

FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

**REPORTS OF
STANDING
COMMITTEES
OF SYNOD**

Submitted to Synod in May 2004

**REPORT OF THE RELIGION AND
MORALS COMMITTEE
Convener: Rev. G. G. Hutton**

RELIGION

IN presenting the Religion and Morals Report to the Synod we do so conscious of the fact that there is little to encourage us in this dark and cloudy day of much false religion and abominations. Upon considering the state of religion at home and abroad, there are signs that the Lord's wrath is against Britain and other nations. His wrath is mainly manifested in the widespread despising of Christ offered in the Gospel, as well as horrible profanity of life, and ignorance of God and His word. Throughout the land the forces of evil abound, and Satan has many instruments striving to advance his wicked designs against Christ's kingdom.

Romanism

Romanism makes the arrogant claim that she is the only true church of God, and that outside of her there is no salvation. She haughtily assumes the authority of Peter's Chair, as well as being the infallible church which cannot err, and is subject to none. She contends that as the only true church she must judge, but cannot herself be judged or found to be wrong. We reject all such claims as false. Romanism is an antichristian abomination, maliciously and unrelentingly set against Jesus Christ, His people and true religion. Popery perverts the Bible, promotes damnable heresies and destroys the soul.

At the Reformation our godly forefathers expelled from the land all that savoured of the Romish heresy, idolatry, blasphemy and superstition. However, over a period of years that satanic institution has noticeably increased its presence and influence throughout Scotland. The *British Church Newspaper* (13th June 2003) makes the following comment regarding the results of the 2002 Scottish Church Census, released on 15th May: "The two largest denominations, the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church, have many more churches and attendees than the smaller denominations, and so their decline offsets the gain by others . . . Roman Catholic attendance decreased by 19% in the same period, to just over 200,000. Between them these denominations account for three-quarters of all Scottish church goers, Church of Scotland 40% and Roman Catholics 35%." History shows that when Rome is in the minority she is like a lamb, when approaching equity as cunning as a fox, and when numerically superior, like a tiger. The devilish Popish mass is celebrated daily in many places in our land. Last October Cardinal O'Brien was foisted upon Scotland by Rome. He is the third such appointment since the Reformation, two having been appointed during the past decade. In taking up his new position he made, ". . . a joint profession of faith and a vow of loyalty to the Pope," and kneeling before him

kissed his ring. The Romish ecclesiastical dignitaries swear that they will persecute to the death all who will not believe the dogma of that institution, and that when it is possible they will perform that oath. There was a time during the Reformation in this land when things were markedly different, and only a few priests practised their religion in secret.

The Pope of Rome marked twenty-five years in that position on 16th October 2003, by appearing before a large gathering in Slovakia. The Pope has been very active during his years of domination over more than a billion followers worldwide. He has beatified 1,319 people, and has also declared 477 others to be saints, both of these numbers exceeding all his predecessors during the past four centuries combined. This is a lucrative way of replenishing Rome's coffers, something which every Popish party are most adept at. Some have linked this with the Vatican's present financial plight, and regard it as the modern equivalent of the sale of indulgences. Rome arrogates to herself the ability to identify and make a saint of her most zealous and useful subjects, who, in their lifetime performed at least two miracles. The Bible declares that any sinner who comes to Christ is a saint (Philippians 4:21). Popery makes saints of those who are no saints, that is, such as are devoid of spiritual life, and bereft of even one good work, and it maliciously slanders the true saints of Christ as wicked heretics, putting them to death when they are in power, and so becoming drunk with the blood of saints.

Popish priests and nuns in Ireland were again the subject of a most damaging report. The *Daily Telegraph* (2nd October 2003) states that: "Many thousands of children suffered at the hands of the religious orders, such as the Christian Brothers and Sisters of Mercy, at industrial schools and orphanages. . . . All forms of abuse – sexual, physical, emotional and neglect were rife, but only became widely acknowledged after civil actions. . . . In some instances it emerged that the Roman Catholic Church have moved abusive priests from parish to parish to avoid scandal." The Roman authorities in Ireland, which ran the institutions where the abuse was prevalent, grudgingly agreed an indemnity deal, capped at about £80,000,000. Romanism has been plagued with many such scandals in recent years, costing millions of pounds worldwide. Its schools and orphanages have often been a cloak for the cruel and perverted abuse of many young people.

We read in the *Daily Mail* (7th March 2003) that, "The Pope believes Scotland is no longer a Christian country". Speaking to Catholic leaders at the Vatican this week, he declared that in Scotland, "There no longer exists the reality of a Christian society". He implored Archbishops O'Brien and Conti to lead a campaign for greater spiritual awareness. The Pope of Rome was right when he so described Scotland as predominantly a heathen land, and in need of Christian missionary endeavour. However, the remedy he commends is a toxic dose of baptised heathenism. The Pope and his two hirelings have merely a feigned care for the people of Scotland. Their aim is to extirpate the remaining pockets of true religion in Scotland, and to substitute their own falsehood. The religion of the Pope is refuted by the Bible. Before

the Reformation, when priestcraft held sway in Scotland, the state of religion was deplorable, and the weapons of persecution and suppression of free inquiry after the truth, were ruthlessly wielded. If the Pope and his satanic emissaries were to have their way, Scotland would, once again, be subject to the same tyranny. There is much need for an aggressive Protestantism in the land of John Knox, to counter the threat of that increasingly influential and dangerous sect.

The Church of Scotland

The Church of Scotland declined further during the past year. Its Moderator, Professor Iain Torrance, was reported by the *Daily Mail* (30th June 2003) to have said that he would be untroubled by the election of homosexual ministers, and that he “cannot understand why there should be any objection to ‘gay’ ministers”. In the same article the Rev. Ian Watson responded by saying, “The defining point is that you accept the Bible as the Word of God, which does not condone homosexuality.” Troublous times have enveloped Scotland when the Moderator can make such public comments. The Bible distinctly condemns sodomy as unclean, body-dishonouring, unnatural, vile and unseemly (Romans 1:24, 26-27). The Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, primarily, because of the sin of sodomy (Genesis 19:24-25). Sodomites are excluded from being ministers of Christ (1 Timothy 3:2,7; Titus 1:5-9). Professor Torrance made other controversial and erroneous comments. The *English Churchman* (30th May-6th June 2003) reported him as saying that the Book of Revelation contains the rantings of a jealous Apostle. Torrance feels that a lot of the fall in church attendance is simply due to people having their own spiritual journey outside the Church. He feels there is a danger that the Church might impose on people’s own individual beliefs with its “crushing rhetoric”. It is clear from above that Professor Torrance is engaged in much mischief.

There was further evidence of downgrade in the Established Church when two women were the only persons nominated to stand for the position of Moderator-Designate for 2004. Dr. Allison Elliott, an elder, and self-confessed progressive and liberal, was later elected to succeed Professor Torrance. She is the only woman to be so chosen in the 443-year history of the Church of Scotland. The *Daily Telegraph* (15th October 2003) reported: “Dr. Elliott said she hoped she was unlike any other previous Moderator, but would not be drawn on her views on controversial issues facing the Kirk, such as homosexuality in the ministry. That was a ‘Churchy Issue’ she said, and she had a lot of reading to do on the subject. Asked what John Knox, who condemned women as a ‘Monstrous Regiment’, would make of her appointment, she said: ‘Knox was a reformer of his time, interested in new ideas. I think it would be an interesting conversation.’” The prospective Moderator hopes to be different from her predecessors, and that she will be because she is a woman. John Knox undoubtedly would have strongly condemned Dr. Elliott’s election as unscriptural, and appealed to the Bible to prove that women are ineligible to hold office in the Church (1 Timothy

2:11-15; 3:1-8, Titus 1:5-8). We are reminded that at the Reformation, Mary argued with Knox about the extent of her lawful authority, and when her arguments were soundly rebutted by him she was left standing for some time as one amazed and shocked by his irresistible wisdom.

The Church of Scotland attendance and income have declined noticeably. The *Daily Mail* (18th April 2003) stated, "Last year the Church's Board of National Mission produced figures showing up to 19,000 people were dropping out each year. Falling attendance has forced the Kirk to consider closing up to 15 churches a year. The Board said the Kirk would effectively cease to exist by 2050 unless action was taken to halt the decline. It also admitted that the principal reason most often recorded in surveys is the lack of relevance of the Church in people's lives. Kirk membership peaked in 1942 at 27% of Scotland's population, but fell to 13% by 1966, and continues to tumble. The Church's capital has dropped from £31.2 million at the end of 1999 to £24.9 million at the end of 2002." These figures reveal a Church which has decayed, and languishes with many problems. To the Kirk's shame, another gospel has supplanted the pure Gospel. The World has crept in, and Christ has left. The decline has not only been numerical and financial, but also, more crucially, spiritual. "*Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed*" (1 Samuel 2:30).

The Church of Scotland has continued its dangerous ecumenical slide. The Kirk organised, and was a leading participant in, the Kirking of the Parliament, which was held in St. Giles's Cathedral, Edinburgh, on 6th May 2003. This event took the form of an ecumenical worship service and involved the following: the Church of Scotland, Islam, the Salvation Army, the Roman Catholic Church, some members of the Scottish Parliament and Prince Charles. The service included the singing of accompanied human compositions, a reading from the Koran, and other items contrary to the Regulative principle. This was but one example of the ecumenical bent of the Church of Scotland, and further evidence that she has swayed closer to Rome.

The Herald (6th January 2004) reported that, "Archbishop Conti's invitation to the Moderator, Professor Iain Torrance, to preach in St. Andrew's Cathedral, was a gracious ecumenical initiative. As the Archbishop said this was the first time a Moderator has been formally welcomed on behalf of the Archdiocese of Glasgow." The article also referred to two previous Moderators preaching in Popish Cathedrals during 1998 and 2000, and that in recent years both Archbishops had addressed the General Assembly. These developments were described by the Principal Clerk of the General Assembly as "gracious ecumenical initiatives, bridge building, the renewing of friendships, and a means for ending every manifestation of sectarianism". We regard them as a serious and dangerous departure from the doctrine, worship and practice of the original Church of Scotland. We are of the view that the Church of Scotland is no longer Reformed and Protestant. The Kirk's ecumenical endeavours show a contempt for the Scottish Reformers, and the ecclesiastical and civil privileges obtained through much tribulation.

The Church of England

The Church of England has continued to decline, and has manifested a growing tension between the Evangelicals (often supported by the anglo-Catholics) and the Liberals. This was most evident in the bitter dispute over the nomination of Dr. Jeffrey John for a bishopric. In July 2003, Jeffrey John, a homosexual rights man who had lived with another man for twenty-seven years, but who claimed to be presently celibate, accepted the nomination as the suffragan Bishop of Reading. However, a short time later, and after considerable pressure had been applied to him by the Archbishop of Canterbury and some evangelical Bishops, he suddenly resigned. The *British Church Newspaper* (1st July 2003) reported that, "The appointment of Jeffrey John was simply to have been a try-on, to see how far Williams and Bishop Harries could push the homosexual agenda". The pro-sodomite liberals in the Church of England are pressing to have sodomites put into the ministry. This is a dark sign; the liberal element have departed from the Bible and are drawing judgements upon themselves and others.

The Church of England, Anglican Communion further schism. The worldwide Anglican Communion, comprising about seventy million people, was ruptured on Sabbath, 2nd November 2003, when Gene Robinson, a sodomite, was consecrated a Bishop of the American Episcopal Church in New Hampshire. Gene Robinson's consecration was opposed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and a majority of other Archbishops, because it was well known that, not only was he a sodomite, but that he also lived with his partner and is a divorced father of two. Despite such formidable opposition, the consecration went ahead. That produced an immediate reaction from the Archbishop of Canterbury, and most of the other primates, which has led to a "realignment" and "impaired communion", which is, in effect, schism. The offending part of the Communion has been largely isolated for the present. The main opposition to the abominable consecration has come from the "Global South", including provinces across Africa, South East Asia, the Middle East, the West Indies and the southern half of Latin America. These regions contain fifty million people, that is, more than 70% of the Anglican Communion. The Archbishop of Nigeria, Peter Akinola, was reported in the *Daily Mail* (4th November 2003) as saying: "We totally reject and denounce this abnoxious behaviour. It is devilish and satanic. It comes directly from the pit of hell. It is an idea sponsored by Satan himself, and being executed by his followers and adherents, who have infiltrated the Church. . . . A clear choice has been made for a church that exists primarily in allegiance to the unbiblical departures of our generation, a church that enthrones the will of man over and above the authority of God and His revealed and written Word. We cannot go on limping between two opinions." His decisive comments regarding the matter of the consecration reflected the views of his fellow evangelical Archbishops. A commission was established in October to undertake an urgent theological review concerning the future of the Anglican community. The commission are understood to be looking at ways of increasing the power of the Primates to

act, when a province or diocese rebels, and even at the possibility of implementing a Papal-style authority in the Church. The endeavours to heal the schism within the Anglican Church are largely centred upon the intellect, knowledge and diplomatic skills of Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, rather than Christ and the power of the Holy Ghost.

The Times (9th January 2004) has a large coloured photograph of Rowan Williams kneeling before an enthroned Pope and kissing his ring. Actions speak louder than words. It is well known that the Archbishop is a liberal who denies the verbal inspiration of Scripture and who has expressed support for sodomites in the ministry. The photograph captures the high esteem, even adoration, he harbours towards the Pope. He clearly has a heart for Rome, and is headed for it. The issues of women priests, sodomites in the ministry and Papal authority are, supposedly, an obstacle to union with Rome. The Church of England has departed from the Thirty Nine Articles, and the reformed doctrines of the Puritans of old, and is ripe for ensnarement by Rome.

The Suffering Church

Death in Mexico – In many parts of the world abroad, men and women professing to be Christians are being persecuted, oppressed and subjected to sharp trials. A report in the *English Churchman* (14th/21st November 2003) gives the following solemn account from Mexico: “As the second pastor in two weeks is murdered, death threats against the evangelical leaders in Chiapas, South East Mexico, are revealed. . . . The latest death is Pastor Mariano Diaz Mendez, 38, who was on his way to a prayer service . . . when heavily armed men stopped his car and shot him to death.”

Imprisonment in China – The *British Church Newspaper* (25th July 2003) gives a report of persecutions in China, which occurred in June, and involved the arrest of fifty-three members of various house churches. The paper comments that among them were “twelve members of a house church movement . . . the movement had applied for government permission to hold their meetings, and was delighted when police promised to grant official status. The twelve agreed to meet with officials on 6th June, to sign the relevant documents. However, on their arrival at the Funing County Public Service Bureau the authorities indicted four leaders, and held them for trial. The remaining eight believers were sentenced to three years of education through labour.

Eritrea, more deaths – The *British Church Newspaper* (27th June 2003) informs us, “that several young Christian soldiers were shot after being discovered reading the Bible. Other reports show Christian soldiers as having been arrested, tortured, assaulted or sexually abused.” These reports do not give details of the teaching and ways of these sufferers. Nevertheless, in these reports, we are told that they professed to be followers of Christ, read their Bible, and were prepared to suffer, even death, in following Him, and “*that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*” (Acts 14:22).

The days are evil. The twin pillars of Satan and Error abound, the love of many waxes cold, the visible Church is depleted and weak, and professing Christians manifesting a heart ablaze towards Christ, and who are effectual, fruitful and vigorous in His service, are a rarity. Yet better days are promised in the Bible, when *“the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it”*. Until then, wherever the Word is proclaimed in power there shall be drawn out of these nations such as should be saved in every generation, and Jesus Christ shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.

MORALS

To do a study of our nation’s morals is a depressing exercise and one that brings to mind the state of the world at the time of the Flood: *“The wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”* (Genesis 6:5). That this wickedness involved both men’s relationship with one another, and with God, is clear also for we are told, *“The earth also was corrupt before God and the earth was filled with violence”* (Genesis 6:11). Significant in this are the words of the Saviour: *“As it was in the days of Noe, so shall be also in the days of the Son of Man. They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.”* As has often been pointed out, there is nothing wrong in any of those things but simply there is no mention in any of this of God. God, clearly, was not in all their thoughts. So it is with the vast majority in our nation today. Truly we are *“an evil and adulterous generation”*.

In attempting to bring out the state of our nation we may focus on five things that especially stand out at this time.

The Rising Crime Rate

One of the best indicators of the crime rate is the prison population and it is a fact that never in the history of our nation has this been so high. In the *May Evangelical Times* it was reported that, “The number of people in prison in England and Wales has reached a new high of 73,091. Home Office officials estimate that the prison population will rise to 91,000 by 2006 but says there is only space for 77,500.” Such statistics – and the trend in Scotland is quite similar, especially in a nation notoriously soft on crime – ought to immediately alert us to the fact that something is far wrong and to what that something is.

When one enquires what type of crime is on the increase, the answer is crime of all sorts: murders, muggings, crimes of a sexual nature, break-ins to property – all are on the increase. What is particularly disturbing in this connection, and what we would like to highlight in this Report, is that the beginnings of criminal behaviour is now very visible in school children. In an article in the *Daily Mail*, on 18th May, Katie Grant writes: “Verbal and physical assaults have reached epidemic proportions in Scotland’s schools.”

“There are,” she continues, “now seven times more attacks on teachers than in 1997. In Scotland, a teacher is assaulted by a parent on average every day and by a pupil every 15 minutes.” Then in an article on 25th March 2003 in the same paper, about behaviour out of the classroom, Scottish Political Editor, Eddie Barnes, informs us that “badly behaved children, as young as eight, could be fitted with electronic tags to prevent them from going out at night”. “Ministers,” he writes, “will unveil plans to crack down on youngsters who have vandalised or disrupted local communities.”

With such behaviour, both in and out of the classrooms, and with such pressure now to introduce an anti-smacking ban, we shudder to think what the future holds for the generation to come. Certainly the crime rate can only continue to rise as we as a nation insist on permitting children to do “*what is right in their own eyes*”. One of the great evils of our day, and surely a big factor in crime, especially of a violent nature, is the television which, it appears, has sunk to new depths with record complaints about violence and swearing. In the “Notes and Comments” of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 108, Number 1, on the subject of the Communications Bill, the director of a notoriously violent film was quoted in a BBC interview as saying: “Film is a very powerful medium, film is a drug, film is a potential hallucinogen . . . it goes into your brain, it stimulates and it’s a very dangerous thing . . . it can be a very subversive thing.”

In light of this, and in light of its connection with trouble on our streets and in our classrooms, surely it is time to curtail drastically what is of the “*prince of the power of the air*” and to enquire once again as a nation, “*What saith the Lord?*”.

Drink and Drugs

Mention has been made of the influence of television, on the young especially, and of how this can lead to crime. Other factors in the rising crime rate are drink and drugs. As these are separate problems and not always related to crime, and as they figured much in the news this year, we now consider them separately, looking first at drink.

In the April *Evangelical Times*, in a quotation from the charity Alcohol Concern, we are informed that, “three million people in Britain cannot get through the day without an alcoholic drink. Researchers said at a recent conference that one in thirteen adults was alcohol dependent – twice the number of people addicted to legal or illegal drugs. They estimate, continued the report, that 65% of suicide attempts were related to alcohol and up to 50% of homeless people were alcoholics.” It is ironic that while the Scottish Executive recognises the problem as well as the health risk of excessive drinking, including binge drinking, and the time lost to employers, they are doing nothing to curb this. Indeed it could be argued that they are encouraging the sale of alcohol by their proposal to liberalise the nation’s licensing laws, which could mean pubs, off-licences and supermarkets selling drink 24 hours a day, seven days a week! In an article in the *Daily Mail*, on 25th August, Kate

Foster, writing of this, tells us that, “The World Health Organisation experts have warned that (those) plans fly in the face of internationally recognised advice and would lead to higher levels of public drunkenness, brawls, accidents and injuries”. This article, entitled “A Licence for Binge Drinkers”, concludes: “The proposals come as a new survey by soft drink manufacturer Lucozade shows that holiday makers who take days off sick to recover from the effects of a week or two spent drinking excessively, cost Scottish businessmen up to £28 million a year!”

Regarding drugs, this evil continues to grow. In the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 108, Number 1, we were reminded that the Scottish Executive has published the “Clubbers Guide” which advises young people on the safest way to take illegal drugs and how to cope with the bad effects of using them. This article rightly points out that the answer to the drug problem is “not to give advice about the safe use of drugs, or decriminalise cannabis, or attempt to cure addiction by administering methadone but to express loudly and clearly the principle of the Apostle’s urgent cry to the Philippian jailor ‘*Do thyself no harm!*’” That there seems to be no sign of this happening is evident from the present demoting of cannabis from a Class A to a Class B drug.

Attacks on the vulnerable (young and old)

In the 2002 Report it was pointed out that about 600 abortions are carried out every working day in the United Kingdom. While there was a very slight decrease during 2002 (0.5% in England and Wales and slightly more in Scotland, according to provisional figures), yet we are still as a nation viewed, according to the *Daily Mail* of 13th March, as “the abortion capital of Europe”. What is particularly sad is that, to further quote the above report, “a thousand abortions were undertaken on girls under 15 in 2001, and 2,777 were done at a gestation period of 20 weeks or over”. The response of the Government to this is to have school children lectured on “safe sex” and to advocate the handing out of free condoms to any pupil over 16 years who asks for them. This proposal, despite First Minister Jack McConnell’s resistance to it, has in effect gone ahead, as pupils are now referred to teenage sex clinics!

On the subject of abortion, the one encouraging development is that in America a powerful anti-abortion lobby is growing and President Bush has promised to approve the banning of “partial birth abortion”, i.e. the aborting of a baby after 24 weeks in the womb, if this be passed by Congress.

For those who survive to birth, the danger is not over. As implied already, peer pressure is extended on children to experiment with sex and drugs. It was reported in the *Daily Mail*, of 28th March, that the charity Marie Stopes International, an organisation which among other things provides NHS abortions under contract, was now offering free condoms to children as young as 11 years! The most recent development in our schools is the proposal of guidelines being given to teachers (as reported by the *Daily Mail* on 31st December) designed to encourage children to “address the issue of homosexuality” by way of drama, video and musical productions. These

guidelines have been penned by a “gay rights group” and we deeply regret that they have the full support of the Scottish Executive.

Mention has already been made of the evils portrayed on television and how Christian parents, if they must have a television, should at the very least ensure that their children do not have unsupervised access to it. Another great problem today is the Internet, and there have been several cases of “grooming” in children’s chat rooms which led to sexual assault. Assaults on young children have, of course, been highlighted recently by the conviction of Ian Huntley for the horrific murders of the two girls, Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman.

At the other end of the scale the vulnerability of the sick and elderly is becoming ever more a reality with increased pressure on the Government to legalise euthanasia. Plans are afoot, as was reported in the September *Evangelical Times*, to legislate for this on the Isle of Man. Two island politicians were given leave to introduce a bill on euthanasia and a select committee of the House of Keys was set up to investigate the issue and take submissions from the public and concerned groups. It is, however, an encouragement, in connection with this subject, that the secular press was disturbed about British citizens committing suicide at a clinic in Switzerland. Also the Head of Science and Ethics at the BMA, Dr. Vivienne Natheson, expressed concern (as was reported in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 108, Number 7), “that a couple could die with such ease while suffering with such illnesses that did not need to make their lives unbearable”. It is also encouraging that a recent survey has revealed that about three-quarters of doctors in our country would refused to perform assisted suicide if it became legal.

In such as day as this, it ought to be our prayer, when so little value is placed on life, that there would be a return to the Bible which makes it very clear how precious life is, and that none but God Himself has the right to take it.

Breakdown of family life

When looking at the subject of family life, we do well to remember that in the vast majority of cases today, families begin outwith wedlock. It is a fact that since 1999 more than 85% of civil marriages have started with co-habitation. Many couples, of course, never marry so we can imagine how few children are brought up today in a normal situation of loving married parents. A report in the *Daily Mail*, of 12th March, informs us that the number of single parent families in Scotland has risen in 10 years from 19,937 in 1991 to 151,484 in 2001, an increase of 66.6% per annum. Such figures give us some idea of the state of things.

What is the cause of this breakdown in moral standards leading to such statistics? Undoubtedly, the main factor is departure from the Word of God. It is no coincidence that as we witness a decline in church attendance and of the whole counsel of God being preached where there is attendance, we witness a breakdown of family life. The old saying, “those who pray together

stay together”, has proved true over and over again, whereas, when family worship in the home and the worship of families in public, is neglected, all kinds of evil follow. Three factors in the breakdown of family life need to be highlighted.

First there is the increasing trend towards covetousness. In an article in the April *Evangelical Times*, reference is made to an interesting report from the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics, which show that people are no happier than 50 years ago, in spite of being much better off in terms of living standards and health. The report states: “Income is a source of happiness because happiness depends on what you have relative to a norm, but the norm is profoundly affected by what others have . . . we should not sacrifice too much in order to increase income, otherwise we risk being less happy than before. Happiness is about feeling good and seeing life as worth living. . . . It is important to have goals but materialist targets become self-defeating if they can be reached only at the expense of family, friends and camaraderie at work.” “14% of people aged 35,” the report continues, “indicate that they have suffered a major depression, yet only 2% of those over 65 recalling having done so at that stage of life.” “Such statistics,” the editorial concludes, “demonstrate that material possessions do not bring either the peace or the satisfaction people say they are searching for.” It is perhaps worth adding, as a footnote to the above, that while in a high percentage of cases today both the husband and wife (or partners) work, yet the Government’s Office for National Statistics reveal that 6 out of 7 women would rather be at home than out working, and that 22% of wives under 40 see their husbands as the bread winner. Surely the conclusion, therefore, must be that many wives work reluctantly in order to maintain a standard.

The second factor in the breakdown of family life is that of the bias of politicians towards unmarried, as against married, couples. Writing in the *Daily Mail*, on 14th May, Katie Grant rightly takes issue with the Scottish Green Party’s proposal to give unmarried couples the same right as married couples in the “Civil Partnership Bill”. The writer correctly points out that “marriage is not a lifestyle option. It is a serious and deep-seated commitment, not just to the marriage partner, but to the wider community. We marry in public, before witnesses, to acknowledge the role that marriage plays in forming those famous ‘building blocks’ of society.” The article goes on to ask the question, Where do children fit into all of this? and to point out that the Scottish courts are crammed with unhappy and disenchanting young people, brought up in “anything goes” households that offer no kind of role model for future relationships of their own. “And now,” she concludes, “politicians wish to undermine marriage even further.” Of course, the Scottish Executive is at present pressing for homosexuals to be given the same rights as married heterosexual couples. There would be joint pension rights, freedom from inheritance tax and a taxpayers’ subsidised “gay divorce system”. We are indebted not only to newspapers but to the Christian Institute for keeping us abreast with all these things. The most recent development, we are told in the

November newsletter, includes the proposal to – (1) Scrap the wording of the marriage ceremony, (2) Phase out marriage certificates (along with birth and death certificates), and (3) Legalise novelty weddings such as skydiving marriage ceremonies, etc. There can be no doubt that behind such schemes are the numerous sodomites in high places, even within the cabinet at Westminster. The Scottish Parliament is fast in pursuit of those proposals also and with such militant members as the lesbian Margaret Smith in the Liberal Democrat Party, and sodomite Patrick Harvey in the Green Party, there is every likelihood that Scotland will continue to go in the same direction as England and Wales. Of this, more is written below, but what is said highlights the determination of many politicians to destroy the God-given institution of marriage. On the contribution of politicians to the breakdown of family life, one could add the pressure to ban the smacking of children which also is a proposal in clear opposition to the teaching of Scripture to chastise – albeit in a loving and restrained manner – disobedient children.

The third factor in the breakdown of family life is the condoning of immorality by the Church. In the May *Evangelical Times* an article entitled “Marriage under Attack”, by Jonathan Skinner, draws attention to a new Church of England report, “Co-habitation: a Christian Reflection”, which questions whether young people should be “burdened with the Church’s traditional teaching on sex before marriage”. The argument put forward in the report is that society has changed and so the Church should consider changing its teaching. It says: “All the media now presents co-habitation uncritically as the practical equivalent of marriage, and in this context it is difficult for the Church, perhaps especially at the local level, to present Christian teaching in a positive and attractive light.” “The report,” the article goes on to inform us, “rejects co-habitation with no intention to marry as unacceptable for believers, yet claims that traditional teaching is creating a sense of guilt in many people. Indeed it notes that some have left the Church over the issue.” The article rightly proceeds to attack the report in the strongest of terms stating that “a Church that conceals a godless ethic with a religious veneer offers nothing and has no reason to exist”. Sadly, while every Church would not go so far as the above, many of today’s Churches are so woolly on the doctrines of truth, such as the holiness of God, sin, judgement and hell, that multitudes see little or nothing wrong with an immoral lifestyle. Since then, of course, things have moved on with the sin of Sodom now being openly condoned in the priesthood of the Church of England.

Sexual Perversion

At the beginning of this report it was observed that as a nation we are guilty both in our relationship with God and with one another, and no doubt there is a connection between the two, for where there is a departure from God, there is inevitably a “giving over” in judgement which in turn leads to a conflict in human relationships. We noticed this already in the breakdown of family life. We see it also in the increase of sexual perversion.

In Romans chapter 1, Paul indeed traces the perversion of that time to departure from God to idols. “*Because they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator who is blessed forever. Amen*” (Romans 1:23-25). All this can be seen most clearly in our day both in the alarming increase of paedophilia and sodomy.

Paedophilia: Reference has already been made to the danger of the Internet and chat rooms. We would just add here that over the past number of months there have been numerous cases of individuals being charged with downloading pornographic material involving children. Much of this was a result of names being discovered on US databases during the worldwide child porn crackdown, “Operation Ore”. One of the alarming features of this exposure was that many of the offenders were professional men who, to all appearances, enjoyed a happy family life. However, some of the biggest offenders have been the monks and priests of the Church of Rome but, as much of this has been brought out in last year’s Religious Report, no more need be said here except that cases still come to light and large sums of compensation continue to be poured out of the coffers of the Vatican.

Sodomy: Things have come to such a sad pass in our land now that many in State, and even Church, are doing their utmost to promote the sin of sodomy. Over the past few months two developments have made the headlines. The first of these has been dealt with already – the promotion of sodomy by the politicians themselves. The second is the condoning of the appointment of sodomite priests by a sizeable section of the Church of England.

For a long time it seems to have been the case that in the Church of England a blind eye was turned to sodomy but over recent months the floodgates have indeed been opened. In the July *Evangelical Times* it was reported that a homosexual couple in New Westminster, Canada, had been blessed by an Anglican Bishop, an action that resulted in the severing of communion with that diocese by Nigerian Anglicans. Even worse was soon to follow. In the USA, Canon Gene Robinson, who lived with a gay partner, was elected Bishop of New Hampshire, while in the UK the homosexual theologian Canon Jeffrey John was chosen as the next Bishop of Reading. As events turned out, Canon John, much to the annoyance of the sodomite lobby, declined the appointment, thus affording a temporary truce, at least, between the two sides.

No more need be said here except to refer to a recent publication by a Dominican Priest, Gareth Moore, entitled *Search for the Truth*. This publication, which perhaps captures the spirit of our day as good as any, was the subject of a review in *The Times* on 17th June. In it Moore rewrites the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in an attempt to prove that homosexuality was not the sin of Sodom but rather the attempted rape of the two men (angels) in Lots’ house. How far fallen man will go in his attempt to justify himself!

The truth of God, however, will stand and every refuge of lies will at length be swept away.

Conclusion

One is very conscious, with regard to the points on which we have focussed, that a great deal more could be said. We have, however, tried to highlight the issues that have been in the forefront of the media during 2003 and we believe that sufficient has been said about these to show the sad state of our land, and the fact that we are a people with whom God has a controversy.

What response is required of us to all this? Surely the same as was required of Judah and Israel in Hosea's day and Isaiah's day – to recognise God's hand upon us and to return in penitence to the One against whom we have sinned so grievously. There is no other hope for us as individuals, as a Church, or as a nation. This is what those prophets called to: *“Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgement, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured by the sword: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it”* (Isaiah 1:16-20).

SABBATH OBSERVANCE COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. J. MacDonald

THIS report will no doubt strike a similar note to the one which has been struck by Sabbath Observance Committee reports over the years. There is little in it to cheer the hearts of the Lord's people, those who love the Sabbath and grieve at the wholesale profanation of the Lord's Day. There is no need to go into unnecessary detail of the widespread breaking of the Sabbath but we could ask, Are we as grieved as we ought to be by this sin in our own communities and our nation? We need the spirit of Nehemiah of old who testified against Sabbath breakers: *“What evil thing is this that ye do and profane the Sabbath?”* We as individuals are in need of being concerned that Sabbath breaking is an evil thing whether it is done in public at big sporting events, in shopping or even in our own personal and private conversation on the Sabbath. As religion becomes more shallow so scriptural Sabbath keeping continues to recede.

The Committee's main method of protesting against Sabbath breaking, planned or actually committed, is by writing to the persons or organisations concerned and this year has again covered almost all areas of the United

Kingdom. The number of letters sent was not as high as last year but this was due to the indisposition for a number of weeks of the Convener. We cannot possibly protest against every profaning of the Sabbath advertised in the Press as that would be a full time job in itself, but we have tried to judge as to where a protest is most necessary or would be most likely to be effective. For example, in the realm of sport we have confined ourselves to one letter to each football club in the Scottish Premier League rather than writing to them on every occasion they play on the Sabbath. Similarly with retail traders who regularly work on the Lord's day. We have confined ourselves to letters when some special event is planned. Our letters have gone far and wide – from the Western Isles Council to the Prime Minister.

The reception to our protests has been mixed. Almost half of our letters receive no acknowledgement and the Prime Minister's office is one of the most culpable in this respect. It is truly a token of the Lord's displeasure when Sabbath breakers are at the head of affairs in our Government. A brief selection of letters and replies will give members of Synod a clearer picture of the work of the Committee:

***Network rail
Glasgow***

I write on behalf of the committee to protest at your plans to carry out improvements on the railway line at Kyle of Lochalsh on the Lord's Day.

While we know this work has to be done we would respectfully remind you that the Lord's Day is the Christian Sabbath and is bound by the moral strictures of the Fourth Commandment, "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy . . ." (Exodus 20:8).

To break the Sabbath is to break God's Law and so to bring guilt on your own souls. You not only propose to break the Sabbath yourselves but are requiring others to do so also, for all who are engaged in this work will be Sabbath breakers.

We urge you to rearrange your programme so as to do this work during quiet times throughout the week and to forbear from trampling God's Law under foot.

The following reply was received: -

Thank you for contacting Network Rail on 24th July 2003 regarding the works at Kyle of Lochalsh.

I appreciate your comments and have passed them on to our project manager. You will be aware that the works have not started and this is because the project, including the methods of work practice, is

being reviewed at present. We will certainly take your concerns into consideration; however, I cannot promise that work will not take place during Sundays.

***Waverly Excursions
Glasgow***

I am writing on behalf of the Committee to protest against sailings of the "Waverley" on the Sabbath throughout the summer and autumn as these are advertised in the public press.

We would respectfully remind you of God's Law which says, "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy". This law still covers the first day of the week, which is the Christian Sabbath.

Though public perceptions have changed, the Law of God is unchangeable and we urge you to consider seriously the fact that you are breaking it. This action, if persisted in, can lead only to God's condemnation at the last.

We would sincerely ask you to consider this protest.

I can confirm that we have noted your protest.

***Scottish Kennel Club
Championship Dog Show***

I write on behalf of the Committee to protest against your holding of this Show on 24th August.

We would respectfully remind you that the first day of the week is the Christian Sabbath. It is the Lord's Day which is governed by the Fourth Commandment which states: "Remember the sabbath day too keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work . . ." (Exodus 20:8). This commandment is as binding on us as all of God's commandments, e.g., "Thou shalt not steal".

We ask you to urgently consider our protest in the light of the fact that we are all responsible to God for our actions and He will judge according to how we live our lives in this world. "For we must all give an account of ourselves unto God" (Romans 14:12).

I am sure that our Executive Committee will respect your views about the Sabbath day. However, you will no doubt appreciate that they will have their own views on this matter and currently they see no reason why our dog shows should not be held on a Sunday.

Our shows have been held at the weekend for many many years and I am curious as to why this matter should have arisen at this time.

As an elder of the Church of Scotland it would be my own personal view that every day of the week is the Lord's day not just Sunday and it is a matter of personal judgement as to how we spend each of these days.

***Wilkies Music Hall
Perth***

I am writing on behalf of the committee to protest about the events you are planning in the City Hall, Perth, on 26th October. We would respectfully remind you that the first day of the week is the Lord's Day – the Christian Sabbath, and is bound by all the strictures of the Fourth Commandment: "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work. . . ." God gives the Sabbath to us for public and private worship and for setting our minds on spiritual and eternal realities. Your present planned entertainments are far removed from this. We earnestly ask you to consider that you are breaking God's Law and so leaving yourselves open to God's righteous anger.

We plead with you in God's name that you heed this protest for it is God's glory and your spiritual good we have in view in writing to you.

Thank you for your interesting letter.

My wife died in February this year, after five years of dreadful suffering and heartbreak. Her illness was Alzheimer's disease. It was brought home to me that few people realise how devastating this illness really is, and therefore there is not much help readily available for those who suffer from it. I am trying as far as I can to remedy this. However, if you care to forward the £2,000 or so that I hope to donate to Alzheimer's Scotland, I will forgo the fund raising show.

Perhaps you would include us in your prayers. Pray that we get a full house so that we can give some real practical help to those suffering Alzheimer's, and pray that the good Lord will understand our reasons for working on Sunday.

***The Right Honourable David Blunkett
London***

I write on behalf of the Committee to protest against the terrorist emergency exercise carried out in London on 7th September 2003.

We are conscious of your weighty responsibilities in countering terrorism and crime and the maintaining of law and order in the nation, and we seek to give you all practical and prayerful support in these tasks.

However, we must protest against your using the Lord's Day for such an exercise. While it may have been the most convenient day in general terms, to hold this exercise on the Lord's Day was a blatant breach of God's Commandment which says: "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work . . ." (Exodus 20:8). There is a moral obligation placed on us by God Himself to give one day in seven to His worship and our own spiritual good. You have not only offended many loyal citizens you have offended the One who says of Himself, "By me kings rule and princes decree justice".

We would respectfully remind you of your accountability not only to Parliament and voters but also to God Himself for, "Everyone of us must give account of himself to God".

We urge you to heed our protest and resolve not to abuse the Lord's Day again in this way.

We regret any offence that was caused by holding this exercise on a Sunday. I would mention though, that for sheer logistical reasons it would have been extremely difficult – and possibly quite risky – to hold such an exercise on any other day of the week. As you may be aware, this was a major event, involving large numbers of personnel and heavy equipment that requires the closing of a key London Underground interchange (Bank Tube station) and a large part of the City of London. Holding the exercise on any other day of the week would have severely disrupted thousands of people's lives and could also have significantly increased the risk of unauthorised personnel entering the exercise Zone at risk to their own safety.

Bear (Scotland)

I am writing on behalf of the Committee to protest about your vehicles "white lining" the A9 in the Dornoch/Golspie area on Sabbath 15th February.

We would respectfully point out to you that the first day of the week is the Lord's Day, the Christian Sabbath. As such it is bound by God's Law which states, "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy . . ." (Exodus 20:8).

God has given us six days of the week for our own work and leisure and He claims the first day of the week as His. To do our own work on the Sabbath regardless of God's Commandment is to "rob God" and He states so in His Word.

We would ask you that you see to it that no such work is done by you in the future.

It is not normally our policy to carry out works on a Sunday, but in this instance we feel we have good reason to do so. As you will be aware, these areas of new surfacing have been lying without white lines for some weeks. This was principally due to the prevailing weather conditions being unsuitable to the type of work involved. . . .

I trust that you will accept this was a one off situation and whilst it is not our intention to intrude into the beliefs of your congregation, sometimes the need arises to do so, for the sake of the common good.

Rt Hon Michael Howard M.P.

I am writing to you on behalf of the Committee, which has a nationwide responsibility.

We are very disappointed to know that you gave your address to the Conservative party meeting on 7th March and vigorously protest against your doing so.

We would respectfully remind you that the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, is the Christian Sabbath and is bound by all the strictures of the Fourth Commandment: "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy . . ." (Exodus 20:8). God has given us six days of the week for our own business and pleasure and has commanded us to give the seventh day to Him for his public and private worship. To use the Lord's Day for political or other worldly affairs is to rob God. We fear that you have not attained to the scriptural requirement, "Them that honour me I will honour" (1 Samuel 2:30).

We would convey to you our prayerful good wishes in your new responsibilities but we cannot but speak frankly against your profaning of the Sabbath.

Jonathan Hellewell, Private Secretary, acknowledged this letter.

A protest was sent to a businessman in the Western Isles regarding the opening of his shop on the Sabbath. He replied courteously that he would wish

to discuss the matter with a member of the Committee. This task was undertaken by Rev. A. Smith as the Committee member in Lewis. In the end there was no meeting of minds on the matter and we understand the shop continues to open on the Sabbath.

Letters to the Western Isles Licensing Board re the selling of alcohol on the Sabbath were not acknowledged.

At its meeting in October, the Committee appointed its Clerk to approach Members of the Scottish Parliament to ascertain the correct procedure for bringing before the Scottish Parliament the concerns of the Committee that the Fourth Commandment was largely being ignored in the land, and to point out that legislation was required to protect the Sabbath Day. The Clerk was advised that the best way forward was to approach the Scottish Parliament Petitions Committee. The Committee agreed to draw up a Petition for the approval of next year's Synod, DV. It is hoped that then speakers will be appointed to represent the Church in petitioning the Scottish Parliament regarding the need for legislation to protect the Sabbath from the increasing inroads being made on it.

Our report is, we trust, a fair reflection of our efforts to testify on behalf of the Lord's Day. This has been an integral part of our Church's distinctive testimony from its beginning and we would desire that it should be so. We would ask that every praying person who reads this report would pray that our efforts would be blessed by the Lord Himself, whose day we are seeking to defend.

JEWISH AND FOREIGN MISSIONS COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. John MacLeod

General

Once again the Committee has to report that over another year and in the Lord's kind providence, the Church has continued to maintain its work and witness in the African Mission field and has also persevered in its endeavours to begin Mission work again among the Jews. We, alas, do not see the fruit that we so much desire to see, but we still seek to encourage ourselves by bringing into view the promise that "*Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth her hands unto God*", and, in regard to the Jews, the assurance that "*if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?*". Our aim has been to do what we can towards the fulfilment of these promises.

Zimbabwe

The centenary of the arrival of the Rev. J. B. Radasi in Bulawayo to begin the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland's Mission work in Africa occurs at the

end of this year. The Gospel which he brought with him continues to be preached unimpaired and we have reason to be thankful that the Lord has continued to raise others in the place of those whom He has removed. The Rev. P. Mzamo continues to labour at Mbuma, the Rev. Z. Mazwabo at New Canaan, and the younger ministers, Rev. M. Mloyi and Rev. S. Khumalo, at Zenka and Bulawayo, respectively. Ingwenya remains a vacant charge but Mr. Khumalo takes services as circumstances allow. We are sorry that the state of the Rev. A. Ndebele's health is such that he is not now able to take services but we are sure that he continues to pray for the prosperity of the Cause of Christ in Zimbabwe and elsewhere, and long may he be spared to do so, since "*the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*". Mr. Nedson Banda, Student, has not yet been licensed to preach the Gospel.

The same high standard of education continues to be maintained at the John Tallach School. Mr. Ncube, who is proving to be a most efficient and authoritative Headmaster, was on leave for six weeks and Miss N. B. MacLean (who re-assumed her duties in January 2004 after four months' furlough) had to shoulder additional burdens over that period. Needless to say, she carried them uncomplainingly while continuing to perform all her other duties, attending to all with the devotion and efficiency which we now take for granted. Miss R. MacKay continues to labour in her own sphere and beyond it, wherever duty has called. She has been a source of support and strength to others who have stood in need of help in other departments. We are grateful to Miss Marion Tallach for answering the call for help at a time when there was a dearth of Bible Knowledge teachers. She has proved to be very competent as a teacher and her presence at Ingwenya has been helpful in many other ways. One of the late Rev. B. B. Dube's sons, who had been teaching at Ingwenya for a number of years, recently became a member in full communion and is now with great acceptance sharing the burden of Bible Knowledge teaching. In September, Mr. James Macleod spent four weeks at Ingwenya attending to the computers and setting a network in place. It is hoped that he will shortly go out for a year to help with the teaching of computer science and skills. We are grateful to him for that.

Miss K. M. MacAulay, indefatigable as ever, helps with teaching as she is able, but most of her time at present is taken up with the revision of the Ndebele Bible. Mr. Teus Benschop, accompanied by his wife and child, returned to Bulawayo and began to work again on this project. As a result of the labours, principally of Miss Macaulay and Mr. Benschop, the revision of the New Testament is now more or less complete. The Trinitarian Bible Society has indicated that it highly rates this revision that it merits its approval. This has been a notable achievement on the part of those immediately involved and we believe that posterity will yet give due recognition to their work.

Our last Synod report mentioned Miss Jessie Coote as "holding the fort" alone at Mbuma Hospital. She continued to do so until Miss Truus Ringelberg came from Kenya to help from February to May. Then Mrs. C. A. Murray, Edinburgh, spent May and June helping out at the Hospital. Miss Peta van de

Ridder moved there from Sengera in July and has remained there ever since. Miss W. Geurtsen arrived from Holland in August. Miss Coote finally left for home in October 2003 and the Committee would like to express its appreciation of the years of faithful service she has given to the Mission in Zimbabwe and Kenya. Miss P. Beukers arrived at Mbuma in February 2004. We are grateful to all these ladies for their self-denying work and what we regard as a "labour of love". Their Master is not forgetful. The Mbuma Hospital, of course, stands in need of a resident doctor, the post having become vacant when Dr. Janette Benschop resigned from it at the beginning of 2003.

Having kept the Mbuma Zending fully informed, it was agreed that the Oikonomos Foundation would continue to help in improving accommodation at school locations and a School Improvement Committee is now being set up with a view to improving the quality of the education provided.

Kenya

Mr. and Mrs. Hugh MacKenzie returned to Sengera in October 2003 and this enabled the Rev. K. M. and Mrs. Watkins to come home to this country on furlough from 8th October until 8th December. After serving the Church and Mission well, Mr. MacKenzie is due to return home in June 2004. It was on short notice that Mr. MacKenzie agreed to go to Sengera at the outset and it is with some sadness that we learn that he now desires his employment to come to an end. His organisational skills and ability to handle men were utilised to the full over the years and the fact that the Sengera Mission is a model of efficiency is largely to be attributed to him. Mr. Watkins' health is improving but continues to cause concern. It is hoped that a change of treatment in regard to malaria which has been recommended by a specialist in Nairobi will be helpful. The general work of the Mission continues as will be noted in reading Mr. Watkins' own report. Opposition from the kingdom of darkness is only to be expected and in Sengera, as is generally the case, it is such as have been weighed in the Church's balances and found wanting that are foremost in this work. Translation work proceeds and both Mr. Watkins and his wife have made significant progress in learning Ekugusii. Thirty-three of the Psalms have now been translated and, printed in a very attractive booklet, are regularly used in the public worship of God. Mr. Nedson Banda, Student, was directed by the Zimbabwe Presbytery to go to Sengera for some time and duly arrived on 17th April 2003. He was to remain there, apart from two short breaks, until 3rd March when he departed for Zimbabwe to meet with the Presbytery.

The Omorembe Clinic, located within the Mission compound, continues to provide much-needed medical facilities, but, in the absence of a resident doctor, there are limits to that provision. Miss Truus Ringelberg is now, in the absence of Miss Peta van de Ridder, in charge of the Clinic. She is assisted by long-serving Miss Celia Renes and by Miss Gelia Wijngaarden who, arriving in Kenya last year, proved, like the others, to be a very capable and hard-working member of staff.

Jewish Mission work

The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland has always had an interest in God's ancient people and has endeavoured within the limits of its ability to reach them with the Gospel. It is now almost certain that the Israeli Government will grant the necessary visa to enable us to establish a presence in Israel, if that is the mind of the Synod. The Committee would urge Synod members to give consideration to this matter from all aspects. The Rev. John Goldby is to be commended for his diligence in exploring ways of reaching the Jews with the Gospel. His own report on the situation will reveal this to be the case and the matter is one which merits, in our view, careful and prayerful consideration. A donation of £500 was sent to the Society for the Distribution of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Mbuma Zending

As in previous years, we have to acknowledge the financial help given by our Dutch friends. Without their help, as has been pointed out time and again, our Mission work in Africa, humanly speaking, would have to be severely curtailed, if not brought to an end in some areas. In writing this, we are not to be thought of as failing to appreciate the generous response of our own people, at home and abroad, when they are asked to contribute to the Jewish and Foreign Mission Fund. It is very much appreciated, yet it must be said that it is the interest and support of Mbuma Zending that is our mainstay. Our relationship with them remains cordial – our common aim being the advancement of Christ's cause and kingdom in the world.

Conclusion

The Committee would commend our missionary activities in Africa and our endeavours to reach a helping hand to Jews to the praying people of God among us. We ask them to pray that those who labour, whatever station they occupy, may be sustained by the Most High and that, by His grace, they would be enabled to let their light so shine before men that He may be glorified. *“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”*

JEWISH REPORT

Rev. J. Goldby

WHEN preaching before the House of Commons in 1649, John Owen spoke of the “bringing home of His (God’s) ancient people to be one fold with the fullness of the Gentiles, raising up the tabernacle of David, and building it as in the days of old, in accomplishment of innumerable promises, (John 10:16; Isaiah 37:31; Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 34:23; 37:24-25; Hosea 3:5; Amos 9:11) and in answer to millions of prayers put up at the throne of grace for this very glory, in all generations” (*Works*, Vol. 8, p. 266, BOT ed.).

Days of prayer and humiliation were kept in Scotland, one particular object being that the promised restoration of God’s ancient people, the Jews, may be hastened. Rev. Robert Smith and his colleagues experienced a remarkable foretaste of what is yet to come. Speaking of January 1843 and the Church of Scotland’s Mission in Budapest he said: “Our hands now became so full of work that frequently we had not time so much as to eat bread; from early morning until late at night we were occupied guiding, counselling and instructing those who were inquiring earnestly what they must do to be saved . . . for a time the whole Jewish community was deeply moved wondering whereunto these things would grow” (*Life of John Duncan*, D. Brown, FPP, pp. 334-335).

Early in 2002 the Jewish and Foreign Mission Committee began to examine ways of resuming work on the Jewish aspect of their remit. The Committee first began to investigate various organisations working for the Jews. Among these were, The Trinitarian Bible Society, the Society for Distributing Hebrew Scriptures, the Netherlands Reformed Congregations, Board for Israel, and Christian Witness to Israel. In June, Rev. J. Goldby visited the headquarters of the Board for Israel in Holland where he was kindly entertained by the Board’s Convener, Ds. Meeuse, members of staff and other ministers. A brief visit was also made to the HQ of the Society for Distributing Hebrew Scriptures in Hitchin, Hertfordshire. Reports on the work of these organisations were submitted to the Committee. The interesting labours of Rev. D. Urquhart in Palestine, recorded in the Synod Reports from 1928 to the war years, were noted. Helpful information was also received from various individuals who had heard of our interest and contact was made with a Christian Jewish printer in Jerusalem called Victor Smadja. The possibility of a website was considered, although this option has not been pursued meantime for various reasons.

The Ukraine is home to some 500,000 Jews, more than twice the Jewish population of Britain. Now that we have a small congregation in Odessa, a city that has a Jewish population of around 45,000, the Committee naturally gave consideration to the possibility of making endeavours in that direction. Members of the Netherlands Reformed Church visiting Odessa gave a positive response to a local suggestion of reprinting the *Articles of the Synod of Dort* in

Russian. Although this suggestion was attractive, the JFMC decided against proceeding with the project at this time.

It was agreed that Rev. J. Goldby should visit Israel in the autumn of 2002 (DV) together with Mr. D. P. Rowland, General Secretary of the TBS, who was himself planning a visit on behalf of the Society. Owing to Mr. Rowland's busy timetable, this visit to Israel had to be postponed. In providence this turned out to be beneficial for us, because in the interval we received from members in the Shildaig Congregation the addresses of two Jewish families who had visited the Applecross Coast and Diabaig. Neither of these families had any connection with the other yet both had come into contact with members of our Church.

We wrote to these Jewish people individually and arranged to meet with them separately in Jerusalem in January 2003. One of the men, Giora Kulka, is a secular Jew and an historian working for the Open University of Israel. The other gentleman, Shlomo Naeh, is a Professor in the Department of Talmud in the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The latter invited Mr. Goldby to stay overnight with them and keep a Jewish Sabbath. He attended their Synagogue and observed the manner in which Orthodox Jews keep the Sabbath. Interesting discussions followed. He asked of the Jewish view of the person of the Messiah and spoke about the question that Jesus put to the Jews, "What think ye of Christ? whose Son is He?" (Matthew 22:42). Professor Naeh was particularly interested in the TBS's list of omissions and changes to the NT text. This is a "Textual Key" which reveals the corruption of modern versions of the New Testament. He was given a copy of *Man's Fourfold State*, by Thomas Boston, and a CD of Scottish Metrical Psalms. "*The Life of Rabbi Duncan*" was sent to Dr. Kulka.

Shortly before leaving for Israel, one of our Church members in Lewis kindly put us in touch with Malcolmina Graham from Ness. Miss Graham has lived and worked among the Jews and in Israel for many years. She in turn introduced us to Miss Mary Kilbride, a Brethren lady who has lived and worked in Israel for more than forty years. The help and advice given by these two ladies with their extensive knowledge of the land has been invaluable.

Victor Smadja, the Jewish printer, was also visited in January 2003. He was sent a two volume set of Adolph Saphir's *Expository Lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, from which he has since reprinted 1,000 sets of the same, to be sold mainly among Jewish people in Israel. Our Church Librarian, Dr. D. R. MacSween, has sent out a number of library books written by Jewish Christians. *Israel in Canaan*, by Alfred Edersheim, was loaned to Mr. Smadja from the library of Rev. J. Macleod, Stornoway. All these books have been copied with a view to reprinting. Since 1992, Mr. Smadja has re-printed more than 2,000,000 Christian books and Bibles, mostly in Hebrew but also in Russian and English. Many of these books have been given free on request to Jewish people. One of Mr. Smadja's Hebrew Bibles has been passed to Dr. D. Anderson, of the TBS, for examination and comment. Mr. Smadja has been given the *Life of Rabbi Duncan*, which he has read with great interest whilst he has given us some samples of the books and Bibles that he has printed.

Following the visit to Israel in January 2003, the Committee arranged a meeting with the Ministry of Religious Affairs with a view to the Free Presbyterian Church being permitted to establish an official presence in the State of Israel. A second trip to Israel took place on 27th March to 3rd April 2003, when a meeting was held in the Ministry of Religious Affairs. For the information of the Israeli legal advisor we provided a Ministry official with copies of *The History of the Free Presbyterian Church*, *The Westminster Confession of Faith* and a *Free Presbyterian Magazine*. Subsequently a letter was sent by the JFMC, on behalf of the Church, requesting permission for a representative of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland to be stationed in Israel. New churches are not allowed to come into Israel by law but the law of Israel does allow churches that were in Palestine before 1948 to maintain a presence. Because of this there seemed to be at least a possibility of our gaining a foothold in the land. Our claim was based firstly, on the link between the FPCS and the Church of Scotland whose first Missionaries arrived in 1840 and secondly, upon the presence of a resident Free Presbyterian Minister in Palestine from 1928, Rev. Donald Urquhart. Mr. Smadja was consulted as to whether he thought we had any hope of being allowed to work in Israel. His reply was: "They will never allow it."

A third visit to Israel took place in July 2003 when the Convener, Rev. J. Macleod, accompanied Rev. J. Goldby. A lengthy meeting with the Israeli Ministry's legal advisor, Mr. Hershler, resulted in our being asked to provide a document setting out our application and views more fully. During this visit we met the C of S minister in Jerusalem, Rev. Clarence Musgrave, and his wife Joan. Mr. Musgrave kindly gave us the use of the St. Andrew's Church of Scotland building for a service on Sabbath night. As on former occasions, we met with a variety of people. Some literature was distributed and a Psalm CD was given to a Jewish man who had attended our service. A few Russian Catechisms and Confessions were also passed on to Jewish people from Eastern Europe. Each visit increases the number and range of contacts and extends our knowledge of the field.

At the July 2003 meeting, the JFMC received a report from the TBS following a visit to Israel in February by the General Secretary, Mr. D. P. Rowland. Among other things the report stated that –

(1) The Society would like to print the Hebrew Bible in Israel and have a distribution agency of some form in that country.

(2) There would not appear to be any Churches in Israel at present that uphold Reformed principles, as we understand them.

(3) Whilst there are no doubt many good people in the Churches of Israel, all the Hebrew speaking congregations have adopted the seventh day as the day of Christian worship. (The Lord's Day is a working day in Israel.)

(4) The Society visited Jewish Evangelical Baptist congregations composed mainly of Russian speaking immigrants whose knowledge of Hebrew is limited.

(5) The Russian people, although poor, extended a warm welcome to the representatives of the Society.

(6) The doctrinal knowledge of these congregations is very limited.

(7) Although the Society would like to assist these congregations by providing copies of the scriptures in Russian and Ukranian, the deputies could not recommend them to act as the Society's agents in Israel.

(8) The Society met with personnel of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations who are to send a literature distribution worker to Israel in the near future.

(9) The TBS would like to work with the FPCS in Israel should a presence be established in the land.

At the same meeting the committee considered the report of the last visit to Israel and it was also agreed to draw up the document required by the Israeli Government.

When the JFMC met in September 2003, the draft document to the Israeli Government was considered. A Jewish Christian translator, recommended by Malcolmina Graham, translated the main sections of the document into Hebrew. The document was entitled, *Comments on Our Application for Recognition by the State of Israel*. The paper explains our Church history, sets out our views of relevant topics, and requests permission to carry out the same Church functions in Israel as in Scotland. The following six appendices were attached and the document was then sent to Mr. Hershler:

1. *Israel and the Roman Catholic Church.*
2. *Our attitude towards Palestinian terrorism.*
3. *Relations between the Jews and the Puritans.*
4. *Restoration of the Jewish people to the land of Israel.*
5. *Summary of the formation of the State of Israel (from our perspective).*
6. *A copy of our original letter to the Ministry of Religious Affairs (for reference).*

The evening prior to a fourth visit to Israel, from 12th to 25th November, some encouragement was taken from Metrical Psalm 60: 8:

*“Moab's my washing pot; my shoe
I'll over Edom throw;
And over Palestina's land
I will in triumph go.”*

During this visit Mr. Goldby met again with Mr. Hershler, who, having read the Hebrew version of our document, invited us to write applying for one visa for a minister and his family. We were required to agree that there would be no future additional applications for ancillary workers. The Israeli Government

has been reducing the number of Foreign Church visas in recent times and several persons in Israel expressed surprise that we were being invited to apply.

Once again during the visit there were opportunities to speak with new Jewish people, some secular, some Orthodox, and a Rabbi. More literature was distributed.

At the 1st December meeting of the JFMC it was agreed to apply for the Temporary Resident's Visa in accordance with the terms stipulated by Mr. Hershler. It was agreed that 150 TBS Hebrew and Arabic calendars be sent to various persons in Israel for distribution.

At the 15th December JFMC meeting it was decided that Miss M. Rechnitzer be engaged to translate the *Westminster Confession of Faith* into Modern Hebrew. A few years ago this lady translated the *Pilgrim's Progress* into Modern Hebrew. It was also suggested that investigations be made re the singing of Psalms in Hebrew.

At Mr. Hershler's request, a further meeting was arranged with him for the end of January 2004. For legal purposes, Mr. Hershler required a letter from Rev. C. Musgrave, in his capacity as the "Scottish Ecclesiastical Ambassador to Israel" confirming our status as a bona fide Presbyterian Church in Scotland, etc. He also required that an application form be submitted for a visa. The form was submitted (meantime) in the name of Rev. J. Goldby and a letter from Mr. Musgrave was faxed to Mr. Hershler. On Friday, 5th March 2004, Mr. Hershler said that when Mr. Musgrave next comes into his office he would put our visa into his hand. We presume that this means a form that must then be taken to the Ministry of the Interior and the Class A3 Temporary Resident's Visa stamped in the passport. This is the visa under which all foreign clergy from churches recognized by the State of Israel operate. Once this takes place we will then have an opportunity to carry out all the functions of the Free Presbyterian Church in the land of Israel.

INGWENYA MISSION REPORT

Rev. S. Khumalo

SOON after my ordination and induction to the Bulawayo congregation, I was appointed by the Presbytery to be the interim Moderator of Ingwenya congregation. Ingwenya was left vacant due to the resignation of Rev. Ndebele because of ill health.

Ingwenya is composed of the following preaching stations: Cameron, Gadadi, Insiza and Inyathi.

At Ingwenya I am thankful to the elders, Mr. P. Moyo and Mr. I. Manzini, for keeping the congregation supplied at all times on Sabbath and at weekday prayer meetings. Though travelling has not been easy, due to the shortage of

fuel, I am thankful to the Lord that I am enabled to frequently supply there and at other stations.

At Ingwenya there is also an evening service for the students and all within the Mission. I am pleased to say the supply for it continues smoothly, for almost every Sabbath, after the services in Bulawayo, I proceed to Ingwenya for the evening service. On occasions they are supplied by an elder from Bulawayo. When I visit Inyathi or Insiza and Gadadi on a Sabbath I end my day at Ingwenya for the evening service.

Cameron and Gadadi were supplied by the two elders who resided in Mbembesi, Mr. Nxusani and Mr. P. Mzamo, for almost the whole of last year, until the sudden death of our faithful and long-serving elder, Mr. S. Nxusani. It was a big loss to the Ingwenya congregation itself as well as to the Church in Zimbabwe and abroad. More to the small congregation at Cameron, where he was a preacher and the community of Mbembesi where he was the light shining in darkness put on a hill. We mourn his passing away in this life, submitting ourselves to the will of God by saying, *“Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven”*.

We pray that the God of all grace will preserve this little flock until that time, according to His own will, when He will provide another of his faithful servants. At present, Mr. P. Mzamo, who was supplying Gadadi, is supplying Cameron, while Gadadi is supplied from Ingwenya.

It was very encouraging recently when I visited Cameron that quite a number of young people and children were at the means of grace. Who can understand the ways of the Lord?

Two communion seasons are held at Ingwenya, in March and September, one in Cameron in July, and one at Inyathi in November. At Ingwenya three female members were received and added to the communion roll, and one received the sacrament of baptism. Also at Inyathi, one female member was received and added to the communion roll and a number of children received baptism.

Ingwenya has been made poorer by the removal from amongst the office bearers through death of Mr. S. Nxusani. But the Lord has not left us in the dark as to what we should do, when He said that the harvest is truly plenteous but the labourers are few. *“Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.”* What a great encouragement to the people of God from the Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I would like to conclude with my sincere thanks and appreciation, on behalf of Ingwenya congregation, for the assistance rendered to them in these difficult and trying times of drought, by the Church abroad, giving drought relief and by the friends in Holland giving clothing. We are experiencing an increased number of orphans due to the AIDS pandemic. This makes us more thankful for all these material things, for the need of such orphans is ever escalating.

“Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; how that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality” (2 Corinthians 8:1-2).

JOHN TALLACH SECONDARY SCHOOL REPORT

Miss Norma B. MacLean

THE work at John Tallach School here at Ingwenya has continued as in previous years. The faces around us change each year as the Form 4s leave to continue studies elsewhere and are replaced with a fresh batch of Form 1s, all eager to enjoy the variety of experiences which secondary school promises them. New faces also appear among the teachers and ancillary workers as some move elsewhere or retire and others take their places. The same is true of the congregation which we join for public worship on Sabbaths and weekdays; we were saddened when Mr. S. Nxusani, whose supply we appreciated so much on Sabbath evenings, died suddenly towards the end of the year. Rev. S. Khumalo's ministry among us began in April when he was appointed interim Moderator of Ingwenya. These changes ought to impress on us all that the passage of time continues unabated, yet the Gospel remains with us as does the Biblical teaching in the school from day to day, year by year reminding us that it is "*the Word of the Lord which endureth for ever*". The continuing aim of the work, amongst all the distractions of a busy school routine, is that this truth would be indelibly impressed on the minds and hearts of the children, teachers and workers here with us.

As was the case in 2002, this was another difficult year economically – there were many financial constraints and many shortages of foodstuffs and imported goods. We reached a crisis in our Fashion and Fabrics department when the sewing machines could no longer be repaired because of lack of availability of spare parts. We were deeply grateful to the St. Jude's Deacons' Court for stepping in to assist with the finance to purchase 30 new sewing machines from South Africa so that the O level practical examination could proceed in October. We benefited also from the continued interest of Miss Eleanor Wylie and Mr. James MacLeod – Miss Wylie was the means of sourcing a large number of microscopes for us and Mr. MacLeod sourced a large number of computers which he came out in September to set up. During his visit he also managed to install a network in the administration offices enabling the three main users there to share files and one printer – this network has significantly improved the efficiency of the office. The Oikonomos Foundation, through Mr. Wilfred van der Kooij, continued to provide much appreciated support for the computer laboratory which they had donated to the school. When it became clear that the people employed locally to give technical support were unable to do so, a volunteer from Holland, Mr. Herbert Bakker, was sent out. Mr. Bakker not only did a lot of work on the system and spent some time giving basic computer training to the teachers but he also trained Mr. T. Bope, one of our teachers, to carry out some maintenance on the networks. We wish to record our thanks for all this assistance and also to the many people who sent donations and sponsored children at the school – we have so much to be thankful for when we see the Lord opening the hearts of people to contribute to the work.

The economic and financial difficulties were compounded by another drought – the crop around Ingwenya failed entirely, leaving the local people without a harvest and completely dependent on famine relief from charitable organisations. The impact of the drought on the operations of the school was significant: maize was difficult to source although the Ministry of Education did intervene in order to assist boarding schools; bread became too expensive as wheat was also scarce. As maize is the main crop in our area, pupils from local families experienced difficulty in meeting their fees commitments – when there are good harvests we are happy to accept maize from local families in place of cash for fees.

Staffing

Mr. B. Ncube has still not been formally appointed as Headmaster – there appears to be a long term moratorium on filling promoted posts but he has continued to be the acting Headmaster, fulfilling his duties as usual with cheerful efficiency. Twenty-five teachers were supplied and paid for by the Ministry of Education with two expatriate teachers in addition – Miss MacKay and Miss MacLean. The number of staff continues to increase because of the new lower pupil/teacher ratios in practical classes. During Miss MacLean's leave in term 3, Miss C. M. Macaulay stepped in to assist in preparing the Form 4s for their O level examinations in Bible Knowledge. She also took over many of Miss MacLean's administrative duties in addition to her own duties on the translation project. Miss Macaulay's continued devotion to the school is very much appreciated. Miss N. Dube and Mrs. T. P. Moyo continued to assist with Bible Knowledge classes. Towards the end of the year we were in the happy position of being able to appoint Mr. D. Dube to the post of Senior Master, which had been vacated by Mr. Ncube on his appointment as acting Headmaster. Mr. Dube is a member in our Bulawayo congregation and we are thankful to have his assistance. Miss S. Gumpo is acting as Senior Lady (with special responsibility for the supervision of the girls): Miss Gumpo is a former student and Head Girl of the school and has been teaching with us since she qualified five years ago. Her continued interest in the school is much appreciated. We continued to experience difficulty in finding a suitable teacher for computing – during the year we had two different teachers, both of whom left us to pursue interests elsewhere. This is clearly not a satisfactory situation, in particular for the students who are studying for O Level Computing Studies, so it is an area of concern to us.

There is still a great need for assistance from expatriate teachers: Bible Knowledge is a key subject area for us and it is not easy for us to cover all the classes with suitable Church personnel. The opportunity still exists for us to bring in teachers from overseas, particularly in recognised shortage areas such as science and computing, but it is also still possible to bring in other teachers on Church recommendation. Applications from suitably qualified people would be very welcome. The main qualification required for expatriate applicants is a university degree with teaching subjects; teacher training is not necessary.

Pupil enrolment

We enrolled 578 pupils in Forms 1 to 4 during 2003, with approximately 100 attending on a daily basis from the local community and the remainder boarding at school for the whole term. Nine children with varying degrees of visual impairment benefited from the services of our specialist teacher, Mrs. Muzanargwo, in the Resource Room.

As has become the pattern in recent years, pupils continued to leave us because of difficulty in paying the fees and also in some cases to move overseas. Demand for places, however, continues to exceed the number available and any available places are heavily oversubscribed.

As has been reported elsewhere, one of our Form 3 pupils, Sly Jaricha, was diagnosed with Hodgkins Disease. Being an orphan with no medical insurance cover, Sly had no hope of receiving treatment for his illness. We, and Sly's family, are deeply grateful to all who donated so generously to the fund set up to assist him – by the end of the year Sly had completed his chemotherapy and radiotherapy. He is to have a scan in April 2004, DV, when the final prognosis will be given, but he appears presently to be very well.

O Level Results

The O Level results for 2003 were very satisfactory, with 96 of our 124 candidates passing 5 or more subjects; i.e. 77%. We were delighted that 4 students managed 9 A passes, a further 5 were awarded 8 A passes, 3 had 7 A passes, 11 had 6 A passes and 8 had 5 A passes. The percentage pass rate was lower than 2002 but we had expected that and we feel it is a fair reflection of the ability of the pupils we had in that year group.

At the annual Awards Ceremony for Matabeleland North 2002, hosted by the Ministry of Education in Bulawayo in August, we were presented with trophies for:

1st in Mathematics	1st in Physical Science
1st in Geography	1st in History
1st in Woodwork	1st in Public Speaking

We were also awarded the trophy for having the highest number of pupils with 5+ A passes in Matabeleland North. It was a disappointment to lose the trophy for Bible Knowledge, in spite of our very high pass rate of 96% in the subject. We were told that in 2002 our overall pass rate was the second highest in the Province.

This continuing success meant that we remained under immense pressure during the year to make a commitment to introduce A level classes. We declined to make a definite commitment because of the massive financial investment which would be necessary for us, as we are presently operating at full capacity and there is still a lot of upgrading required on our existing facilities. However, education to O level standard is no longer a complete education in Zimbabwe and it is becoming very difficult for us to explain our reluctance to agree to a commitment.

Finance

Serious hyper inflation was experienced throughout the year with rates as high as 760%. To give an idea of the situation we faced: in February our food bill was \$1,795,790; by June it was \$4,154,050, an increase of about 230% on February's figure; in October the figure was almost 860% higher than February's at \$15,484,743 for more or less the same items. The level of fees set for the year quickly became insufficient to cover our costs: we began the year in January with fees set at \$35,000 per child increasing to \$120,000 per child in September which was a rise of only 342%, well below the rate of inflation as it continued to rise beyond all expectations.

The school operates under a policy of having to meet its running costs from income from school fees, while the Jewish and Foreign Missions Committee and Mbuma Zending have been very generously funding the capital expenditure. It quickly became clear that this year it would not be possible for the school to meet its running costs, so a plea was made to the Jewish and Foreign Missions Committee for assistance in financing the deficit and we were deeply grateful that this was granted. The eventual deficit amounted to \$20,893,249 for Terms 1 and 2 but we were very happy to report that no assistance was necessary for Term 3 as we managed to reach a break-even point. As soon as it became clear that our fees of \$120,000 were insufficient to cover Term 3's expenditure, a surcharge of \$50,000 per child was set in order to complete the year with sufficient funds. This surcharge meant that over the year the fees increased by approximately 485%.

In this financial climate, when our expenditure had been pared down to the absolute minimum, with only the most basic of maintenance work being carried out, it was a most wonderful provision to receive the generous legacy of £14,349.11 left to the school by the late Mrs. A. MacLeod. This legacy will enable us to resume improvements which have had to be abandoned over the last two years: such as, mattress and bed replacement, classroom/dining room furniture, interior and exterior painting, purchase of a new photocopier and other projects as the funds permit.

Vehicles and Buildings

Our vehicles again served us well, although the cost of repairs increased dramatically and it was just as difficult to obtain spare parts as in 2002. The biggest problem in relation to transport was the difficulty in obtaining fuel, both petrol and diesel, so the strictly essential trips only policy effected in 2002 continued for most of the year as exorbitant prices had to be paid for the fuel when it could be found. The situation eased a little towards the end of the year when the Mission's bulk purchase of petrol from South Africa became available.

There was little progress on buildings during the year, as even basic maintenance became very difficult due to the rate of inflation and also due to the lack of availability of cement and other supplies. Work continued on the new girls' dormitory started in 2002 but progress was disappointingly slow so

it was not finished and ready for occupation until the end of the year. It is, however, a very nice building with large rooms, a beautifully tiled bathroom, new beds and comfortable mattresses. The completion of this dormitory means that we are now able to comfortably house all the boarding girls in Forms 1 to 4.

Overcrowding is still a big problem in the boys' department, however. It had been hoped that a new dormitory would have been started to provide extra space for the Form 3 boys, so we were disappointed that the funding was not available but we are hoping that this project can be started during 2004, DV.

We are also desperately needing an extra Science Laboratory. At present we are unable to accommodate all the science classes in the existing two laboratories, which is clearly not a satisfactory situation.

Our kitchen premises for the school dining hall are also in need of modernisation and renovation. All food is cooked in wood-fired pots but we are experiencing increasing difficulty in sourcing wood. An attempt was made to convert to coal but it is now even more scarce than wood. We would like to convert to electricity, keeping one or two wood-burning pots for emergency back-up. At Ingwenya, electricity is fairly reliable and is, of course, much more hygienic. The storage of food also needs to be improved – when we are feeding almost 500 children three times a day, the installation of a proper cold room is now a modern necessity, although we are managing reasonably well with our collection of freezers.

A very worrying development for us is the increasing instance of theft – in 2003 the engines from two of our boreholes were stolen. After the theft of the first one, security of all the engine houses was reviewed. New brick engine houses were built and burglar bars were installed in the roof spaces, metal doors were also installed but even all this security failed to prevent the theft of the second one – on a windy night the thieves simply broke through the wall at the ventilation point.

Conclusion

Much has been said about economic and financial problems but AIDS continues to have its devastating impact around us. Societies where AIDS is prevalent have been described as being *overwhelmed by death* and we are very much aware of that here – almost every week children are called to the funeral of a close relative and every year more children are being orphaned during their time with us. In the midst of this death and despair how necessary is the hope of eternal life through Christ Jesus: we would plead your prayers that all around us would come to the knowledge of the Lord of whom it is said, "*But thou O Lord shalt endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations . . . But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.*"

ZENKA MISSION REPORT

Rev. M. Mloyi

BY the grace of the Most High I am settled in the Zenka congregation. There are two communion seasons in the congregation. In August, the second communion season in the year was my first communion here and it was very interesting to meet South Harris friends on their first visit to Zimbabwe.

Church services have been conducted on the Lord's Day at the preaching stations – these are Zenka, Katasa, Mabayi and Fudu. At Gwampa there is no preaching station now because most of the residents have moved to new settlements at the farms. If transport is made available for the Zenka Mission, we would be able to visit the people there. Some new settlers are from Zenka congregation itself.

Mabayi preaching station was reopened after being closed due to shortage of manpower. As there is now a resident pastor in Zenka, the Kirk Session resolved to revive it. I often alternate with elders to preach at these stations but it is difficult in summer because the roads are wet and muddy. Fudu station has been visited no more than once, due to transport problems.

I alternate also with elders to conduct worship at the local clinic every Wednesday and Friday at 8 a.m. The Word is read and preached to the working staff there and the locals attending the clinic. The staff are appreciating this work and we pray that it would be profitable to their souls.

One male member was ordained as a deacon – Mr. Judea M. Sibanda. We hope that he will be a faithful servant in the Lord's vineyard. The other deacon, Mr. Moses Dlamini, is struggling with ill health. By the grace of God he has seen the New Year begin.

The loud voice of death was heard in the area by the passing away of young and old. We have attended some of the burials where we had been asked to say a word of comfort to the bereaved and of warning to the careless. The past year saw the deacon, J. Sibanda, lose a son and his mother (widow of the late George Sibanda, Zenka, elder), and two nephews and a niece of Paul Magaya Ncube passed away.

In between the first service and the second there are Sabbath School classes. Juniors are taken by the deacon, J. Sibanda, and seniors by the elder, D. M. Ngwenya. On Fridays at 2 p.m. there is a Bible Study for all interested members or non members. This is conducted by the minister. Topics covered so far are Sin and the Fall of Man and the Redeemer of God's Elect. Attendance at times is affected by wet weather.

We are thankful to the Most High for the good rains, although they started late. We do not deserve this because of our sins. We pray that these rains would continue. We are thankful for the food aid – supplying mealie meal and beans – from the World Vision in helping the locals and also the Church. Presently people are waiting patiently for the latter rains, as mentioned in James 5:7.

We are also thankful to the Oikonomos Foundation for installing solar power at the mission in the Teachers' Cottages, the School Office, one

classroom and in the manse. It has been a great help to us in providing light especially. The Zenka community was also helped by the Oikonomos Foundation which gave maize seed prior to the planting season.

The present manse is too small to accommodate my family and visitors at communion seasons and, also, the roof is too low and leaking, thus damaging the ceiling.

There is a great need of a security fence around the Mission, as at other Mission stations. Zenka Mission did not get a fence because the former minister was residing at his own homestead. We need to close out stray goats and locals who make the Mission a passage way to the shopping centre – even on the Sabbath. The present barbed wire fence, which is old and broken, is not serving its intended purpose. We need proper security because people can get in anywhere.

I pray for the Lord's guidance in this great pastoral work in this Mission field, for its prosperity. May He grant me wisdom to lead, as in the words of Solomon: *"Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?"* (1 Kings 3:9).

NKAYI MISSION REPORT

Rev. M. Mloyi

CHURCH services were held regularly on the Lord's Day and at weekday prayer meetings. Because of transport problems, I have not managed to conduct prayer meetings recently at the Nkayi stations, but this was done by elders residing there. On the Lord's Day I used to often go to the following stations: Donsa, Nkuba, Mathetshaneni, Manomano and Nkayi by arrangement with the transport manager. He provided a car and driver to ferry me to and fro. It is only Mathendele preaching station that I have not visited so far. The deacon there helps on the Lord's Day, alternately with elders.

The elders also conducted burials of the dead, warning the careless and comforting the bereaved. Nkayi had the privilege of the Lord's Supper being dispensed. In preparation for the 2004 communion season, the Kirk Session of Nkayi proposed to resume the June Communion which was stopped because of the immense workload which was borne by the former interim Moderator, Rev. P. Mzamo. If God wills, Nkayi will have two Communion seasons a year – on the 1st Sabbath of January and the second Sabbath of June.

The Donsa Communion has been moved to the second Sabbath of May because in March travelling is difficult due to rain. One of the professing members at Donsa lost his wife who died from malaria, and the elder lost his daughter after a long illness.

The Sacrament of Baptism was dispensed at Nkayi and Mathetshaneni; two were baptised at Nkayi (a boy and a girl, aged 17) and an old man at Mathetshaneni.

Two men were ordained as deacons at Nkayi congregation, Mr. Ben B. Mpofo and Mr. John B. Moyo. We pray that they will be faithful servants in the Lord's vineyard. There is great need to visit these Nkayi preaching stations often, especially Donsa, where the elder, Mr. L. Sithole is on his own most of the time. The other professing member cannot help much because he is an invalid.

In this area also people are being helped by the World Food Programme in this time of need. The Church also is supplying mealie-meal and beans. We pray that the rains will continue so that the people will get a better harvest this year.

REPORT FROM NEW CANAAN

Rev. Z. Mazwabo

AGAIN the wheel of time has made a complete circle and we have once more arrived at the place of reflection upon the past, which was otherwise shelved and forgotten. It is a humbling experience to look back at the difficulties and the failings that we have come across in the past year and as it were mourn over them again. In the area of Chief Mazvihwa, near where we have our congregation of Maware, rich deposits of diamonds have been discovered, and a company called Rio-tinto has started the works of extracting the precious stones from the ground, but before the work was started all the people who had villages in that area were evacuated, and resettled on land previously purchased for that purpose outside the asbestos mine of Mashava. They are happily settled in their beautiful homes built for them by the company. But that was not all, the graves had to be opened and the dead bodies buried in them exhumed and reburied on new ground outside the site of the mine. The Mazvihwa people do not have a common burial place but each family have their graves near their homestead. So family after family was called to witness the digging of the graves of their relatives. It was a painful experience when the old memories of the loss of their loved ones were once more revived and they mourned over them again. All families were affected; there was no exception. The talebearers have it that some bodies were intact almost just as they were during the time of burial. Some coffins contained only bones, yet from some graves nothing was found to the confusion of many, thus encouraging the superstitious belief of witchcraft, which is rife among the people of these lands. We do not often think about it that below the ground are so many dead bodies, far more than the ones above, for there is but one generation above and no one knows how many generations are below, all

waiting for that great resurrection day, of which we read: *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with trump of God and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we, which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

The main load of spreading the everlasting Gospel of our Lord Jesus in this part of our Church is shared among myself and my two home missionaries, Mr. N. Siziba and Mr. J. Mashavakure, with our other elders for whom I am very thankful. Mr. N. Siziba looks after New Canaan, Makovere, and Ebenezer congregations. Mr. Siziba could go much further but the other stations are far away. Mr. J. Mashavakure looks after Chiedza Ngezi, where he has his new home, and Munaka congregations. Munaka is the only congregation on the other side of the river in the province of Masvingo. The rest of the congregations are supplied by elders. I try to go to New Canaan for the first Sabbath of the month and the subsequent week take the prayer meetings in those congregations with Mr. Siziba, then on the following Sabbaths, take the first service at Chiedza and go to one of the congregations for the second service and go to their prayer meetings during the week until the end of the month. When the first Sabbath of the next month comes round again I go to New Canaan again. On the second Sabbath I come back to Chiedza taking the first service and continuing the second service where I left off. We notice that our people are ignorant, so we endeavour to instruct them in the Scriptures, both from the pulpit and in their homes. Times have been set in all our congregations for prayerful instruction both from the Bible and from our subordinate standards, reminding them of their duty to, in turn, instruct their own children and bring them up in the fear and admonition of the Lord as it is written: *“And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down and when thou risest up”* (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). There is need to instruct our young, especially so in this our day and generation, when the Bible is given no place in school and in public places. We are also persuaded that it is because of this that there is so much lawlessness among young people. But no doubt we need generations of prayerful Christian teaching, with all dependence upon the Lord, before we can notice any real change in the conduct of communities. But we also know that there is nothing impossible with God. The fact that as a denomination we have no witness in the towns to which our children go to work is still a painful problem. A suitable place of worship in Zvishavane is becoming more and more necessary.

The AIDS pandemic is not abating yet; on the contrary it is on the increase. The hospitals cannot cope with the many sick people that need beds, so after the primary treatment the patients are sent home to continue their treatment at their own places under the scheme which has come to be known, countrywide, as home based care. This is something about which we have not done as much

as we would wish but it is something we cannot ignore. It involves training people for the task which is handling and advising and administering the medicines that there be. But for a Church it involves training Christian people so that they will not only bring medicine but also the Word of life. The farmers do not give up so that if the first attempt fails they try again until they succeed. And do we not get encouragement in the words of the Psalmist: *“They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him”* (Psalm 126:5-6).

We have to confess that we have been fed from the basket-like hands of those to whom we are thankful, who minded to give both from the Church and the international community. Thank you very much and may the Lord bless you. The drought is not over yet. On our part the people of New Canaan and the people of Chiedza will be better off this year than they were last year. But the people of Mazvihwa will reap nothing from their fields. The crops in the whole of that area failed almost totally. If one who once visited the Mission field had an opportunity to do so again, one would be surprised to find out that there is not much difference as far as the congregations are concerned. They have not increased very much but perhaps, happily, have not decreased very much either. There are not very many new faces but the same old faces we meet again and again. We only hope it is not so only in the inward part but that there are some of whom it might be said: *“. . . and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee: For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me”* (John 17:6-8).

And we pray that we may be given the strength and the grace to work while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work.

MBUMA MISSION REPORT

Rev. P. Mzamo

IN the kindness of the Lord, the Church work was not disturbed throughout the year. The work in the hospital is being disrupted by the absence of qualified Christian staff. We need them to work among the civilised educated heathens of our generation, and to witness on the Lord's side by word and life.

The church services on the Lord's Day were held in the usual manner in all our preaching stations, as were the weekday prayer meetings. The two new ministers had their first communion in their own congregations and got on very well.

Throughout the year a few were added to the communion roll and a few to the offices of the eldership and deaconship. Ten children were baptised.

In preparation for a communion season we continue to have the usual starting on a Thursday and continuing to Saturday. Attendances increase each day – the largest gathering being on Sabbath. It is encouraging that people now provide their own transport. At a communion time we see people coming to the Mission from every direction, carrying their bedding on their heads or on carts drawn by donkeys. These stay in the Mission until after the Monday thanksgiving service, which is usually held in the morning. Communion seasons are like oases in the desert.

The elders and some of the other men continue taking church services in our various congregations. Although fuel is expensive and hard to get, and spare parts for cars and bicycles are also very expensive and scarce, the Lord still continues to give means, and a measure of health and willingness to do the work.

On New Year's day I gave an address on the great necessity of the new birth, as the Lord expresses that need in John 3:3. There was a very large gathering in the church when every sitting space was occupied.

There are bright prospects of a good harvest this year in Nkayi district.

Now, I take this opportunity to sincerely thank the home Church at large, and the friends in Holland for their continued support of the work in the Mission field and for famine relief, so generously given. "*Your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*"

Binga

Two elders visited this small gathering in Cemende and Senka. The precious seed was sown at both places. "*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).

There is a need for regular visits to these places, and a greater need for a professing man to settle among Tonga people.

MBUMA MISSION HOSPITAL REPORT

J. A. Coote and P. van de Ridder

AS we write the Hospital Report for 2003 we once again have to raise up our Ebenezer saying, "*Hitherto hath the Lord helped us*". In many respects, 2003 was a very difficult year but we deeply acknowledge that the Lord has been to us a very present help in every time of need. Drought, famine, shortages of food, fuel and staff continued throughout the year. Moreover, we were very conscious of the hand of the Lord in continually providing in many different ways for all our needs.

1. Famine Relief

Famine Relief was carried out in different ways:

Famine Relief Fund of our own church. Each of the five mission stations was responsible for the distribution of relief from the Famine Relief Fund.

Christian Care. This organisation has been, and still is, active in our area, supplying rations of maize, cooking oil and beans at monthly intervals.

ENDRA (Emergency Nutrition and Drought Recovery Assistance). Our hospital is involved in this ENDRA feeding programme which was started by ZACH (Zimbabwe Association of Church related Hospitals) and is expected to continue into 2004.

The programme caters for different categories of needy people, which is as follows:

- Malnourished children under 5 years;
- Malnourished children over 5 years and adults;
- Chronically ill patients, e.g. HIV and AIDS, TB and Cancer patients;
- Pregnant mothers from 7 months onwards until 6 months after birth.

These groups receive 5kg of a mixture of maize/corn and Soya meal every 2 weeks. Near the end of 2003, 5kg of rice was also added once a month.

In the hospital every inpatient gets a daily portion of 150g of this highly nutritious blend over and above their ordinary meals. On discharge they get 5kg to take home and if they are in any of the above mentioned categories they continue getting it every 2 weeks. For TB patients this is half a year after completing their treatment.

2. Fuel

Diesel and gas were still in short supply throughout the year and drastic measures had to be taken to conserve fuel –

- The length of time the generator and water engines were running had to be reduced;
- Boiling of water and autoclaving had to be done on an outside fire;
- Flasks were filled at night (before the generator went off) with hot water for breakfast the next morning.

The reader can imagine the effects – less lights at nights, and less water supply. Refrigeration was cut down to a minimum and watering of the vegetable gardens curtailed.

The generator charges a battery system and with a few solar panels provides the night-lights. Installation of solar panels is expensive and other sources of power need to be considered.

Rural electrification was to have been completed by 2003 but as yet there has been no sign of this happening.

3. Transport

Transport was also difficult due to fuel shortages. Trips had to be reduced. Vehicles were frequently in need of repair and due to lack of availability of parts they were often out of action for weeks rather than days. Both the lorry and ambulance after such a repair broke down on more than one occasion on the way home! Regular changing and also stronger vehicles would be helpful in transport management at the hospital.

Communication

The telephone was a constant problem, as it was so often out of order. It is a great boon when it is working, as we do not feel so isolated and can keep in touch by email, etc.

We have to thank the John Tallach Secondary School for giving us a computer for hospital use.

Staff

The situation has been critical throughout the year. Sister Coote and Sister Dube were often the only trained staff on duty. When one was off the other coped alone. Trained locum staff were also difficult to recruit and none were available until the end of February with no guarantee of regular help continuing for the remainder of the year.

Our colleagues in Kenya came to our aid. Sister T. Ringelburg arrived at the end of February and Mrs. Cathie Anne Murray, ex Sister at Mbuma, came in May. Both were with us for three months. They were a valuable asset to the staff and we are most grateful to them for their help. Sister P. van de Ridder came from Kenya in July and she received her Temporary Employment Permit at the beginning of August.

Two Dutch nurses had been waiting since 2001 for their Nursing papers and Temporary Employment Permits. We are thankful to say that Willie Geurtsen received all her papers and was able to arrive safely at the beginning of August with the added bonus for us that she was allowed to do her orientation year required by the Nursing Council at Mbuma. She has settled in well to the work. Sister Coote was then able to think about furlough and to hand over to Sister van de Ridder. A few days before Sister Coote left on furlough, the Temporary Employment Permit for Petra Beukers arrived. She also will be able to do the year of orientation at Mbuma. She is expected to arrive early in the New Year, DV.

Ancillary staff at the Hospital are around 50 to 60 in number. This includes Nurse Aids, Domestic, Clerks, Drivers, Grounds-men and Gatemen, all valuable members and all very supportive in the very difficult situations we were faced with. They themselves faced difficulties, including the ever-rising costs of basic provisions and transport.

Four of our Nurse Aids have left us this year and have started an eighteen months Primary Care Nurse Training Course, and one has started the 2 year

Training for SCN. All their homes are around Mbumba and after their training is finished they are likely to return to our hospital as qualified nurses, which will be a big improvement on the staff situation, DV. Meanwhile we have been able to recruit new Nurse Aids in their place.

We are still mourning the sad and sudden loss of Nhlanhla (Nkala) Dube who died on 18th December 2003. She had been a very valuable and capable Nurse Aid with our Hospital for many years. Latterly she mainly worked in the laboratory. At present we have not been able to recruit a suitable replacement.

Hospital

Due to shortage of qualified staff, we have tried to limit the numbers of admissions. This resulted in quite a marked rise of the number of outpatients, as the following statistics show. Among our inpatients the majority have TB, which in many cases is HIV related.

With regard to the TB patients we are not keeping them for 2 months, as we did in the past. After being diagnosed they start their treatment and then stay for one or two weeks to observe how they respond to the treatment. If there are no complications, then after being well instructed, they go home and come back regularly for follow-up visits.

We admitted many malnourished children and others with failure to thrive to the Childrens' Ward. Not thriving is frequently due to HIV related conditions. From time to time we have had to treat children with burns, who had fallen into the fire or had an accident with hot water, tea or porridge.

At the end of the year we treated many Anthrax cases and Nkayi District was declared to have had an "Anthrax outbreak". Some of them could be treated as outpatients. Quite a number needed admission for a shorter or longer period. Thankfully, all survived.

We also had many snake bite cases, and sadly lost a small child from a scorpion bite.

STATISTICS

	2002	2003
Admissions		
General, including TB	881	726
Maternity	424	303
Discharges		
General, including TB	808	634
Maternity	426	281
Bed occupancy		
General, including TB	11,742	14,584
Maternity	2,692	5,798

Deaths, including NND		
General, including TB	115	89
Maternity	0	1
Outpatients		
New.....	9,816	15,476
Total	13,619	18,620
Confinements		
Total	389	287
Live births.....	387	286
Still births	5	1
NND (up to 1 month)	6	2
Antenatal Clinic attendances.....	2,112	2,164
Major operations		
General.....	—	—
Maternity	1	—
Minor operations		
General	146	222
Maternity	127	6
X-rays		
Patients.....	166	142
Films used.....	248	172
Ambulance		
Number of trips	107	155
Other cars used – number of trips (not available 2003)	91	—
Km covered	40,328	32,820

<u>Five major health problems</u>	2002	2003
<i>Age below 5 yrs</i>	1. ARI 2. Diarrhoea 3. Skin disease 4. Eye disease 5. Malnutrition	1. ARI 2. Diarrhoea 3. ENT 4. Eye disease 5. Skin disease
<i>Age 5-14 yrs</i>	1. ARI 2. Injuries 3. Skin disease 4. Eye disease 5. Malaria	1. ARI 2. ENT 3. Skin disease 4. Injuries 5. Malaria

<i>Age 15 yrs and over</i>	1. ARI	1. ARI
	2. STD	2. STD
	3. Malaria	3. Malaria
	4. Skin disease	4. Skin disease
	5. Injuries	5. Injuries

ARI = Acute Respiratory Infection
 STD = Sexually Transmitted Disease
 ENT = Ear Nose & Throat

Conclusion

In spite of all the discouragements and difficulties, we acknowledge the kindness and goodness of the Most High for keeping us and giving us health and strength to carry out our work. As before, we commend the work and the people at and around Mbumba to all the praying people of the Church. We are conscious of our need for His guidance, wisdom and protection in all our duties and highly value the prayerful support of the Mission friends throughout the world and their continued financial help without which our work would not proceed. We seek the Lord's blessing on the work and the endeavours through it to spread the Gospel.

BULAWAYO MISSION REPORT

Rev. S. Khumalo

IT is almost a year now since I was ordained and inducted as the minister of the Bulawayo congregation, and so became the third minister after Rev. D. A. Ross, who was the first minister of Bulawayo, followed by the late Rev. A. Mpfu.

Bulawayo had no minister for more than twelve years since the removal by death of Mr. Mpfu and one might have been tempted to think that the number would dwindle. But wonderfully, the Lord by His providence preserved and kept it faithful and united in all trials. Supply was continued by the moderators, Rev. A. B. Ndebele and Rev. Z. Mazvabo respectively. The elders of the congregation also supplied the congregation every Sabbath, lifting up Christ and Him crucified in the Gospel.

We have a reason to say, like the Psalmist, that "*the Lord hath been mindful of us: he will bless us*" (Psalm 115:12).

The Bulawayo congregation consists of three preaching stations – Lobengula church being the main station, and Nkulumane and Mguza outstations on the outskirts of the city. Services are continued in these stations every Sabbath.

On weekdays the prayer meeting is held in three places; that is, Lobengula on Friday at 4 p.m., Thembeiso on Tuesday at 9 a.m., and Mguza on Thursday at 3 p.m. In all our preaching stations, both on Sabbath and prayer meetings,

the attendance is very encouraging. Big crowds come to hear the Word of God. More encouraging is that most of the people that attend are young people with their families.

It was the desire and prayer of our old ministers and the Church at large that a place of worship would be established in Bulawayo, as most of the young people and their families were migrating from the rural areas to the cities in search of employment and were making their homes there. Rev. Ndebele used to say that because of the concern for the souls of our own children a church was built for them in Bulawayo that the truth might follow them, and they would also bring up their own children under the preaching of the truth and the fear of the Lord as practised in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. *“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call”* (Acts 2:39). May the growth not be in numbers only but also in the knowledge of *“the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent”* (John 17:3).

Two communion seasons are held each year, in June and December. As for the past year, both of them were well attended and three male members were received and added to the communion Roll and nine children were baptised. May the Lord Himself graciously bless them with all spiritual blessings.

Also in the year there was the addition of elders and deacons. To the present two elders, Mr. Zikhali and Mr. Jubane, were added Mr. B. Mziya and Mr. N. Sibanda. The men ordained to the office of deacon were Mr. D. Sibanda, Mr. B. Ncube and Mr. T. B. Mpfu. We now have four elders and four deacons, Mr. S. Ncube, who is already serving in the office, being the fourth deacon. *“Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain”* (Psalm 127:1).

In conclusion, I would like to extend my sincere thanks, on behalf of the Bulawayo congregation, to the Church in Scotland and other parts of the globe, for the help rendered to us in these difficult times by giving drought relief and to the friends in Holland for the clothing sent and for their interest and support in the Mission work in all its departments.

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

NDEBELE BIBLE REVISION REPORT

C. M. Macaulay and T. Benschop

THE revision of the Ndebele New Testament has continued over the past year with the assistance of the Ndebele language helpers, Mr. N. Mpfu and Mr. B. Mziya. Miss S. Ndlovu helped for some months. It has been re-read a few

times to check the Ndebele translation against the original Greek as well as against the AV English version. We realise that it is very important to give an accurate translation, and we need the daily assistance of the Lord in the work. We have consulted Mr. Anderson, of the Trinitarian Bible Society, on a regular basis for advice when we were not sure of certain points and we also referred some points to the Home Church for clarification.

We also drew up a list of queries in language and usage. Recently, a Translation Panel met to discuss these, and the proposed changes were incorporated in the translation. This included points like vocabulary, spelling of certain words, names of plants, and various other points. The panel included the ministers, some elders and members who had helped in the work at different times, and Ndebele language specialists who are also members of the Free Presbyterian Church. They had already been issued with the current translation for reading through. The Presbytery has indicated that they would like a further meeting of this nature before the text is sent for printing. Meantime additional checks and comparisons are continuing and any corrections noted and entered.

As the New Testament revision is now completed, except for final checking, we hope that it will be ready for the printers very soon. If it were possible, we and the people here would like to have the Revised Ndebele New Testament printed in time for the Centenary of the Free Presbyterian Mission, which is next year, DV.

We wish God's rich blessing on those who will read it.

In recent weeks, the translation team has been doing revision of the Ndebele Psalm Book in preparation for a reprint.

EBENEZER SCRIPTURE MISSION REPORT

S. B. Mpofu, Superintendent

WE have come to the beginning of another year and have every reason to give thanks to the Most High for sparing us. The year 2003 had lots of problems but we managed to pull through.

*“Oh come, let us sing to the Lord:
Come, let us ev'ry one
A joyful noise make to the Rock
Of our salvation.”*

(Psalm 95:1)

This is what the Psalmist wished and if all at this institution were of the same mind then God would have the first part in our lives.

Thembisio Children's Home

Our residents are above our quota, which is 53. Most children are healthy with only a few who have minor health problems. We safely went through 2003 without any loss of life. Thabo, the youngest baby girl, is 1¹/₂ years old and Nkosilathi Ndlovu is the oldest. He is now above 19 years of age. It's sad to say this boy does not have any document to identify him. He has remained so long in the institution because he does not have any concerned relatives.

The three pre-school classes have continued with very little problems. These classes help our children to get used to local children. Last year we had a very colourful graduation day.

Staff

Our staff has remained at the same number. When Miss Z. Mavundkla, the matron, left, Mrs. S. Mathambo was appointed matron. The staff continued to render their services, though at times some failed to do so fully because of absences which characterised 2003. We sometimes have volunteers and those who are on community services to help us. However, there is need of an additional watchman so that there are two on guard at night.

Supplies

During the year, food prices rose so quickly and, along with their scarcity, I thought we would fail to feed the children. Bread reached \$2,900 per loaf and meat was also more than half a million dollars for 60kg – being the supply for a week. When milk became too expensive for us, we were helped by the Ingwenya Mission, which sold us some during school holidays. We are glad that these necessities are now affordable.

The children have enough clothing and bedding. Most of our clothes come second-hand from overseas. We buy the children school uniforms and a few other things. Some local companies have helped by donating to the home.

Church services

We thank the Most High for providing us with ministers. Rev. S. Khumalo has been taking our prayer meetings on Tuesdays and he preaches to the whole primary school. Our Sabbath school is operational and we thank Miss K. Macaulay for the lesson materials.

Problems at the institution

Firstly, lack of birth certificates – up to now, about 36 children are without these. Secondly, constant burglary. Thieves break into our institution at night. We have made two repairs to our security fence when it had been cut and carried away. The first repair cost \$2,306,317. Just yesterday yet another cut was made in the fence. Thirdly, salary rises are now beyond what we can locally afford.

ALUZ classes

The two centres at Thembiso and Mabutweni have been functional throughout the year. The Thembiso Centre had better results at the end of the year. Adults continue to receive catechism lessons from their tutors.

Reformed bookroom

The bookroom staff of three members worked harder than usual this year when we had many more customers towards the end of the year. Business was much improved during the year. We had to buy a till for \$3,797,300 as the old one needed replacement. Sales were bettered by the improvements in stock made by Miss K. Macaulay, who procured religious books from overseas. The bookroom staff experienced problems from shoplifters and running costs at the bookroom are now high as our new landlords have much increased the rent.

ZIMBABWE MISSION ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mr. E. B. Zikhali

THE year 2003 was one of the most difficult years in the history of our Church in Zimbabwe. However, in the Lord's kind providence, we have been enabled to continue with the work.

Throughout the country there was a shortage of cash, basic commodities, fuel, drugs and building materials. Generally fuel could only be found on the black market. Employees' salaries and wages were raised by 100%, backdated to 1st May 2003. The shortage of staple food was so serious that some communities were without food for weeks. We are very thankful that none of our Church people died of hunger.

The Mbumba Hospital was kept going in spite of the fact that it did not have a doctor. The arrival of nursing sisters from both Holland and England was a great relief to the hospital. When Sister Jessie Coote left, we witnessed the arrival of Sister Peta van der Ridder from Kenya, and Willemrie Geurtsen and Peta Buekers from Holland. The hospital is now fully staffed, apart from not having a doctor. We are very thankful for how things worked out.

The Field Committee continued to meet to discuss matters pertaining to the Mission finances and projects in Zimbabwe. Projects were carried out in spite of expensive building materials. Oikonomos Foundation continued the building programme at Mbumba, Lutsha and Zenka schools. It also installed solar energy at Zenka teachers' houses and the manse. In addition to this, it has set up the School Improvement Committee which will deal with the buying of books for the primary schools mentioned above. We think this will indeed improve the results in our schools.

The Mission was enabled to buy two new cars for the new ministers. The present fleet of vehicles is still able to do the workload for the hospital,

ministerial duties and general Mission maintenance, although some of them are too old. We should be, indeed, thankful. Theft among our Mission stations has drastically increased. Some efforts are being made to remedy the situation.

The FMC purchased a house in Bulawayo for the Benschop family; Mr. Benschop being still fully involved in the Ndebele Bible revision. Deacons' courts continued to support the ministers in buying fuel and maintaining church buildings. The political situation continued to be gloomy when the Government and the main opposition party failed to resolve their differences.

Zimbabwe's annual inflation stood at 525.8% last November – one of the highest in the world – and nearly 80% of the population live in abject poverty. The country has also been rocked by shortages of nearly all basic commodities as well as foreign exchange rate collapse that has resulted in the country being dry of imported fuel. It is, however, pleasing of late to see heavy rains all over the country, giving hope of a bumper harvest.

Mbumba-Zending continued to supply second-hand clothing to our Church stations, which was gratefully received and much appreciated. We are very thankful to the Lord for having opened the hearts and hands of the people in Holland towards the Mission. We are deeply grateful to them. *“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver”* (2 Corinthians 9:7).

My report would be incomplete without the mention of the invaluable services rendered by Miss N. B. Maclean, as Deputy Head at John Tallach Secondary School, Miss Rhoda Mackay as a teacher of Religious Knowledge, and Miss Macaulay in the Ndebele Bible revision.

The year 2004 is very unique in the history of our Church in Zimbabwe in that it marks 100 years since the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland came to Zimbabwe – then Rhodesia. We are looking forward to its celebration in 2005, DV, and the preparations are at an advanced stage. We have every reason to be thankful to the Most High for bringing us to witness this important anniversary.

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

BUILDING AND TRANSPORT REPORT

Mr. J. B. Mpofu

Building

The Mbumba Mission classrooms are under repair because of cracked and falling plaster, and the replastering is being done by a man we have employed. Our own workmen are repairing cracks in other Mission buildings. The main dormitory has been repaired and one Mission house is under repair. The Blair toilet at the hospital was damaged by heavy rain and we were forced to close part of it. A new toilet has been dug and we are building it up with the bricks we have moulded for it.

We thank Oikonomos Foundation for installing a solar system to give light to the houses of the minister and teachers and to the school office at Zenka Mission. They did the same in the Mbuma teachers' houses.

Ingwenya girls' dormitory has been completed. The children went into it at the beginning of last school term. The manse at Ingwenya is being roofed with asbestos by the contractor. We hope it will be finished in the near future. We have plastered the bare brick walls of one of the old houses at Ingwenya and have painted them white.

The John Tallach Secondary School sports covered area has been improved by adding some brickwork, laying a concrete floor and providing a new roof made of the salvaged asbestos from the girls' old dormitory which was demolished.

The churches at Bulawayo and Zenka were both fitted with new fascia boards on the gables.

Transport

The transport fleet has remained much the same, with the following cars located at the different stations.

The Mazda used by Rev. Mzamo is still in good condition, as is the one used by Mr. Benschop, but it has seen many years of good service. The Mazda Ambulance is running well but not as well as the B2200 Mazda. It uses more fuel than the B2200 and has been sent to the garage many times for repairs.

The Jimbie Lorry is in good running order and now has much improved door handles to those that were mentioned in my last report. The old Landrover Defender is still very useful on the Mission and the Mazda used by the Building and Transport Manager is still in good condition. The Venture vehicle used by the John Tallach Secondary School, the Mazda School Bus, the other school bus donated by the Ingwenya Friends, and the Leyland Comet Lorry are all in good condition and running well. The Mazda used by the Bulawayo office is roadworthy and Rev. Mazvabo's Mazda is also giving good service.

At Thembiso, both the Superintendent's Mazda and the institution's Combie are in good condition. The Bulawayo congregation bus is still serving the congregation very well in bringing people to church.

The main changes in the fleet have been that we sold the Ford Correa and bought two new Toyota cars – one for Rev. M. Mloyi and the other for Rev. S. Khumalo.

The driver of our Leyland Comet Lorry, who has a good knowledge of repairing vehicles, does good work in repairing our mission cars when he is not driving.

*“Remember me, Lord, with that love
Which Thou to Thine dost bear
Why Thy salvation, O my God,
To visit me draw near.”*

(Psalm 106:4)

KENYA MISSION REPORT

Rev. K. M. Watkins

FOR me personally it has not been the easiest of years, on account of continuing health problems. There were times when words in a Hudson Taylor biography felt applicable: "He was conscious only of two things – great and growing opportunities on the one hand, and rapidly failing health on the other; so that while longing to multiply himself into 100 missionaries, he was increasingly unequal to the work of one." It is a consolation to recall the many missionaries of the past who battled with sickness again and again, and yet the Lord used them. Trophimus, a missionary colleague of the apostle Paul, fell sick and had to be left at Miletum (2 Timothy 4:20). Paul's own sickness seems to have led to the establishing of the Lord's cause in Galatia (Galatians 4:13-15).

It has not been myself alone, but a number of the European staff have suffered from recurring bouts of malaria this year. Sengera is almost 6,000 feet above sea level, almost level with the equator, and in a region endemic with "highland" malaria. The health of Europeans takes a constant beating, which over time can wear down even the strongest. We are all very thankful for the much-needed furlough after each 12 months of being here.

Nevertheless, the work of the Kenya Mission goes on and progress has been made. Thankfully, Mr. Nedson Banda from Malawi was with us for most of the year, and that helped greatly to continue the spiritual work. I am grateful to Mr. Banda for his timely assistance, especially during the time of my furlough.

For the Sengera congregation, the usual morning and afternoon services were held each Sabbath, as well as the weekly adult catechism class, with the willing help of Mosoti and Mishael, the interpreters. It would rejoice the hearts of Synod members to hear some 70 to 80 souls reciting the *Shorter Catechism* each week, some in English and some in their own Ekegusii language, and many of them doing it word perfectly. Most of the year was spent on the many questions dealing with the Ten Commandments. This was most useful among a people whose culture and thinking are so morally corrupt and contrary to the perfect law of God. How can sinners know Christ without knowing sin, and how can they know sin without knowing the divine law? "*For sin is the transgression of the law*" (1 John 3:4). And how can they understand the cross of Christ without understanding the curse of the law?

Services were held on a few Saturdays at Magenche and Maiga, which had previously been outstations of the Mission and where there are still groups of people interested in and attached to the witness of our Church. Various contacts have been made with others who seem to have an interest in truth and a readiness to be taught it, and we await the unfolding of providence as to where these things will lead. One thing is certain: the whole Kisii tribe (more than 2 million people) needs the pure Gospel, not just the few thousand souls in our immediate vicinity. "Churches" and "pastors" abound, and so do people who think they are born again, but the real Gospel is almost unknown.

Recent employment statistics show that missions and non-government organisations are the second largest employer in Kenya. Our Mission is by far the largest employer in the rural location of Sengera. So whilst our desire is for spiritual fruit, we have to realise that our mission-station approach creates a major economic impact. Inevitably, given the lack of other employment opportunities and relative poverty of the area, too many see the Mission only or mainly as a means of temporal advancement. People come to church, learn what the Gospel is, and even pretend to be real Christians – all in the hope of temporal gain. This makes one wary of trusting professions that people make, as there are so often ulterior motives. This is nothing new, of course. In the Saviour's day, many followed Him only for temporal things, not spiritual. He had to say to them: "*Ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled*" (John 6:26).

The thing that has impressed itself on me this past year is that the Saviour did something about that unsatisfactory situation. For one thing, He did not continue to produce food miraculously. For another, He told the people to seek the spiritual food of His flesh and blood. He knew what effect that hard teaching would have: "*From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him*" (John 6:66). Through the spirituality of the preaching, a division was made among the people. It is our duty to follow in the Master's steps.

Over the past year, the Poor Fund Committee has endeavoured to be more strict in the distribution of free maize. We have tried to apply scriptural rules as thoroughly as we can. For example, if a widow has a family who could help her – especially if they are connected with the congregation – it is not the duty of the Church to help (1 Timothy 5:4). Through this tighter policy, we lost perhaps a few dozen people from the congregation. We have also done something about the continual unnecessary latecoming of a sizeable group of people. Much explanation was given as to how insulting this was to the God of glory, but still many wilfully attended church late. When practical measures were taken to stop this, thankfully a number of the offenders mended their ways, but regrettably a few others have been lost.

It has been encouraging to speak and pray with some who have been seriously sick, for whom worldly interests faded from view. A man in his mid-thirties snatched from the clutches of death, who admitted that he had shown little interest in Christ before, began to speak of "the blood of Christ" and "the finished work of Christ" with such feeling, not only as a means to escape punishment but also for leaving sin. A woman, on the day she was diagnosed with HIV, when asked what she had been praying about, replied that she had been confessing her sin. But wasn't it her husband's unfaithfulness that had brought the disease? Yes, she said, but there were all her own sins, and that is what was concerning her. A young woman dying of AIDS, who when she was well had adamantly refused to come to church, now seems to have only one bright thing in her life: nothing but talking of Christ's salvation for sinners can light up her face.

In recent weeks, four men left the congregation, having invited an American charismatic church to start a Mission here in Sengera. It is sad to see this, especially as they had been under FP teaching for many years and had even been Mission employees in the past. But when the truth is not blessed with power unto salvation, there is no stability in the things of God, nor loyal attachment to Christ's holy Cause in the world. "*They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us*" (1 John 2:19). May the Most High show glorious mercy and yet make them feel the power of saving truth!

On the translation side, a metrical psalm book twice the size of the previous one, with over 550 stanzas, was published in September 2003. A tract on hell was printed at the turn of the year and thousands have been distributed. The TBS calendars were translated and distributed in January to many homes, schools and workplaces both near and far in Kisiiland. The much needed re-translation of the *Shorter Catechism* has continued. The *Dear J* letters project has continued, but we have met with many translation difficulties. We would dearly love to begin in earnest on a Bible translation, as the only Kisii translation is dire, but we wait on the Lord in His providence for such a major undertaking. I am grateful to all those involved in the translation work for their diligent and painstaking attention to this most important work.

We are thankful to the two European wives for their contribution throughout the year. Although not officially employed by the Mission, they can be found as hard at work as anyone. Mrs. Katherine Mackenzie has spent hours and hours sewing – to assist a young ladies' sewing class run by Sister Truus Ringelberg, and also baby wraps for the clinic. The translation team appreciated Kathie's help in distributing the TBS calendars in January. Apart from all the unseen things, she is always so hospitable and will be greatly missed when she leaves in June. Mrs. Elizabeth Watkins continues to work full-time in the translation team, co-ordinating the work and producing with the main interpreter, Mosoti, the initial drafts of each translation project before I get involved. She also spent much time during the year teaching an English course to him. I must also acknowledge her help when Mr. Mackenzie was on furlough and I was laid aside, for the burden of Mission administration fell on her for most of the summer. Both ladies help with Sabbath School classes and Ekegusii reading classes.

The separate Clinic report has been written by Sister Truus Ringelberg this year, as our Matron, Sister Peta van de Ridder, has spent most of the year in Zimbabwe, giving essential support to Mbuma hospital. I am thankful to Sister Truus for fulfilling the role of Acting Matron throughout this time. As her report shows, the Clinic has continued to develop its influence for good, in particular by educational courses on AIDS and Malaria in schools and market places. The women's Ekegusii reading class has seen the fruit of a few women now able to read their Bibles and sing the Psalms. Sister Celia Renes has continued her work within the clinic and out in the community, in particular

with AIDS patients, and Sister Gilia van Wijngaarden has completed her orientation, and returns from furlough soon. All the Sisters help with Sabbath School classes.

We are thankful to all the staff, both European and African, who contribute in any way to the Mission's ongoing witness to the grace of Christ.

The Administrator's report shows the advances that have been made in the past year. This is to be Mr. Hugh Mackenzie's last report as Administrator, and the Kenya Mission is a transformed place compared to when he first came. The vehicles are up-to-date and well maintained, the infrastructure is vastly improved, our homes are comfortable, well-decorated and pleasant to live in. The advantages of modern technology are very evident on the compound. Difficult and time-consuming office procedures like immigration have been simplified and regularised. There is just no comparison between the roads surrounding the Mission as they are now and as they were before. The orderliness of the congregation in public worship, a thing rare indeed in Kenya, is largely due to his untiring efforts over his time here. Mr. Mackenzie has always been very mindful of my spiritual responsibilities as a Gospel minister, and has endeavoured to shield me as much as possible from the day to day burdens and problems of the Mission. This was especially true during my prolonged malaria attacks, when he bore the burden of the temporal side of the Mission almost entirely himself, at a time when among other problems there were long-running and difficult legal cases in the courts. I am thankful indeed to Mr. Mackenzie for all his work here, both spiritual and temporal, and wish him and his wife the Lord's blessing as they prepare to leave us.

Here at the Kenya Mission we wish to thank all friends throughout the world who have given their support in any way to the work for another year, whether from the denomination or from Mbuma Zending or in a more personal way. It is a privilege indeed to be labourers together with God in the work of the Gospel.

KENYA MISSION ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mr. Hugh Mackenzie

ANOTHER year has passed at the Kenya Mission where we can once more express our thankful acknowledgement to the Most High for His great goodness toward us in maintaining the Cause in our midst. The following report covers the work undertaken in the administrative areas under the canopy of the Gospel work in Sengeru.

Several members of the Mission staff have undergone formal and informal training over the past year. Miss Gilia Wijngaarden successfully completed a 6 month orientation programme at Kisii General Hospital and is now registered with the Nursing Council of Kenya. Mrs. Beatrice Mwendu, who

was a Nurse Aid at the Clinic, is now in her second year of her nursing course at the Medical Training College in Kisii. Mr. Justus Mosoti, Mission Translator, successfully completed an English Learners (ESL) correspondence course and has been awarded a Certificate with distinction. Several of the Mission tradesmen are on continuing programmes of assessment and certification in their respective grades and trades.

A new training room has also been established. Several training programmes have been run, including computer courses for European and African staff involved in the use of Information Technology. A low-cost network server has been installed to allow ease of access to training material and to improve the teaching and learning environment. European staff will also be able to use the equipment to prepare computer based presentations of the Mission work they are engaged in to show to interested groups while on furlough. Consideration is being given to the development of a Mission website which would keep interested parties up-to-date with Mission activities and also have a link to the main Church website.

The roof replacement programme has been completed and all the homes have now been brought up to a good standard of maintenance with little or no work envisaged over the coming year. The same can be said of the clinic, offices, workshops, canteen and out-houses. The present church building (formerly the hospital) is due to undergo some minor renovations, internally and externally, to improve the lighting and décor and provide better access at the front of the church.

Because the existing timber pillars supporting the 6 water towers on the Mission compound are constantly attacked by termites, we have begun a programme of replacement with steel pillars and frames. The repair of some of the existing underground tanks is continuing and when the whole project is complete the Mission will have a reliable and substantial long-term water storage and distribution system in place.

Until recently, access to the bottom compound by vehicle has been via the track down to the school. During the rains it became very difficult for vehicles, especially since the drainage from the new road feeds directly onto it, turning it quickly into a river during heavy rains. A gravel track with drains similar to the main road up to the market has greatly improved the condition of the surface and makes our access to that part of the Mission much easier. It is hoped to extend the track as far as the school at the bottom of the Mission land area.

All the Mission vehicles are in reasonably good condition and well looked after by our mechanics. There is no immediate need to replace any of these in the near future. The improvement to the local access roads has reduced the wear and tear on our vehicles.

The legal proceedings concerning the land adjacent to the Mission continue. Over the past year we have been involved in various stages of pursuing the case through the courts and recently secured a ruling in our favour. The defendant has appealed against the ruling and we now await the magistrate's judgement on this appeal.

In recent months the local primary school situated on Mission land has undergone some management and staff changes for the better. In co-operation with the Schools Inspectorate and Gucha District Education Department, the Mission has been able to establish an influence in the appointment of school managers and the head teacher. The previous holders of these positions were not in sympathy with our Church's teachings, neither were they conducting the financial affairs of the school in a trustworthy manner. A new head teacher, who is an adherent of the Sengera congregation, has been appointed together with a new School Board chairman and treasurer, both of whom are Mission employees and Church adherents.

In conclusion I would like to express grateful acknowledgement to all who have contributed to the continuance of the Gospel work in this part of Africa, both by practical and spiritual goodwill throughout the year. "*Brethren pray for us*".

KENYA MISSION OMOREMBE HEALTH CENTRE REPORT

Sister Truus Ringelberg, Acting Matron

AS the Matron, Sister P. van de Ridder, has been absent in Zimbabwe most of the year, I will try to give a summary of the work in Omorembe Health Centre. Most of the work in the clinic has continued as the years before. It has its quiet and more busy periods, depending on the season of the year.

1. Outpatient Department

Looking through the whole year it has not been very busy in the outpatient department, except in January, February, June and July. These months are known as the malaria season and quite a few people have to be referred to a proper hospital, due to anaemia, cerebral malaria, or other complications. Even in these months it has not been extremely busy, as some organisations have been helping the community with mosquito nets, which were given freely to high risk patients, and others were helped with anti-malaria treatment. Usually patients coming to the OPD are really sick and need proper treatment; they do not come for small things. Perhaps it is good to highlight one incident that happened on the 1st July at the chief's camp where one of the walls of a nearby house collapsed and 26 people were injured and rushed into the clinic. Nine of them had to be referred to a large hospital due to fractures and other major injuries; 17 were treated in our clinic.

2. Maternity

Most of the time there is some activity in the maternity. It has its quiet, busy and very busy spells. It is one of the most happy parts of the work, as usually there is joy when life is spared and new life is given.

3. Ante Natal Clinic

The weekly ante natal clinic is well attended. An amount of Ksh100/= (about 80 pence) is paid at the first visit. For this they receive their card, laboratory test, routine medicines and TT injections. This certainly does not cover the costs and therefore the lab. test is paid from the AIDS Fund as it has to do with diagnosing sexually transmitted diseases. Ogembo General Hospital has been providing us with Fansidar tablets, and a dose is given two times during pregnancy to prevent malaria. Also weekly lectures are given to the attendees. We would like to see part of the work being extended in some villages from where we get a number of patients who have to come a long distance by foot. This might be a help to them.

4. Laboratory

Both of our lab. technicians have been upgraded in examination of AFBs so that we are able to examine and treat tuberculosis patients, although we have not received the medicines yet, as our laboratory needs to be adjusted to some requirements first.

5. Medicine supply

So far we have nothing to complain about regarding the supply of medicines in Kenya. It rarely happens that an item is not available. Every month an order is sent to MEDS in Nairobi and we receive the supplies as ordered. MEDS also pay us a visit every year to check our medicine store, and other issues, if necessary, are discussed. A very strict eye is kept on the expiring dates of the medicines, for in no way are they to be used when expired. All medicines have to be recorded precisely, and a special record has to be kept for all the antibiotics as these medicines are very sensitive in Kenya.

6. Deworming

Deworming tablets have been given out at different schools. It is first discussed with the teacher of the school and a date is set to come and distribute the treatment. Every student pays KSh10/= for a full dose. The same has been done at a few markets and many were treated. At the same time we set up a table at the market and advertise "Waterguard" and tablets for treating bed nets, to make the people more aware of these items. Waterguard is so useful for ensuring safe drinking water without boiling, and the tablets for preventing malaria. But it must be said that it is not very easy to get the people to understand it. They would rather wait until sickness appears, than think ahead, although that would be far more economical to them. Hopefully this might change as we continue to try to persuade them.

7. School education

Most of the nearby schools, both primary and secondary, have been visited and lectured on AIDS. It continues to be a great problem in Africa. The lectures

take about 2 to 2¹/₂ hours. The first hour is spent on teaching, with the help of posters, which we received from Kijabe Hospital and are very helpful; the second part on answering questions. Many questions are asked by the students and real wisdom is needed to answer them in a right way, pointing them to the Christian principles which are to be found in the Word of God to guide us in all things. Our hope and prayer is that the Lord would be pleased to bless the efforts made to the glory of His Name and to the help of the Kisii people.

CLINIC STATISTICS FOR 2003

	General Outpatients	Malaria Cases	STD Cases	Ante Natal Cases	Deliveries	Stillbirths/ Perinatals	Referral by Ambulance	Other Referrals	Lab Tests
Jan	441	411	29	167	40	1	13	18	440
Feb	344	287	19	121	29	1	12	21	458
Mar	269	191	22	143	37	0	8	13	216
Apr	168	88	49	145	40	0	9	9	207
May	186	97	14	118	33	1	6	5	241
Jun	225	135	25	122	37	1	9	12	174
Jul	432	314	10	121	30	0	17	26	367
Aug	229	144	24	115	35	0	8	5	141
Sep	160	71	33	113	51	1	5	5	160
Oct	139	71	29	100	33	0	6	11	119
Nov	157	79	27	82	27	0	5	6	139
Dec	183	102	24	125	39	1	5	5	169
Total	2933	1990	305	1472	431	6	103	136	2831
2002	3924	2400	380	1683	494	19	113	158	3233

DOMINIONS AND OVERSEAS COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. A. Ross

IN God's providence, the Church was in a position to send deputies to all our overseas congregations. Revs. Edward Rayner and Johannes van Dorp have a wide field of labour in Australia and New Zealand. When ministers from the home Church visit their congregations there is no question about the appreciation of the congregations and their ministers who are delighted with the help they obtain. They are glad also that Mr. Alasdair MacPherson (Missionary) visited New Zealand in March and was able to take services while there and also in Singapore.

Australia and New Zealand are old fields of Gospel labour where generations of families have followed the Free Presbyterian Church. I was glad that I was able at long last to visit our congregations there. My twenty years of absence from those parts was too long, and I was reminded of this on several occasions by our friends there. I hope in the providence of God that I will be in a position to visit these places again in the not too distant future. My full report gives more details of my visit. In the last eight years, Church deputies have visited these countries almost yearly but there was a three-year period, shortly after the split in 1989, when no deputies were able to go.

Mr. Rayner, of Grafton, also has the oversight of the Sydney congregation, and Mr. van Dorp in Gisborne has the oversight of Auckland, Wellington and Tauranga congregations. They are both extremely busy in the work of the Gospel. The Grafton congregation is the largest of all the congregations, with between 60 and 70 people attending regularly. It is encouraging for the future that there are young families in most of these congregations. If they follow the true religion they have inherited it will augur well for the continuation of the Free Presbyterian Church in Australia and New Zealand. I was privileged to assist at communions in Singapore, Tauranga and Auckland.

Both Mr. Rayner and Mr. van Dorp are beyond retiring age. It is a concern to them, and indeed to us, that there are no young men being raised up to continue the work of the ministry. However, as a Church, we have been experiencing the Lord's kindness in supplying pastors. Let us continue to plead the promise of God to send us pastors after His own heart, not only to replace our older ministers, but also to suffice all our congregations.

Singapore is under the oversight of Mr. van Dorp. It is cause for wonder and thankfulness that we have an established congregation in Singapore. The elder, Mr. Bernard Yong, continues to take the services each Sabbath and the mid-week prayer meetings when there is no minister present. I was to be in Singapore for one Sabbath but due to illness I had to remain a second Sabbath. During my stay there I was able to take all the services as well as to assist at the communion season.

Rev. Neil Ross was able to supply in Chesley, Canada and Richmond, Texas, for two Sabbaths in each place. There were communion seasons in both places and there was one new member added to the communion roll in Richmond. Rev. George Hutton, who is the interim Moderator of Chesley, was unable to visit the congregation because of illness. Mr. Neil Ross is the interim Moderator of the Richmond congregation. At the time of writing this report, Rev. Barry Whear is supplying Chesley for six weeks. It is hoped that in April and May the Rev. Wilfred Weale will visit Chesley and Richmond for two weeks in each place and at the same time preach at the communion seasons in both congregations.

There have been three visits to Fornaci di Barga, Italy. Mr. Lucio Strata and I went once and Mr. Strata went alone on two other occasions. The usual Sabbath services were conducted, as well as weekday services. We were well received by our friends during these visits. The amount of money given for the

furtherance of the Gospel by our friends in Italy is an indication of their goodwill towards the work. Mr. Strata has supplied two volumes of Spurgeon's sermons in Italian and these are read to the people by one of the men. We also visited relations of Mr. Strata in Stabio, Casella, near Genoa, and had the opportunity to give a short address from the Word of God. Considering that the people are of Roman Catholic persuasion, it is remarkable that this door seems to be opening in providence. May the Lord by His Holy Spirit open the understandings of the people to receive the Word in truth.

Again we have not been in a position to visit our friends in Vancouver. As reported last year, the congregational property continues to be constantly well cared for by Mr. John MacLeod, to whom the Church is deeply indebted.

The congregation in Odessa continues steadfast in the truth. There is little need to say much in this report since other reports on Eastern Europe have considerable detail of the work going on there. We hope that the reception of Mr. Dimitriy Levitskiy by the Western Presbytery to study for the ministry will eventually prove to be of great benefit to the advancing of the Gospel in the Ukraine.

I conclude my report by noting that despite occasional difficulties in our congregations overseas (and what congregation does not have its difficulties from time to time?) the Lord has been mindful of us and continues to bless us. The work of the Gospel continues – despite what seemed to be a great setback in 1989, we have been able to carry the Gospel far beyond our borders. May it all redound to the glory of God, of whom we must say: *“The Lord of us hath mindful been and He will bless us still”* (Psalm 115:16, metrical).

AUSTRALIAN REPORT

Rev. E. A. Rayner

SINCE the last report, I have continued to supply Sydney on a regular basis as in previous years. The yearly communion was put forward to the Easter holiday period since I did not need to go to Gisborne owing to the Rev. Neil Ross being there to assist. This gave the opportunity for more of the Grafton congregation to attend. The Sydney congregation continues much the same in numbers as last year. The extensions to the recently purchased manse have now been approved with an interest free loan from the Presbytery's Property Fund. The work will proceed when the chosen builder is available.

It was a privilege to have Mr. Ross to assist at the Grafton communion held at the usual time on the first Sabbath of May. There was one new communicant. We do hope and pray that others will be raised up by the Lord and then make a profession to take the place of the older generation when they pass on. Some of them are now quite aged. I have managed to assist at the

various communions in N.Z. as in the past. In addition I was in Singapore to supply for two Sabbaths. During my visit there some properties were looked at with a view to purchase. Since then other developments have taken place to secure a different property. We enjoyed the usual generous hospitality and fellowship with our friends there.

The sad decline of Christianity in Australia is of great concern. More people than ever now class themselves as having no religious affiliation; in fact more than a quarter of the population according to the latest government figures. In addition there is a significant increase in the number of those who follow Buddhism (1.9%) and Islam (1.5%). The decline of Christianity has no doubt much to do with the change in principles and practice adopted in so much of the professing Church.

Many people think of Australia in the light of penal settlement at the start of European settlement. Yet if we go back 100 years there were men of a sound Christian profession in public and business life. "Two very well known men in the early days of Australia were quite successful businessmen, also active Christians, deacons in the same church (Pitt Street Congregational) and philanthropists. One was John Fairfax of *Sydney Morning Herald* fame and whose favourite motto was 'Pray without ceasing'. The other was David Jones, a man of action, expressed by the press 'diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord'. He kept the Sabbath, the stores bearing his name today, ought to remember from whence they came. Among his last words on earth were from John 14, 'In my Father's house are many mansions', indicating his preparation for death" (*Faith and Freedom*, November 2003). Sadly not only has the nation forgotten the Sabbath but also the Church.

There is more and more reason to plead with the Psalmist, "*Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men*" (Psalm 12:1). May the Lord enable us in this part of the world to hold fast the form of sound words till it please Him to revive His work.

NEW ZEALAND AND SINGAPORE REPORT

Rev. J. A. T. van Dorp

AS my wife required two hip-replacement operations, I have not been able to visit other congregations this year as often as I did in the past. The usual communions, however, have been conducted in all congregations and the sacrament of baptism has also been dispensed in Gisborne and Auckland. The weekly Sabbath services and prayer meetings were maintained in all congregations with the help of Ken and Cornell van Kralingen in Auckland, Dick Vermeulen in Tauranga, Neil Hicklin and Hank Optland in Wellington, Jacob Geuze, Ken MacPherson, Peter Vermeulen and Jim Haringa in Gisborne, and Bernard Yong and Tham Wing Keong in Singapore.

Jim Haringa was lately elected an Elder in the Gisborne congregation and was ordained on the 16th November, whilst Dick Vermeulen, who until recently was an Elder in Wellington, has been elected in Tauranga and was inducted on the 22nd December.

There are no signs at all of the religious decline in New Zealand abating. In Gisborne this is evident in the establishment of both a Bahai Centre and a Buddhist Centre. In the Botanical Gardens one can frequently see either individuals or small groups of people in eastern meditation poses.

A more disturbing occurrence was the invitation extended by the Anglican Vicar in Gisborne to the retired liberal Anglican Bishop John Spong. The result was an evening of dialogue during which this heretical cleric was permitted to air his most unchristian views in a supposedly Christian environment. It is not difficult to guess the calibre of this gentleman's "Christianity" when it is revealed that he is on terms of friendship with the openly homosexual, newly-made USA bishop, Gene Robinson, and that his "theology" is very similar to that of Professor Lloyd Geering of New Zealand. These two men, together with Don Cupit, a British liberal, formed an unholy trio in the religious radio programme *Connexions*, which won an award some time ago.

Another most unsatisfactory development is the decision of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand, to express their view that there are no specific regulations barring the ordination of homosexuals. This is expected to open the way for a 40-year old lesbian woman to train for the ministry of the Presbyterian Church.

The small congregation in Singapore continue faithfully in the means of grace established in their midst. They commenced the year with a New Year's Day service and have been enabled to maintain a consistent and faithful witness on the side of the truth throughout the year. This includes the two services on the Sabbath, the prayer meeting on the Wednesday evening and the day of humiliation and prayer as appointed by the Synod. The communion has been settled for the first Sabbath in December – it being the holiday season means a little more time is available for the extra services.

This year was the fifth occasion that the Lord's Supper was dispensed on the Asian continent and the first occasion that a Church deputy was present during this solemn season.

There are times when hotel guests staying at Bayview Hotel join the Free Presbyterian worshippers for public worship, as there is a conspicuous notice in the foyer drawing attention to the services. Also, since Singapore is on the travel route from Britain to Australasia and New Zealand, there are occasionally visitors who are en route to Australasia and who know of the services through the Church magazine or the Church website. This may well be the last year that the services are conducted in Bayview Hotel, as at present negotiations are being made to purchase a suitable place for worship. The property under consideration is now registered for association use so that application is required for change of use to religious services. Procurement of the place will obviously be very helpful for the congregation.

There was much appreciation of Rev. Neil Ross' visit to these parts earlier this year and the Rev. Donald Ross' visit during the closing weeks of this year and into the New Year. Mr. D. Ross' last visit to this part of the vineyard was in 1984 and was occasioned when I suffered a period of ill health as the result of a heart attack. This time Mr. Ross required hospital treatment himself in Singapore, when he suffered an attack of cellulitis. It just shows that we are frail creatures and there is much need that younger labourers be raised up to continue the work which will not be completed until the last of the flock has been gathered in. When Satan does his utmost mustering his forces of liberals, let us pray the Lord of the harvest, who is the hearer of prayer, to send forth His labourers, for the harvest is great but the labourers are few.

EASTERN EUROPE REPORT

Rev. D. A. Ross

IN the good mercy of the Most High, the small gathering of our Church people in Odessa remains steadfast in the manner in which they began. The congregation continues to meet every Sabbath and during the week, when a sermon is read or a portion from a suitable book. They have read McCheyne's book of sermons several times because of the shortage of suitable works in Russian. They also read Boston's *Fourfold State* and Calvin's *Institutes*.

There is a lack of sermons in Russian and indeed of sound Calvinistic literature. However, this want is being redressed by various Christian groups which appreciate the need for Reformed literature. We are doing what we can, although it is a slow and painstaking task. Some other groups are making greater progress in producing sound literature.

Our first communion was held in Odessa last May. In the kind providence of the Lord, the appointed Kirk Session, which consisted of Messrs, Kenneth MacLeod, Edward Ross and myself, was able to visit Odessa for two Sabbaths in April and May. On the first Sabbath we had the normal services and the following Sabbath was the communion Sabbath. We had all the preparatory services and, as already reported in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, there were two new communicants received – Mr. Igor Zadoroshniy and his wife Tanya. Mr. Dimitriy Levetskiy and his wife Inna were already communicants on the Laide Congregation communion roll and were transferred to the Odessa communion roll. The work of preparing a communion table and benches and a small reading desk was done while we were there. Since then a local carpenter has supplied a more substantial table and seats. There have been also considerable renovations to the room where the services are held, making it more suitable for meeting each Sabbath. It is hoped, God willing, that the next communion will be in June of this year, when the Rev. Neil Ross and Messrs. Kenneth MacLeod and Edward Ross will attend.

Over the communion season there were twelve people in attendance. However, this is not possible every Sabbath since there are some who have difficulty in attending. The church members are in a position to attend regularly along with their children. There has been no growth in the congregation over a number of years. One reason, in part at least, is because at this point in time we are not registered with the government and it is not expedient to advertise the church service in Odessa. Not being registered and at the same time holding services could possibly cause problems with the local authorities.

Thankfully we have been able to resume the process of registration which we hope will be granted by the authorities. A lawyer whom we have employed to facilitate registration has informed us that to function fully as a religious body it is necessary to register separately as a charity and as a church. A charity cannot engage in church work and a church cannot engage in charity work. The lawyer is being paid as work proceeds. The last amount paid was £280, but will be considerably more by the time registration is completed.

Translation of Rev. Donald MacFarlane's sermons continues at a rather slow pace. The translation of Rev. Robert Shaw's *Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith* is now complete. Two groups of editors have been engaged in editing the work. We contacted a third party, the "Reformation Society" in Moscow, which pointed out the need for further improvement in theological precision and grammatical style and suggested a further editing. This we have agreed to, and it will take two months to complete. Thereafter we should be ready to go to print. The cost of translation and editing runs to a few thousand pounds but the Lord has graciously supplied this need. We have completed the translation of two leaflets, *Pentecostalism* and *Seventh Day Adventism*. Mrs. Inna Levitskiy has now translated 29 of the Psalms into metre and supplied music for some of these.

Since we published the *Westminster Confession of Faith* in Russian, a number of words have been discovered in it which need improvement. This makes us more aware than ever what great care is necessary in translation work and the final editing of any translation. There can be disagreement between the translator and the editors over certain words. It is not an easy matter at times to come to a decision but, usually, after discussion, the final decision is left with the translator.

There is a growing demand for the literature we produce and we receive many expressions of appreciation for the literature we distribute. The Director of the Reformation Society in Russia says: "We are grateful to you for your faithful adherence to Reformation endeavours in Ukraine and Russia throughout years and years."

Our principle activity is, of course, sending Bibles to many different people, particularly in the Ukraine, since we are stationed there. Igor Zadoroshniy continues to be the person engaged in this important work. For the year 2003 he has distributed 1,000 Bibles and with 987 of these he sent a *Shorter Catechism* and a selection of tracts. He also distributes the *Westminster*

Confession of Faith booklet as well as the volume that includes the Catechisms and other documents. Fifty-two copies of the *Confession* and 80 *Shorter Catechisms* were donated to the Moscow Christian Library. We also obtained Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in Russian and have distributed five sets of these three volume editions. From the Church Office in Glasgow, under the direction of Miss Norma Morrison, a considerable amount of Bibles and literature have been distributed to Russia, Ukraine, Hungary, Romania and other countries. In all, 303 Bibles, 492 pieces of literature (such as the *Shorter Catechism*, the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, *The Apostolic Church*), 3,230 Gospels of John, 3,300 tracts and some Bibles and literature in English have been forwarded to the Ukraine.

At the end of 2003, with the help of others, Igor Zadoroshniy distributed ten thousand *Words of Life* calendars provided by the Trinitarian Bible Society. These were distributed to various churches in Odessa, and government institutions and offices. We go on with this distribution work with a deep awareness of its futility if the Lord do not bless it. Without that, all labour is in vain. We know, however, that the purpose and promise of the Lord is that the work will not be in vain, as the parable of the sower amply demonstrates.

We were able to go with only one load of aid to Odessa. Our normal run to Romania had to be cancelled because of the volume of other Eastern Europe work. We were glad that Messrs. Edward Ross and Christopher Lamont were able to take a load of medical aid to Odessa Children's Hospital. A journey of this sort costs in the region of £2,000. However, the medical equipment we bring is worth considerably more than the expense involved and is deeply appreciated by the hospital authorities. The last load also included Bibles and Christian literature, some of which went to the hospital. We do not engage in these works of charity simply to show kindness to those in need, although that is proper. It is always with a view that this work will lead to doors being opened for the Gospel.

We were thankful that Rev. David Campbell was able to give two Sabbaths to the congregation in Odessa. He had the usual services and during the week gave a number of lectures on different subjects. His visit was very much appreciated by our people there. The congregation is very isolated, and more especially because they have taken a strong stand against Arminianism. Some Arminian churches are very opposed to our distributing the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, and they regard Mr. Igor Zadoroshniy as a heretic. We are very grateful that in such circumstances, Rev. D. Campbell was able to hold services and lectures. Mr. Campbell also chaired the Field Committee meeting there and was able to assist with the registration procedures and other matters.

Dimitriy Levetskiy appeared before the Kirk Session in May of last year and applied to be received as a divinity student in the Free Presbyterian Church. The Kirk Session saw fit to recommend him to the Presbytery. He has now been accepted by his Presbytery as a student of the Church to study for the ministry. He continues to study English and History.

There are Calvinists in the Ukraine and outwith who take an interest in our work. One can imagine that our small congregation in their isolation do have leanings toward such, but they do see the differences. I believe they appreciate the firm stand we endeavour to make as a Church. However, they do need to be prayed for; that they would be steadfast and unmovable in this good work in Odessa which the Lord has begun through our Church.

We are deeply indebted to all who in any way contributed to the furthering of the Gospel and works of charity in Eastern Europe. The Trinitarian Bible Society kindly continues to give grants of calendars and Bibles. A person in Canada has now for a number of years donated Russian Bibles on a regular basis. The Inverness ladies have again helped greatly in the preparation of aid and others too numerous to mention have contributed toward the work. Thanks are also extended to those who continue to donate the money without which the work could not carry on – as it does to this very day.

It is a marvel that lands which not so long ago were curtained off from the rest of the world and the Word of God have had that steely curtain taken away by the Most High. We believe He surely must have a great purpose to advance the gospel of His grace in these vast lands so long denied the truth. “*He hath done all things well*” (Mark 7:37).

REPORT ON VISIT TO ODESSA

Rev. D. Campbell

IN response to a request from the interim Moderator of the Odessa Kirk Session, Rev. D. A. Ross, I agreed to spend two Sabbaths in Odessa and accordingly flew out on Tuesday, 7th October 2003, from Stornoway, and on Wednesday 8th from Heathrow Airport. I was met at Borispol Airport outside Kiev by Mr. Dimitriy Levitskiy and after a short wait took a bus to Odessa. This over-night bus trip of about 8 hours was not a pleasant experience, as noise from videos being shown, together with poor quality roads, made any proper sleep impossible. However, in the Lord’s kindness, we arrived safely in Odessa at 5.20 a.m. and were met by Mr. Igor Zadorozhniy, who took us to his home where I was to stay for the duration of my trip. At the time, Mr. Levitskiy and his young family were staying with Mr. Zadorozhniy and his wife Tanya while they awaited a move into their new home at the end of October. As a result, I was able to get to know both families during my stay. I was very warmly received and treated with every hospitality and kindness by my hosts, for which I am most appreciative. It did not take me long to become acquainted with my surroundings and, however different from home, I was soon very comfortable and felt much at ease.

In all, I conducted six services and gave two lectures during my visit. I took a prayer meeting on the Friday evening after my arrival and gave a brief

lecture on Saturday on the Second Coming of Christ. The services on the Sabbaths were an hour apart, for the benefit of a family who had come from the other side of the city. There are four attending from this family besides the families already mentioned, making a total of ten. I conducted a prayer meeting on the evening of Wednesday 15th and gave another lecture, on the Regulative Principle, on the following Saturday. All the services and lectures were translated by Mr. Levitskiy, who has a good grasp of spoken English and maintained a flow of speech in translating to a commendable level. The services were very attentively listened to and on several occasions there were prolonged periods of discussion afterwards. The room in which the services are held has all the appearance of a church since the provision of a well constructed pulpit and the neat rows of comfortable chairs. It is hoped that this room will soon be extended by a couple of metres.

Together with my preaching duties, which were my primary reason for visiting Odessa, I was asked to engage in some other activities associated with our Mission. Accordingly, on Monday 13th October, accompanied by Mr. Dimitriy Levitskiy and Mrs. Tanya Zadorozhniy, I visited the children's hospital which is regularly supplied with aid from Scotland. I was greeted warmly by the head of the pathology department of newborn babies, Dr. Torbinskaya, who took me through the department showing me the use made of items brought from Scotland. The poverty and lack of proper resources in the hospital department is very clear to see when one visits and the help given is much appreciated. I also had a chance to meet some of the mothers and their new-born children. Before leaving I purchased a quantity of medicines for the department from the in-house pharmacy with funds given for that purpose. A little British money goes a long way in Ukraine and this small gift was gratefully received.

On Thursday, 16th October, we arranged a visit with the lawyer whom Mr. Ross had met previously, Mr. Vladimir Popov. It was hoped that this visit would have got the process of registration as a charity finally moving, but one further delay was encountered. This has now been settled and progress towards registration is being made. As requested by Mr. Ross, I also chaired a meeting of the Field Committee in which the present situation of our group and its endeavours were discussed. Clearly our witness is very small and, compared with the numbers attracted to other organisations, we may be deemed an irrelevancy. Yet the Word of God and the Westminster standards are being sent out in large quantities and we can hope and pray that He who alone can bless the truth will follow these endeavours with a rich and abiding blessing.

I left Odessa on Monday, 20th October, at 7.30 a.m. After another 8 hour bus trip, which enabled me to see some of the country through which I was passing, we arrived at Borispol Airport. Ukraine is a very flat and fertile land, at one time producing bread for the whole of the USSR. However, poverty is very evident and it was most disturbing to see so many aged women huddled in the cold at road junctions trying to sell miserable quantities of produce to passing motorists. Corruption and deception are sadly only too common in this

land and as a foreigner I was grateful for the company of Mr. Levitskiy, who kept me in mind of the dangers during our travels. Together with Mr. Levitskiy, I waited for five and a half hours before I was able to go through the customs control in order to board my flight. My flight left for London at 8.20 p.m., and landed safely three and a half hours later. Mr. Levitskiy had another two hours to wait before taking another eight-hour overnight bus trip home. These trips are exhausting and Mr. Levitskiy should be heartily thanked for agreeing to come as a companion to visitors from Scotland. I arrived home in Tolsta on the following day, Tuesday 21st, exactly two weeks after departing. I have much cause to acknowledge the kindness of the Lord to me in my journey and during my stay in a foreign land. I was very conscious of the prayers which went with me and cannot but express my gratitude for this. The prayers of God's people at home are a valuable contribution to our Missionary endeavours in Ukraine. I should also include a word of thanks to Miss Norma Morrison for arranging my flights and my visa. Being able to book well in advance meant that the total cost of my flight from Stornoway via Glasgow and London, returning by the same route, was only £311. When one compares this with the cost of some flights from Lewis to the mainland, it was felt that we obtained a very good deal indeed.

At present the Psalms are being translated into metre by Mrs. Inna Levitskiy, who has significant musical talent. The singing of the Psalms by our friends was very attractive to listen to, and several Scottish tunes are used. Thus far, about 25 Psalms have been completed and while I was with them, Psalm 80 was added to the collection. Among many concerns expressed by our people in Odessa was the need for literature which exposes the idolatry and heresy of the Orthodox Church. Visiting a monastery with our friends and seeing the many Orthodox churches in the city, I was struck by the Satanic influence and darkness which prevail. Some tract dealing with this brand of false religion would benefit our people and could be distributed by them among the poor souls in bondage to the Orthodox Church. Our friends have necessary contact with Orthodoxy in areas such as family bereavements and, in questions arising from the consequent funeral rituals, there is need for direction and guidance.

There is much reason to be hopeful about our Mission work in Odessa. We cannot forget that, "*Except the Lord do build the house, the builders loose their pain*". We are thankful that the establishment of Christ's Church is not a work of man and that Christ governs His own kingdom in every part of the world. We can be encouraged by the fact that Mr. Igor Zadorozhniy has a very large number of contacts all over the country and many of them profess to be sympathetic to the Reformed Faith which he is instrumental in spreading far and wide. It is even more heartening that we now hope to have a native Ukrainian training for the Ministry of the gospel among his own people. This is the greatest need in Ukraine and is, we trust, a sign that the Lord has a purpose of mercy towards sinners in that land.

Although there are few attending our group at present, this can be easily accounted for. Firstly our unregistered state actually makes preaching illegal

and this has frightened off a significant number. It also means that our group cannot be engaged in any work which advertises our existence in the city of Odessa itself. A third reason is that the local Churches who preach Arminian doctrine have very emphatically denounced our work and witness to their people and any work among them has to overcome that obstacle. Even here, however, there is reason to be hopeful. Mr. Zadorozhniy showed me several recent letters from correspondents which indicated a real hearty commitment to Calvinism. Among those with whom he has contact are seminary students and Baptist pastors who, although forbidden to receive the *Westminster Confession*, are professing an adherence to it. Only the Lord can effect a work of Reformation in Ukraine, but the seed that is presently being sown by our little group is, we trust, not without some evidence of growth here and there. "*Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days*" (Ecclesiastes 11:1).

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO CHESLEY AND TEXAS

Rev. N. M. Ross

LAST November I found the people of our congregations in Chesley, Ontario, and Richmond, Texas, in good heart, and faithfully holding fast.

On my arrival in Toronto on the last day of October I was kindly met by Mr. Gilbert Zekveld, one of the Chesley elders, who drove me to the Chesley manse, which was to be my comfortable abode for a fortnight.

It was a pleasure once more to meet the people of the congregation after the Sabbath morning service. Having been very generously loaned a car by Mr. Hank Bouman, I was able to visit them in their homes in the following days, and was the grateful recipient of their homely hospitality. Also, I visited friends in both the the hospital and the old folks' home in the town.

During my second week there we had a communion season. The attendances at the services were encouraging (some friends came from Texas, Indiana, and Hamilton), and reached 45 by Friday evening, when we had the fellowship meeting at which ten men were called to speak.

The communion Sabbath was a "solemn holy day" in the congregation, when we kept in remembrance the death of the Saviour, and had, we believe, some measure of the refreshing presence of the Lord.

It was with reluctance that we said goodbye to one another after the Monday morning service. Mr. David Kuiper called for me at 6 a.m. on Tuesday and helpfully drove me back to Toronto, on my way to Texas.

That afternoon I was warmly greeted at Houston Airport by Mr. Jim Moline, who took me to Brookshire. There, he and his wife generously set me up in a comfortable mobile home near their own home. Next evening we all gathered in the Ervine home for a prayer meeting at which I preached.

It was most convenient that I (and the elders who later arrived for the communion) had the use of a hired car. I drove on Saturday to Santa Fe where it was my pleasure to be well looked after for a few days in the welcoming home of Mr. and Mrs. Ernie Smith and their family.

Attendances on the first Sabbath in the Richmond church were 25. The absence of Mr. Lyle Smith and his wife and their six children in Scotland, as he studies for the ministry, has significantly reduced the numbers.

On Tuesday evening the prayer meeting was held in a very suitable conference room in a bank in Santa Fe. I preached on “*Good hope through grace*” to 18 people, including five from outwith the congregation.

The communion season in the congregation commenced on Thursday, by which time I had moved to a motel in Rosenberg (five minutes’ drive from the church in Richmond), where accommodation was thoughtfully provided by the congregation for myself and elders Mr. A. MacPherson from Scotland and Mr. D. Kuiper from Canada. This saved us having to travel the long distances between the church and the homes of the people. Our kind friends nevertheless unstintingly put in food for us, including cooked meals.

We had a profitable meeting on Friday when four men were called to “speak to the question” (which was based on Jeremiah 23:6: “*This is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*”). On Saturday it was encouraging to both the Kirk Session and congregation that a young man, Mr. James Smith, was received by the Kirk Session as a member in full communion.

A congregation of almost 35 gathered on Sabbath, when the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was administered. We sought to bless the name of God for His loving kindness to us, for it was indeed good to be there.

The elders and I spent Monday at the Motel doing, among other things, congregational business. The Kirk-Session decided to hold an election of Deacons in the congregation, with the hope of an ordination prior to the April communion. The Deacons’ Court regretfully accepted Mr. Ervine’s resignation from the congregational treasurership, and expressed its gratitude for his diligent and punctual discharge of his duties. It was agreed also that Mr. Mark Smith be appointed as the new treasurer. These decisions were announced to the congregation at the end of the evening thanksgiving service, after which we regretfully parted from one another.

We record our gratitude to them for their warm friendship, Christian fellowship and open-handed hospitality – all flowing from Gospel ties. Our heart’s desire and prayer to God is that they might be abundantly blessed with spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO SINGAPORE, AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

Rev. D. A. Ross

MY wife and I left for Singapore on Tuesday, 2nd December, 2003. After a delay of three hours at Heathrow Airport we eventually got on our way, arriving in time for the communion, which began on the 4th December. We were met in Singapore by elders, Mr. Bernard Yong and Mr. Wing Keong, and their wives. We also met up with the Rev. Johannes van Dorp, who had been in Singapore for the previous week. From the comments of the congregation, it seems to have been a profitable communion, and it was a pleasure to witness the two Singaporean elders attending for the first time on their own to the duties of the communion. The attendance was in the region of 20 each day. During our stay we were in a hotel near the place of worship – this was a room in a hotel – and we were shown bountiful and cheerful kindness by the elders and their wives.

On Tuesday the 9th we were to take our leave for Australia. Although Mr. van Dorp took his departure, my wife and I were unable to do so as I suffered an attack of erysipelas cellulitis. This kept me in Singapore for another week as well as in hospital for a few days. I was glad that my wife was with me to help – not least to rearrange our flights. At this time the kindness of the elders and their wives was exceedingly appreciated. In the good providence of the Most High, I was able to take the service in Singapore on the Day of Humiliation and Prayer, which had been arranged for me to take in Auckland, and to take the Sabbath services in Singapore instead of in Gisborne as planned.

We bade our farewells to our Singaporean friends, to whom we became very attached, and flew to Sydney, Australia. We arrived there on Tuesday, 16th December, to be met by an old friend, Mr. Calvin Mackenzie, whom I knew as a young lad in Gisborne. We were kindly entertained in his home by himself and his wife and family. I conducted the prayer meeting that evening and it was good to be there and to meet those whom I knew from the past, and others I had not met before. The Sydney people have had their disappointments because of some families coming and going with some disturbance to our people, but they continue to this day, which is cause for much thankfulness.

On Thursday, 18th December, we were up at 4 a.m. to travel to New Zealand, and Mr. Calvin MacKenzie kindly took us to Sydney Airport. After arriving safely at Auckland we took a flight to Tauranga where the communion was to begin that day. We were met at Tauranga Airport by Mr. and Mrs. van Dorp, Mr. Dick Vermuelen, and Mr. Peter Vermuelen and his wife. We were comfortably housed in a motel, along with Mr. and Mrs. van Dorp. Here again we had a profitable communion, although there were not many in attendance – about fifteen on average at each of the services. After the Monday service, Mr. Dick Vermuelen was inducted as an elder of the congregation. Tauranga congregation has not been long in existence. It was a

great pleasure to be there and to see that another place of worship has opened up in New Zealand.

On Monday, 22nd December, Mr. Dick Vermuelen kindly drove us to Gisborne, arriving late that evening at the home of Mr. and Mrs. van Dorp, where we were well looked after. Next day we met many of the congregation in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Vermuelen and were kindly entertained there that evening. On the Wednesday I took the prayer meeting and met others of the congregation. I was disappointed that this was my only visit to Gisborne – the congregation there bringing back fond memories of my time under the ministry of the late Rev. William MacLean. While a number of the congregation whom I knew have now gone to the eternal world, and others have left the Church, it is encouraging that those who continue in the congregation adhere to the testimony of the Church. This is no small matter in a day when many forsake the truth.

On Tuesday, 25th December, Mr. Dick Vermuelen took us to Hawkes Bay, where we met up with Miss Jocelyn Cox, with whom we spent many pleasant years working on the Mission field in Africa. Until we left the following day we received much kindness from Miss Cox. In a small hall, not far from where she was, we held a prayer meeting, at which the usual address was given and Mr. D. Vermuelen prayed and led the singing.

The following day we headed for Wellington to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Neil Hicklin. Here also we enjoyed much hospitality as well as the company of the large Hicklin family. On the Sabbath two services were held, and we had some visitors at the evening one. On Monday, Mr. Dick Vermuelen took his leave of us and returned to Tauranga, as did Mr. and Mrs. Peter Vermuelen, who returned to Gisborne. On Tuesday evening we held another prayer meeting.

We bade our goodbyes to the Hicklin family on the last day of the year, and Mr. Hicklin kindly took us to Wellington Airport. We flew to Sydney, then took a flight by a rather small plane to Grafton, via Tamara, where we were met by Mrs. E. Rayner. We enjoyed much hospitality in the Grafton manse and, indeed, from a number of families in the congregation who had us in their homes. On New Year's Day I took the customary service and then on the Sabbath the two normal services. In the Grafton congregation there is a large number of children and they, as well as the adults, seemed to listen very attentively to the preaching.

On Tuesday, 6th January, Mr. and Mrs. Rayner took me to Coffs Harbour Airport, from where I flew to Sydney, and then to Melbourne, where I met Mr. Briggs and two of his sons who took me to their hospitable home in Moreware, about an hour's journey by car from Geelong. Here I met with Mrs. Briggs and one other son. I left my wife in Grafton in a scorching heat of 45°C. In Geelong it had plummeted to 17°, which was a great relief to me from the Grafton heat. The purpose of my visit was to help the Briggs family find out more about the Free Presbyterian Church, before they would make any commitment to worship among us. There are some differences between us and I cannot see

(unless these are resolved) that they would be happy among us as a Church. I am grateful that they paid for my fare. Here I tried to preach on the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, using particularly the words, "*God be merciful to me the sinner*".

On Tuesday, 8th January, the Briggs took me to Melbourne Airport and we took our farewells. I arrived safely at Sydney Airport where I met up with my wife. We were met by Martina and Hannah van Praag, who took us to their parents' home in Riverstone, about two hours' drive from the airport. In the van Praag home we obtained considerable rest and were exceptionally well looked after. We also visited Mrs. Shaw, Hurstville, Sydney, who is, of course, well known to our people and is a faithful supporter of the Cause of Christ among us. In Riverstone I took the Sabbath services and prayer meeting on the Monday. We were invited to all the homes of the congregation and were very kindly received.

On Tuesday, 13th January, we again arrived at Sydney Airport, this time going in the direction of Auckland for the communion season there. In Auckland, Mr. Ken van Kraligen and his family and Mrs. Flora Campbell met us. In Auckland we were comfortably settled into Manukau Motel, where also Mr. Rayner and Mr. van Dorp and their wives resided over the communion.

On the Wednesday I took the prayer meeting. Thereafter the communion services followed, Mr. Rayner and myself assisting Mr. van Dorp, the interim Moderator of the congregation. Of the fifteen men who could have spoken to the question at the fellowship meeting, ten did so. The men were from throughout the congregations of New Zealand, Australia and as far away as Singapore. I felt it was a profitable occasion, as did others, as the men gave marks of grace, based on Psalm 2:11-12. It is truly wonderful to see this good custom practiced in distant lands, and it highlights the text, "*They that feared the Lord spake often one with another: and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name*" (Malachi 3:16). I also found it very profitable to be under the preaching of Mr. Rayner and Mr. van Dorp. We enjoyed much kindness from families in the congregation but were unable to accept all invitations to homes. After such a pleasant communion, Monday was a sad parting time. In the afternoon, the Australian and New Zealand Presbytery met as planned and Church matters were discussed and decisions taken.

On Tuesday, 20th January, Mr. Ken van Kraligen kindly ran us to the airport on our way to Sydney and then Singapore. Mr. Bernard Yong was also at the airport returning home to Singapore but we had to follow on a different flight. Eventually we were on our way to Sydney, but because of a delay in Auckland we missed our connection to Singapore and thus eventually arrived in Singapore at 3 a.m. There Mr. Bernard Yong and his wife were kindly and patiently waiting for us, and they took us to our hotel where we got some much needed rest. Once again I was able to take a prayer meeting in Singapore. There are some problems in the congregation but we trust that it will work out

for the good of the Cause of Christ there. Again kindness upon kindness was showered on us. Mr. and Mrs. Yong were able to see us off at the airport on the final leg of our journey. We said our final farewells, hoping to meet again in connection with the glorious Cause of Christ which we all seek to uphold. We had an extremely turbulent flight on our way to London. We were told that the pilot was able to steer clear of the worst – I cannot imagine what that would be like after our experience! We had a smooth changeover from one flight to the other in London and arrived safely in Glasgow, on time to be driven home to Laide. While it was a great pleasure to be among the Lord's people in the different congregations, it was good to be among the little flock in Laide once again.

Despite problems which from time to time arise in our congregations in Singapore, Australia and New Zealand, it was apparent that our people there continue to appreciate the testimony of the Free Presbyterian Church. While the APC movement had an adverse effect on all congregations in Australia and New Zealand, it appears that the Gisborne congregation suffered more than others. Many of the young people I knew from my previous connection with Gisborne have gone to other churches or have become churchless. The Gisborne congregation is now made up of older people and they feel, and will continue to feel, the mischief done by the APC. Nevertheless they are firmly set on upholding the principles of the Word of God.

The APC movement also had an adverse effect on the Auckland congregation, but wonderfully the congregation now has a good number of young families. We hope and pray that it will be likewise in Gisborne. The senior elder in Auckland, Mr. Ken van Kraligen, had to go to Sydney for medical treatment. We hope the Lord will spare him to continue in the useful work he has been engaged in for many years.

Since my last visit to the Antipodes, nearly 20 years ago, there have been two new congregations formed, namely Tauranga and Singapore. The services in Tauranga are kept by Mr. Dick Vermeulen and about a dozen people meet from Sabbath to Sabbath. It has been difficult to hold midweek prayer meetings but it is intended to have these shortly on a regular basis. There is undoubted harmony among the people there and an appreciation of the Gospel. As Tauranga is a large and growing town, there is the prospect that others might be brought to worship in the congregation.

Singapore is the other new congregation and there Mr. Bernard Yong keeps the services. About a dozen people now meet from Sabbath to Sabbath and they are altogether desirous for the Gospel. They give a warm reception to the Gospel and to those who preach it, and have a gracious determination to be constant in the things of Christ. How we need grace to continue thus.

There have been difficulties from time to time in the various congregations in the Presbytery there. Some of these come from persons dissatisfied with other denominations who seek to make their spiritual home in the Free Presbyterian Church. Often, in God's providence, there have been great gains for our Church from people who have come from other churches, but

sometimes there are others who push extreme views and if they do not get their own way they move on. It seems to me that some of these people are righteous overmuch, and the truth is that they could have a very unsettling effect on some of our people and would do the Cause of Christ no good. What need for the Church to be wisely exercised in these circumstances and to patiently wait on the Lord to be the breaker-up of our way and lead us to right decisions.

I have to record the Lord's gracious care of us in all our travels; of being given the great privilege to preach the everlasting Gospel to so many people, and to have fellowship in the bonds of the Gospel which is a precious privilege in itself. I have already mentioned the great kindness of the congregations and people. There is, too, their genuine appreciation of the Gospel and visiting ministers who come among them. We hope, therefore, that in the not too distant future, the Church will be in the position to send yet another deputy among them.

*“The Lord Himself did give the Word,
The Word abroad did spread;
Great was the company of them
The same who published.”*

(Psalm 68:11)

TRAINING OF THE MINISTRY COMMITTEE'S REPORT Convener: Rev. D. J. MacDonald

At its meeting in March the Western Presbytery received Dimitriy Levitskiy, Odessa, as a student studying for the ministry of the Church. It is hoped that the Committee will be able to recommend a course for him to the Synod.

The other students studied Systematic Theology and Apologetics with Rev. J. MacLeod, Stornoway. On completing his exit examinations, Mr. J. Bruce Jardine will be ready to be taken on trials by his Presbytery. Mr. Donald MacDonald will proceed to Leverburgh to study with Rev. K. D. MacLeod, tutor; Mr. A. B. MacLean will go to Edinburgh for the last year of his course with Rev. H. Cartwright, tutor in Greek and cognate subjects. Mr. Lyle Smith will also attend the classes in Edinburgh. We recommend students and tutors to the prayers of the Lord's people hoping that they will be able ministers of the New Testament.

The Committee hopes to have a full programme for the annual Theological Conference in place in time for the Synod. The Conference will be held in Glasgow on Tuesday and Wednesday, 7th and 8th December 2004, DV.

THEOLOGICAL TUTOR'S REPORT

Rev. John MacLeod

AS arranged, the students assembled in the Vestry of the Stornoway Church on Tuesday, 9th September 2003, and the session to be devoted to the study of Systematic Theology, Apologetics and Scripture began. This being his first time in this position, the Tutor was as conscious of entering uncharted territory as his students were, but we set out together in the hope that we would be carried through the session and that all the mountains before us would be surmounted. Hitherto, that has been the case. The burden of preparing orderly courses for the study of Theology and Apologetics was much eased as a result of the Rev. Donald MacLean making available to me the series of lectures which he had prepared over his long period of service as Tutor. These Lectures, having been typed out by Dr. John Mitchell, as a labour of love, were photocopied, wire-bound and then issued to the students. My debt to the Rev. Donald MacLean is therefore great. The students attending the Classes were, in alphabetical order, Mr. John Bruce Jardine, Mr. Donald MacDonald, Mr. Alasdair Beaton MacLean and Mr. Lyle Smith.

The Class was opened with prayer, after which we endeavoured, bearing in mind the importance of maintaining contact – however tenuous it might be – with the original languages read, on alternate days, a verse from 1 Timothy in the Greek New Testament and a verse in Hebrew from the book of Psalms. For interest, we read what Ellicott had to say on the Greek Text and what Alexander had to say on the Hebrew. We also, in our own time, over the course of the session, systematically read through Volume 1 of Beveridge's translation of Calvin's Institutes and, before turning our attention to the main subjects, we briefly discussed what had been read.

Systematic Theology

In our Theological studies we made use, principally, of A. A. Hodge's *Outlines of Theology* and Louis Berkhof's *Systematic Theology* referring, as we went along, to other authors and works which shed further light on particular doctrines as they came under our consideration. Among these authors we may mention James Durham, George Smeaton and Thomas Halyburton. Systematic Theology is such a vast subject that, in the time allotted, we hardly went beyond getting our feet wet in the shallows of a boundless ocean of mystery. It is to be hoped that as a result of our studies together we have benefited spiritually and that our desire to enter more and more into "the things of the Spirit of God" has increased.

Apologetics

It would appear that there is at present a dearth of text books written from the Classical Apologetics viewpoint and therefore suited to our need. On certain topics we consulted *Apologetics to the Glory of God*, by John Frame, but with

care in view of the author's bias toward the Presuppositional approach. However off-putting the title, John Blanchard's book, *Does God believe in Atheists?*, is a mine of information and was found to be up-to-date and helpful in many ways. That can be said without subscribing to everything that has come from his pen. We relied heavily on the Rev. D. MacLean's Lectures, supplemented by certain portions of John Gerstner's *Reasons for Faith* and among other books consulted were B. B. Warfield's *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* and J. K. van Baalen's *Chaos of Cults*, the latter being particularly helpful in our study of Modern Cults and Heresies.

Scripture

The portion of Scripture prescribed was Job to Malachi.

The students applied themselves to their studies with commendable diligence and to lead them in their studies was for me a great pleasure and privilege. I have to thank them for so willingly supplying pulpits throughout the bounds of the Outer Isles Presbytery. We pray that they may be spared to adorn the office of the ministry in years to come and that He who is the great Head of the Church would keep them faithful in declaring all the counsel of God and also faithful in maintaining the testimony and witness of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

WELFARE OF YOUTH COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Rev. D. A. Ross

BY the time this report is presented to the Synod, our Youth Conference will have been held, God willing, in Craibstone Agricultural College, Aberdeen. We attended this conference centre in 1998, and found it most suitable, not least for its convenient location for many of our young people.

A number of ministers were asked to give lectures on different topics selected by the committee. Some, for various reasons, were not able to attend on this occasion but we were glad when the following ministers agreed to provide lectures on these selected topics:

1. ***The Role of Women in Society – Some Biblical Principles***
Rev. N. M. Ross
2. ***Eastern Europe – The Free Presbyterian Mission and the Religious Background***
Rev. D. Campbell
3. ***The Providence of God – The Doctrine and How it Applies to Our Lives***
Rev. H. M. Cartwright

4. *Sites of Religious Interest around Aberdeen – A Historical Tour*

Rev. D. W. B. Somerset

5. *A Church Unique in Christendom – Some Free Presbyterian Church Principles*

Rev. R. MacLeod

6. *A Barnabas and Boanerges – James Kidd of Aberdeen, 1761-1834*

Rev. D. W. B. Somerset

At last year's conference, held at Inverness Youth Hostel, there were 68 present, which included speakers and two housemothers. The numbers attending have been fairly consistent for some time – about 65 to 70 for most years. In places where non-resident members are able to attend, the numbers tend to be over 70. We hope that even more of our young people will attend these profitable events.

We are indebted to the Rev. Angus Smith for the news of the conference in the *Young People's Magazine*. He wrote of the usefulness of the subjects dealt with, the good response on the part of the young people, and the friendly and relaxed atmosphere. On the Wednesday evening, all the conference members and the speakers attended the prayer meeting in the Inverness congregation at which Mr. Smith preached. All the conference lectures are available on CD, which can be obtained from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom for £6.00. We are indebted to Mr. James W. MacLeod for producing the CDs.

We are thankful that so many parents take sufficient interest in the conference to encourage their children to go. It is indeed a great pleasure to have them gather together to hear and discuss what is profitable for time and eternity. Some parents take the trouble to ask us how their children behaved during their time at the conference. We have nothing but praise for the young people who attend. They are suitably dressed for the occasion, mannerly and most orderly. Indeed it is an unusual sight in our day to see such a gathering of young women modestly dressed and with their hair as the Word of God requires. It is not uncommon to have staff remark on how well behaved and well presented they are. While our young people are at the conference there is always a happy atmosphere among them, no doubt due in part to meeting up with old friends and finding new ones; but also due to the opportunity to hear and discuss moral and spiritual issues. There is always a degree of sadness on parting. We trust that in the good pleasure of the Most High these occasions of meeting together will prove spiritually beneficial.

We cannot conclude the report of the Conference without yet again mentioning the necessary and useful work of the housemothers, Mrs. Catherine Ross and Miss Margaret MacAskill. Indeed, housemothers are best able to handle the needs that arise with young folk and give good advice. Certainly the conference would be the poorer without them.

While the conference caters for young people from the age of 16 upward, the younger children are instructed through the Scripture and Catechism Exercises. There continues to be a reasonable response from families in the Church and beyond. We are exceedingly grateful to the six ladies who continue with this work. These are: Mrs. N. M. Ross, who attends to the overseas exercises for all sections; Miss C. MacQueen, who sets and corrects the Senior Section; Mrs. J. Hymers, the Intermediate Section; Mrs. C. M. Sutherland the Junior Section; Mrs. Sheena Campbell the Upper Primary Section; and Mrs. R. J. Dickie the Lower Primary Section.

Miss Shona Gillies, who set and corrected questions and answers for the Senior Section for the long period of almost twenty years, has retired from the work and handed over to Miss C. MacQueen, who previously did the Upper Primary Section. In place of Miss MacQueen, Mrs. Sheena Campbell has kindly taken over. We are very grateful to Miss Gillies for her long period of service performed so willingly and efficiently. The committee has presented her with an inscribed Bible as a token of its appreciation for her valuable work.

Over the years, Bible Reading Cards have been provided for young children. These, if duly followed, lead them through the Bible in four years. It is necessary to reprint these and we trust they will continue to help the children and young people to be steadfast in the all-important activity of reading the Scriptures daily. May their reading of the Word of God, along with learning the truth through the Scripture and Catechism Exercises and Conferences, yet prove to be to them "*the power of God unto salvation*" (Romans 1:16).

BALLIFEARY RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. J. R. Tallach

THE year 2003 was, providentially, a quiet and uneventful year for Ballifeary Care Home.

We record with sadness the passing of Miss Catherine Anne MacKenzie on 11th January.

The bed occupancy was 99.8% through the year and the waiting list at the end of the year stood at 25.

Responsibility for the supervision of Care Homes has passed from the Local Authorities to the Care Commission set up by the Scottish Executive. The Commission took some time to find its feet and many months passed without an inspection, but when an inspection did take place, in March, the report was highly satisfactory and the Inspectors had nothing, by way of improvement, to suggest.

This is the first full year in which the residents have had the benefit of en-suite facilities throughout the Home and these improvements are very much

appreciated. During the past year new garages have been built, the kitchen has been re-furbished and an air-conditioning unit installed, while a storeroom in the basement has been upgraded.

Financially, the Home continues to be in a strong position. We are dependent, however, on rates set yearly by the Local Authority for income, and unforeseen outlay may be required because of rising standards of accommodation, or by the requirements of the Fire Service. In this sense the Home goes from year to year.

The Committee thanks our Auditors, Mr. John Fraser and Mr. John G. MacLeod, for their work and all others who volunteered some of their time and effort to the care of our elderly. We are indebted, as ever, to Matron and her staff for another year's duties faithfully discharged.

The Lord has been good to us as a Home. Sabbath services are relayed, daily worship is kept and an atmosphere is maintained in which our elderly people can feel spiritually, as well as temporally, at home.

LEVERBURGH CARE HOME COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. K. D. Macleod

OVER the past year, the Home has continued to care for up to 16 residents. Since it opened in 1988, 63 residents have taken up a place in the Home, with a further 10 coming in on a short-term basis. Since our last report, the Home has continued to receive favourable reports from the Care Commission, who conduct both announced and unannounced inspections. We would wish again to express our sincere appreciation to the Officer in Charge and her staff for all their hard work and commitment. It is this commitment which makes the operation of the Home as satisfactory as it is.

In the past year, the Home has normally had its full quota of residents and, in particular, the bed set apart for respite care has been well used. Last year the Committee reported its decision to increase the size of the sitting/dining area by building a conservatory-type extension with a tiled roof. This work is now progressing well, after some delays at the outset resulting from unexpected difficulties with the foundations.

During the year 2003, the Home continued to run at a surplus. The replacement of all bedroom doors by fire-resistant ones, called for by the Fire Brigade, was a significant expense. Following the tragic deaths as the result of a fire during the night at a Care Home in Lanarkshire, the Fire Brigade inspected the Home one evening. There are indications that further regulations may be introduced. We would, of course, wish the Home to be as safe as possible, but we would be concerned at measures being brought in, as a knee-jerk reaction to a tragedy, which would not contribute to safety.

During the past 12 months, four residents passed away: Mrs. R. Morrison, Mr. M. MacLennan, Mrs. A. Paterson and Mrs. E. MacLeod. We would extend our sympathy to all the relatives.

OUTREACH COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. A. Ross

THE spread of the Gospel has been the aim and activity of this committee over the past year. We endeavour to do this in several ways.

Tracts

The committee has produced a considerable selection of Gospel tracts as well as tracts on other subjects, for example, the Sabbath, Roman Catholicism and Christmas. These are displayed in the Bookroom as free literature and most customers take a few for distribution. When a large amount of tracts is taken we ask that a donation be given. We have advertised these tracts in the *Evangelical Times* on several occasions – now this will be done on a monthly basis for an extended period of time. We are also in the process of providing tracts in Dutch, German and French with a view to distributing them among tourists.

As for distributing to households, in one rural area every home was visited and given a tract and a Trinitarian Bible Society calendar. We would remind our people that these tracts are freely available for distribution.

Literature

Through the Internet and other means, several contacts have been made with the Free Presbyterian Church. Where there seems to be a serious enquiry about the Reformed position of the Church, we forward a selection of leaflets; for example, *Which Church*, and the latest Church magazines. Sometimes it is appropriate to give something more substantial, such as, *The History of the Free Presbyterian Church* or *The Apostolic Church – Which is it?* Recently a clergyman of the United Episcopal Church of North America requested a Gaelic Bible as his entire family is studying the language. Two second-hand Bibles were forwarded.

In connection with book distribution, we are also investigating the possibility of setting up a small bookshop permanently in Inverness but there are many issues to consider before coming to a final decision.

Internet

The Internet is a powerful tool for making contact with people all over the world. Our website gives much information about the Free Presbyterian Church and our Reformed position. While some contacts with our site were by

people abroad looking for help in seeking out their ancestors who have had connections with Presbyterian churches in Scotland, by far the most were by those interested in the Reformed Faith and wishing to make contact with others of the same mind as themselves. In such cases discussion by email may arise over particular points of doctrine and practice. This can be very time consuming. Some questions are so broad that it is quite impossible to spend the necessary time researching and answering them. It is common to get questions as to the difference between the Presbyterian Churches in Scotland and questions about the Sabbath. Some contact us just to make their views known and to argue their point. As from June of this year, DV, there will be the facility provided for audio sermons from ministers of the Church.

Religious stands

Last August we were able to visit the Black Isle Agricultural Show with a selection of religious literature. This is a costly exercise and the sale of materials does not cover the cost of the allotted stand, advertising and other expenses. However, the committee feels strongly that in this dark age of materialism, irreligious attitudes and false religion, that this work is a worthwhile contribution to spreading the Word of God. Small though it may be, it is yet a witness on the side of the truth.

We considered at one point the purchase of a vehicle in conjunction with the Eastern Europe Mission and thus reducing the burden of transport costs by sharing. However, no suitable vehicle at reasonable cost has been found. In the event we purchased a large tent for £300, which proved to be quite suitable for the work. An awning was donated which covered the front part of our allotted space while the tent was in the back part, and thus the whole site was utilised effectively.

The total amount of sales on that occasion was over £180, arising from the sale of Bibles, books, booklets, leaflets and taped sermons and Psalms. It was particularly encouraging to have Bibles and the *Westminster Confession of Faith* sold in some quantities. There was a high demand for children's books. Some people simply stopped by to wish us well, telling us at the same time they were well stocked in their home with religious books. Others told us that they had great difficulty obtaining Christian books for their children. This is a hint indeed that we should be doing our utmost as a Church to produce more books for children. We met people from all streams of the Christian Church and others with no Church connection. With every sale, a selection of Gospel tracts was freely supplied and other small literature was made available at no charge. At the door of the tent we had two Trinitarian Bible Society Bible text posters displayed as well as a similar large poster within the tent.

We did make enquiry about having a stand at the Skye Agricultural Show but this was not done in enough time to allow us to be there. We hope this year to enquire further about the possibility of having a display in Skye.

In conclusion, this committee is grateful to every one who in any way contributed to this work of reaching out to others with the Word of God. We

could not have functioned at the Black Isle Agricultural Show without the help of others outwith the Committee. The same applies to the work involved in maintaining our website. We are also grateful to our Church people who continue contributing in many ways to this work. Without their much appreciated assistance we could not possibly carry on.

We trust that the Lord will bless this small endeavour to spread the glorious news that Christ Jesus has indeed come into the world to save sinners. Although some obviously turn away from hearing or seeing the Word of God – as was evident in the case of some passers-by at the Black Isle Show – who can tell but that the text at the door of the tent sufficiently caught their attention, and in the Lord's providence a good work was begun. If by our literature we have helped some to come to a better understanding of the Bible or been instrumental in even one person being brought from darkness to light, the effort and the money involved is a small price to pay. "*What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*" (Matthew 16:26).

MAGAZINES REPORT

Rev. K. D. Macleod, Editor

IT is a matter for thankfulness that, during another year, both Magazines have been issued each month, and the *Gaelic Supplement* every three months. The circulation of the Magazines is a significant part of the witness of the Church, and access to them is now possible on a much wider scale than in the past by virtue of their being available on the Internet. We must look to the Lord for the blessing. Only as the Holy Spirit applies the truth, in its spoken or written form, is there profit for individual souls.

The price of the Magazines was left unchanged for 2004, except for an increase in the cost of subscriptions for single copies of each magazine, to reflect an increase in the cost of postage. During the last 12 months, circulation of both Magazines has declined slightly.

This year brings to an end the ten-year period for which I was appointed by the Synod as Editor of the *Young People's Magazine*. I would take this opportunity of specially thanking all who have given their help in a variety of ways over this period, and I would acknowledge the assistance given over the past year in particular in the production of both Magazines. I am grateful to all who have sent in articles and, in particular, to members of the Editorial Board of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* for their consistent help with their contributions. I would again specifically mention Dr. J. Mitchell for his continued help in checking the contents of both Magazines month by month.

**PUBLICATIONS AND BOOKROOM
COMMITTEE'S REPORT
Convener: Rev. K. D. Macleod**

Publications

Since the last report was written, Volume 6 of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* has been reprinted and the Committee hopes to proceed gradually with further volumes; it is hoped that volume 7 will be available before long. We also have in view a reprint of Rev. Donald Beaton's little volume, *The Reformed Faith*, and the work on *Saving Faith* by John Colquhoun of Leith. A number of people have requested that the letters contributed to the *Young People's Magazine* by Mrs. M. R. Macleod should be published in book form. These are now at the printer and the book is to have an introduction written by Rev. N. M. Ross.

Sales of books in 2003 were very much higher than in the previous year, largely, but not entirely, because, when the *Westminster Confession of Faith* was reprinted at the end of the year, the Banner of Truth Trust took a significant proportion of the printing of hardbacks, as they have done for a number of years now. A proportion of the print run on this occasion was bound in paperback as stocks of these were exhausted. It has not yet proved possible to reprint *Pages From the Past*, but a further reprint of Thomas Witherow's popular little volume on Presbyterianism, *The Apostolic Church*, was brought out.

It is hoped that the problem of storage for the book stock will soon be resolved now that the General Treasurer's former office is becoming available for this purpose.

Bookroom

The Bookroom has continued to fulfill a useful function as a source of reliable Christian literature for people within the Free Presbyterian Church and beyond. Total sales for 2003 were significantly up by almost £26,000 on the previous year. This includes a substantial increase in sales of Free Presbyterian publications and also in sales to our Zimbabwe Mission. With the help of the congregational collection for the Bookroom Fund, there was a surplus over the year. The Bookroom website – www.fpbookroom.org – continues to attract a significant amount of business.

We are again grateful to the men who have kept the Bookroom open on a Saturday morning and to others also who have given help in various ways. We would once more request the prayers of the Lord's people for His rich blessing on this particular work of the Church, in trying to put good literature into the hands of readers in various parts of the world.