* Not acknowledged.
13. December 2000 – *Letters to the Managers: Eastgate Centre, Inverness; St. Nicholas Centre; Bon Accord Centre, re opening on Sabbath 24th December.* The letter from Mr. Frank Sutherland, Bon Accord Centre, is quoted in full to give readers an insight into the attitudes with which the Committee has to contend:

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the Christian Sabbath.

Regardless of my personal beliefs, it is a fact of life that the buying and selling of all types of goods is now common practice on the Sabbath Day. Very many people now see shopping as a leisure pursuit rather than one of necessity and make little distinction between shopping and other leisure activities such as playing sports, going to a cinema or restaurant, watching TV. The list is endless.

Retailers would argue that they are responding to public demand. The Church might argue that the people are being led astray by retailers. However, I am not the referee in this debate.

Many retailers outwith shopping centres trade on Sabbath. Shopping centres provide facilities for retailers and their customers, one such facility being the ability to trade on the Sabbath. If this facility were not available within shopping centres, retailers and their customers would trade elsewhere.

Rightly or wrongly, Sunday trading is now accepted by the elected government, millions of voters and nearly every national retailer as the norm. It is outwith my remit to influence current trends, and whilst I appreciate your point of view, I am unable to accede to your request.
14. 28th December 2000 – *Letter to Lord Bassam, Home Office Minister, House of Lords, re government's proposal to abolish the Sunday Observance Bill 1780.* This was not acknowledged.
15. 5th January 2001 – *Letter to Provost Smith, Inverness.* The reply quoted is from an administrative assistant:

Hogmanay Celebration

In noting the views of your Committee, I would point out that the celebration was family oriented and included a well attended ecumenical church service within Inverness Cathedral. It was entirely a matter for individuals to decide whether they wished to attend the event with apparently some 15,000 choosing to do so.

Your Committee can be assured that in planning such events all views are taken into account by the Council when seeking to conclude arrangements which are acceptable to the wider community.

16. 9th February 2001 – *A letter to Mr. N. Cooper, Manager of Ross County Football Club, protesting against scheduling a football match on Sabbath 18th February 2001, and a letter to Mr. Roy MacGregor, Managing Director of Ross County Football Club commending him for distancing himself from the above match by stating publicly that he would not attend but would be present in Church with his family on the Sabbath as usual. Neither acknowledged so far.*
17. 19th March 2001 – *A letter to the Manager of Scot Rail protesting against the introduction of Sabbath train services between Edinburgh and West Calder. Not acknowledged so far.*

The above represents slightly less than half the letters written, but gives a cross-section view of the Committee's work. The committee note with appreciation the letters written by the Clerk to the *Stornoway Gazette* in connection with a public debate on Sabbath Observance

As in previous years we commend the Committee's work to the prayers of Synod members and all the Lord's people in our midst. Again we have to say that we must not assume that Sabbath breaking is something beyond our borders as a Church. It becomes us all to look at our Sabbath keeping as ministers, office bearers, members and adherents. A particular responsibility rests on heads of families and households. We need grace to be constantly watchful lest we begin to copy the standards of the society in which we live. We need the grace of God daily to keep us faithful to God's Commandments as individuals and as a Church. Let us seek this grace.

JEWISH AND FOREIGN MISSIONS COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. John MacLeod

GENERAL

The Committee has to report that our African missions in Zimbabwe and Kenya have been sustained over yet another year. Would that we were able to report that the seed sown has brought forth much fruit! We are, however, able to report that we have continued to sow the seed and that, accordingly, the

minds of many – young and old – have been brought into contact with the Word of God. We look to the One who has declared that His Word will not return to Him void to give the increase. Those engaged in sowing the seed whether in the pulpit, Sabbath school, classroom or hospital ward, have continued to do so with commendable diligence. We regret to report that the Rev. A. B. Ndebele has decided to retire from the active ministry due to ill health. He served the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland well over these many years and his presence at Ingwenya will be greatly missed. We hope that he will be spared for many years yet and that, having rested awhile, he will be able to preach again from time to time. The Rev. Zororai Mazvabo, notwithstanding the difficulties associated with failing eyesight, continues to attend to his ministerial duties in Mashonaland and the Rev. Petros Mzamos, having greatly benefited from receiving medical treatment in South Africa, continues to do the same at Mbumba. Before very long we hope to have an ordained missionary settled in Kenya and that will supply a long-felt need.

Throughout the year deputies visited both Zimbabwe and Kenya. The Convener spent eight weeks in Africa, dividing the time equally between both places, apart from spending a few days in Malawi, accompanied by Mr. R. A. Campbell. This brief visit was necessary in order to attend to matters relating to material assets there. The Rev. K. M. Watkins arrived back in this country in February after having spent two weeks in Zimbabwe and six weeks in Kenya. Separate reports, prepared by these deputies, will be presented to the Synod.

Again we have to acknowledge the financial support given by Mbumba Zending. Over the years, the generosity of our Dutch friends has been truly amazing. Not only have they consistently and by regular remittances continued to support our mission work but they have willingly come to our aid at times when unexpected difficulties have arisen and when our own resources were insufficient to enable us to resolve them. We are deeply grateful to them.

ZIMBABWE

We reported last year that the political situation in Zimbabwe was unstable and it seems clear that things have since then gone from bad to worse. Our mission stations, however, have not been affected by the unrest and we have reason to be thankful that we have not been impeded as far as our mission activities are concerned. Oikonomos Foundation, a Dutch-based charitable organisation, gave considerable help with specific building and transport projects during the year. Our association with them was, however, tentative and entered into only with a view to determining whether or not it would be possible for us to accept help from them on a more permanent basis. We are most grateful for the help which they have given us. Our relationship with them, as to the future, is now, however, under review. The two students received by the Zimbabwe Presbytery continue to prosecute their studies while helping with supply and at the same time maintaining their wives and families by continuing in their

present employment. Mr. Khumalo has passed five “O” Levels; the results of examinations sat by Mr. Mloyi are awaited.

Revision of the Ndebele Bible by a Translation Committee, of which Miss C. M. MacAulay and Mr. Teus Benschop are prominent and industrious members, is proceeding very satisfactorily. Teus and his wife, Dr. Janette Benschop, returned to Mbumba in March at the expiry of a well-earned furlough spent in Holland. The work at the hospital continues to increase but with Miss Lia Terlouw not renewing her contract this year and Miss Margaret Macaskill, the Hospital Matron, not renewing hers when she returns home in September, the staff situation may well become critical in the second half of the year. To these ladies, who have laboured with us in the Gospel, we desire to express our sincere gratitude for the years of faithful service which they have given to the mission. We are grateful to Jessie Coote for going out to help earlier this year and the fact that she has undertaken to return to Mbumba later on in the year for a longer period is much appreciated by the Committee. We hope and pray that some other nurses will be led to offer their services and even if only for a period of two years help out at Mbumba.

At Ingwenya, one of the notable events of the year was the retiral of Miss Marion Graham from her post as Headmistress in November 2000. We wish to place on record our sincere appreciation of all the work that she did at Ingwenya. During the period of her headship, the John Tallach School became widely known for the excellent education provided on its campus at Ingwenya and this is to be attributed to the diligence, zeal and expertise of Miss Graham and her staff. We are persuaded that under the headship of Mr. Bonekele Ncube and the deputy headship of Miss Norma MacLean, the school will continue to achieve the same excellent results. Miss Sheena Ross returned home on leave at the end of 2000 and is not renewing her contract. She proved to be an excellent teacher and her presence on the mission will be greatly missed. This year we mourn the loss of Miss Jean Nicolson whose name will always be associated with our African mission to which, we might say, she devoted her life.

All deputies and visitors report favourably on the Thembiso Home. Under the superintendence of Mr. Stanford Mpofu it continues to be a well-run establishment. Children are cared for in a Christian atmosphere and, in general, it serves a most useful humanitarian purpose.

KENYA

The decision not to renew Mr. Ian MacLean’s contract as Administrator was conveyed to him on 4th May 2000. Mr. Hugh MacKenzie, a deacon in the Stornoway congregation, was appointed *interim* Administrator at Sengera and after serving for four months, over the course of which he thoroughly reorganised the administration of the Mission and introduced order into the handling of mission finance, he returned home in early August 2000. His organisational abilities and experience, gained as a civil servant and as a lecturer in Information Technology, were utilised to the full and the mission

reaped the benefit. Mr. Malcolm Gunn, an elder in the Ness congregation, followed Mr. MacKenzie and he continued and added to the work begun by his predecessor. As a former high-ranking police officer, Mr Gunn was well-qualified to assess the security situation and as a result of the work done by him the compound, without taking on the appearance of a fortress, is now more secure than it ever was in the past. The pulpit in the Sengera church, constructed by his own hands, will continue to bear testimony to his skill as a “do-it-yourself” carpenter! In the absence of an ordained missionary, both Mr. MacKenzie and Mr. Gunn conducted the catechism classes, worship and services while at Sengera and the Committee is greatly indebted to them and to their wives also, who, in various ways, served the interests of the mission. At the time of writing Mr. and Mrs. Hugh MacKenzie are back at Sengera having, self-denyingly, and at very short notice, agreed to return.

The outpatient clinic located at the Omorembe Health Centre is steadily becoming more accepted and established in the community. The nursing sisters, Miss Peta van de Ridder, Miss Truus Ringelberg and Miss Celia Renes, in attending to their patients also labour – within their own sphere – to bring the truth as in Jesus to their attention. Even if only their labours as Sabbath school teachers were taken into account and the example they set, their presence on the compound would still be regarded as of great benefit to the mission. Patients who cannot be treated at the clinic are sent by ambulance, on an atrocious road, to Tabaka Hospital. It was while returning from one such mercy mission that the ambulance left the road and sustained much damage.

We are glad to report that the Rev. K. M. Watkins has indicated to the Committee that he believes that he has a call to labour on the mission field in Kenya and once the formalities connected with his resigning from his pastoral charge in London are completed, it is hoped that he will be settled at Sengera. The Committee regard this provision as an answer to prayer and a token for good. We hope and pray that the way will be made plain for Mr. and Mrs. Watkins.

MALAWI

The Church does not have an on-going mission in Malawi but the house and vehicle which had been used in former times by mission staff are still there. The Convener and Mr. R. A. Campbell paid a short visit to Malawi in July 2000 and on the basis of their report, the Committee decided to sell both the house and the vehicle.

CONCLUSION

We trust we are able humbly to say: “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.” In His holy providence, the resources necessary to maintain our mission activities continue to be provided, largely through our friends in Holland as already indicated, but also as a result of the generosity of our own people. We are encouraged in that so many souls are inclined to attend the means of grace and it is our hope that the Lord of the harvest will provide the labourers which we

so greatly need. The burdens borne by our ministers, teachers and nursing sisters are great and manifold and we would appeal to the Lord's people everywhere to remember them continually at the throne of grace.

“And let us not weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Galatians 6:9).

REPORT FROM ZVISHAVANE

Rev. Z. V. Mazvabo

THE year 2000 has come and gone, and in the kind providence of the Lord we have been allowed to see the start of the year 2001. Disappointed were fears and anxieties that rose in the hearts of many, but we have to confess that many were the grievances and sorrows that the different families went through. There is no congregation, and in the congregations, there is no family, that has not been shaken by the sorrows of death. At Chiwara a widow lost a firstborn son. Most widows in the country have no income as, more likely than not, their husbands were not employed. In such cases the firstborn son is expected to take over the responsibility of looking after the family. So, you can see the magnitude of the tragedy when such a one is stolen away by death.

Still at Chiwara the elder lost his father after a long illness. And so we can go through all the congregations. Sad to say, because of the fuel situation – both the non-availability of it, and the expense of it (sometimes fuel is available in the garages but there is no money to purchase, or there may be little money and there is no fuel in the garages) – we were often not able to attend the funerals of our people and be with them in their time of sorrow. But on this occasion we arranged for Mr. Siziba to go on his new motorcycle. But on his way back 8km out of Zvishavane he ran out of fuel and had to push his motorcycle the rest of the way. Mr. Siziba, by the help of kind friends, now runs a small but useful and efficient motorcycle. We are very thankful for it and we hope that when things get better it will be even more useful.

The work of the Gospel is to show fellow sinners the way of salvation. But this way is not only spoken evil of but rejected, neglected and despised, though our fellow countrymen have it presented to them with fellow feeling and concern. “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” Following false prophets, false doctrines and false sects is nothing but a determined rejection of the true Gospel and that is the common thing among us. They will not come to Him that they might have life. The educated people will not read good books so that they can enlighten their minds and be able to follow the preaching of the everlasting Gospel with a measure of understanding. The illiterate will not remember a sermon; say they, “we are not educated”; the old will not remember because they are old, so say they; and thus all excuse themselves. But the truth is that they will not have this Man to rule over them.

Inwardly they are complaining that they are being troubled, and being taught customs which it is not lawful for them to receive or observe, “being Romans”. The saying of the prophet is evidently true: “Hear ye indeed, but understand not, and see ye indeed but perceive not.” But we believe that the Lord has left Himself a remnant according to the election of grace, and they shall come in the day of His power. But for us it is good to learn our lesson – “without me ye can do nothing”.

The work of correcting the Shona translation of the Bible has not progressed well as, for now, we have not a suitable man to help Mr. Siziba. Mr. Emmanuel Shoko, who was helping with the corrections, is studying for a degree and has not much time to spare. As soon as we can get a suitable man the work will be continued.

Our country is a country of unpredictable seasons. At the end of last year we were again overtaken by famine. As far as I can remember, we have not had earthquakes, except mild tremors, but a famine is as much a catastrophe as an earthquake. It reduces people to skeletons and makes them desperately miserable. This has been the case here. One Sabbath morning, during the course of the first service, I noticed that a good fraction of the congregation were outside. They were drinking water. When I asked why it was so, I was told that the people were hungry. It was then decided that those of the congregation who had any mealie meal to spare, be asked to bring it to the church during the week, so that “sadza”, the staple food, could be cooked and made available to those who needed it between services. I was told that, at New Canaan, a lady actually fainted and had to be given soft porridge.

The congregation of the small town of Zvishavane is still a small congregation of about thirty. We hope that, as soon as we have a suitable place of worship, it will grow. Just now we have services at the manse. Despite the difficulties that have come our way we are thankful that all our stations are supplied regularly and satisfactorily.

We are worried about our children. They go away from home to other places in search of jobs but we have no places of worship in these towns.

A day will come, we hope and pray, when the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland will have a witness in Gweru, Harare and Masvingo. The Lord grant us an outpouring of the Holy Spirit so that, “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose”.

INGWENYA MISSION REPORT

Mr. S. S. Nxusani

ANOTHER year has come and gone and with each passing away of a day we draw nearer to death and eternity.

During the course of the year, Rev. Ndebele’s health has been going down at a rather alarming rate and he has finally retired.

The Word of God continues to be preached at Ingwenya Mission – this duty falls largely on Mr. Van Praag, who takes the greater part of the work. The Sabbath Day starts with a prayer meeting for the boarders and is followed by the first service of the day at 11.30 a.m., taken by Mr. Van Praag in English. The second service is taken by either Mr. P. Moyo or Mr. I. Manzini and the last service of the day is in the evening, taken again by Mr. Van Praag. One of the elders every now and then goes to one of the outer preaching stations. There is a weekly prayer meeting every Thursday.

CAMERON

At Cameron in Bembesi, Mr. S. S. Nxusani takes the two services on the Lord's Day and the prayer meeting on Thursday. Mr. Philani Mzamo, a young man from the family of Rev. Mzamo, assists in taking the services at Gadade every Sabbath when he is at home.

INSIZA AND INYATHI

These are two more preaching stations and an elder from Ingwenya or myself go to these places when we can. When none of the elders are available, a male member reads and prays with the congregation.

The people continue to come to the means of grace to hear the Word of God every Sabbath Day and our hope is that, as the Lord promised by the prophet Isaiah: "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

ZENKA AND NKAYI MISSION REPORT

Rev. P. Mzamo

THE work in these congregations was mostly carried out by Church elders who take all services on the Lord's Day and weekday prayer meetings. I am much indebted to all elders in these congregations.

I was unable, as on former occasions, to give these congregations a visit from time to time, owing to the shortage and high costs of fuel.

There are two services at Zenka and Nkayi and one is taken in other places, which means travelling from one place to another.

However, we should be thankful to the Head of the Church that all our preaching stations have the Word read every Lord's Day. May the Lord of the vineyard send us faithful ministers, elders and missionaries – for the missionary era is not yet over in Africa – who would declare the plenteous redemption purchased for the chief of sinners by the great Redeemer.

Four communions were held when the Lord's Supper was dispensed at the first service of the Lord's Day, preparatory services taking place on Thursday to Saturday. The sacrament of Baptism was administered at Nkayi and Donsa.

The *Shorter Catechism* was freely given to schoolchildren and sold to adults and Scripture tracts were given out freely to young and old.

May the Lord send a blessing upon His Word, to the conversion of sinners, the edification of His people and, above all, that all the glory would go to Him alone: "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

MBUMA MISSION REPORT

Rev. P. Mzamo

IN the kindness of the Lord, we have seen the past year come to an end and a new year begin. As such large periods of time come and pass there is a loud voice to men concerning the brevity of time. The Lord said: "Work . . . while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

The Church work continued as usual throughout the past year. Services were held each Lord's Day at all our preaching stations; two services at some and one at others. Weekday prayer meetings were held at Mbuma on a Thursday at 8 a.m.; Singwangombe on a Thursday at 2 p.m.; Mpakama and Sembo each Tuesday at 2 p.m.; Gampagalala and Lutsha each Wednesday at 2 p.m. and also at Somakantana and Makwateni – professing men take worship here.

The Lord's Supper was dispensed at the first service on the Lord's Day, twice during the year at Mbuma and once at Somakantana. The usual preparatory services, from Thursday to Saturday were held, with the Thanksgiving service taking place on Monday. Large numbers gathered at the places of worship on all these occasions.

The shortage and high cost of fuel interrupted regular visits to outlying preaching stations, both on Sabbath and weekday prayer meetings. I was only able visit Binga once during the year.

The land being the only source of income for a countryman, he is dependent for his livelihood on his crops. Last year's harvest was poor, there being too much rain – this year we are faced with severe drought. Two consecutive years of poor harvests have brought hardship, hunger and starvation to many families and although, as I write, there is rain, it has come too late to bring us a good harvest.

I take this opportunity to sincerely thank our Church people at large and our friends in Holland, whose generosity has kept our heads above water in the Mission field.

MBUMA MISSION HOSPITAL REPORT

Sister M. M. Macaskill, Sister in Charge

AS Dr. Benschop is at present on leave, the task has fallen upon me to write the Synod Report for 2000. During a year of turmoil in Zimbabwe we, to a

large measure, have been enabled to continue with our work, although aspects of it were hampered.

In general the pattern of work continues much the same as in past years. A widespread shortage of petrol and diesel, which continued throughout the year, gave us much anxiety. The generators, water engines and vehicles all use diesel. The regular supply that we had become so accustomed to was no longer forthcoming. Yet, time and time again we experienced the wonderful hand of the Lord in providence. A supplier was found in Bulawayo who agreed to help the mission as much as possible and rescued us times without number. The smaller generator, which uses less diesel, had not been working for some time and was repaired with the help of friends in South Africa and Mr. Van Praag. This meant that the hospital could be supplied with electricity, despite the shortage, on a more regular basis. The solar lighting in the wards, installed in 1998, proved to be immensely useful. Without it we would have been reduced again to looking after patients by candlelight. We were relieved that it was not necessary to cut down on water supplies, because in an institution like ours this is quite hazardous. Theatre was not in use as well as it might have been, but it was good that there was a doctor at Nkayi able to operate. Also we were able to continue travelling to the three clinics which are held in other areas each month for the under fives and for examining expectant mothers. Our neighbouring district hospital and other health centres have had to curtail this activity due to the fuel crisis. Hampering of the immunisation programme is a breeding ground for outbreaks of disease. It was a great relief when towards the end of the year it became possible to import diesel and have it stored at Ingwenya Mission, giving us again a regular supply. We are grateful to other mission staff for the support they gave us during that worrying time.

In the work here, one consolation is that God's Word does not return to Him void, and there is always the hope that the Holy Spirit may yet revive in the memories of the patients something of what they heard at Mboma, making it a blessing to their souls. Sabbath and weekdays throughout the year, patients and relatives have to be gathered for worship, both at the hospital and at church. It is to be feared that if left to themselves the benches would be very empty. Many patients do not possess Bibles at home; others, if they have any religion at all, belong to sects where there is erroneous teaching. One young teenage girl, terminally ill, belonged to such a sect called Guta Ramwari. Their followers are forbidden to read the Bible. Despite Mr. Mloyi, our catechist, attempting to bring before her the truth that there is no salvation in any other name except the name Jesus, she gave every appearance of resisting that truth and, sadly, died within a week's time at home. Another man, suffering from a skin cancer in his leg, was enticed to join the same group when he was promised healing – all, of course, to no avail. There is still ample opportunity to distribute tracts and speak to patients about the Word of God. Many do remain indifferent but we hope not all. We normally approach patients as if they do not have any knowledge of spiritual things, but sometimes we are pleasantly surprised by discovering those who do confess the Lord as their Saviour.

The public address system, which had been gathering dust for the past thirteen years or so – deemed, by a Bulawayo shop as irreparable – was rediscovered by Mr. Benschop and repaired. It is gratifying to see patients who are confined to their beds, regularly hearing the Word read and preached. Sister Terlouw still holds a Bible class for children on a Saturday afternoon, where they are taught the *Mother's Catechism* and given Scripture lessons. A regular number attend and often the children ask searching questions. Many of them belong to families who do not attend church. In the children's ward we had a little girl looking after her three-year-old brother while he was ill. She, after some persuasion, started attending the class and now, along with another sister, attends the class and church regularly. During the year Mrs. Van Praag brightened up the children's ward considerably. Among the beautiful murals she painted are the words from Matthew 19:14: "Suffer little children, and forbid them not. . . ."

The AIDS scourge forges ahead relentlessly, sweeping countless numbers of babies, infants, and young people into eternity. When we witness again the heart-breaking sobs of bereaved relatives we sometimes ask ourselves, Will there ever be an end to this desperate loss of human life? Yet, tomorrow in the outpatients there will be those in the queue seeking treatment for diseases that they have needlessly brought upon themselves. Again, we may ask why the deaths of relatives, neighbours and friends in these circumstances, is not convincing all of the wisdom of God's Law, which is written on the conscience of every human being. It confirms the truth of what Abraham said to the rich man in hell: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." We beg, therefore, the prayers of the Lord's people that the Lord would be merciful to do what is beyond human power, convincing many through the working of His Word and Holy Spirit, graciously granting, unworthy though we are, repentance and faith in the Saviour. Nursing the dying is not easy, but we know in the Lord there is every source of comfort and help in whatever situation we may find ourselves.

A number of men and women on the staff are members in different congregations – which is encouraging. Sadly, in July, we lost another member of staff, Mrs. Margaret Nyoni, aged 42 years, a general hand who had worked at the hospital since 1986. This is the third consecutive year that a young member of staff has died. Miss Z. Mavundhla, a nurse aide with us since 1986, moved on to become matron of Thembiso Orphanage. She was a very caring nurse and we are glad she is of use in another very important area of the work. Mr. M. Montana, the Environmental Health Inspector for the hospital and community, on whom we depended much for advice, also resigned. We are disappointed that more trained nursing staff have not come forward for the work here, especially as two of the permanent qualified staff do not see their way to renewing their contracts at this particular time, DV. We will be sad to part with Miss Lia Terlouw, who has proved an invaluable member of the nursing staff since 1990. Miss Terlouw resigned while on furlough during March and July, but kindly agreed to continue with us until Mr. and Dr.

Benschop would return from furlough at the end of March 2001, DV. Her consistent dedication and willing, cheerful spirit, have been exemplary. The shortage of trained staff continues to be a serious concern. However, again we must acknowledge the Lord's great kindness to us during the year in providing very welcome help in the forms of Miss Jessie Coote, from March to July, and Mrs. Thembeke Moyo, a nurse and midwife, who relieved during the month of May. Mrs. Moyo is a member in our Bulawayo congregation. We had one very serious case of discipline, where the guilty party resigned voluntarily. No dismissals are allowed without a hearing at the Ministry of Labour offices, and it is preferable to solve cases of a disciplinary nature at the hospital to avoid any possible unfavourable outcomes for the mission.

Rev. P. Mzamo's illness in April gave us an anxious time and it was with heartfelt gratitude that his congregation watched him mount the pulpit steps again, after making a good recovery from heart surgery. We heard with sadness of Miss Jean Nicolson's death. She had proved a devoted friend to the mission and we miss her prayers and personal letters. In February we enjoyed a visit from Mr. Neil Hicklin, New Zealand. In July it was very refreshing to have a visit from the Church's deputy, Rev. J. Macleod, and in December from Rev. K. and Mrs. Watkins.

Throughout the year we were the recipients of a variety of kind donations from different countries, which included a vast quantity of used clothes, all organised by the Neef family in Langley, Canada, bed linen, two solar-powered hot water geysers, and a young cow in calf. The hospital is now supplied with copious amounts of milk which is a great saving on our budget. Dutch friends initiated a collection for a scanner and diathermy machine – both these items were purchased secondhand in South Africa by Mr. Wouter van den Berg, who has been very helpful to the hospital. The company, called Siemens, decided to donate the scanner. We renew our thanks to all friends who have in any way contributed to the work here.

In closing, we acknowledge the Lord's great kindness to us, throughout another year, in granting continued health, strength, harmony and enjoyment in our work at Mbumba. We can be confident that as many souls are brought under the preaching of the Gospel, through coming to the hospital, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

STATISTICS

Outpatients

New cases	18,039
Repeat visits.....	4,236
Total	22,275

Child Welfare Clinics 5,785

Antenatal/Postnatal Clinics	3,805
Admissions	
General.....	1,388
Maternity	851
Total	2,239
Deaths	
General.....	102
Paediatric (under 12 years).....	44
Maternity	3
Total	149
Births	
Live births.....	655
Still births	15
Total	670
Major Operations	
General.....	2
Caesarean Sections	0

JOHN TALLACH SECONDARY SCHOOL REPORT

Miss N. B. MacLean, Deputy Headmistress

THE year 2000 saw a historic change in the administration of the school when Miss Marion M. Graham retired from the post of Headmistress after almost 40 years of service. It seems appropriate that this report should begin by paying tribute to her work. Miss Graham's devotion to duty was beyond question and she was blessed with considerable managerial abilities which she used to good effect in building a formidable reputation for the school over the years: the school is well known throughout Matabeleland Province and further afield for its educational excellence and sound moral teaching and that reputation is undoubtedly to her credit. A very successful farewell function was held in her honour just before she left for Scotland in June 2000 and the crowds of people who came to bid her farewell was clear evidence of the respect in which she was held. The changeover in administration thankfully went very smoothly and that in itself is a credit to the systems which had been set in place. The new Headmaster, Mr. Bonikele Ncube, is a communicant member in our Bulawayo congregation: he is well qualified for and well suited to the post and it is a matter of great thankfulness that a local Zimbabwean Church member was available and willing to serve the Church in this capacity.

STAFFING

As in the past, teaching staff were supplied and paid for by the Ministry of Education. We are entitled to 24 teachers (including the Head and Deputy) to staff a school of approximately 620 pupils, so class contact hours for teachers are high and everyone is very busy. We have a core of teachers who have been with the school now for a number of years, are very supportive of our particular ethos and dedicated to their work – this is reflected in our consistently high results.

However, few of the teachers are from a Free Presbyterian background so there is still a need for overseas staff to come to help in the teaching of Bible Knowledge. Earlier reference was made in this report to the *academic excellence and sound moral teaching* in this school but the primary purpose of the school goes far beyond that as a *handmaid to the Gospel*. Our main aim is to bring children into contact with the truths of the Gospel so the teaching of Bible Knowledge is at the core of our activities and we need people sympathetic to our own Church to teach it. There are few qualified secondary teachers in our congregations in Zimbabwe who can help so we are still anxious to recruit suitably qualified personnel from overseas. Science teachers are in short supply here so applications from anyone with a suitable Science qualification would be likely to win the support of the Ministry of Education, but we would be happy to hear from anyone interested.

During the year, Mr. Benschop transferred to Mbumba Mission to be with his wife and to pursue his translation work, so we lost his services in the Science and Bible Knowledge departments. At the end of the year we were very sorry to lose the services of Miss Sheena Ross, who also taught Science and Bible Knowledge: Miss Ross was a particularly versatile and successful member of staff so we were disappointed that she could not renew her contract. We are thankful that Miss MacAulay has been able to help in the teaching of Bible Knowledge.

PUPIL ENROLMENT

We had an enrolment of 625 pupils in the year 2000, approximately 100 of whom were day pupils from the local community, the remainder being boarders. Pupils range from the age of 12 to 18 in Forms 1 to 4 (O Level Secondary). They come from a wide variety of backgrounds, although many do have some family connection with the school. The Resource Room catered for the needs of 10 visually impaired/blind students. Most of the students who do transfer to other schools do so because of inability to pay fees or because they are not satisfied with the curriculum.

EXAMINATION RESULTS

The Zimbabwe Junior Certificate Examinations (normally taken at the end of Form 2) were cancelled due to financial difficulties between the Government and the Examinations Board. Although the value of these examinations is questionable, it did cause us some operational problems in unexpectedly having to keep the Form 2s occupied to the end of the year.

The O Levels proceeded as normal and our results for 2000 were very pleasing: 125 out of 152 candidates passed 5 or more subjects – i.e. 82%; 3 pupils managed 9 A passes and 5 got 8 A passes; 30 pupils managed 5 A passes.

FINANCE

The financial situation of the school remained very healthy throughout the year so that we managed to finish the year with a surplus in our bank accounts. This meant that we were able to undertake some major maintenance. Our school fees for boarders are much cheaper than other comparable schools but the children from the local community are finding it difficult to meet their payments. We help by buying maize from them for fees but if a bad harvest is experienced then that would not be an option for most. In the past these children's fees were subsidised by the Government salaries paid to missionary teachers – these salaries were signed over to the school. However, the Government is now clearly reluctant to pay overseas staff so that source of funding is now drying up.

VEHICLES AND BUILDINGS

The old school bus had been giving us serious problems and running up expensive repair bills so we were absolutely delighted to be granted a replacement by the Foreign Mission Committee. The school bus is an essential lifeline for the boarding school; at least twice a week supplies are transported out to the Mission from Bulawayo and the teachers are driven in to the city on Friday afternoons and brought back out to school on Monday mornings. The vehicle therefore needs to be versatile enough to carry goods and passengers. The new vehicle was designed much the same as the previous one with a van back, but the seating was improved to allow for more comfort.

We were also delighted that the Foreign Mission Committee granted finance for the building of a new Girls' Dormitory to replace an old building of unsuitable design (it had been converted from a dining hall). The older 18-bed building was demolished in order to make space for a new 60-bed dormitory. It is intended that this new building will be used to eliminate the overcrowding in the existing girls' dormitories. The building is being constructed by our own squad of workers under the supervision of Mr. J. B. Mpofu and Mr. J. van Praag. We expect it to be completed during 2001.

In our maintenance programme we managed to carry out a lot of painting in one of the dormitories, the dining hall and kitchen and in the teachers' cottages. It is intended to continue with this painting programme in 2001 as long as funds are available.

DONATIONS

Various donations and gifts have been gratefully received throughout the year. We received the usual donations for the visually impaired/blind students' unit and many donors have continued to contribute to the fees of specific children – we are very thankful for this regular support. Noteworthy was a special

anonymous donation of £2,000 with which we decided to install overhead ceiling fans in the church, dining hall, kitchen and staffroom, resulting in a considerable improvement in comfort in these areas on the many hot days we have in this part of the world. There was enough money left over with which to buy one bunk bed for each of the Form 4 boys' bedrooms – these are small rooms and the boys are quite crowded so the bunk beds have resulted in improved floor space.

Perhaps, before closing, it is appropriate, for the benefit of those who are unfamiliar with the school setup, to give an idea of how we seek to fulfil our role of being a *handmaid to the Gospel*:

- Worship is held with the children every morning and evening.
- Bible Knowledge is a compulsory subject for all classes from Form 1 to Form 4.
- Sabbath school is run every week for one hour on Sabbath mornings during which Scripture portions and the *Shorter Catechism* are learned.
- All of our pupils do the Scripture Exercises run by the Welfare of Youth Committee.
- All pupils attend the church services and the weekly prayer meeting is timetabled into the school day so that all teachers and workers must also attend.

Although for the time being we see little, if any, interest in the spiritual aspect of our work among the children and others, we persevere in the hope that the Lord Himself will yet raise a seed from among them to do Him service.

BULAWAYO MISSION REPORT

Mr. E. B. Zikhali

THERE are four preaching stations in Bulawayo: Lobengula Church, where there is a prayer meeting on Fridays at 4 p.m. weekly, and two services on the Sabbath; Nkulumane Church, with two services on the Sabbath; Mguza Church, with a Sabbath Day service at 9 a.m. before the main services at the other two previously mentioned; and a prayer meeting at Thembiso Children's Home every Tuesday at 9 a.m.

Church services continued to be conducted in the normal way during this current year – all under the administration of an elder in Bulawayo. The Bulawayo congregation has 54 communicants and there has been no resident minister since 1983 when the late Rev. A. Mpofu passed away. Rev. A. B. Ndebele has been the interim moderator but since the deterioration of his health, Bulawayo is hardly visited by any other minister, except during communion services. This is a very unhealthy situation spiritually for the congregation.

However, the Bulawayo congregation, late in the year, witnessed the ordination of Mr. Misheck Jubane as a ruling elder and two deacons, Messrs. Nopel Sibanda and Siphon Ncube. I hope the Lord, in His goodness, will help these men to carry out their duties spiritually. Mr. Stanford Mpfu, Superintendent of Thembiso Children's Home, who is an elder at Nkayi, very often helps in taking prayer meetings at Thembiso Church and services at both Lobengula and Nkulumane Churches on the Sabbath when he will is not visiting his home during weekends. Mr. Josiya Mashavakure, a watchman at Thembiso Children's Home, also helps by taking services at these places when he is not visiting his family at weekends. It is in God's providence that these two men were employed here. Children and workers at Thembiso join the rest at Lobengula during the Sabbath services every week.

In spite of all the setbacks, Bulawayo congregation has remained committed to attending all services weekly in large numbers, averaging almost 400 per service at Lobengula in particular and giving generously to the Lord's cause.

All our thanks go to the Almighty for giving such an atmosphere in a congregation which has been without a resident minister for nearly 18 years. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

THEMBISO CHILDREN'S HOME REPORT

Mr. S. B. Mpfu, Superintendent

THEMBISO Children's Home has now a total of 78 children ranging from 1 year to 17 years. We lost one baby in the year 2000 and 2 children were adopted by couples. The children are better behaved now since my arrival and all thanks is to Him who is able to change characters.

Worship is conducted at the home twice a day – morning worship at 6 a.m. and evening worship at 5 p.m., conducted by myself and Mr. J. Mashavakure, a watchman who is an elder of our Church. We also have midweek prayer meetings on Tuesdays at 9 to 10 p.m. and also gather on this day in our church with the rest of the primary school, together with the workers. Again, Mr. Mashavakure and I take turns in conducting the prayer meetings.

On the Lord's Day we have morning worship at 8 a.m. and then Sabbath school classes are conducted by the pre-school assistant teachers and myself. At 11 a.m. we are ferried to the main church at Lobengula to meet with the rest of the congregation at 3 p.m. In the evening, after our worship, we have discussion on the sermons that we heard and try to find out if the children were attentive during the services.

We have to be very thankful that some of our Church members, such as Messrs. E. Masina and B. Ncube, help to drive the Combi which is used to ferry the children to the services. Again, thanks should be given to tireless

workers such as Z. Mavundhla, the Matron and Mrs. N. Mahlangu, the clerk. We must also mention the services rendered by Mr. C. Moyo (finance) and Mr. E. B. Zikhali (administrator). The school Headmistress, Mrs. J. Ndebele, also gives valuable advice when called upon.

We need to thank the Most High for giving us the means to survive during the difficult times facing us in Zimbabwe. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Proverbs 16.33).

ZIMBABWE MISSION ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mr. E. B. Zikhali, Administrator

THE year went through busy and difficult times. The volatility of the rate of inflation rose to 56% and fuel prices were punctuated with sharp and constant rises in addition to its scarcity. However, we were very thankful that this did not result in the stoppage of any activities in the Mission. Every department had to do with the little it had, by conserving to the maximum.

The Field Committee continued with its routine meetings, holding five meetings in the year – less than the previous year when nine meetings were held. Two of these meetings involved the two deputies who were in Zimbabwe during these times. It was very exciting to have them at our discussions. One of the biggest boosts for the Mission in Zimbabwe was the purchase of fuel in bulk – 40,000 litres – in foreign currency. Our grateful thanks to the Mission General Treasurer and his F.M.C. team for responding positively to this request. The fuel will go a long way to alleviating the shortage.

The country went through serious political upheavals before the June 2000 Parliamentary elections, which resulted in the death of almost 32 people. We are very thankful to the Most High God that we were spared and that these did not affect our normal weekly church services.

It was pleasing to note too that the F.M.C. was able to send two deputies in the year to Zimbabwe. Rev. John Macleod spent four weeks in Zimbabwe and conducted three communions in three stations in Zimbabwe. Rev. K. Watkins, in Zimbabwe for only two weeks, was able to conduct communion services at two stations and in one of these he was unassisted. We were very thankful that in God's providence these two deputies were able to come when our own three ministers were experiencing health problems.

The financial position of the Mission in Zimbabwe remained stable during the year, in spite of the many problems that cropped up. All the projects earmarked for 2000 (except the girls' dormitory at Ingwenya) were successfully completed on time, including those for Oikonomos Foundation.

Although there is no expansion to our Mission stations, the amount of work in maintaining existing structures is very large and huge sums of money are spent. Mission cars continue to drain our resources because of repairs, bad roads and careless drivers. The problem of Trade Unions, Labour Relations

and the National Employment Council, continue to plague us as a Mission by demanding high salaries, allowances and benefits for Mission employees every year. It is very likely that there will come a time when the Mission will not be able to meet these demands and we will be forced to retrench our numbers drastically in order to meet these unrealistic demands.

The shortage of foreign currency continues to hike the prices of important and urgently needed drugs at hospitals. Our own hospital in Zimbabwe continues to suffer from the shortage of drugs and the cost is beyond the reach of ordinary people. Our Mission hospital is presently battling to obtain a licence to import drugs which may lessen the cost.

European Mission staff are charged very large sums of money by way of income tax and this move is a great worry to them, although, due to government policy, there is nothing that can be done about it.

The political instability continues to deny the holders of British passports the right to obtain permanent residence. However, temporary work permits continue to be issued to our local expatriate workers. This, again, is very expensive to the Mission, as each time these are renewed, each one costs \$5,700 and is only valid for two years or less.

There is every need that professing locals be employed in our Mission to hold important positions such as sisters-in-charge, medical doctors and headmasters. Unfortunately these are not presently available in the local market. Residence permits are now a thing of the past, making the recruitment of foreigners almost impossible. However, we shall continue with what we are doing until such time as we shall come to a halt.

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:10-11).

BUILDING AND TRANSPORT REPORT

Mr. J. B. Mpofu

BUILDING

MBUMA Mission, a two-block classroom, was built from a donation given by the Oikonomos Foundation and has come into use as from the beginning of 2001.

The nurses staff house, was also completed and houses four nurses. It contains a kitchen, sitting room, a shower and a toilet. The previous staff house is no longer used because of serious wall cracks, but we are repairing it presently.

Hospital wards needed a new ceiling and the walls are also being painted. More land has been given to the Mission at Mbuma so we have bought material to fence this.

Lutsha School, under Mission supervision, had been given a donation for building a teachers' house, again by the Oikonomos Foundation and, with six bedrooms, has now been completed. The same sponsors also gave money for the Zenka Mission and a teachers' house has been completed and is now in use.

Miss MacAulay's home at Ingwenya Mission has been completed after the old house was demolished. In order to get these various jobs completed quickly we hired contractors for each as our own workmen have much to do on other Mission projects.

The teachers houses needed more toilets and showers because of the number of occupants – the teachers could not get themselves ready in time for school as they were waiting their turn to wash. We did more work during the school holidays and are presently trying to finish painting. The girls' dormitory is in progress and we hope it will be soon ready for use in the following term.

The church building at Bulawayo developed bad cracking on the pillars against the outside walls and so we had to get an engineer to advise us on what to do in order to support the building. Work is now in progress to remedy this situation.

The Chiedza church has also a very bad crack and we hired a man to mend this by using brick and concrete reinforcement.

TRANSPORT

The Ford Courier of Rev. Mzamo was replaced by a new Mazda and is still in good condition. Dr. Benschop's Mazda is still giving good service. The new Mazda Ambulance twice developed engine power problems, but after garage attention is going well. The garage have not informed us of the cause of the problem.

The Ford Triton lorry has also developed problems and is always in and out of the garage. If funds can be obtained a new lorry would be most useful for the hospital. The Land Rover Defender Ambulance was involved in an accident with a donkey cart and has been in the garage for a long time due to the difficulty of obtaining parts in Zimbabwe.

The Nissan car, used by the manager, is now giving problems due to the long distances travelled between Ingwenya and Bulawayo every Tuesday and on Friday I must be at Mbuma using the "Fighting Road" which is a bad road for cars.

The Toyota Ventura is still in good condition and the Mazda, used by Rev. A. Ndebele, is still running well and giving good service.

The Mazda used by Mr. Van Praag is still in good order. The Leyland 16.16 Haulage is still going well in serving all the Mission stations.

The new Mazda school bus is in good running order. Rev. Mazvabo's Mazda is still giving him good service. The Thembiso Mazda is in good running order and the home has a new Toyota, a school bus which the children like very much.

The old school bus, once used by the John Tallach Secondary School, is now in Bulawayo and used for taking people to church services.

The Ford Courier, once used by Rev. Mzamo, is now used by the Bulawayo office.

Rev. Mazvabo's old Ford Courier, the green car used by the office, and the motorcycle, used at Thembiso, have now all been sold, as there was no need to keep these vehicles.

**KENYA MISSION AND OMOREMBE HEALTH
CENTRE REPORT
Sister P. van de Ridder**

DURING the past year no changes have taken place in the staff and services situation, which comprises:

- **Out Patient Department**

Opening hours: On workdays 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. After 5 p.m. and during weekends there is an "on call" service.

- Ambulance service available 24 hours.

- **Staff**

European –

Sister C. Renes

Sister G. L. Ringelberg

Sister P. van de Ridder

African –

1 full time Clerk

5 full time Nurse Aids

2 qualified Laboratory Staff members

2 part time Cleaners

17th January 2001 marked the anniversary, a year ago, of the medical work at Sengera as an outpatient clinic. (Before closure in 1998 we were a small hospital with admission capacity.) During this first year we – and likewise the people in the communities around us – were often wondering how our medical services would develop. Many have expressed their desire to have a full-blown hospital again. Others predicted difficulties in the clinic management if we would refuse to admit patients during busy malaria seasons.

Looking back we have much cause to be thankful to the Most High, who knows the end from the beginning and the beginning from the end. Despite our many faults and failures He gave us strength and health to carry out our duties.

Before proceeding to elaborate on the past year, it needs explanation that our medical work in the past much depended on malaria seasons which were usually two in a year – June and July being the main periods. Outside these seasons our work would usually be at low ebb.

After reopening we started off very quietly but towards March, in order to generate more usefulness, we decided to open a maternity service for straightforward deliveries, this meant admission and discharge on the same day or the following, depending on delivery time and how far away the patient's home was.

Around June we prepared for the busy malaria season but, due to a different rain pattern and preventative spraying by an overseas organisation, thankfully the season never arrived. However, the work gradually grew; maternity cases increased and also the O.P.D. attendances as the statistics appearing at the end of this report will show.

From October onwards to December we had much rain which resulted in a malaria season. An increase in malaria cases were noticed by December and these came to their height in January and February of this year, gradually settling down towards the end of February. From trustworthy resources we learned that our neighbouring hospitals at Tabakha, Ogembo and Sengera Mission, were overfull with malaria cases. Our clinic also was unusually busy during this period.

Most of the malaria cases treated at our clinic by far would have high fever but were treatable with anti-malaria injections followed by tablets or syrup or by tablets and/or syrup only. Really serious cases, such as children with severe anaemia, were referred to the surrounding hospitals at their parents' request.

From this malaria season we may conclude that most of the very severe cases of malaria went straight to admitting hospitals. However, two children and a youngster of 16 years old were brought to our clinic but sadly died upon arrival or just before. This was the case with a few referral children who died on the way to hospital; parents bringing them too late, their condition was too serious.

Although very busy during the malaria season, staff and capacity wise our workload has been manageable and our African staff was very understanding and co-operative.

When Sister Ringelberg was on furlough we managed to get a Kenya Registered Nurse/Midwife from Ogembo Hospital who assisted us for five weeks at the height of the season. She came in on Monday and Wednesday from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. and on Tuesday and Thursday assisted from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. This took the pressure off our workload and proved very satisfactory.

Ambulance services have proved a great and dependable help to many with malaria and emergency and non-emergency cases.

CLINIC FEES

On the whole these are well paid and we have no large outstanding hospital bills – we used to have plenty of these before closure of the hospital.

QUIET SPELLS AT THE CLINIC

During quiet spells the nursing Sister spent the remaining time in other activities, such as:

- Visiting of Sabbath school children.
- Visiting of AIDS patients in the neighbourhood.
- Language study.
- Preparation for teaching the Sabbath schoolchildren.
- A very successful deworming day was carried out at the beginning of October 2000 by Sister Ringelberg assisted by Sister Renes and African staff. After due preparation this was held at the chief's camp near our clinic. About 800 children and adults attended and bought deworming medication. (Many people are troubled with worm infections here.)

STATISTICS

The statistics only show the figures of the most common conditions we treat. Besides these we deal with chest infections, diarrhea, skin infections, tooth extractions, injuries which require stitching, and many other illnesses.

	General outpatients	Malaria cases	Sexually transmitted diseases	Antenatal cases	Deliveries	Maternal deaths	Fresh stillbirths	Macerated stillbirths	Neonatal deaths	Referral by ambulance	Other referrals	Laboratory tests
2000	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
Apr	165	72	25	54	10	—	—	—	—	9	16	182
May	316	90	27	68	9	—	—	—	—	9	5	219
June	272	81	25	80	11	—	—	—	—	6	11	121
July	275	131	17	70	15	—	—	—	—	6	5	149
Aug	206	85	41	76	19	—	—	—	—	8	8	119
Sept	202	69	45	97	14	—	—	—	—	4	5	175
Oct	192	60	30	88	20	—	—	—	—	5	7	176
Nov	198	79	37	120	23	—	1	—	—	10	2	191
Dec	252	99	40	151	21	—	1	—	—	9	9	189
2001												
Jan	335	185	51	120	36	—	—	1	1	17	7	325
Feb	380	313	29	79	23	—	—	2	1	13	17	336

DOMINIONS AND OVERSEAS COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. Donald A. Ross

DESPITE the fact that our Church is so short of manpower, some of our ministers have been able to supply congregations in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Singapore. These deputies have submitted favourable reports of their visits.

We had been unable to send deputies to New Zealand and Australia for some considerable time, so we were particularly pleased that the Rev. R. Macleod was able to go there at the end of last year. During his deputation, from 7th December to 6th February, he was able to visit the Singapore congregation both on his way to Australia and on his return. During his very busy schedule he visited all the congregations in these countries, and assisted at the Auckland communion.

The Synod Reports by the two ministers in the antipodes, the Rev. J. van Dorp, Gisborne, and the Rev. E. A. Rayner, Grafton, tell of their work throughout the year in their own and other congregations. They also express their appreciation of the visits of the Rev. R. Macleod and the Rev. A. J. MacDonald, and especially of their assistance at communion seasons. These reports emphasise the great need of continued supply from the UK, especially since the addition of the Singapore congregation. Mr. Rayner was able to supply the Singapore congregation for two Sabbaths in November. Mr. Van Dorp's report emphasises the very low state of true religion in New Zealand.

The addition of two new congregations to the Church, namely Richmond, Texas, and Singapore, means more work for the Church. However, these extra burdens are cause for thankfulness and happiness, especially when we witness some places of worship closing down in Scotland over the years. The Southern Presbytery has the oversight of the Texas congregation, and the Australian and New Zealand Presbytery oversees the Singapore congregation.

In the kind providence of the Most High, and as was hoped, communion seasons were held in the Singapore and Texas congregations, in September and October 2000 respectively. The ministers preaching at these communions were the Rev. J. A. T. van Dorp in Singapore, and the Rev. A. Smith and the Rev. K. Watkins in Texas. There were a number of people in these congregations accepted as communicants by the respective Kirk Sessions. The accounts given by the ministers of these communions tell that they were happy and spiritually profitable occasions. In the Texas congregation the sacrament of Baptism also was administered.

We are glad that the Rev. A. Smith was able to spend five weeks with the Chesley congregation. The communion season there in November was well attended (about 60 present on Sabbath), and one person professed Christ for the first time. Mr. Smith also held a service in Mount Elgin and two services in Troy, places at a considerable distance from Chesley. Forty people attended the Mount Elgin service, and seventeen and twenty-three the Troy services.

The Committee has received a request from Mr. D. Harrison, Vancouver, for Free Presbyterian services to be resumed there. He has been longing for a considerable time for this to happen, and in response to his request we have asked the Rev. John MacLeod to travel to Vancouver. Mr. Macleod hopes to conduct services there in the next few months, God willing.

The ministry of all the ministers who supplied our congregations overseas has been well received and their labours very much appreciated. The great

desire of the people in those congregations is to have many more such ministerial visits. The committee endeavours to supply that need, but as Synod members know very well, it is not an easy task because of the great shortage of ministers among us.

In the goodness of God, the work in Eastern Europe continues, as another report shows more fully. Often it is a fear that the door to the Gospel may close there. However, at the moment, and particularly in the Ukraine where we do most of our work, there is freedom to distribute the Scriptures. It is a great hindrance, however, that we are not able to register as a Church, and therefore cannot operate in an official way as a denomination. But it is not the first time, nor will it be last, when the Church of God has been restricted from functioning fully. Moreover, such restrictions in the past did not prevent those that feared God from spreading the Word of God as best they could – and this is what the group associated with us in Odessa continues to do.

There have been two visits to Eastern Europe: Rev. D. A. Ross to Odessa, Ukraine, in September, and Messrs. G. MacAskill and A. D. Ross by truck to Gheria, Romania in October. At the time of writing it is expected that the Rev. N. M. Ross will visit Odessa in April. The truckload to Romania consisted of clothing and 15,000 *Words of Life* calendars. The clothing was given to those in great need of this kind of help, but it would be good if we were able to bring other kinds of items such as certain medicines and small pieces of furniture. However, I am inclined to the idea more and more that it would be easier to render help, especially in the case of the Ukraine, if money instead of goods was brought into the country and used, under the superintendence of the visiting deputies, for the purchase of items for those in need.

According to a past decision of Synod it was agreed that there would not be the yearly visits to Italy by deputies but rather that occasional visits be made, and that Mr. Lucio Strata would provide translated sermons for the group as often as he was able. Mr. Strata has done this over a considerable period, but since then he has conducted services in Fornaci di Barga and addressed the congregation from the Word of God on several occasions over a number of years. We are very much indebted to him. This year, along with Mr. Lucio Strata, I was able to go to Italy for a few days, and as I trust you will see from the report on Italy it was well worth the time and expense in making the visit.

We are greatly indebted to all ministers who have gone to these far off lands for the sake of the cause of Christ. While the elders from other places who attended Texas and Singapore communions did so under the direction of their Kirk Sessions, it is much appreciated by the Church that they did so for the sake of the precious Gospel.

May the Lord in His great mercy continue to bless our attempts to spread the Word of God abroad, and to assist those connected with us in these countries who strive to maintain the cause of Christ in their midst. “Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen” (Psalm 72:19).

AUSTRALIAN REPORT

Rev. E. A. Rayner

THE situation for both congregations remains much as was reported in the previous year. One young family has moved from Sydney to Grafton, leaving the Riverstone congregation even more depleted since they lost two families last year. It only emphasises the great need for one to be raised up to labour amongst them, for the harvest truly is plenteous in such a greatly populated city like Sydney.

We were privileged to have the supply of Rev. A. MacDonald in Sydney, where his labours were very much appreciated and his ministry proved most suitable for the people. As he was in Sydney at the time of the congregation's communion season, he was able to assist me. Usually I take all the services. I very much appreciated this time of fellowship with him. More recently we were also glad to have the company of Rev. R. MacLeod as an official deputy who laboured for two weeks in Sydney with much appreciation. He was able to take a prayer meeting address on the Wednesday while in Grafton for a few days before returning to Sydney for the Sabbath. On that occasion he baptised Calum Marshall, a recent arrival to the Marshall family. I hope to have the privilege of having Mr. MacLeod's fellowship again at the Auckland communion towards the end of January.

Last year mention was made of an extension to the Grafton church building to enlarge the size for public worship and to provide better and more modern facilities for the Session Room with an additional room and a new toilet area. The City Council approved the plans drawn up by Richard van Dorp, an elder in the congregation, and who has an architectural business in town. Tenders were called for and the Deacons' Court have approved a suitable quote so that it is hoped that work will proceed early this year.

With the addition of Singapore to our Presbytery, I decided to take advantage of a reasonable package deal for travel and accommodation to give supply for two Sabbaths. On this occasion my wife accompanied me. We enjoyed the overwhelming hospitality of our friends there and trust that the ministry and fellowship were encouraging and instructive for them with the Lord's blessing. A couple of the young men that seemed would have been a help to Bernard Yong and Tham Win Keong have sadly left for another Church. However, I was most impressed with the steadfast loyalty of the two men who made application at our Synod recently. Another disappointment was the departure of Raymond and Winnie Lee to another congregation as they were communicant members in Gisborne. It is, therefore, most needful that supply be given to our friends in their isolated position in connection with our Church. So it was very much appreciated that Rev. R. MacLeod was able to give a Sabbath on his way to Australia and another on his return from New Zealand.

As in the past we must continue to be constantly aware for the need of the Lord's blessing and to find that His grace is alone sufficient and that His

strength is made perfect in weakness. Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but it is the Lord that gives the increase. “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake” (Psalm 115:1).

NEW ZEALAND REPORT

Rev. J. A. T. van Dorp

THE year has again flown past. The two Auckland communion seasons and the two Gisborne communion seasons were observed with the assistance of Rev. E. A. Rayner. At the Wellington communion this year I was pleased to have the help of Rev. Allan MacDonald who was supplying in Australia and New Zealand for a number of weeks. At each sacrament there were some visitors from other congregations. There were no Baptisms this year.

What has made a marked difference to our Presbytery this year is the reception of the small Singapore congregation into our denomination as a preaching station under the oversight of the Australia and New Zealand Presbytery. Its significance lies not only in its situation on the route to New Zealand but hopefully also as a gateway into Asia with its teeming millions. The visit of the last deputy, Rev. Roderick MacLeod, could therefore be scheduled to include Singapore without attracting additional travel expenses. Mr. MacLeod will have visited all the congregations of our Presbytery by the time he returns to Scotland. The last Sabbath of the year 2000 he was supplying in the Wellington congregation.

All who love the truth were shocked by the announcement of the New Zealand honours list on the 30th December 2000. It included the name of Professor Lloyd Geering, Presbyterian minister and former Principal of Knox Theological College who gained notoriety in 1967 through a charge of heresy brought against him. Although he denied the resurrection of Christ from the dead and expressed his belief that man is without a soul, he was acquitted of heresy and the General Assembly of the NZ Presbyterian Church expressed her confidence in him as a minister, theological teacher and Principal of Knox College. Truly “truth is fallen in the street and equity cannot enter” (Isaiah 59:14). He was named in this year’s list as Principal Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit (equivalent to Knight Grand Companion). The late Rev. William MacLean, M.A., at that time minister in Gisborne, in a sermon on the Resurrection of Christ, said: “The Christ of Principal Geering is a false christ, not the Christ of God and of the Church universal in all ages and lands. Whatever claims Principal Geering may lay to gifts and to scholarship, his soul is still in the death and darkness of unregeneracy. He is a wandering star without hope and without God in the world, heading heedlessly towards the blackness of darkness of a lost and undone eternity.”

A few years after the heresy trial, in 1970, the Presbyterian Church officially dissociated herself from Professor Geering's views but yet permitted him to continue sowing his heretical views and infecting countless people with the cancer of unbelief. He never resigned and he was never disciplined and so continues in good standing. With respect to the so-called conservatives in that denomination, Mr. MacLean, in his annual report to the Free Presbyterian Synod in May 1968 wrote: "The so-called Evangelicals of the Westminster Fellowship in the Presbyterian Church proved themselves the spineless successors of the sons of Ephraim who faintly turned back in the day of battle (Psalm 78:9). Not a single one of them even dissented from the decision of the Assembly, exonerating Principal Geering. Their claim to hold to the Confession of Faith is false and unfounded."

May prayer go up with renewed vigour for the worldwide working of the Spirit and for labourers to be raised up who will not shun to declare "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

EASTERN EUROPE MISSION REPORT

Rev. Donald A. Ross

THE work in Eastern Europe goes on reasonably well although there are a number of disappointments – as, for example, the loss of our most able translator Mrs. Natasha Hopkins. Mrs. Hopkins has a thorough grasp of English, Russian and Ukrainian languages. Due to family commitments she has had to give up this work which she did for us and for other organizations. As yet we have not found a translator to continue our important work of translating reformed literature.

Mrs. Hopkins has completed the translation into Russian of Thomas Witherow's useful book, *The Apostolic Church – Which is it?* At present, the translation is in the hands of Miss Margaret Campbell for final editing. We believe that the book will be an excellent help to some Churches in Eastern Europe in teaching them the scriptural form of Church government. Most of the Christian Churches there have either the Independent or Episcopal form of Church government.

The distribution of Bibles and literature goes on as in the past. Last year, from our Head Office in Glasgow, Miss Norma Morrison has posted many parcels of literature to Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Hungary and Romania. For example, 262 Hungarian Bibles, 196 Russian Bibles, and 1,720 Russian Gospels of John have been sent out. Also, the following items in Russian have been distributed: 413 *Shorter Catechisms*, 343 *Mothers Catechisms*, 4,700 leaflets exposing the errors of the Jehovah's Witness and Mormons, and 9,000 Gospel tracts.

In Odessa, Mr. Igor Zadoroshney posted 3,196 Ukrainian Bibles to addresses throughout the Ukraine during the past year. He sent a total of 4,136 parcels containing Bibles and literature such as *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, *The Shorter Catechism*, and *The Mother's Catechism*.

We receive responses from many recipients, which indicate that the literature, as well as the Bibles, is well received. As far as we can judge, the doctrines of the Word of God, as summarised in the *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms*, has influenced some people to the extent that they wish now to embrace them. Our wish is to witness a heartfelt attachment to these teachings, which will take place when the Holy Spirit begins to instruct the sinner.

Mr. Igor Zadoroshney also delivered parcels of humanitarian aid, and distributed 10,000 *Words of Life* calendars. Many of the calendars were delivered in Odessa and local regions by hand with the assistance of some in the congregation. We are well aware that all this labour will be in vain unless the Lord will give the increase. We who send the literature and those who distribute it in Odessa and elsewhere must do so prayerfully.

Last year we were able to send our truck to Eastern Europe only once, when Mr. George MacAskill and Mr. Alasdair Ross drove a load of aid to Romania. They reported that they encountered various hazards, but that the bringing of literature and aid to those in need was well worth the trouble. The small congregation of Presbyterians who received the load for distribution was deeply appreciative, as was their pastor, who is a Calvinist and one of a number of young men there who have adopted Calvinistic views. It is a pleasure to meet Calvinists in that part of the world where the Christian Church is riddled with Arminianism and Liberalism.

We are deeply indebted to the Trinitarian Bible Society for gifting *Words of Life* calendars – 10,000 Russian calendars, 7,500 Romanian calendars and 7,500 Hungarian calendars. The Romanian and Hungarian calendars were taken by our vehicle to Romania. (The Hungarian calendars were sent to Romania because there is a large population of Hungarians there.) For various reasons we were unable to take our truck into the Ukraine, but the Trinitarian Bible Society posted the Russian calendars to Igor Zadoroshney in Odessa. He distributed them not only locally but also to distant parts of the Ukraine and as far away as Russia.

I went to Odessa for two Sabbaths last September, and preached twice each Sabbath. I spent a total of fourteen days away from home, three of which were taken up with travel. On the second Sabbath I administered the sacrament of baptism to the second child of Mr. and Mrs. Dimitri Levitsky. You will recall that they had their first child baptized at Laide in April. The Levitsky family, as well as others in the congregation, appear to have a very good grasp of the doctrine of baptism and it was a great encouragement for them to finally witness this ordinance being administered in their midst in Odessa.

On three evenings during the week I conducted meetings – one prayer meeting and two lecture meetings. One lecture was on the sacrament of Baptism, with special emphasis on infant baptism, and the other on observing

the Christian Sabbath, underlining the fact that true observance of the Sabbath is “a delight”.

When these families in Odessa left their Baptist churches because of liberalism, they viewed infant baptism as one of the big obstacles to their joining a Presbyterian Church. Now, however, they are in full agreement with infant baptism and the other reformed doctrines. In the past they were familiar with the letter of the Word of God, but they were kept in error about certain matters (not least, proper Sabbath keeping) by years of wrong teaching. It was not until the *Shorter Catechism* and the *Confession of Faith* fell into their hands that they began to realize how far astray they were doctrinally. These systematised and summarised teachings of Scripture have been wonderfully blessed to most of them and their desire is to have a Church among them fully based on these teachings. They wish unreservedly to belong to the Free Presbyterian Church.

During my stay in Odessa considerable time was spent in organising the printing of literature. We have printed, in the Russian language, *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, *The Larger Catechism*, *The Shorter Catechism*, *The Sum of Saving Knowledge*, *The Directory for the Publick Worship of God*, *The Form of Presbyterial Church-Government*, and *Directions for Family Worship* (all bound in one volume) at a cost of £6,064 for the 5,000 volumes produced.

I also arranged with the printers to proceed with the printing of *The Westminster Confession of Faith* alone – 5,000 copies for a total cost of £1,996. Previous volumes of *The Confession of Faith* in Russian had the Scripture proof references alone, whereas this volume will have the references fully quoted. We hope to issue a further print of both *The Shorter Catechism* and *The Larger Catechism* in separate booklets. I arranged for 20,000 tracts exposing the evil of the occult to be printed at a cost of £64.

The congregation in Odessa has never recovered its numbers following the scare caused by the threat of the Odessa Regional Committee for the Regulation of Religious Activities. However, the sad fact is that the people who left the congregation at that time did not have then a genuine interest in the Word of God and the salvation of their souls. A few have returned, however, but not on a regular basis, one reason being that they do not agree with infant baptism.

There is the problem also of some of the congregation living at a great distance from the meeting place and using public transport on Sabbath to come to Church. I suggested to Messrs. Zadoroshney and Levitsky that a small bus should be purchased with help from the Church, but they were very much against this because unfriendly neighbours would report the purchase to the police, who would in turn investigate where the money came from to make the purchase. This, it was feared, would eventually get the group into serious trouble with the police authorities and the Bureau for Religious Affairs.

It is hoped, God willing, that the Rev. Neil Ross will visit Odessa for two Sabbaths in April when he will preach, DV, on Sabbath and weekday as well

as give lectures during the week. The group looks forward very much to his visit and the preaching of the Word once again. Meanwhile the group meets regularly. With regard, for example, to Sabbath 25th February, Dimitri Levitsky reports: “. . . Also we read in public worship 1 Kings, chapter 19, as well as the *Larger Catechism* from questions 90 to 100. And we are thankful to you for remembering us in your prayers.” Rev. Neil Ross also intends to visit the Odessa Children’s Hospital in order to give a blood transfusion machine which has been kindly donated to us by Raigmore Hospital for use in Odessa, and looks as good as new. The cost of a new machine would be in the region of £2,000.

Dimitri Levitsky is studying a course in English Language, which is paid for by the Church and which we hope will prove useful for the work of the Gospel in Odessa. Financial assistance is also given for the support of some families. We receive many appeals for assistance from different parts of Eastern Europe, but it is possible to help only a very few. Manpower and money is limited. As we seek to do what we can, we know that however little or much we do it will avail nothing spiritually unless the Lord will look down from heaven in sovereign mercy and pour out His Holy Spirit to accompany His Word with saving power.

We are indebted to so many people who help us in our mission work in Eastern Europe by giving of their time and money. I would like to encourage them to continue doing so by reminding them that the Saviour took notice of, and graciously commended, what the poor widow did when she threw into the treasury “two mites which make a farthing”; and when He said of another woman, “She hath done what she could.” The Saviour not only commends such work – He requires it of us all.

May the Lord grant, through all these endeavours, the fulfillment of His promise: “A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation” (Isaiah 60:22).

ITALIAN REPORT

Rev. Donald A. Ross

IN the kind providence of the Most High I was able once more to go to Fornaci di Barga, accompanied by Mr. Lucio Strata, to visit the group who continue to worship there. My time there was very limited because Mr. Strata could only afford to take a few days leave from his employment. We arrived on Thursday, 1st March, and returned on Monday, 5th March. The group still consists of the Marchi and Campani families. There have been no additions to the congregation. One extra person, a woman, did attend for a time (and she corresponded with us on several occasions) but she has since fallen away and returned to the Church of Rome.

Our visit was at a time of mourning for the Campani family. Mrs Campani's aged mother had died, and the burial had taken place a few days before our arrival. As well as expressing our sympathy we used the occasion to remind the people of the necessity of our being bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord if we were at last to enter into the heavenly home of the Lord's people.

On Thursday, Friday and Saturday, in the home of the Campani family, I gave discourses from the Word of God, and these were interpreted by Mr. Strata. After each discourse we had a discussion about it. On Sabbath we met for two services in a hired room in the hotel in which we resided. These were attended by eight people in the morning and seven in the evening. We are thankful to record that we were granted a measure of freedom in preaching and interpreting, as well as during the discourses and discussions at the weekday meetings. We followed precisely our form of worship, except that we were not able to sing the Psalms. Instead, Psalms in prose were read.

Some of the people expressed, with a greater earnestness than they had done in the past, their appreciation of our visit. The others were as appreciative as ever of the help we try to give, which they described as a caring for their souls, and wished our speedy return.

We were disappointed that they have made no progress with Psalm singing. When they meet each Sabbath, it is only to read the Word of God. Also, the women have not taken to heart the biblical requirement about using a head covering in public worship.

While the visits over the years by Mr. Lucio Strata have obviously kept the group mindful of our concern for them I do feel that there is need for more visits by a minister. I do wonder, with hindsight, if I was not somewhat hasty in discontinuing regular deputation visits to the group. They do have visits from a preacher from time to time but in his preaching there is no distinction made between the converted and the unconverted. I did discern that there was a desire among them for a more distinguishing kind of preaching. It is the opinion of Mr. Strata and myself that the Church should endeavour to give more regular ministerial supply to the group. As a church we do our utmost to recover those of our properties appropriated by the APC; more so ought we to regain people who were led away by the APC, for they are immeasurably more important than properties.

It seems to us that an evidence of the sincerity of the group in Fornaci di Barga is the large donation of money, which they gave to us for the Church. It almost covered the cost of our visit. Indeed, had I been able to travel to London by train, as was intended, instead of flying, the amount given would have been well over the total cost.

The Committee is much indebted to Mr. Strata for visiting Fornaci di Barga each year and addressing the people from the Word of God. The group is very much looking forward to another visit from him in May, God willing. Also, I believe that Mr. Strata should be encouraged to visit Italy during some of his long weekend holidays, if possible. Exceptionally cheap flights can be obtained if booked well in advance. By his going more often, and with the

blessing of the Most High, it is more likely that our Church principles will be impressed upon the people. “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:19-20).

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND AND SINGAPORE

Rev. R. Macleod

ON Wednesday, 6th of December 2000, I parted with my wife and family at Stornoway airport for nine weeks to serve as Church deputy visiting the Singapore, Australian and New Zealand congregations of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

SINGAPORE

During my time in the Far East and Australasia I spent two Sabbaths in Singapore, one on the way out and the other on the way back. In this congregation, though they be few – around seventeen persons meet for Sabbath services – there is an encouraging commitment to the cause of Christ and the distinctive principles of the Free Presbyterian Church.

The trouble that our friends go to in Singapore to maintain Free Presbyterian services in their city, the expense they have incurred in providing a bus for transporting those of the congregation who do not have cars to church, and the labour involved in maintaining and driving the bus, shows a level of commitment which is altogether uncommon in our day. Obtaining a vehicle in Singapore is very expensive. Maintenance of the minibus is no doubt time consuming. To avoid using public transport run in systematic disregard of the Fourth Commandment, five hours’ driving is required every Sabbath day to take people who do not have cars to church.

The congregation’s trials are compounded by the difficulty in Singapore of obtaining a place for Christian worship. Singapore law forbids public gatherings in private homes. We understand that property is as expensive as the most exclusive parts of our own big cities. Even if they were able to purchase a building, it is difficult to get permission to change its use for religious worship. At present the congregation meets in a hotel room on Sabbath morning and in the Bible House in the evening. The Bible House is a large building with many rooms where different Christian denominations meet. Both venues are adequate for their needs, and they are usually able to worship without interference in these places. It would, however, be desirable for the congregation to obtain a building of their own.

Their faithful adherence to the Fourth Commandment and the regulative principle of worship has left them isolated and depleted. Rev. M. Roberts and Rev. J. J. Murray, of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), have supported a congregation in Singapore which uses instrumental music, and allows its members to use public transport on the Sabbath, though it be run for profit making and in defiance of the Fourth Commandment. Mr. Roberts was one of an ordination team which ordained a minister in Singapore in this congregation. At a time when there seems to be a readiness to receive instruction in the Reformed faith among the people of Singapore, it is deplorable that ministers of their standing in the ecclesiastical world are countenancing practices which are not scriptural, and regarding instrumental music, a practice which they would not allow in their own congregations. Our friends in Singapore need to be encouraged to hold fast that which they have, "for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Samuel 2:30).

During our stay there we were struck with the words in Job 14:7-9: "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; Yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant". We should pray that the scent of the water of those streams that make glad the city of God, should make this congregation to bud and grow, bringing forth more fruit.

The general public met in the course of my stay there gave the impression of a hard working, courteous and honest people. One cannot but be stirred up with a desire for their salvation and the enlarging of the tents and the strengthening of the stakes of the first Free Presbyterian congregation in Asia.

Those who saw that this congregation might be the opening for our witness to spread further into Asia were greatly encouraged when we were able to respond to a request from a Burmese Church to be received into the fellowship of the Free Presbyterian Church. The Australian and New Zealand Presbytery were in a position to send Mr. Bernard Yong to speak with them and to observe them in their worship.

AUSTRALIA

The services in Sydney, where I spent two weeks, were attended by around thirty people. On the second Sabbath, I conducted a baptismal service, when Calum Marshall, the son of Mr John Marshall, elder, was baptised. More than once the people in Sydney spoke of the need for more contact with the home Church. It is only natural that if the link between the home Church and the overseas congregations is not nurtured by frequent visits by deputies, then the bond will be weakened more and more, and we fear the day will come, if this bond is not strengthened, when we will hear calls for a separation from the Church in Scotland.

During my time in Australia I went to Grafton where the Rev. Edward Rayner is the minister in our congregation there. This congregation of the Free

Presbyterian Church of Scotland is in the happy situation of having to enlarge their premises. Plans for the extension were drawn up and the work ready to proceed when I was there. I took the midweek service and a Friday evening prayer meeting where four or five men prayed.

NEW ZEALAND

From Australia I went to New Zealand where my time was spent visiting our congregations there. Sabbath services were conducted in Wellington and Tauranga, both for one Sabbath each, and in Auckland, where I spent three Sabbaths. In Gisborne, where there were up to 30 present, I took the midweek meeting. I also took one midweek meeting in Havelock North, where there were 10 persons present at the service, and one meeting in Eketehuna, where there were again 10 present.

The Wellington congregation is not large but it is well established and is made up of two young families and Mr. Patrick Cassidy, who was at one time on the roll of students, but is presently hospitalised and suffering from a very prolonged and trying illness. They number around 20 souls. I conducted the New Year's day service in the church there also.

At Tauranga there was a small but well established congregation.

In Auckland there is a congregation of about 35 to 40 people meeting on the Sabbath, with a good number of children amongst them. My last Sabbath in Auckland was their communion. There were very good gatherings: sometimes 70 and more in the congregation. The morning prayer meetings were very well attended, many parents taking their children to all the prayer meetings and all the services, no doubt prayerfully seeking the fulfilling of that promise, "I will save thy children" (Isaiah 49:25). The Rev. Edward Rayner (Grafton, Australia) preached the action sermon. Thirty-three persons sat at the Lord's table. There was a feeling that people parted on the Monday with some reluctance, their mutual bonds in the Gospel being strengthened by meeting together around the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.

The preaching of the Gospel in the congregations of the widely scattered Australia and New Zealand presbytery is conducted by the ministers, the Rev. E. Rayner, Grafton, and the Rev. J. van Dorp, Gisborne. They have a vast area to cover in this presbytery, extending now to Singapore. "Truly the harvest is great and the labourers are few (Luke 10:2)".

In the vacant congregations and preaching stations services are conducted by elders: Mr. C. MacKenzie and Mr. J. Marshall in Sydney; Mr. K. van Kralingen and Mr. C. van Kralingen in Auckland; Mr. D. Vermuelen in Tauranga; Mr. N. Hicklin in Wellington and Mr. Bernard Yong in Singapore.

David spoke of the blessing of God upon His people under the figure of dew descending upon the hills of Hermon which were afar off, and the hills of Zion which were near (Psalm 133). So it is good and pleasant to go afar off to the other side of the world and find the same doctrine, worship and practice maintained in our congregations there as we endeavour to maintain them at home. To find people from differing backgrounds and cultures valuing the

distinctive witness of the Free Presbyterian Church, in a day when faithful adherence to the Word of God is so out of fashion, is the wonderful working of the Lord, in our esteem, and a token of His favour, undeserving as we are. May the Lord keep both us at home, and them who are afar off, near to the Lord Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest, where the spiritual blessings and unction of the Holy Spirit flow down from Him the Head to the members, “for there the blessing God commands, life that shall never end” (Psalm 133).

During the nine weeks I was away from home I was very dependent on the kindness of our people abroad. Much kindness I met with, for which I am very grateful, and with great pleasure I got to know the families in Singapore, Australia and New Zealand.

On Tuesday, 6th February 2001, I arrived back at Stornoway airport, to be met by my wife and children. “But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth” (Psalm 86:15).

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO SINGAPORE

Rev. J. A. T. van Dorp

AS a result of an application from Covenant Grace Church, Singapore, to be affiliated with the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the May 2000 Synod in Glasgow passed the following resolution: “That the crave of the petition of the Congregation known as the Covenant Grace Church, Singapore, be granted in so far as that it be given the status of a preaching station under the supervision of the Australia and New Zealand Presbytery. That the Australia and New Zealand Presbytery be instructed to appoint a Kirk Session to meet in Singapore at an early date, draw up a Communion Roll and regularise the situation.”

In endeavouring to carry out this resolution the appointed Kirk Session met in Singapore for services, including a Communion on the 4th Sabbath of September 2000. The first service was a prayer meeting, a few hours after my arrival on Friday, 15th September.

The usual Sabbath services were conducted the following Sabbath, 17th September, when about 17 people gathered for public worship. The assessor Elders, Mr. Dick Vermeulen and Mr. Cornell van Kralingen, arrived Tuesday evening and Thursday evening respectively.

The usual services of the Communion Season were observed commencing on Thursday, 21st September, as advertised in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*. All the services were well attended by the small congregation. Three persons met with the Kirk Session and were received into full membership so that we can say that although the beginning is small the foundation is sound. The fledgling congregation are not only in sympathy with Free Presbyterian practices, they are also willing to learn where adjustment is needed on scriptural grounds.

One aspect of adjustment is the constitution that each congregation is required to have under Singapore law, in common with secular societies. That matter is being attended to and as soon as it is completed and approved by the government the Session can proceed with an election of office bearers.

The manner of conducting a Communion Season according to the well-established practice of our denomination was something completely new in modern Singapore. Preparatory services on the Thursday, Friday and Saturday and a Thanksgiving service on the Monday were entirely unknown. Even the very necessary custom of a prior interview with the Kirk Session for aspiring communicants was something quite foreign. I had thought of bringing a small supply of communion tokens from New Zealand. However, I had not considered it necessary to bring a communion cup as I knew that Covenant Grace Church had a Pastor until about two years ago and that the sacraments had been dispensed by him. Yet, here also the congregation began to tread new territory as the use of a communal cup had not been practised before. The matter actually caused me some anxiety as there was some difficulty in locating a suitable article. At the eleventh hour Bernard Yong experienced much help from a lady in a Church Store who knew exactly what we wanted and actually procured the scriptural communion vessel.

All the services of the Communion Season were conducted in the Jade Room, Bayview Hotel, which is just three minutes' walking distance from the hotel where I and the two assessor Elders were staying.

I believe that the prospect of this congregation is good as the members, though small in number, are sympathetic to the biblical principles we seek to uphold and are willing to learn and make adjustments where needed.

One area where that is clearly manifested is that of public transport on the Lord's Day. In Singapore it is very expensive to own a motor vehicle due to the large amount of tax that is levied on the owners of vehicles. Consequently, public transport of trains and buses is very widely used, even by worshippers to get to church on the Sabbath. To overcome this problem, Covenant Grace Church have purchased a van to collect any that wish to come to the services and are in need of transport. At first there were some young men who undertook this work but with their departure to another Church this work has fallen on Mr. Tham Wing Keong. Those making use of this service are indebted to him for his willingness to undertake this genuine labour of love every Sabbath.

Indeed, I and my fellow Elders, are also indebted to him and to Mr. Bernard Yong and their families, together with the other members of the congregation, for making our visit memorable, pleasant and edifying in the "fellowship of the gospel" (Philippians 1:5).

What we need to concentrate on now is to give them supply as much as possible and to facilitate that they are well situated as a staging-post between Australia/New Zealand and Britain.

At the time of writing this report, Rev. E. A. Rayner, Grafton, N.S.W., is supplying Singapore for two Sabbaths; i.e. from 10th November to 20th

November 2000. I am also appreciative that Rev. R. MacLeod has agreed to supply from 8th to 11th December on his way to Australia and New Zealand and from 2nd to 5th February 2001, on his way back to Britain.

In the beginning of December, Mr. Bernard Yong mentioned to me that the Rev. Micah Tawk Kap, General Assembly President of the Myanmar Presbyterian Community Church, had approached him for the purpose of Church contact. Mr. Kap had received Mr. Yong's name from the Synod Clerk who had earlier in the year received a communication from this Church in Myanmar (formerly Burma). This contact resulted in an unofficial visit by Mr. Yong to Myanmar where he met Mr. Kap and had an opportunity to observe their practices. My understanding of the situation is that there is much that needs to be put right in that denomination if ever they are to be recognised as a sister denomination.

Let prayer go up for God's blessing on the witness that has been raised in Singapore to our Lord Jesus Christ, the only "name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). For the promise is that "a little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time" (Isaiah 60:22).

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO ZIMBABWE AND KENYA

Rev. Keith M. Watkins

ON 6th December 2000 my wife and I left London for a two-month visit to Africa. We spent only two weeks in Zimbabwe, yet with the much appreciated assistance of Mr. and Mrs. Jacob van Praag, we were able through "journeyings often" to see many parts of the Church's mission.

My duties began with assisting at Chiedza communion. Chiedza is one of several congregations in Mashonaland, a district where Free Presbyterian mission work began in 1981. Just 20 years later, it testifies to the Lord's blessing on Rev. Z. Mazvabo's labours to see hundreds in attendance at the communion. Many walked long distances in hot temperatures to reach the church. A number stayed within the church premises over the weekend.

As yet, our Shona people do not have all the Psalms translated metrically into their own language. But no one listening to their hearty singing could fail to long for the day when they will have all the Psalms to sing. It is hoped that work can soon begin in earnest to provide them with an improved Bible translation.

Before our arrival it had been very dry and it was with thankfulness that rains came, enabling the people to plough. Before that the ground was too hard. It was when rain began to fall on the Monday of the communion at Kirk of Shotts that the Holy Spirit was poured out. How we need showers from

heaven to fall, so that our hard hearts would be softened to receive the seed of God's Word!

Our second week saw us move to Bulawayo, to assist at the communion there. Services began here in 1968, as children from the country districts of our mission moved to town in search of work. Services are held regularly in three places in and around the city. The people came together for the communion, so that the congregation could be as many as 400. Although many understand English, all the sermons were interpreted, as they are throughout the mission. As at Chiedza, we were struck by the dignity displayed by the communicants as they solemnly took their places at the Lord's table. Rev. Ndebele's continued poor health prevented him from preaching, although he was enabled to address the second table on the Sabbath.

In addition to the communions, I conducted prayer meetings at Nkayi, Zenka, Ingwenya, and also at Singwangobe and Gampakalale in the Mbumba area. Thus I was privileged to preach 15 times during my fortnight in Zimbabwe. We hope that the warm welcome we received in each place indicates the reception that our people are giving to the Word of God. "He that receiveth you receiveth Me" (Matthew 10:40).

At Mbumba we were thankful to see Rev. Mzamo in good health following his treatment in South Africa, and able to preach the Word among his people. However, Mr. Ndebele has now resigned from the pastoral charge of Ingwenya. No doubt eternity will declare that there has been much fruit from his unwearied labours in Zimbabwe and elsewhere. With only two active ministers to cover some forty congregations spread over a wide area, and often with larger attendances than we are accustomed to in the United Kingdom, the Zimbabwean mission is crying out for help. "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest." I was encouraged by meetings with the two divinity students, Mr. Khumalo and Mr. Mloyi. They value the prayers of the Lord's people throughout the Church, as they study in preparation for their divinity course, as well as working full-time and taking services.

Miss MacAulay and Mr. Benschop, with the help of local Church people and the support of the Trinitarian Bible Society, are busy improving the translation of the Ndebele Bible – a vital and overdue work. I was pleased to visit the Reformed Bookroom and the Thembeiso Children's Home in Bulawayo, through which the Gospel of Christ continues to be made known to old and young. May the distribution of literature and the care of the orphans – including taking them to the Bulawayo services – be made a blessing to many.

The hospital at Mbumba continues to provide a remote community with high standards of medical care. This demands and receives sacrificial commitment and sheer hard work from the nurses. Suitably qualified persons from overseas are continually needed. In the current political climate fresh expatriate applications can take many months to process. Through the hospital the mission seeks primarily to bring Gospel healing to souls. We enjoyed taking evening worship on the hospital verandah, attended by staff, the more

able-bodied patients, and families of the sick. Mr. Mloyi usually takes this, as well as catechising the patients from day to day and speaking to their families and friends.

At Ingwenya, the schoolchildren were on holiday, but there was still much activity: building a new dormitory; various painting projects; and re-covering mattresses. In term time, the congregation numbers about 1,000. Hundreds of young people are being given an excellent education at the school, but again, of primary importance is that they are taught the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom.

Anyone visiting our Zimbabwe mission cannot help but be stirred by the evidence of decades of Gospel effort. In *One Hundred Years of Witness* the Rev. James Tallach wrote: "It is often said that Reformed Calvinistic teaching does not generate a missionary spirit or draw men and women away from their homes to travel half-around the world to preach the Gospel to sinners. From Rev. John Radasi onwards our Mission demonstrates yet again that a living Reformed Church will give itself in men, women, time and money to missionary work. As Calvinism puts God at the centre of the whole of salvation, so the ninety years of missionary work in Africa . . . are but an extension of David's prayer:

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

(Psalm 72:19)"

On 21st December my wife and I left Zimbabwe, to spend six weeks at our Church's Sengera mission in Kenya. Apart from some days with the auditors, I had the joy of being able to devote myself to the spiritual work of the Gospel ministry among the Kisii people. This was made possible by the able work of the temporary administrators, Mr. Calum Gunn at the beginning and Mr. Hugh MacKenzie at the end of my stay. In between, I was thankful for my wife's attending to routine office administration.

Each Sabbath the public work begins with a catechism class attended by old and young. These men and women had nothing of the privileged upbringing that many readers of this report have enjoyed. Hearing them recite the *Shorter Catechism* brings to mind the Lord's promise: "I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten." Humanly speaking, without our Church's mission, they would know nothing of these things.

The Sabbath services were well attended, especially in the morning, when more than 250 souls would be present. There was a steady increase over the period. The people were attentive to the preaching, and I am thankful for the most able and willing interpreting of Mr. Justin Masoti.

There are four large Sabbath School classes, taken by an African teacher and the three Dutch nurses helped by their interpreters. Many of the children have parents who are only beginning to learn the Gospel themselves. Others come

from families who do not attend the church. Without our mission, these children would have every right to say, "No man cared for my soul". Sister Ringelberg was on furlough, so with the help of Mr. James Matara as interpreter I conducted her class of approximately 60 young people. We hope that the Lord will bless their diligent memorising of the doctrines of the Reformed faith so that they would obtain more than a mere *form* of godliness.

At 8 a.m. each working day, worship is held in the mission compound with all the workers. Upwards of 25 staff attend, along with patients and their relatives awaiting the opening of the clinic. An explanation of the Scripture passage is given before the concluding prayer. Then an opportunity is given for questions, usually prompted by the passage studied or the Sabbath sermons. These times are very profitable. We studied the first ten chapters of Romans, which explain so clearly the way of justification by faith and not by works. The way God's law relates differently to believers and unbelievers raised many questions. How can you know if you truly have saving grace, or are just a hypocrite trying to work for the favour of God? In different forms, this was often raised, indicating real soul concern. After worship the staff attend to their various duties around the compound or in the clinic.

I was able to visit some 50 homes, including those of the mission workers. Invariably I was received as a Gospel minister ought to be received – as one who had come for their spiritual benefit. With Mr. Masoti interpreting, worship was conducted and I briefly addressed the gathered families from the Scripture passage read. Frequently the people showed a keen interest in the Word of God. Along with the public preaching of the Gospel, I remember these visits as some of my most worthwhile times in Sengera, and we hope that when so much seed has been sown in public and from house to house it will not be in vain.

Future prospects for direct missionary work among the people are almost unbounded. Time constraints meant that we could not get to all the homes that would have welcomed a ministerial visit, neither could we accept invitations to speak at local schools. There are many "churches" and cults all around and it is fearful to see so many being led astray by blind leaders of the blind. Regrettably, relatively few Psalms have been translated metrically for singing, and the Kisii translation of the Bible needs much improvement. Providentially, contact has been made recently through the Trinitarian Bible Society with a Dutchman who has specialised in the study of the Kisii language and is willing to assist us.

Although it is a day of small things with us at home, our privileges are many. Unlike the people of Sengera, we have the pure preaching of the Gospel; we have ready access to the Word of God in a most accurate and faithful translation; we have sound literature to read in our own language; we are acquainted with those who know and have experienced the truth. We have a wonderful opportunity to bring these benefits to others. We have the oil and wine of the Gospel that can heal the spiritual wounds caused by sin. Will we be like the priest and Levite in the parable who passed by on the other side?

Today the door is open to the Kisii people. “Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee.”

There were a number of funerals in the community during our stay. When a 14-year-old boy died from a brain tumour, our mission carpenters made the coffin. A continual stream of people came to the bereaved family’s kraal, some of them wailing day and night. Polygamy and immorality are rife with all their attendant miseries. AIDS is widespread and newspaper photographs of the deceased show how young so many are. May it soon be said that “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.”

Mission communication difficulties were much relieved by a new satellite telephone. Security improvements include a new wall, four lampposts and new fencing. When a false alarm was raised recently, a number of locals appeared at the compound with their machetes, ready to defend the mission. The relationship with the local community seems to be good. At a recent de-worming initiative run by our nurses at the Chief’s office, 800 people attended. The clinic became very busy during my stay with malaria cases. Many babies were safely delivered at the clinic, but we long to see evidence of many new births.

The congregation’s Poor Fund provides necessary relief by distributing free or subsidised maize – the staple food. The people struggle to pay school fees and there is a real need for help with this. As its handmaid in doing good, the Gospel has always had close ties with education. Perhaps a fund could be set up, into which friends of the mission could contribute. Obviously, the people see that temporal benefits can be gained from the mission. Nevertheless, a spirit of genuine Gospel interest and enquiry appears among them. One wrote: “Our main concern as a congregation is salvation of our souls. How shall they call on Him they have not believed? How shall they believe in Him they have not heard? How shall they hear without a preacher? Yes, we have hospital, jobs, mission. It is good but not good enough without a minister. What will profit a man although he gain whole world and lose his soul?” Another wrote asking the Church in Britain to “pray to the Lord of the harvest us from the garden of Satan to the garden of the beloved Jesus Christ”.

We left Sengera on 2nd February 2001, thankful to the Lord for His care and help. To all who gave us such a warm and hospitable welcome and made our stay in Zimbabwe and Kenya so memorable, we extend our sincere thanks.

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO CANADA AND USA

Rev. A. Smith

MY wife and I left Stornoway on Monday, 25th September 2000. We spent the night with Roderick Campbell, Glasgow, and the next day, 26th September, flew to Newark, New York, and from there to Toronto, Canada. We were met there by Erika Schuit and taken on a 2¹/₂ hour journey to Chesley in Ontario.

We stayed in the manse at Chesley. The town has a population of just under 2,000 and no public transport. It was originally called Sconeville, after the Scone in Scotland where Robert the Bruce was crowned. Another area beside it also used the name Scone and so to avoid confusion the Post Office began using the name Chesley for this town, after the name of a Post Office official. It was built on 200 acres owned by a Scot called Elliot and the cemetery names indicate that it was full of Scots in its early days.

We stayed for a month in Chesley. There were two services every Sabbath and a Sabbath School. The average Sabbath morning service attendance would be about 35 and the average evening service about 39. The Prayer Meeting on Wednesday averaged about 29. A Harvest Thanksgiving service was held with 41 present. There was a service at Mount Elgin, 2¹/₂ hours' drive away, attended by 40, and two services at Troy, 2¹/₄ hours' drive away, with 17 and 23 present respectively. A Communion was held in Chesley on Sabbath, 15th October 2000. One lady, Erika Schuit, professed at the table for the first time. On the Sabbath there were 58 present. The congregation are mainly of Dutch extraction and there are 15 members.

We also had a congregation meeting and a name was agreed upon with view to a call. They desperately need a pastor. May the Lord raise one up for them, and may we at home not be complacent about such needs.

We much enjoyed the fellowship, and we could see the yearning for a full-orbed teaching of the Word of God. We trust that it may have been of benefit to our own souls also. We were shown great warmth and kindness.

RICHMOND, TEXAS, USA

My wife and I left Chesley on Tuesday, 31st October, flying from Toronto airport to Houston. We were met there by members of Ernie Smith's family. We stayed in Texas for a month. First of all we stayed with Ernie Smith at Santa Fe for a number of days, then we went to the home of James Moline in Brookshire. This was followed by a stay at the ranch of Carol Richards, and while there, Rev. and Mrs. Watkins arrived and the first ever Communion was held in the congregation. Six people professed their faith at the Lord's table in our Church for the first time. Three disjunctions from Chesley make the roll nine at present. Our final week was with Lyle Smith and his family.

The congregation is scattered over 100 miles, and worships at Richmond which is central. The average attendances were 32 on Sabbath morning and 36 on Sabbath evening. On the Sabbath of the Communion there were

72 present, the numbers being augmented from Chesley, Indiana, Minnesota, Vancouver, etc.

Great interest seems to be shown in our Church and the crying need is for a minister of the Gospel. We pray that God will grant that, if it be in accordance with His holy will. Once more we had much fellowship among the various families and much discussion of spiritual matters. We stayed with four different families and were overwhelmed with the kindness shown. May Chesley and Richmond be laid upon the souls of our praying people.

We acknowledge the Lord's help and journeying mercies.

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO KENYA, MALAWI AND ZIMBABWE

Rev. J. Macleod

INTRODUCTION

My eight-weeks' visit to Africa began and ended in Kenya. In between I visited Malawi (accompanied by Mr. R. A. Campbell) for two nights and then Zimbabwe for four weeks before making the return journey. This chronological order will be followed in writing this report.

1. KENYA – FIRST VISIT

Having, the previous evening, boarded a British Airways flight at London Gatwick, I arrived in Nairobi in the early hours of 22nd June and in the forenoon of the same day travelled by air to Kisumu where I was met by Mr. Hugh MacKenzie, the Mission Administrator, *pro tem*. We arrived at the Sengera Mission compound in the late afternoon.

What immediately strikes the eye on arrival at Sengera is the neatness, tidiness and colourfulness of the whole compound. Mr. MacKenzie had adopted the policy of employing casual labour to assist the gardener in looking after the flower beds, vegetable plots and maize plantations and while the standard wages paid are, by British standards, very low, hiring them at all, as far as some of them are concerned, is like throwing them a life-line. The working day on the mission begins with worship in the rondavel. A blessing is asked on the Word, some verses of a psalm are sung, a portion of Scripture is read and a short exposition given on any topic suggested by it. The worship is then concluded with prayer but before dispersal an opportunity is given to anyone who may wish to ask any questions. These "family worships" are well attended and the level of interest shown was very encouraging.

On the two following Sabbaths, I attended the Catechism Class at 9.30 a.m. and then preached to around 250 souls at 10.30 a.m. and to a slightly reduced number at 2 p.m. The services are held in what was previously space occupied by hospital wards. With the partitions removed and comfortable timber pews

installed, it has turned out to be a very suitable venue for the holding of services. The decision to move from the building previously used, and which was so inconveniently situated, has proved to be of great benefit to the mission and, hopefully, the future will more and more reveal that it was to the furtherance of the Gospel at Sengera. Justin Masoti acted as interpreter and performed that duty in a very competent manner. In the absence of an ordained minister, Mr. Hugh MacKenzie attended to these duties and performed them in a most acceptable manner. Over one hundred children attend the Sabbath School, the classes being taken by the Nursing Sisters – Peta van de Ridder, Truus Ringelberg and Celia Renes, assisted by Joel, a local Primary School Headteacher and an adherent of the congregation; Consolata and Esther, Nursing Aides, help in interpreting.

The OPD Clinic, over this initial period of my visit, was not at all busy apart from some few malaria sufferers turning up from time to time and the occasional child delivery. The Nursing Sisters, finding time on their hands, were asking to be allowed to do more home visiting in the community. This was granted but on the understanding that a note of the locality being visited would be left at the Mission and provided that it would always be possible to recall them should an emergency arise at the Clinic.

In general it may be said that Mr. Hugh MacKenzie, in the comparatively short period of time that he was there as Administrator, commanded the respect of all the members of staff and organised the day-to-day running of the Mission in a most efficient manner. The compound is now well guarded night and day. He introduced a new reduced-hours shift system in order to minimise the likelihood of the night guards sleeping on duty and it seems to be working very well. Mr. MacKenzie also brought order into the book-keeping and accounting systems with the books being now balanced on a weekly basis and regular returns being made to the General Treasurer.

My time was limited, but I did manage to visit some homes and I also endeavoured to make personal contact with as many as possible of the members of the congregation. There is much evidence of disease, poverty and destitution around the mission and even from a purely humanitarian view our presence in Sengera continues to have quite a significant impact on the surrounding community. As far as the spiritual aspect of our activities is concerned, it is most encouraging to find so many attending the Sabbath services, to find men, women and children prepared to learn the *Shorter Catechism* and, more surprisingly, prepared to present themselves for public catechising! They are being instructed in the doctrines of the Faith and who can tell when the Holy Spirit may cause the seed sown to bear fruit? It seemed evident to the writer that some of them are now well-grounded in the foundation doctrines of the Faith and that there are found attending the means of grace in Sengera such as are not far from the kingdom, some few who may even be already within its bounds. There is every encouragement not to weary in well-doing. On 4th July I left Sengera and after experiencing some delay at Kisumu eventually arrived in Nairobi where I stayed overnight.

2. MALAWI

On Wednesday 5th July I was early at Nairobi airport to catch the Air Malawi flight to Lilongwe. In the milling throng of people finding their way to various departure gates I literally bumped into Mr. R. A. Campbell! He had just arrived from Amsterdam and was on his way to catch an Air Kenya flight to Lilongwe where it had been arranged that we should meet. My flight being direct while his was via Lusaka, I had to wait a few hours at a very cold Lilongwe Airport until he eventually arrived. We then caught the next available flight to Blantyre, arriving there in the mid-afternoon. As we were not expected to arrive until the evening there was no-one there to meet us, but having managed to get word of our whereabouts to Mr. John McGrath, he duly arrived to pick us up. He had arranged accommodation for us in a missionary's house within the AIM compound in Blantyre, the current occupants of which were on furlough in Europe. On the way to Blantyre, however, we turned off the road to view the mission house which had been built under the supervision of Mr. Dick Vermeulen. Davis, the guard and caretaker of the property, was the only one on the premises but we were soon joined by Dick van Shaik and Dick Boonzaaijer, the former being the manager of the Stephanos Orphanage situated some 20 km from Blantyre and the latter a temporary employee working at the same institution. We were informed that the house had been used from time to time to house homeless people who were not specifically identified. It has to be said that there was some evidence of wear and tear. Outside and inside, the house stands in need of repair and renovation. After this somewhat disjointed meeting came to an end, Mr. McGrath brought us to the house where we were to stay overnight and we are grateful to the people concerned for granting us the use of the house and to the young missionary and his wife who provided us with an evening meal.

Dick van Shaik had more or less arranged our itinerary for us and the next morning he picked us up and took us to the Stephanos Orphanage where we met for the first time Mrs. van Shaik and also Mr. and Mrs. Beukers, a young couple from Holland. Here we also met for the first time Nedson Banda, a young Malawian whose name was already well-known to us. We spent some time with him. It will be remembered that the FMC helped him complete his studies at a Bible College and that he approached the Zimbabwe Presbytery some years ago seeking to be received as a student studying for the ministry of our Church. He was now living within the orphanage compound and responsible (under Ds. Schaffma, the resident Dutch minister) for conducting the daily worships and taking the regular services there, and, also, we understood, preaching to the congregations in the vicinity of Blantyre which were formerly provided for under the auspices of our Church.

In the afternoon we returned to the Blantyre mission house where we had arranged to meet Mr. Timothy Banda. Mr. Banda maintained that he had not severed his connection with the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland when the Foreign Missions Committee decided to discontinue its missionary work

in Malawi and that he had continued to keep services under the name of the Church! Sadly, Mr. Banda has since passed away and that has closed this avenue which was open to us for the spreading of sound religious literature in Malawi.

Early the following morning we returned to Blantyre Airport to board the 10.00 a.m. flight to Lilongwe. We had arranged to meet there, at the Airport, with Mrs. Coby Maida, an old friend and one with whom we had been closely associated in the past when we engaged in mission work in Malawi. She had arranged overnight accommodation for Mr. Campbell and after we had spent some time together they took their departure. After much uncertainty as to the time of departure, the Air Zimbabwe flight to Harare eventually took off around 5 p.m. and I was now on my way to Zimbabwe.

3. ZIMBABWE

Fully reconciled to having to spend the night in Harare, I arrived there about 7 p.m. However, on making enquiries as to the time of departure of the morning flight to Bulawayo, I discovered that the evening flight had not yet departed and I was informed that if I hurried to the domestic terminal I might be able to board it. I thus arrived in Bulawayo on Friday evening and I was very glad and relieved to find Mr. J. van Praag, Mr. Teus Benschop, Miss K. M. MacAulay, Miss J. Coote and Miss M. MacAskill waiting to greet me at the Airport.

The services connected with the Bulawayo communion season had begun on the previous day. I had been invited to assist there, so my first duty was to preach in the Lobengula church on Saturday forenoon. At the church I was glad to meet the Rev. A. B. Ndebele, whom I had last seen in September 1996. He was then lying in a hospital bed at Mpilo with his life hanging in the balance. It was obvious that Mr. Ndebele had not fully recovered from his injuries but it was to me a matter of thankfulness that he was still taking services. On Sabbath morning the sacrament was administered and in the evening I came out to Ingwenya to take the English evening service in the church there. On Monday, after the conclusion of the communion services, I was taken to Ingwenya where I was to be the first person to stay in the handsome new house which had been built to provide accommodation for Miss MacAulay and Miss Ross. On Thursday I made my way to Mbuma, taking a service at Nkayi en route. There was a large congregation present as a result of the children and teachers of the local primary school being present. At Mbuma I took the prayer meeting the following morning and the morning service on Sabbath. On Sabbath afternoon I preached at Zenka and on Monday, on my way back to Ingwenya, I took the prayer meeting there.

It was gratifying to find the Rev. Petros Mzamo back in harness and to all appearances revitalised as a result of the heart operation which he underwent in South Africa. The Hospital continues to provide much-needed medical services under the competent supervision of Dr. Janette Benschop and Miss Margaret MacAskill. At the time of my visit, Miss Jessie Coote was still

there covering for Miss Lia Terlouw's absence on furlough in Holland and, with Miss Louise Leiper, made up the number of expatriate nursing sisters on duty there. The Hospital appeared to be very busy. We know that those who labour there are not seeking the praise of men: they are, nevertheless, to be commended for their dedication to duty in isolated surroundings and having to handle cases and situations which in other circumstances would be the responsibility of specially trained nursing staff with specialist equipment at hand.

From Ingwenya, I visited the Thembiso Home where I held a service attended by the staff, teachers and children. Afterwards, Mr. Stanford Mpofo showed me round. He and his staff are coping admirably with the duties and difficulties incident to the orderly daily running of such an establishment. At the time of my visit the number of resident children was well in excess of that number for which the Home had been licensed and this was posing difficulties as far as dormitory facilities were concerned. From time to time the police, without prior warning, offload children at Thembiso, there being no other place available, and the fact that our Home is the only one in the area which is willing to take in HIV positive children, very likely encourages them to do so. The impression I got at Thembiso was that it was functioning most efficiently under Mr. Mpofo and his staff and that they performed their duties in a most loving and caring manner.

On Thursday 20th July, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Jake van Praag, I arrived at the Zvishavane Manse and thereafter proceeded to the New Canaan church where the communion services were to begin. These services from Thursday till Monday were well attended and I felt that it was good to be there. Over the days of the communion we were well looked after in the Zvishavane Manse and we are grateful to our hosts.

On Monday we returned to Ingwenya. On Wednesday I attended the Field Committee meeting in Bulawayo. On Thursday, following the prayer meeting at Ingwenya, the communion services at Cameron began and apart from the Sabbath afternoon service, I took all the services. Although he preached only once, it was a real pleasure and privilege to be in the company of Mr. Ndebele.

My final service in Zimbabwe was on Sabbath evening when I took the English evening service in the Ingwenya church. There, I was preaching to around 600 young people. On all occasions I found them to be attentive hearers and in my personal contacts with them I found them to be invariably courteous and friendly. The Headmaster introduced me to them at one morning assembly when I briefly addressed the whole school. One cannot but entertain the hope that the seed sown at Ingwenya will yet bear fruit and that, on the scattering abroad of so many young people throughout Zimbabwe, they will take with them what they have heard and in turn communicate it to others. Mr. Bonikele Ncube seemed to be settling down well as Headmaster while Miss Norma MacLean, with her usual competence, is handling all affairs related to the administration of the school establishment as well as attending to teaching duties as the Deputy Head. This new regime was introduced as a result of Miss

Graham's retiral and is working well. Miss Sheena Ross was then a most valuable member of staff, respected by pupils and staff alike, and her decision not to renew her contract is much regretted and especially in view of the fact that the shortage of teachers competent to teach Bible Knowledge has become even more acute on her departure. This shortage has already meant that on Miss Graham's departure, Miss C. M. MacAulay has had to resume teaching duties. This, in turn, meant that she was not able to devote as much time as before to the revision of the Sindebele Bible.

This work of Bible revision has proceeded well under Miss MacAulay's supervision and her enthusiasm for it, has, I believe, affected others. She seems to have a very competent knowledge of the Ndebele language and the revision once completed will, I fully believe, be regarded as the most thorough to date and one which future generations, in better times, will be thankful to have in their hands. At Ingwenya she is assisted by the two elders, Paul Moyo and Isaiah Manzini, while Teus Benschop's input, working at his computer up at Mbuma, is most valuable. Teus has studied Hebrew and Greek and consequently where there is doubt as to the exact meaning of words, or passages, or the tense to be used, he is able to consult the original languages. Teus is also busy learning and studying Sindebele and before long it would appear that he will be fluent in it. I was very impressed by the amount of work that has been done by Miss MacAulay and Mr. Benschop.

Miss MacLean and Miss Ross accompanied me to the Airport on Tuesday 1st August. There, before us, was the Rev. Z. Mazvabo who had come to see me off. The flight took me back to Harare where I changed planes, joining a Kenya Airways flight to Nairobi and arriving there in the late afternoon.

4. KENYA – SECOND VISIT

The following afternoon I proceeded to Kisumu, where Jeremiah, the mission driver, and Shadrach, the mission mechanic, met me. We arrived in Sengera about 9 p.m. after a hazardous drive uphill from Ogembo. To describe the state of the road after heavy rain as treacherous seems quite inadequate and an understatement of the reality! The skill and iron nerve of the driver were admirable!

On arrival at the compound, I was glad, and, I hope, thankful, to enter the warmth of Hugh and Kathie Mackenzie's home and happy to find Calum and Agnes Gunn there ahead of me. They had safely arrived the previous week and were in the process of adjusting to their new surroundings. The following day it was evident that they were learning fast and by the time I bid farewell to them it was obvious that Mr. Gunn was well able to handle mission affairs. On the following two Sabbaths I took the services as before and I have to acknowledge that I felt helped in doing so. Mr. and Mrs. MacKenzie bade farewell to us on Monday 14th August, a week earlier than expected due to the serious illness of Hugh's mother. It was gratifying for us to hear that they arrived home in time for her to be able to recognise and converse with them before she passed away. As before I visited some homes and I spoke to many

in the market inviting them to attend the services in the church on Sabbath. On Monday 14th I, also, bade farewell to all friends at Sengera – black and white – and eventually arrived in Nairobi having caught the early evening flight from Kisumu. On Thursday 17th August I, in the kindness of the Most High, arrived home in Stornoway. To all in Kenya, Malawi and Zimbabwe who showed no little kindness I have to express my gratitude.

TRAINING OF THE MINISTRY COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. J. MacDonald

THE Committee are glad to announce that at its meeting of 12th September, the Southern Presbytery received Mr. J. Bruce Jardine, a deacon in St. Jude's congregation, as a student studying for the ministry of the Church. Mr. Jardine is already a graduate, and the Committee have arranged for him to study Greek and Hebrew privately in order to sit his Entrance Examination so as to be ready to join the Divinity class in August.

Mr. David Campbell is now in the final year of his Divinity Course and, on successfully passing his Exit Examinations, will be ready to be taken on trial for licence by his Presbytery.

Dr. Douglas Somerset has finished his second year in Divinity and expects to move on in September to the final year of his course with Rev. H. Cartwright, Edinburgh, the Tutor in New Testament Greek and cognate subjects.

We would ask our loyal people to pray that the Lord would keep these young men and to make them faithful ministers of Christ in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. May the Lord in His kindness send forth many more labourers into the harvest.

THEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE

The Theological Conference was held in Glasgow on the 5th and 6th of December under the chairmanship of Rev. Neil M. Ross. The programme was as follows :

1. *Thomas Cranmer and the English Reformation.* Rev. K. D. MacLeod
2. *The Usefulness of the Westminster Confession of Faith* Rev. H. M. Cartwright
3. *Purgatory in the Light of Scripture* Rev. A. Smith
4. *The Establishment Principle* Rev. J. MacLeod
5. *The Priesthood of Christ* Rev. D. MacLean

The attendance was gratifying, the discussion proved interesting, and the fellowship, we trust, edifying.

This year's Conference will be held in Inverness on December 4th and 5th, DV, and it is hoped to have a programme ready in time for the Synod.

THEOLOGICAL TUTOR'S REPORT

Rev. Alfred E. W. MacDonald

THE Synod are only too well aware of the circumstances which led the Training of the Ministry Committee to ask me to resume the role of Tutor in Systematic Theology and Apologetics for the Session 2000/2001.

The class was attended by the two divinity students, Messrs. D. Campbell and D. Somerset. Rev. Allan MacDonald, whose application for reception as a minister of the Church is pending, sat in, in accordance with instructions of Synod of 2000. In the Lord's providence we were able to meet on a regular basis daily, Tuesdays to Fridays, for a period of more than two hours. It did prove unsatisfactory that Mr. Somerset chose to live at Laide. As the Church is providing for the students, the place of residence should be in the vicinity of the tutor.

Although there are many prepared works on Systematic Theology, and among them a recent production of a translation of the Elenctic Theology of F. Turretin, the course pursued was what may be termed a systematising of Owen's Theology. Some reading was done in the work of Turretin referred to, and in the *Outlines of Theology* by A. A. Hodge. Other authors consulted were J. Edwards, T. Goodwin, Calvin, Halyburton, Cunningham and Shedd.

In the study of Apologetics emphasis was on the defence of the sources of the faith. The Classical Apologetic for establishing the Being of God was studied and over against this the Pre-suppositional Apologetic. In this connection the work of Gerstner was looked at but considered rather superficial and although the work of Frame was superior, it was to Van Til's *Defences* of the faith that we attended.

The students were given material on the major religions of the world together with such as what was considered appropriate on the matter of the sects.

It is to be hoped that the course has given a sense of the vastness of the subject of Theology, and stirred them up to realise that it deserves their life-long devotion looking for light from the Lord.

WELFARE OF YOUTH COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. A. Ross

THE Youth Conference of 2000 drew a considerable number of young people from congregations throughout the Church and from as far away as Texas. There were also a few young people from other Churches. They all showed a lively interest, and some, I believe, had a serious concern for spiritual matters. We are deeply indebted to the conference speakers, Rev. A. Smith, Rev. N. M. Ross, Rev. J. R. Tallach and Rev. K. M. Watkins, who all presented excellent

papers, and to Mr. Bruce Jardine for leading the historical tour. It is not always easy to answer all the questions which our young friends ask after each paper, but the speakers readily assist each other in this task.

The conference also provides an opportunity for our young people to renew old friendships and make new friends with those of the same reformed background. In their everyday life most of them are often isolated from company that will speak about scriptural and religious matters. The conference gives an opportunity for this.

There have been requests for some time for a conference to be held in the Island of Skye. Consequently, the 2001 conference was held in Portree High School Hostel, Hedgefield Road, Portree, from Tuesday 10th April to Thursday 12th April. It was chaired by Rev. D. A. Ross and the housemothers were Mrs. C. Ross and Miss R. Mackay. The following lectures were given:

1. *Recovering Mansoul – John Bunyan’s Holy War* Rev. R. MacLeod
2. *“That Meek Man of God” – Thomas Cranmer and the English Reformation* Rev. K. D. Macleod
3. *Living by the Light of God’s Word – Biblical Morality for Today* Rev. N. M. Ross
4. *The Wonderful Works of God – The Skye Revival (1812-1820)* Rev. D. J. MacDonald
5. *The Prophet Samuel – A Messenger Sent by God* Rev. J Goldby

Conference members also attended the weekly prayer meeting in Rev. F. MacDonald’s congregation.

The committee is deeply indebted to the dedicated ladies who continue preparing and correcting the Scripture and Catechism Exercises. At times it may seem to them, as they carry out this task year by year, that they are forgotten. The fact is that we do remember them often, and that their work is much appreciated by both the committee and parents. We are not to forget that the greatest of all rewards in this work is when the Holy Spirit enlightens the minds of those instructed in the Word of God as to their need of the Saviour, and leads them to faith in Him. There is no reward to compare to that. The number of young people doing the Scripture and Catechism Exercises varies slightly from year to year, but on the whole has been pretty consistent during these last few years.

A new law is being formulated by the Scottish Executive under Part V of the Police Act 1997 – Protection of Children. It will require that every organisation which has access to children up to the age of 18 years must register with the Scottish Criminal Records Office in order to obtain the required Police checks for each new person who is selected for working with children.

We as a Church must register in order to obtain the required check before appointing, for example, a Sabbath school teacher or a youth conference

worker. This new legislation is expected to be in place later this year. A fuller report will be presented to the Synod.

The only work going on at present in connection with the publishing of books for young people is the editing, by Rev. Neil Ross, of the late Rev. Alexander McPherson's articles which appeared in *The Young People's Magazine* under the title, "From Shepherd Boy to King of Israel". This work is very time consuming, but it is hoped that the book will be ready for publishing in the not too distant future.

The death of the Rev. Alexander McPherson at the end of last year has brought to mind the incessant and extensive work he did for the young people of the Church, not least in his being editor of *The Young People's Magazine* and convener of the Welfare of Youth Committee for many years. He often chaired, or was a speaker at, youth conferences, and presented very instructive papers. He is greatly missed.

The members of the Welfare of Youth Committee are sincerely thankful to all that in any way contributed to the activities of the committee and our hope and prayer is that the Lord will bless our work for the spiritual well being of our young people. "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15).

BALLIFEARY RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Alistair N. MacRae

WE are thankful that, in the providence of the Most High, the Home has completed another satisfactory year.

This year has seen the retirement of Miss C. Tallach, after thirteen years as Matron, and the appointment of her successor, Mrs. E. MacDonald. We wish Miss Tallach every blessing in her well-earned retirement. Mrs. MacDonald had worked for several years in the Home and we are pleased to report that the change-over caused no problems and the high standard of care by all staff has been maintained.

We record with sorrow that seven residents passed away during the year 2000: Mrs. D. Macaskill on 16th February; Mrs. J. Macintosh on 11th April; Miss J. Nicolson on 20th May; Mrs. A. Macmillan on 15th July; Miss A. Urquhart on 26th July; and Miss M. Nicolson on 1st December. Rev J. Fraser was transferred to R.N.I. on 30th August and passed away there on 17th October. We extend our sympathy to all their relatives.

Mrs. Swan celebrated her 100th birthday on 28th July 2000. She received a telegram from the Queen and was presented with a floral arrangement by the Provost of Inverness.

The occupancy for the year was 98.5% for which we have cause to give thanks, particularly when we consider that most of the Homes in our area are operating on average at 50% and some are on the verge of closure. There are six persons on our waiting list.

All the inspections carried out by the various authorities were satisfactory.

Major improvements carried out during the year are as follows: A large part of the drainage system had to be renewed at a cost of £12,158.90. The basement was refurbished, creating a staff room for the carers. Legislation dictates that care and kitchen staff must have separate amenities. This work cost £12,487.00. We thank Mr. Iain MacRae for his help in arranging and supervising these projects.

Planning permission has been granted for refurbishment and upgrading of the Home to present-day standards and requirements. However, the body responsible for “listed buildings” has called in the application for consideration and we await the outcome. This is to be a medium- to long-term project and is expected to cost somewhere in the region of £300,000.

As the result of an advertisement for staff in the local press an individual took the Home to an Industrial Tribunal in May. We are thankful to the Lord that, after a lengthy and costly process, the case was dismissed by the Tribunal in December.

Worship continues to be conducted in the Home morning and evening and we are indebted to those of our Ministers, Elders, Deacons and others who assist with this all-important aspect of our work. We also extend our thanks to the ladies who regularly visit the residents. Their visits are much appreciated by all.

Miss Jane Logue, who was employed in the Home for many years, latterly as Assistant Matron, resigned in August when she was married to Rev. A. MacDonald. We wish them the Lord’s richest blessing.

The Committee is pleased to report, with prayerful acknowledgement to the Lord, that the Home continues to operate without any financial burden on the Church.

We are grateful to Mr. J. Fraser and Mr. J. G. MacLeod for auditing the accounts.

Finally, our thanks go to the Matron and all her staff for the efficient and compassionate way in which they carry out their duties and we commend them and the residents to the prayers of the Lord’s people.

LEVERBURGH RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. K. D. Macleod

WE have reached the end of an era in the history of the Home. Miss I. S. Campbell, who has been officer in charge since 1987, has now retired. She saw to the organisation required in order to have the Home ready for residents early the following year, and she has run the Home efficiently in providing appropriate care for the residents during the 13 years since then. We are greatly indebted to her for all she has done since she came to Leverburgh from Ballifeary Home, where she had been matron. In her place we have appointed Mrs. Marion MacSween, who has worked in the Home since it was opened and has been Deputy Officer in charge since 1991.

We are thankful that the operating surplus for the year amounted to over £34,000, a significant increase over the previous year. Last year we had a welcome increase in fees and we expect another similar increase in the coming year. We were helped during 2000 by the fact that the Home was almost continuously full. Only one resident passed away since the last report was written: Mrs Margaret MacQueen. We would extend our sympathy to the relatives.

The Committee would again express its sincere thanks to all the staff in the Home for the consistent care they are giving to the residents. We wish them all the Lord's blessing and again commend the work of the Home to the prayers of the Lord's people.

OUTREACH COMMITTEE REPORT

Convener: Rev. G. G. Hutton

THROUGHOUT another year the Outreach Committee has continued its efforts to expand the witness of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Requests for supplies of the Gospel tracts produced by the committee have continued to come from various parts of the world, the most recent from Nepal, where multitudes of souls are without the Word of God and the preaching of the Gospel with which we in this country are so familiar.

The Free Presbyterian website on the Internet, now with an enhanced format, remains a valuable means of contact for many people remote from our places of worship. Numbers visiting our website continue to increase, along with responses to the material included on our site. As well as adverse comments, usually criticising our Church's distinctive Protestant ethos, we receive some very appreciative letters and emails. An example is from a Presbyterian minister in Zelienople, Pennsylvania, who writes: "I greatly

admire the stand you have taken against godless modernism. My denomination is in the throngs of destruction over the very issues you took in the 19th century. One issue that is current is whether our denomination (which held to the Westminster Divines and their Confession) should keep including more and more confessions with each generation. It is driving us insane because we as a Church do not understand what we stand for anymore. I appreciate the clarity with which your Church has taken its stand.”

Mr. James Macleod, Leverburgh, has been appointed by the committee as the new webmaster, taking over his duties from Mr. Kenneth Campbell. As a committee we are very much indebted to Mr. Campbell for all the work he has done on our behalf, setting up the website and giving us all the necessary technical advice we required.

It is the intention of the committee to add the *History of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland*, Volume 1 of *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* and, in future, the annual report of the Religion and Morals Committee report to Synod, to the material presently on our website. We believe that the Internet is one of the most effective means available to us for promulgating our witness and message to society at large. Our prayer is that our website will be used by the Lord to retain a genuine witness to the historic Reformed Faith and the Gospel of redeeming grace.

MAGAZINES REPORT

Rev. K. D. Macleod, Editor

FIRST of all, I would like to express thankfulness to the Most High that it has proved possible for me to produce both magazines over the months since I was appointed by the Synod, on a temporary basis, to edit *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* also. There is, as members of Synod will understand, a great amount of work involved in writing some articles and editing the rest of the contents of the magazines. It may well be necessary to take up the suggestion, made at a previous meeting of Synod, of setting up an editorial board for *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* to lighten the burden on the editor.

Over the year, both magazines have followed more or less the same pattern as in previous years, as has the *Gaelic Supplement*. I would like to thank contributors to the magazines over the past year, including those who have sent in papers presented to our conferences. It is good that these papers should have a wider audience than that which was present to hear them when they were originally given. I would also thank those who directed me to suitable material from other sources, some of which it has not yet been possible to publish. I was particularly grateful to the friends who sent me J. C. Ryle's booklet on the Foot and Mouth outbreak, which arrived on a day when I was keen to find my own copy but did not know where to look for it. I must, in particular, acknowledge

the help of Rev. N. M. Ross, who has made a large contribution to both the “Notes and Comments” and “Protestant View” columns in *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*. Thanks are also due to Dr. J. Mitchell for his continued willing help in checking both magazines at the final stages of editing.

At its October meeting the Committee approved a revised design for the magazines, which was introduced on the January 2001 issue. The circulation of the Magazines remains much the same as the previous year. Again the Magazines Committee found it necessary to increase the price of *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* by 10 pence per issue from the beginning of 2001, but it was decided to leave the price of *The Young People’s Magazine* unchanged. The increases in price over the past few years have brought about a significant improvement in the income for the magazines.

Once more I would conclude by drawing attention to the need for prayer that the magazines would prove spiritually useful to their readership. They reach many parts of the world, among them many places where no Free Presbyterian minister has ever gone. It is one way of bringing something of the Free Presbyterian witness to the attention of people far and near. May the Lord bless the work to many souls!

PUBLICATIONS AND BOOKROOM COMMITTEE’S REPORT

Convener: Rev. K. D. Macleod

PUBLICATIONS

Following on the decision intimated in last year’s Synod report to reprint Volume 2 of *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*, the Committee has also produced Volume 3 and hopes to bring out Volume 4 shortly. In the course of the year it proved necessary to bring out a second reprint of Volume 2 and also of *Memoirs and Remains of Rev Neil Cameron*. We also expect that the three-volume set of the *Works of Ebenezer Erskine* will be available well before the Synod meets, DV. It was of this godly man that a contemporary minister used to say: “He that has not heard Ebenezer Erskine preach the Gospel has not heard it preached in its majesty.” All the above titles are being produced in limited quantities.

Also reprinted during the early part of this year, but using conventional methods of printing, was *The Apostolic Church*, for which there is a market in one of the Presbyterian denominations in the USA – it is used for the training of elders. In addition, stocks of the booklet edition of *The Westminster Confession of Faith* were exhausted last year. It has been reprinted, in Singapore, at significantly lower cost than it would have been here, and we are grateful to Mr. Wing Keong for his help in finding a suitable printer for us. Last year we expected to have to reprint the hardback edition of *The*

Westminster Confession of Faith. In the event, this did not prove necessary, but it is likely that it will become necessary some time later this year. Thomas Watson's *Art of Divine Contentment* is now out of print.

Total sales of books were somewhat less last year, at around £13,000, but again there were none of the very large orders which boosted sales figures in 1999. Sales through Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing in the USA continue to account for a significant proportion of our orders. Through them we have much better access to what is a massive market for Christian literature, but a great part of what is published for that market is, sadly, thoroughly unsatisfactory. We trust that our small effort in publishing sound literature will be in some measure useful in instructing this generation in the truths which have been graciously handed down to us from other times which had more of Gospel light than there is today.

BOOKROOM

We are glad to report that the Bookroom has had a welcome facelift in the early part of this year. The existing shelving has been replaced and it is now possible to give a better display of the books and other products on sale. We hope that the Bookroom will now prove to be a more attractive place to shop. We are grateful to the Finance Committee for making finance available for this project and also for funding the purchase of computer equipment.

Total sales for the year 2000 were up by about £7,000 on the previous year's total, though this represents only a small increase on the figure for 1999. But when the lower sales of books from Free Presbyterian Publications are taken into account, there has been a clear increase in the sales of other books. Improvements have been made to the Bookroom website, and we hope that it will become increasingly useful as a means of contact with both existing and potential customers all over the world.

Three second-hand booklists were issued last year, largely from the collection of a valued customer, the late Mr. J. W. S. Dearness, of Orkney, which was left to the Bookroom. The Committee would like to thank Mr. Alasdair MacLean who has spent many hours pricing these books; his expertise and effort are much appreciated.

Once again the Committee would express their grateful thanks to the manager, Miss Marion Morrison, for her diligent and efficient work in running the Bookroom over the past year. We are also grateful to the men who keep the Bookroom open on a Saturday morning and to others also who have given help in various ways.

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.