

FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

**REPORTS OF
STANDING
COMMITTEES
OF SYNOD**

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REPORT OF THE RELIGION AND MORALS COMMITTEE

Convener: Rev. W. Weale

INTRODUCTION

IN introducing this report we wish to draw attention to the fact that over and above the actual preparation of the Religion and Morals Report there were several letters of correspondence sent out. These regarded such issues as divorce, the Civil Partnership Bill, gambling and gaming machines, the BBC's blasphemous showing of *The Opera*, the Religious Hatred Bill and suicide.

We would also wish to put on record our indebtedness as a Church to the Christian Institute for the excellent work they do in keeping us abreast with events, in suggestions regarding letters of protest, and in the protests they themselves make which we believe are used by God as a restraint upon both Houses in Westminster.

RELIGION

In the days of our reforming fathers in Scotland, there was reason seen to produce a lengthy and detailed document entitled *Causes of the Lord's Wrath Against Scotland*. The work, agreed upon by the Commission of the General Assembly of the Scottish Church in 1650, contains ten articles in which the sins of the Church and nation are set forth.¹ The primary concern of this confession was the backsliding from the National Covenant, which is dealt with more fully, but the people of the land were called to use the document as it drew attention to national sins, seen as the causes of the Lord's displeasure. We can see great reason to have the same approach to our own national sins in the present generation and desire the same work of repentance to go on among us as was known in those blessed days. It is our duty, as those who profess to be the true heirs of the Reformation Church and to uphold the Establishment Principle, to set out plainly the duties and obligations of those in authority and, in confessing our own sins and the sins of the Church, to make known also the sins of the nation, calling both people and rulers to repentance. While this is primarily the work of the pulpit, and while the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* regularly highlights such important issues, this opportunity to voice the mind of the Synod on such matters has its own place.

THE STATE OF RELIGION IN BRITAIN

For the purposes of this annual report, we consider the state of religion in our land by looking at the breaches of the first table of the law of God. Within the framework of these commandments we will look more carefully at some

1. *Works of George Gillespie*, Still Waters 1991, Vol. 2.

examples of the departure that we have seen in the past year from the Bible. We will then briefly consider the state of religion in the professing Church in our nation and draw attention to events in the Churches that give us reason to fear the Lord's wrath against us as a nation and people.

False religion

The First Commandment forbids all forms of false religion and atheism, requiring all men to know and acknowledge God to be the only true God, and to worship and glorify Him accordingly. The dominant philosophy of our society, which is being more aggressively promoted than before, is that all religions are equal and have the same claim to our respect and toleration. Humanists who deny the very existence of God have been behind much of what is said in our media and by our politicians for many years and continue to assert themselves in every aspect of our increasingly godless and materialistic society. Truly we are a people who like Israel of old, "change their gods" and who have forsaken the fountain of living waters in our enthusiasm for the broken cisterns of false religion. That we will yet regret our apostasy from the God of the Bible in favour of heathen darkness is certain. We need not expect anything less than the wrath of God for our breach of His first commandment.

Atheism and Evolution

We have daily evidence of the growing strength of atheism in our society. Even in the burial of the dead, men now demand that God be cast out. One Scottish local authority now organises humanist funeral services. Such services are up by 700% nationally in the past 5 years.² Atheistic science and education has also seen a further advance in the past year. The Vardy Foundation, which established Emmanuel College in Gateshead, and which was in the news in 2002 when Prof. Richard Dawkins attacked it viciously for teaching Creation alongside Evolutionary theory, was opposed in attempts to set up another Academy in Doncaster on the same principles.³ A media storm was created and parents and educationalists drummed up opposition in a concerted campaign to discredit the record of this Christian establishment. The concerted efforts of various pressure groups nearly succeeded and while we are not in sympathy with everything produced by the Vardy Foundation, it is deplorable that such a worthy endeavour to bring the truths of Scripture to bear on young minds should be attacked with such naked intolerance and bigotry.

Another item of news arose in October with the discovery in a cave on an Indonesian island of what scientists have called a distant relative of the human species. This miniature skeleton, which measures a mere 3 feet in length, was found amidst what is referred to as evidence of considerable intelligence and ability. Whether a human or a monkey, this creature is no evidence against

2. Scottish Christian News Monitor website – 15.02.04.

3. BBC News article published online 21.06.04.

what the Bible reveals concerning the uniqueness of the human race in relation to God. It is, however, an illustration of just how little intelligence is exercised by many in the scientific world over matters of human origins. Undermining the conclusions that they have arrived at, the scientists have had to work their way around cultural myths in the region concerning miniature people who were known to previous generations.⁴ Their success in doing so is not entirely persuasive to the average onlooker and the hype drummed up around the discovery did not last more than a few weeks. This news item was referred to in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*.

Ignorance of God

The first article produced by the Scottish Reformers in their above mentioned document on the causes of God's wrath, bemoans the "gross atheism and ignorance of God, and of His Word and works, that is in a great part of the inhabitants of the land, which is such that neither law nor gospel, nor the most common and necessary points of truth are understood or known by many thousands". We may say the same regarding many millions of our fellow citizens. A survey of 10,000 people in 10 different countries, carried out in January 2004 by the research company ICM for a BBC programme, *What the world thinks of God*, revealed that Britain is among the most secular nations in the world.⁵ Only 31% of Britons believed that God was the only true God and a mere 21% regularly attended a religious service. We can certainly conclude that a smaller percentage still have any remote connection with the Church of Christ or the truths of the Gospel. This is hardly surprising given the trends in education and the considerable pressure from humanists to remove all religious instruction from the education system.

In September 2004 *The Times* produced an extensive and authoritative survey of young people between 18 and 30 in the United Kingdom (the "Generation" survey). The findings draw attention to the dismal condition of British youth on the subject of religion and morality.⁶ It reveals that only 10% of young people have ever been to a Church, while 53% profess to believe in life after death. The sad but predictable conclusion of many Church leaders is that the Church must modernise and adapt to the wishes and aspirations of the young. After the last Lambeth Conference, bishops announced, "We need to be in nightclubs connecting with the youth". All this goes to show that not only are the people ignorant of God and unconcerned about the Gospel, but the Churches of our land are filled with blind guides. Alas for our once Christian nation!

False worship

The Second Commandment requires us to worship God only in such ways as He has appointed in His Word, forbidding all forms of idolatry and will-worship

4. BBC News article published online 27.10.04.

5. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/wtwtgod/default.stm>

6. Times Online 14.09.04.

devised by men. The Regulative Principle of worship has this second commandment as its foundation. We need not enter into the demands of this principle, further than to say that public worship has been almost universally corrupted in our beloved land where purity of worship was once a national boast. The inventions of men know no bounds in religion and there is plenty evidence that what was said of Ephraim may now be said of Scotland, with the dreadful judgement also applicable, "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone". The idolatry of the nation does not stop at false forms of worship, for men have turned wealth, sport and pleasures of every kind into idolatry. False gods abound and our people love to have it so. We may well wonder that the God of heaven has not avenged Himself on such a nation as this.

The false prophet

The true Church of Christ has always taught that the religion of Mohammed is a false and pernicious religion. Islam has ever been a religion of the sword and there is much evidence in the world that it continues to be so. The BBC and other news agencies are somehow unable or unwilling to broadcast the murder and oppression of Christians in Arab and Muslim countries in Africa and the Middle East. Michael Gove points out (*Times* column, 14/12/04) that Church leaders in Britain also fail to raise their voices against it. There is nevertheless widespread persecution of Christian minorities throughout the world, most prominently by the disciples of Islam. The Barnabas Fund is a group that highlights this persecution and its workers draw attention continually to the suffering Church, as this report has mentioned in previous years. Whatever Western politicians say and do to cover the militancy of Islam as a religion and however blind they may be to the violence which has characterised its activities, our nation remains in constant danger while this false religion is encouraged by our rulers.

Another aspect of its destructive nature is in the area of marriage. Professing to have a strict moral agenda that challenges the loose morals of Western society, the Koran in fact gives place to the licentious and horrid practice of polygamy. While many may think this evil to be confined to Eastern nations, a Radio 4 programme, aired in October 2004, and presented by a Muslim woman, revealed that figures high up in Islamic society in the UK practise polygamy. The high moral ground that British Muslims take to themselves is further removed from under them by the tolerance shown to forced marriages and the very slight and ambiguous criticism of what have been wrongly termed "honour killings". When we consider this, together with the fact that many Muslims refuse to condemn unreservedly suicide bombing, we conclude that it is high time the immoralities of Islam were fully exposed. The highlighting of these evils is now categorised as Islamophobia, but such name calling does not diminish the urgent need to inform the people of Britain of what is becoming a real threat to our nation.

The Antichrist

The false religion of Romanism is ever seeking ways to advance its interest in the world and to recover the power over the nations which it lost at the Reformation. That it has made significant advances in that direction in our own land is increasingly obvious. Quite apart from the fact that on nearly every moral or religious question discussed in the media a Romanist is called to air his views, many in positions of responsibility and trust in our Parliament and Government are committed Romanists. As such they are required to give their first loyalty to a crown other than the British crown. The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland has warned of these evils for many years, and the issues raised here were addressed in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* in the past year. That our Prime Minister openly courts the religion of his Romanist spouse has been frequently pointed out. We see further evidence of it in the statements made by Mrs. Blair's priest, Timothy Russ, who claims that the Premier "might well" convert to Rome, although he also declared that "a lot of things would have to change . . . in his way of thinking and working before he could be a Catholic".⁷ We have good reason to fear our most powerful politician becoming a loyal Romanist, for as such he would have a religious obligation to give obedience and political loyalty to the Pope of Rome.

The upheavals which the new European Commission experienced when the European Parliament objected to one of its members, gave much concern to those who desire to see morality on the public agenda. Signor Rocco Buttiglione, the Italian representative on the Commission and an ardent Romanist, held views on sodomy and the role of women out of keeping with the dominant secular philosophy in Europe. His being proposed for the position of Minister for justice, was portrayed as being compromised by his "Christian" morals. Under enormous pressure, the Commissioners were deselected to suit the agenda of an increasingly powerful pro-sodomite lobby in the European Parliament and media. Given that Signor Buttiglione is a devotee of Romanism, it is perhaps a blessing in disguise that he was removed.

However, we did not see the same concerns raised among politicians and the media in our own country when Ruth Kelly, an ardent Romanist and a member of the secretive Opus Dei cult, was promoted to the post of Education Secretary. At the age of 33, she is the youngest cabinet minister and her appointment bodes ill for Protestant Britain, given that the Vatican has a very powerful influence upon all members of this much feared society within Romanism. Objections were raised to her promotion by scientists who claimed that her religious beliefs would conflict with the advance of stem-cell research in British Universities. To Protestants the great concern is when people with this religious background obtain high office.

7. *Times* – Friday, 15th October 2004, page 7.

REVERENCE TOWARDS GOD

The Third Commandment and its requirements are now almost universally forgotten. Far from men using God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word and works with reverence, His name is everywhere taken in vain. The public media sets the example of blasphemy with the names of Christ used as expletives to an alarming degree. The young are taught how to blaspheme before they can speak properly and even many politicians and those who ought to act as examples to others, use obscene and blasphemous language. The godlessness of our society may well be gauged by the profane language that has become current and we need not wonder if God judges us for it, for He will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. Those to whom the Name and Word of God are precious are filled with revulsion and grief when what they value is trampled under foot by man and made to serve his vile and godless humour. This tendency to mock at the holy things of God is becoming increasingly popular and again the public media, including television, radio and newspapers, are to be identified as particularly guilty.

Blasphemy

Two prominent examples of the growing evil of blasphemy may be highlighted from the past year. In early 2004 a vile portrayal of the sufferings and death of Christ in a blasphemous Hollywood film reached the United Kingdom. It was difficult to know what to be more disgusted at: the film itself or professing Christians flocking to see it and their admiration of it. Among the admirers of the film was the Free Church of Scotland Moderator designate, Rev. Alex MacDonald, who in a "film review" for the April 2004 *Monthly Record* gave a positive assessment of the film. Discussing criticisms he asks: "Is the visual portrayal of Jesus not breaking the Second Commandment?" The answer, he says, "is not at all clear". Arguing from the fact that cherubim were engraved on the mercy seat he then takes several leaps of logic to conclude that "If film is legitimate, the portrayal of the events of the life of Jesus in film is legitimate". That any minister in a professedly Reformed Church should descend to this is sad indeed.

A second example of blasphemy and wicked mockery of God and Christ occurred in early January 2005, when a heinous television show, *Jerry Springer – the Opera*, was broadcast by the BBC. In spite of some 50,000 complaints before-hand and much media condemnation, the BBC persisted in putting the show into private homes throughout the country. Many who find their base entertainment in such horrid blasphemy assert that no person can have a moral objection to it when they have not seen it for themselves. This position, however, is utterly false. It is enough to be informed of the kind of iniquity found in such plays and a shameful thing to participate in it when informed of its evil nature and design. It is most alarming that our government proposes to change the blasphemy law, and has in February 2005 voted to begin the process of making a law which outlaws "incitement to religious

hatred". Apart from turning a godly law into a man-centred one, this change robs God of His rightful claims on men and hinders the preaching of the Word of God. There has been much discussion in the media and elsewhere of this proposed change. A petition to Her Majesty the Queen concerning this matter was signed by many in the Church over the past year.

The Word of God

The irreverent use of the Word of God is also a grievous sin of our nation. It is not possible in this report to refer to the multitudinous examples of it, but the fact that God's Word is increasingly trampled under feet ought to be remembered and lamented. No longer are the claims of truth held sacred and absolute in the thinking of men. The relative morality of the majority and the place given to the "holy books" of every religion which shows its head is most dishonouring to the God of truth. We see that our rulers are again leaders of this confusion when our Prime Minister in an attempt, no doubt, to court favour in the Muslim constituency, commends the reading of the Koran and virtually places it on a par with Scripture as a source of light and guidance in the things of religion. Truly when the blind lead the blind both fall into the ditch.

We are bound to include as a the breach of this commandment all nativity plays and pictorial or dramatical representations of Christ. The place now given to these relics of popery during the celebration of Christmas is nauseous and hurtful to true Christians with biblical sensitivities. The holy things of God and His Word being prostituted to the vain and empty religious aspirations of men is a sin and a shame in our once Protestant nation. We trust that our people will continue to shun these things and that our children especially will be protected from becoming conditioned to them in our schools. The power of television to condition young minds to sinful words and actions is something parents must be very careful about.

THE SABBATH

The Fourth Commandment and the obligations on man to keep it, together with protests against the decline of Sabbath observance, fall under the review of another Committee of Synod. However, we do not think it out of place to draw attention here to the fact that where Sabbath observance declines, public religion and public morality decline with it. When men will not acknowledge God on the Sabbath, they quickly forget Him altogether. It is not long before His authority over their lives is cast aside when the Sabbath is forgotten. Even nominal public Sabbath keeping has preserved our nation from many grievous departures in the past. Our rulers must yet give an account to God for refusing to encourage and preserve the keeping of the fourth commandment, although we are thankful for a few who stand in defence of it.

We now comment on some issues closely related to public observance of the Sabbath.

Worldliness

The picture of an ungodly nation that we see everywhere we look is very distressing. The bad example set by those in the public eye, including royalty, in their pursuit of pleasure is only one way in which the god of this world wins the hearts of young and old. Sport and music festivities are now common activities for many thousands on God's holy day. Indeed sport has become a new religion for many. The world itself recognises this, and as a BBC news magazine article recently declared, "Football is a religion". The adoration of the stars by the crowds, "doesn't just look like worship. It (sport) has taken over almost all the patterns of British life and behaviour that used to belong to Christianity."⁸ As it is said in Jeremiah's prophecy, "They have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:13). As the nation forgets God and casts aside any remembrance of Him, it must find other gods to serve. Sadly many give to these gods not only the Sabbath of the Lord but every available hour of their free time also. The Scripture prophecy concerning men in the last days is everywhere fulfilled – "men shall be . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:24).

An evidence of this love of the world more than God, widespread throughout the country, revealed itself in the Western Isles in a prominent way early in 2004. In spite of objections from the local Police, the Free Church in Stornoway and from our own Outer Isles Presbytery, the licensing board permitted the extension of late night drinking into the Sabbath morning in several public houses in Stornoway.⁹ Together with the recent opening of Stornoway airport on the Lord's Day, this marks a decision among the people in this part of the country, where Sabbath keeping has until now been outwardly maintained, to have the world before God. It is with thankfulness that we can record, however, that the Western Isles local council acknowledged the respect for the Sabbath by not allowing a new Sports centre in Stornoway to open on the Lord's Day. We are gratified by this and pray for the preservation of what remains of the Sabbath rest there, and for those who are willing to publicly defend it.

Church and State

The failure of rulers to protect the Sabbath or encourage Sabbath-keeping is one symptom of the fact that the State no longer feels under obligations to the Christian religion. Our nation has lost all sight of the benefits of the Establishment Principle. This scriptural principle, upheld in our constitution as a Church, protected the interests of the Church of the Reformation and advanced the good of society for centuries. We view this loss with considerable alarm because we are persuaded that our religious liberties are very closely tied to the Protestant heritage we have been entrusted with. Such moves as our government is making to outlaw and punish "incitement to

8. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/3828767.stm>

9. *Stornoway Gazette*, 20th January 2004.

religious hatred”, while obviously commendable in so far as such incitement is sinful, have a more sinister side to them when viewed in the light of the attitude of many in power to our Protestant constitution. The strongest argument against this law is that the present law, if properly applied, is perfectly adequate. It seems very likely that the scriptural duty on ministers of the Gospel to unequivocally condemn and expose the evils of false religion will eventually come under the strictures of such a law.

With every religious creed given the same place and acceptance by the State, and the Protestant Church sidelined, the claims of truth now have very little influence upon men in high office. Nearly every matter of principle which arises is subjected to a democratic process and, whether right or wrong, the majority have their way. In this way true religion in our nation has been all but destroyed and the heritage of the Reformation sold for the supposed gains of a multi-cultural society. In spite of all the efforts of politicians (many of them sincere) to promote tolerance, there is a noticeable absence of tolerance and peace in the nation. The increasing restlessness among many bodes ill for the nation and it is greatly feared that the loyalty of many in our country to the throne and constitution is non-existent. This lack of unity, together with the continued opposition to our Protestant heritage, suggests strongly that we are living in very unsafe and uncertain times.

THE CHURCHES

The Church of England

Looking at the professing Protestant Churches of the United Kingdom, we can see that the multi-faith movement has for many years eaten away at biblical standards within the recognised national Churches. We can only look with dismay at the pronouncements of bishops and archbishops in the Church of England over the place of other religions in our Protestant Christian country. The plans within that Church to set up what have been called “heresy trials” may appear to be a step in the right direction but, as was pointed out in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, “the present pluralism of the Church of England makes the definition of heresy and the disciplining of heretics in the biblical sense a remote prospect”.¹⁰ A growing split over sodomy within wider Anglicanism highlighted the extent to which many in the Church of England will go in wresting the Scriptures. It is to our shame as a nation that it is from the clerics of Africa that the strongest voice in defence of biblical morals has come. The Vatican was not slow to respond to the weakness in the Church of England either. In November 2004 the *Church of England Newspaper* drew attention to remarks by the Pope on the issue: “In a clear reference to the Anglican Church’s divisions over homosexuality, the Pope last weekend said that ‘new ethical obstacles’ had surfaced which blocked progress towards

10. *FP Magazine*, Vol. 109, No. 2, page 60.

unity.”¹¹ In February 2005, Anglican leaders asked the US and Canadian Churches to withdraw from a key council temporarily because of their stance on homosexuality.¹² It remains to be seen if this split will become a real and permanent one or if the strong support for the North American position within the Church of England will prevail over the more scriptural position of the African bishops.

The Church of Scotland

As was reported to last year’s Synod, in January 2004 the then Moderator of the Church of Scotland, Prof. Ian Torrance, took his Church another step Romeward by being the first in his office to preach in a Roman Catholic cathedral. The new female Moderator, Dr. Alison Elliot, did not do any better when in December she attended a Roman Catholic requiem mass with the representatives of various false religions, for the victims of the tsunami tragedy in South East Asia.¹³ The fact that the Church of Scotland has descended to the level of having a woman as its Moderator, highlights just how far it has drifted from its Reformation moorings. It seems only a matter of time before it loses altogether the distinctives of a branch of the true Church of Christ. Known even to worldly men as aggressively liberal in its theology and recognised as losing any credibility in its pronouncements on matters of religion or morals, the Church of Scotland has sacrificed biblical principles for political correctness and expediency. In doing so it has ceased to be a voice in the nation and the voice of Rome is replacing it.¹⁴ How needy Scotland is of a national Church that will herald the truth of God’s Word as in former days.

The Free Church of Scotland

Since the recent departure of many from its ministry, the Free Church has shown signs of sliding considerably in its defence of biblical principles and practices. The Principal of the Free Church College continues to write provocatively in the press¹⁵ and while many within the bounds of the Free Church are undoubtedly disturbed and grieved, he boldly advocates union with other Churches and proposes abandoning several long held principles of the Free Church. The *Monthly Record* “is understood to reflect generally the theological position of the Free Church of Scotland”.¹⁶ If this is true and if the views of the Editor are broadly representative of the Free Church ministry, we can see that the Free Church has indeed shifted far from its moorings. There is growing evidence that no longer does the Free Church unambiguously stand for the purity of worship advanced in her historical testimony. The modern

11. *Church of England Newspaper*, No. 5744, 19.11.04.

12. BBC News article, published online 25.02.05.

13. BBC News article, published online 03.01.05.

14. BBC Radio Scotland discussion of Sex Education in January 2005.

15. *West Highland Free Press* article on ecumenism (Autumn 2004).

16. Policy blurb in *Free Church Monthly Record*, page 2.

innovation of women holding ecclesiastical office is openly proposed as a possibility and the path to ecumenical relations with Churches of dubious doctrinal standards is eagerly sought out by many in her ministry. We urge those who seek to remain faithful to the old standards to open their eyes to these matters.

Among several changes which have developed in the Free Church, one stands out in the past year – the eventual issuing of a new version of the metrical psalms. The Scottish Psalter of 1650 has served the Scottish Church admirably and was produced by competent and godly men. The purpose of these men was to produce a metrical version for all time and one which was, while unquestionably accurate and faithful to the original, accessible to all. The use of a common metre tune for every psalm achieved this noble and scriptural end. On this point the new version falls very far short with many new tunes needing to be learned before the words of the Psalms can be sung. More significant, however, is the conformity to modern versions of the Bible in the use of irreverent language when addressing God. This factor alone renders this new version of the Psalms unsuitable for the worship of God. It seems clear that the distinctive testimony of the Free Church of 1843 needs defending today as much as ever and we must be zealous in holding the banner left with us by worthy and godly forefathers. We draw attention to these departures, not to malign others, but to warn our people and because these matters have become prominent in the past year again.

The Free Church (Continuing)

The grievous division which occurred within the Free Church and issued in the emergence of the Free Church (Continuing) in 2000 took a new but expected turn in the past year. The two sides came together in a court battle whose conclusion (at the time of writing) has not yet been reached. The court hearing was nearly averted when a reconciliation was proposed, but this fell through when the terms of compromise were not accepted by the Free Church (Continuing). While it is impossible to determine what the eventual outcome may be, we do not hesitate to draw attention to the glaring fact that the reasons for departing from the Free Church in 1893 were considerably stronger than those put forward for doing so in 2000. Furthermore, the interference of civil law in the decisions of Church courts should not be encouraged and while the property question is always a serious one, the example of the Disruption fathers, adopted by the Free Presbyterian fathers, was to suffer themselves to be defrauded.

The Associated Presbyterian Churches

It is with sadness that we see many of those who left our Church in 1989 dispersing to unscriptural Churches year after year. In saying that, however, it cannot be denied that the APC has contributed little to the defence of the heritage of the Reformed Church in Scotland in the past year. Set upon a foundation of compromise, this is not altogether surprising. Aspects of their

present position suggest a fragmentation of the Presbyterian structure of Church government upon which they started out. APC ministers continue to hold in their possession property belonging to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The claim that the APC is the true representative of the Free Presbyterian Church has by now lost any appearance of credibility and is hardly mentioned by any but a very small minority in that denomination. We are saddened that so many young people who were within the Free Presbyterian Church have been betrayed and led astray by ministers who were once among us. It is to God that all are accountable in this matter, however, and we urge repentance in all who are guilty of the schism brought upon the Church and sustained indefensively over the past 15 years.

MORALS

RELIGION and morals are inextricably linked. The religious beliefs and practices of a person or society will be reflected in their morality. Bearing this connection in mind, we might conveniently think of religion as our relationship to God, while morality distinguishes between right and wrong in human behaviour.

We believe and maintain that the Bible contains the moral standard to which the whole human race has a duty to conform. The ten commandments are a summary of the Bible's moral standard, and it is noteworthy that God Himself chose to summarise His moral law in these ten commandments.¹⁷ The biblical teaching of the Church on moral issues is therefore founded on the authority of God, and so has a status far above the mere opinions of those who propagate it.

Moral standards are absolute, and universal in their application. Much modern thinking is based on the idea that each person, or society, is free to choose a suitable moral standard. Such thinking is consistent with the many expressions of respect for different religions that are currently fashionable, but even simple reasoning demonstrates the absurdity of this unbiblical view.¹⁸ Societies that have benefited from the influence of the Gospel have laws that recognise the principle of absolute and universally binding standards, as illustrated by their disapproval of such crimes as murder.

In the following sections of this report we comment on the moral state of our nation at the present time and seek to highlight relevant biblical truths. There can be no doubt that the general morality of the people of Scotland, and indeed the United Kingdom, comes very far short of the biblical standard set out in the ten commandments. This is a matter which grieves us, and leads us to fear the deserved judgements of God on our nation. The Bible proclaims

17. Deuteronomy 4:13 and 5:22.

18. If every person's chosen standard can be described as morally right or acceptable, then that can be said of the person's standard who commits and condones cold-blooded murder.

Jesus Christ to be the only hope for sinners who come short of obeying God's holy law. Our desire as a Church is that our work and witness would be the means of not only bringing sin to the attention of our people, but also of bringing them to find salvation from sin through Jesus Christ.

THE MORALITY OF OUR NATION

A comprehensive survey of moral affairs in our nation over the past year would result in a report much larger than this one. We have, therefore, used examples from our national life to highlight some of the more significant current moral issues. The framework for this part of the report is the second table of the moral law; that is, from the fifth commandment to the tenth commandment. The distinction usually drawn between these two tables of the law is that the first table represents our duty to God and the second our duty towards man. Most of the issues that are informally described as moral issues are covered by the second table of the law, although the requirements of the first four commandments can equally be described as moral in the proper sense.

LAWFUL AUTHORITY

The fifth commandment requires us to recognise and submit to lawful authority. The terms in which this commandment is expressed in the Bible require children to honour their parents, but the scope of the commandment takes in all situations where God has ordained a lawful authority.

Discipline of children

There have been several moves in recent years to interfere with the way in which parents exercise their God given authority in their homes. The focus of these moves has been to restrict or remove the right of parents to physically chastise their children. Towards the end of 2003, legislation came into force in Scotland which prohibits the use of implements in the punishment of children, and there is no doubt that the Government would have gone further had they been able to.¹⁹

The Bible teaches that parents have a duty to discipline their children, and that there are circumstances in which physical chastisement is the proper form of discipline.²⁰ We, therefore, believe that it is unscriptural for our Government to use legislation to come between parents and their duty to God. The effects of a lack of discipline in the home are all too obvious in our society, when young people in particular are increasingly asserting their perceived right to do as they please. Teachers in some schools find it well nigh impossible to

19. *Children, Physical Punishment and the Law*, produced by the Scottish Executive. On page 6 this booklet acknowledges that "smacking is not completely prohibited" but goes on to say that "smacking is not advisable as a method of disciplining children. . . ."

20. Proverbs 22:5; Proverbs 13:24.

perform their professional function, and instead spend much of their time and energy trying to control unruly and violent pupils.

We recognise the fact that in our increasingly depraved society there are some parents who physically abuse their children, and the law should indeed punish this crime, along with all other forms of unjustified violence.

Duties of those in authority

While children are commanded to honour and obey their parents, parents have the corresponding duty to treat their children fairly and kindly,²¹ and the same principle applies in every other relationship where God has instituted authority. We fear that our Government are guilty of provoking disrespect for authority and of breaking the fifth commandment, by bringing in unnecessary and often unscriptural legislation. Examples of particular concern are the laws on incitement to religious hatred, gender recognition and civil partnerships, and the legislation on punishment of children already referred to. In these areas Christian citizens are experiencing a conflict between their instinctive obedience to civil authority and their loyalty to the law of God. The desire of Christians is to be able to show their obedience to God by their respect for the lawful authorities ordained by Him, but the Bible teaches that when that is not possible we ought to obey God rather than men.²²

Those in authority also have a duty to exercise their authority in the punishment of lawbreakers. The Bible describes the civil magistrate as a “minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil”.²³ We continue to be appalled by the leniency of the sentences sometimes served for very serious crimes. In the biblical concept of punishment, the requirement to satisfy justice takes priority over reform and rehabilitation of the offender, admirable as these secondary objectives might be in their own place.

We believe that significant contributions to an increased respect for authority would come from a reinstatement of the legal powers to discipline children in the home and in schools, and punishment of offenders in a way that better reflects the nature and wrong of their crimes.

MURDER AND VIOLENCE

The sixth commandment prohibits murder, and within its scope fall all other sins which arise from the same attitude of hatred. The Bible describes the world just before the flood as being “filled with violence”²⁴ and a similar description would surely be appropriate for many parts of the world, and of our own country today.

21. Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21.

22. Acts 5:29.

23. Romans 13:4.

24. Genesis 6:11.

Murder

Murder is so horrible a crime that even a single occurrence in a year should shock a nation. Yet we have become used to hearing reports of murders on a regular basis, and there are several hundred cases of homicide in the United Kingdom each year.²⁵

We are thankful that, in recent years, the United Kingdom has experienced a reduction in the levels of murder and mass murder by terrorists, but we fear that the threat of such violence and murder is still present. Irish republican terrorists, by whatever political or paramilitary names they may from time to time call themselves, are still armed, and are still the principal obstacle to peace in Ulster. Our Government is verily guilty on account of having released murderers from prison in Northern Ireland, and the continuing lawlessness in that part of our nation suggests that many of those released have not found their way into peaceful occupations. Christian people in Northern Ireland will justifiably feel betrayed when our Prime Minister parades himself as one of the chief opponents of what he now conveniently calls “international” terrorism.

Meanwhile, the threat from Islamic terrorists has continued to overshadow many parts of the world, including the United Kingdom. A co-ordinated series of explosions on trains, which devastated Madrid in March 2004, is widely recognised as the work of Islamic extremists. There have been reports during the past year of security services foiling planned attacks in our own country, and senior police and public figures repeatedly urge vigilance. The teachings of the Koran are also claimed as justification by the perpetrators of suicide bombings and gruesome hostage murders in Iraq.

As Christians we mourn over the deaths of our fellow human beings in any of these circumstances, and seek to sympathise with those who are bereaved. But in the midst of these human considerations we recognise that the breach of the law of God is the most serious aspect of murder, and indeed of every other sin.

The death penalty

We take this opportunity to state once again that the Bible requires the death penalty for murder: “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.”²⁶ It is likely that the reintroduction of the death penalty would have a deterrent effect, but the principal consideration is that the death of murderers would satisfy justice in the way required by the Judge of all the earth. When murderers are allowed to live, the blood of the murdered continues to call out for vengeance against our nation, and against our rulers in particular.

25. The Home Office publication, *Crime in England and Wales 2003/2004*, states on page 89 that there were 853 cases of homicide in the year 2003/4. Homicide includes murder, manslaughter and infanticide. See www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/hosb1004.pdf

26. Genesis 9:6.

Hatred

The Bible clearly identifies hatred with the sin of murder when it states: “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.”²⁷ Hatred is the attitude of mind which leads to, and finds its ultimate expression in, murder. The Scriptures describe unconverted sinners as “hateful, and hating one another”,²⁸ while the effect of the Gospel is to replace hatred with love and to teach us to love our neighbour as ourselves. But the Bible also claims exclusivity for the Christian religion, as is well illustrated in the statement of Christ himself: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”²⁹ This, and many other teachings of Christianity, have caused it and its followers to be hated over the centuries.

Against the background of terrorism, our Government proposes legislation which would make incitement to hatred on religious grounds a criminal offence. Although we long to see an end of hatred in our society, we are suspicious of the motives behind the proposed law and fear that it would cause more harm than good if it were to get to the statute book. The main practical effect of the proposed law would probably be to provide a tool with which haters of Christianity could try to silence Gospel ministers and others who propagate the truths of the Bible. Existing laws provide sufficient protection against incitement to commit criminal acts.

Euthanasia

The issue of euthanasia has continued to feature in public debate. Press reports have described cases where people have travelled from Britain to Switzerland – where assisted suicide is legal in some circumstances – in order to be helped to kill themselves.³⁰ In one case a husband accompanied his wife to Switzerland for this purpose, after the High Court lifted an injunction banning him from doing so.³¹ And debate has continued on the issue of the circumstances in which doctors should withdraw medical treatment and life support from patients who are considered to be terminally ill.

The sixth commandment requires that we use all lawful endeavours to preserve our own life and the life of others.³² While we acknowledge that medical decisions in particular cases are often too complex for the layman, we also insist that the guiding principle must be that human life is immeasurably precious and to be preserved by all lawful endeavours. God has given us our life in this world so that we might live to His glory and seek preparation for our eternal existence, and He alone retains the authority to decide when each

27. 1 John 3:15.

28. Titus 3:3.

29. John 14:6.

30. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/3623874.stm>

31. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/4056149.stm> and <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/4067939.stm>

32. *Shorter Catechism*, answer 68.

member of the human race should leave this world and go to the next. We are glad that our Government's stated position is against euthanasia and we urge it to use its powers to protect life in this area.

Abortion

The slaughter of unborn children makes our nation, along with many others, guilty of bloodshed on an enormous scale. The issues involved in abortion, and the Christian view on the matter, are well known and documented, and we as a Church have consistently witnessed against this evil for many years. In the year 2004 the grim statistics showed a continued increase in the number of abortions, with over 50,000 cases in England and Wales during the first quarter of the year.³³ Statistics also reveal that some of the highest rates of increase are seen among the youngest mothers.³⁴ We are warned in Scripture that vengeance belongs to God,³⁵ and we fear that the blood of millions of unborn children is calling for that vengeance on our nation.

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUAL SINS

The sins forbidden in the seventh commandment are all forms of sexual uncleanness. It is an unpleasant duty to have to comment on any sin but particularly so when the sin is of such a vile nature. Our everyday interactions with society illustrate the extent of this form of moral depravity, and it is neither necessary nor profitable for this report to recycle the sorts of stories regularly carried in the media. Yet sins against the seventh commandment are so prevalent and prominent in our society that any meaningful witness on the side of biblical morality would be incomplete without some reference to these matters.

Divorce

The biblical pattern and rule for human relationships is that one man and one woman should live together in marriage and remain faithful to each other throughout their lives. Many in our society have rejected this pattern and it is now considered the norm for unmarried couples to live together as if they were married. Among those who do marry, over 160,000 couples are divorced each year in the United Kingdom,³⁶ with around 10,000 of these in Scotland.³⁷

In April 2004 the Scottish Executive published a consultation paper on family law. One of the proposals in the paper was to reduce the time for which a couple must be separated before they can be divorced – from two years to

33. <http://www.prolife.org.uk/document.asp?id=prabratessoar0205.htm&se=2&st=4>

34. <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article0,,2087-1491802,00.html>

35. Deuteronomy 32:35; Hebrews 10:30; Romans 12:19.

36. <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=170>

37. *Family Matters – Improving Family Law in Scotland* – consultation paper issued by the Scottish Executive in April 2004, page 16. See <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/consultations/justice/iflis-03.asp#3>

one year with consent, and from five years to two years without consent. The consultation paper also made no effort to hide the Executive's strong preference for divorces to be on a no-fault basis. We believe that the only legal grounds for divorce should be fault-based grounds, and the only two grounds allowed by Scripture are adultery and irremediable wilful desertion.

Civil Partnership Act

This Act received Royal Assent in November 2004 and will come into force in December 2005. It gives to same-sex couples who live together most of the legal status currently enjoyed only within marriage, and is widely recognised as introducing homosexual marriage in all but name. In their own words, "the Government has sought to give civil partners parity of treatment with spouses, as far as is possible, in the rights and responsibilities that flow from forming a civil partnership. There are a small number of differences between civil partnership and marriage. . . ." ³⁸ As well as being manifestly unfair to those of opposite sexes who live together as relatives, or in a care situation, this Act undermines the institution of marriage and brings yet more divine displeasure on our nation.

Gender Recognition Act

Another ungodly piece of legislation which received Royal Assent in 2004 was the Gender Recognition Act. This Act provides a process whereby people who are not at ease with their natural, physical gender can eventually have their legal gender redefined by the issue of a certificate which is effectively a new birth certificate (and is physically indistinguishable from a birth certificate). ³⁹ For most purposes they must then be treated as being of the opposite sex.

We believe that a person's physical gender is given by God, and that it is unnatural and sinful to be discontent with one's gender. Such discontent must indeed be a burden to any who are subject to it, but it calls for mental and spiritual help rather than legal recognition of a lie – and the gender recognition certificate is a lie. We are also very concerned that this Act could cause legal difficulties for Christians who cannot conscientiously recognise a person's redefined legal gender, especially within the Church. This is likely to be a particularly difficult area because there are offences under the Act relating to disclosure of the natural gender of a person whose legal gender has been changed. This and other aspects of the legislation were strongly opposed during the Bill's passage through parliament, and while the Act itself does not contain the amendments that were sought, the Christian Institute did obtain assurances that secondary legislation would provide some protection for church officials. ⁴⁰

38. "Frequently asked questions" answered on the Government's website. See <http://www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/lgbt/faq.htm#geninfo>

39. <http://www.answers.com/topic/gender-recognition-act-2004>

40. http://www.christian.org.uk/transsexualism/finalbill_statement.htm

Sexual health

As well as being contrary to the law of God, sexual promiscuity has many negative effects on health and wellbeing and this is recognised by society and by Government. Following a consultation exercise in 2004, the Scottish Executive recently published its strategy for improving sexual health.⁴¹ The title of the publication – *Respect and Responsibility* – sounds encouraging, as does the emphasis on strong, trusting relationships as the proper context for sexual activity. But, sadly, the strategy fails to take its moral message beyond these vague, general phrases. The only successful strategy would be the biblical one, which recognises mutual faithfulness within heterosexual marriage as the best preventative for such social problems as sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted teenage pregnancies and abortions.

Widespread moral depravity

The previous paragraphs cover some of the areas where the requirements of the seventh commandment have been disregarded by our Government in the public affairs of the nation. The effects of such unscriptural laws are clearly seen in the widespread moral depravity of our people. Homosexuality continues to be aggressively promoted. Public figures give no impression of being ashamed when their immoral lifestyles are exposed. The media seems to be getting ever bolder and to be descending ever lower in the depravity of the material it broadcasts. Biblical distinctions between the appearances and roles of men and women are virtually unknown to most people in our society. When we consider the standards of God's holy law, as summarised in the *Larger* and *Shorter Catechisms*,⁴² we can only wonder that an even greater measure of His wrath has not been revealed from heaven against our nation.⁴³

THEFT AND DISHONEST DEALINGS

In the eighth commandment the sin of theft, which includes all forms of dishonest dealing, is forbidden. This is probably one of the commandments on which the stated laws of our nation are still reasonably conformed to the law of God, although there are undoubtedly many instances of theft.

Bank robbery

One such instance which was prominently reported at the end of 2004 was the theft of over £26 million from a bank in Northern Ireland. The way in which the robbery was executed was particularly cruel towards the bank employees involved, and their families. The police have publicly stated their belief that the IRA was responsible for the crime, although no convictions have yet taken place. We deplore the crime as a flagrant and very public breach of the

41. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/health/shst-00.asp>

42. *Shorter Catechism*, answers 70 to 72; *Larger Catechism*, answers 137 to 139.

43. Romans 1:18.

eight commandment and we hope that the perpetrators will soon be brought to justice.

Another example of large scale breach of the eighth commandment is the fact that over £500 million was lost through credit and debit card fraud in the UK during 2004, a 20% increase over the previous year.⁴⁴

The eighth commandment can also be broken in less obvious ways. The judicial laws given to the nation of Israel under the Old Testament contained provisions which ensured fairness and justice in commercial life⁴⁵ and the general equity of these laws still applies today,⁴⁶ condemning all forms of oppression. We would also comment that the Government is guilty of theft when it extracts unwarranted taxes from the people, which can surely be said of that portion of tax revenues which is used for such unscriptural purposes as NHS funded abortion and sex change operations.

TRUTHFULNESS

The ninth commandment takes to do with honesty and specifically forbids lying and the bearing of false witness. Truthfulness is one of the glorious attributes in which God reveals Himself in His Word, while lying is held out in Scripture as a characteristic of Satan.⁴⁷ Truthfulness is also fundamentally important for the stability of civilised society, as illustrated by the requirement that witnesses and jurors in court give a solemn oath or affirmation.

The Government and the EU

Patriotic citizens of the United Kingdom have a longstanding grievance against successive governments over the deceitful way in which the nation has been entangled within the European Union. The long history of deceit is well documented by many able writers. But it is still a very current issue and one of the most important facing our nation at the present time. The Government has promised a referendum on the treaty establishing the proposed EU constitution, and if it wins the forthcoming general election we can expect a major campaign to achieve a vote in favour of the constitution. We protest against the Government's refusal to straightforwardly tell the British people that the whole European project is aimed at incorporating our nation within a federal superstate. We have many concerns about the consequences of such a union with other European countries, but our chief concern arises from the Romanist religion and culture of these countries.

The news media

The free dissemination of news has many benefits for society, and indeed for the Church. Under repressive regimes, government control of news

44. <http://www.apacs.org.uk/downloads/cardfraudfigures%20national®ional%20-%208mar05.pdf>

45. Leviticus 19:35-36; Deuteronomy 25:13-15; Proverbs 11:1. See also many of the proof texts given for answer 142 in the *Larger Catechism*.

46. *Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 19, section 4.

47. John 8:44.

broadcasting keeps the people in ignorance and thus deprives them of the ability to challenge the activities of those in power.

The benefits of a free press in a free country obviously depend on the truthfulness and completeness of the news that is broadcast. We as a Church know from our own experience that many news outlets have scant regard for the accuracy of their stories. The Hutton Inquiry, which reported in January 2004, brought under scrutiny the truthfulness and accuracy of BBC news reporting, and of public statements by the Government. Whatever the proper allocation of blame might be in this complex case, it is evident that the truth did not accurately reach the public through the press reports. It is also a matter of general concern that we hear virtually nothing through the major news outlets about very significant things that we know to be happening in the world, such as the persecution and murder of professing Christians in some Islamic countries.⁴⁸ We have reason to believe that through inaccuracy, invention and omission, the witness borne by our news publishers is sometimes a false witness.

COVETOUSNESS

While all the commandments are as applicable to our thoughts and desires as to our conduct, the tenth commandment deals more directly with heart sins when it forbids covetousness. The Bible teaches that the love of money is the root of all evil.⁴⁹

Our age is a very materialistic one. The Bible certainly teaches that we ought to earn our living by honest labour and we would always seek to commend diligence. But even honest labour in a lawful calling can go too far. Working hours in Britain are considered to be among the longest in Europe, yet the amounts earned are insufficient to satisfy the thirst for material possessions, so that consumer credit has reached record levels. We fear that the effect of so much wealth in our nation is to make many feel independent of God.

Gambling

In October 2004 the Government published its Gambling Bill⁵⁰ which proposes sweeping liberalisation of the existing gambling laws. In recognition of the very undesirable consequences of gambling for the gambler and indeed the whole of society, the law currently places restrictions on many aspects of gambling, such as the maximum prizes that can be won and the concentration of gambling outlets in any locality. The Bill proposes that these restrictions be largely abolished, and would generally make gambling much easier to participate in, and much more harmful for those who do participate.⁵¹ The

48. These events are well documented by, for example, The Barnabus Fund.

49. 1 Timothy 6:10.

50. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200304/cmbills/163/2004163.htm>

51. The Christian Institute provides a typically comprehensive analysis of the Bill in its recent publication, *Gambling with our Future*. http://www.christian.org.uk/gambling/gamblingbill/gambling_feb05.pdf

proposed legislation is another predictable step down the slippery slope that our nation chose when the National Lottery was introduced 10 years ago. As well as being harmful to individuals and society, gambling is motivated by covetousness and therefore a sin against the tenth commandment. If the experience of other countries is repeated here our Government might soon rue the day it passes into law this iniquitous Bill.⁵²

FACTORS AND TRENDS IN NATIONAL MORALITY

We conclude our survey with a brief analysis of some of the main factors influencing the present state of morality in our nation.

The media

The media wields enormous power in modern society – a power that could be put to very good use but is more often effective in the advancement of moral degeneracy. Television in particular is principally used for entertainment and the moral quality of what is called entertainment is continuing to deteriorate. We need not be surprised by the attitudes and behaviours that prevail in our society when we consider that considerable numbers are feeding their lusts daily on depraved television programmes. The controversial musical *Jerry Springer – the Opera* quite rightly attracted strong opposition on account of its blasphemy, but would have belonged to the moral gutter even if the Lord's Name had not been mentioned. Many Christians have found that the safest course is to avoid television altogether, and have banished it from their homes.

Much is also available on the internet that has a very negative influence on the morals of our nation. The use of the internet to transmit child pornography is just one example of how far man will go to gratify his unnatural lusts, and there have been news reports of criminal convictions of some who use such websites.

Tyrannical minority pressure groups

For many years, key areas of our national life have been influenced for the worse by the activities of pressure groups representing the interests of small minorities of the population. Such pressure groups often use aggressive and intimidating tactics to achieve their goals. The homosexual rights lobby has been particularly successful at imposing its agenda on those in authority and has gained many concessions as a result. We have already commented on a number of pieces of legislation which cater for the wishes of homosexuals, which have progressed into law during 2004. There are also religious and racial minorities which are successful in campaigning for recognition and benefits far beyond what a tolerant Christian nation should be expected to provide. We believe that our Government has a duty to resist such minority groups and instead to govern in accordance with the Christian constitution of the country and the wishes of the vast majority of citizens. One of the reasons

52. *Gambling with our Future*, page 37.

why these groups have been so successful is that they have managed to get a disproportionate number of their own into places of authority.

Human rights

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights begins with the words, “Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. . . .” This preamble unmasks the humanistic and God defying basis on which the modern human rights movement is founded. The Gospel teaches that man, by his sin, has lost the dignity and rights with which he was created, and that the death of Christ on the cross is the only foundation for freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Human rights are claimed as the basis for many of the God dishonouring practices and laws of modern society. Our nation’s ties with the European Union have bound us to a mass of alien legislation based on what are called principles of human rights. Most of these laws do nothing to defend the God given rights of the people of our Christian nation to live and worship in accordance with the Bible, and in many cases they are designed to have the opposite effect. We believe that the way to promote the freedom of the people of our country and indeed of the whole world, is to proclaim the Gospel way of salvation and the associated life of obedience to the law of God.

Addiction

Addition to harmful substances is one of the causes of many of the problems in our society. Alcohol and drug abuse are often directly involved in accidents and violent crimes. It is now many years since smoking was recognised as an indisputable cause of disease and death, yet millions are still in the grip of tobacco addiction. Gambling is also well known to be highly addictive. It is surely remarkable that in many of these areas the Government is active in liberalising the law to make it even easier for people to be ensnared by life-ruining addictions.

Christian influence

The Church is described by Christ Himself as the salt and light of the world.⁵³ In our day the salt has to a large extent lost its savour and the light is hidden under a bushel. Christian influence on our increasingly godless society is therefore very weak. On the one hand the professing Church is fragmented, and weakened by heresy and worldliness, while on the other hand the media and the civil authorities pursue a policy of silencing, ignoring or ridiculing any witness that is raised on the side of truth.

We are, however, thankful that the Lord has yet left a witness to the truth in our nation. Although the voice is often weak and despised, yet it is heard. The Christian Institute continues to campaign against the flood of ungodly

53. Matthew 5:13-14.

legislation that is overflowing our land, and we have to acknowledge with thankfulness that God has blessed these efforts in the past year. There are a few in our Houses of Parliament who are prepared to stand up on the side of truth. We have no doubt that there are still many in the nation who pray earnestly for the defence of our nation against the false religion and godlessness that is advancing so rapidly.

Most of the things discussed in this report will cause grief and concern to the godly. We take no delight in recording our negative views on the state of society but as far as moral issues are concerned there is relatively little positive news to report in our day. In the midst of so much evil, the Church is to be encouraged by the fact that Christ rules over the nations, and that all power in heaven and in earth belongs to Him.⁵⁴ Our duty is to continue endeavouring to witness on the side of truth and to continue proclaiming Christ as the only hope for lost and perishing sinners. We know that the power of God could bring about a moral and spiritual transformation of our nation and generation within a very short space of time, and we feel encouraged by the Scriptures to pray that such a change would indeed take place. Our chief desire is that whether we live in a dark day or in a day of Gospel prosperity, He would use our work and witness to glorify His name through Jesus Christ. “And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory” (Psalm 72:19).

SABBATH OBSERVANCE COMMITTEE’S REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. J. MacDonald

NO doubt it is to be expected that our report will seem fairly repetitive as we strive year by year to witness for the Sabbath and to bring this matter of Sabbath observance before our fellow men. The keeping of the Sabbath as required by God’s Word has all but disappeared from our land and, as has recently been noted in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, “Sabbatarianism is a word generally used with strong undertones of disapproval”. This is just another indication of the moral decline of the nation of which it can sadly be said “they have rejected the word of the Lord”. Nowhere is this rejection more clearly seen than in the wholesale Sabbath breaking to be seen on every side.

It is not necessary to quote many examples of the profanation of the Sabbath for it is plain for all to see. That it stretches from the major cities in our land to the hamlets and homes of the Highlands and Islands cannot be denied. Much of this is due perhaps to ignorance, for the vast majority of churches have one way or other long ago departed from preaching and upholding the Moral Law, though we are taught in the Bible that it is perpetually binding on all men everywhere. It is sad to see the results of the churches in our land failing to preach and teach scriptural principles. The following quotation from a popular newspaper makes the point clearly. With the headline “Sunday heads for the

54. Matthew 28:18.

top of the shops” it goes on to say: “It used to be the day of rest but in 2004 Sunday has become the day for shopping. Ten years after trading laws were changed to allow retailers to open seven days a week the Sabbath has become the busiest day on the High Street after Saturday. Some fifteen percent of sales take place on a Sunday – more than twice as many as five years ago.” These figures are apparently taken from a study undertaken by a national commercial firm. The result of such a survey does not surprise anyone yet it should grieve all those who profess to love the Sabbath and desire to see it being kept as God commanded.

The work of the Committee continues as in previous years. This consists in protesting against breaking of the Sabbath. Too often we do not hear of events till after they have taken place but even then we think it proper to protest to the organisers of events which involve Sabbath breaking. Of the letters we write, about fifty percent are not acknowledged. Most of the rest are merely acknowledged. For example: letters that are written to the Prime Minister usually evince the statement: “Thank you for your letter. I can assure you that the Prime Minister will be made aware of your views.” We fear that our views are of little interest to the present Prime Minister or to any of his Cabinet or Party. This is not a political statement for, as far as we can judge, there is little to choose between political parties as far as their keeping of the Law of God is concerned. The sad truth is that we are a nation of Sabbath breakers. We would not like to make this charge lightly but a cursory observation of what is done in the land leads us to this conclusion.

In addition to shopping, sport of every kind results in large scale Sabbath breaking. Right-minded people cannot but grieve at the thousands who gather in football stadiums almost every Sabbath, while more and more congregations see their attendance continue to fall. This itself is a clear indication of the spiritual state of our nation and many of our letters are written to managers or directors of football clubs with very little response. We fear the greatest Sabbath profanation of all takes place in the home. The vast majority of homes in Britain have television sets and have access to a variety of channels. Thus there is a vast amount of Sabbath breaking which cannot make news and does not arouse any public interest but is nevertheless grieving to the One whose day it is.

Our letters follow a more or less standard format and it may be of some interest to members of Synod to give just one example as follows:

As a Committee we feel it our duty to protest to you against the playing of a Scottish Cup-tie on the Lord's day on 9th January, at Inverness.

We would respectfully point out to you that the first day of the week is the Christian Sabbath, the day of which it is written, “Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy”. God has given us this day to worship Him in public and in private, a day to remember our relationship and accountability to Him.

By playing this game you have deprived your employees of the opportunity to fulfil this commandment and you have drawn many hundreds of people to watch a game of football.

This action gives great offence to Christians, but more importantly it breaks God's Law.

We urge you to cease from playing football on the Lord's day.

Interestingly we had a letter from a person out-with our Church congratulating us on our stance on the Sabbath and suggesting that we should try to include a Gospel message along with our protests. This has not been done in the past but the Committee are prepared to consider this matter afresh. We note that when we sent a copy of the tract, *One Day in Seven* (published by the Publications Committee) with a batch of our letters, not one of them was acknowledged. Though we cannot be sure that this was the reason why no replies were forthcoming, we have at times been told bluntly "not to preach to people".

We have had several amicable replies this year again but they all seem to miss the point we are making in our letters. We quote one here to illustrate the point:

Thank you for your letter regarding the playing of the Scottish Cup tie on Sunday 9 January.

The scheduling of Cup fixtures is controlled by the Scottish Football Association and is outwith the control of the Celtic Football Club. However, we would wish to assure you that we would not insist that any of our employees worked on the Sabbath should they wish not to for religious reasons.

Thank you for taking time to contact us with your comments.

For reasons not always known to us, some of our protests stir up anger in the recipients. Below is one example of a letter sent and the answer received.

I write to protest against your holding Property Exhibitions on Lord's Day 23rd January, at Glasgow, Renfrew and Inverness.

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 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. . . ."

The Lord has given us the Sabbath to be used for His worship; to put it to a commercial use is to break God's Law every bit as much as to break the Commandment: "Thou shalt not steal."

We urge you to cease such activities on the Lord's Day; holding them and participating in them is a sin against God to whom you are ultimately accountable.

Answer received –

I would like to begin by saying that I find your letter both repugnant and offensive.

Let me warn you that Let's Live Abroad Limited operates an equal opportunities policy that does not discriminate on grounds of age, race, disability, sex or sexual orientation. That is only where the differences between our company and the Free Presbyterian Church begin. Whilst working on Sundays might be equally offensive to you, some of the practices and beliefs supported by militant religionists will not be tolerated here and can result in instant dismissal.

It was decided at last year's Synod that the Committee would draw up a petition to be sent to the Scottish Parliament's Petition Committee. We hope and pray that the Scottish Parliament will give our petition a favourable hearing.

Indeed we would ask all who read this report to make this issue a matter of prayer for "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16), and prayer is our only weapon.

We as a people ought to be aware of the fact that we have received a precious heritage, under the hand of God, in the godly examples set before us by previous generations. It is our duty to value this heritage and to do all that is in our power to preserve it and to pass it on undiluted to future generations. This is particularly true of Sabbath observance. It would be of benefit if we compared our Sabbath keeping to those who have gone before us. We fear that we as a generation would emerge very unfavourably from such a comparison. However, it is our duty whatever our station, whether as ministers, office-bearers or parents, to adhere fully to the precept of the Lord which still says, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy". We must seek grace continually to avoid the compromising spirit of this generation. Our standard must continue to be Scripture only.

JEWISH AND FOREIGN MISSIONS COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. John MacLeod

General

The Jewish and Foreign Missions Committee has, within its own sphere, and to the best of its ability, attended to all the duties laid upon it by the Synod. The aim is to bring the Gospel to the ears of others in distant lands, in the hope that hearers will become believers, and that the interests of the Cause of Christ worldwide will be advanced. The sowing of the seed continues and those who

plant and those who water continue to look to the One whose seed it is to give the increase. This year marks the centenary of the arrival of the Rev. J. B. Radasi at Ingwenya and the beginning of our Zimbabwean missionary activities. The Zimbabwe Presbytery is arranging for the centenary to be celebrated in a suitable manner in September 2005 and the Committee has decided that three of its members – the Convener, Clerk and the Rev. D. A. Ross – should attend the meeting as representatives. The Committee has endeavoured to exercise stewardship of the resources at their disposal in as wise and prudent a way as possible. We are grateful to all who contribute to the Jewish and Foreign Missions Fund at home and abroad.

As usual, we draw attention to the liberality of our friends in Holland. In recent times the Mbuma-Zending Board have increased their quarterly contributions by 15% and we are grateful to them for that. Without such help, as is often enough pointed out, our Church could not continue to work in Africa to anything like the same extent. It is also incumbent on us to mention that, in Zimbabwe, the Oikonomos Foundation has continued to work in its own quiet and efficient way in bringing a variety of Mission projects to completion. We are most grateful to them for the work done.

Zimbabwe

We are glad to note that the Rev. P. Mzamo still continues to labour on in his Master's service at Mbuma and that the same is true of Rev. Z. Mazvabo at New Canaan. It is also encouraging to note that the recently-ordained ministers – Rev. S. Khumalo and the Rev. M. Mloyi – are settling down well in their respective charges. Mr. Nedson Banda was asked by the Zimbabwe Presbytery to supply Mission pulpits, spending some time at each station and under the supervision of the ministers concerned.

Mr. James Macleod applied to the Committee and was accepted as a teacher of Computing and Religious Education over a "gap" year, after his graduation in June. He has since extended this period by a further year. Miss Eleanor Wylie, a Science graduate, also arrived in January 2005 at Ingwenya to teach at the John Tallach Secondary School. Mr. B. Ncube continues to carry out the duties of Headmaster in his own capable way, while Miss Norma MacLean continues, in her own competent manner, to attend to the duties falling to the Deputy Head which includes being responsible for looking after the boarders with all that that entails. Miss Rhoda MacKay, not for the first time, volunteered her services when the need again arose and we are grateful to her for staying over an extra term to give further help. It is gratifying to know that the standard of education set at the John Tallach Secondary School has earned for it the Secretary of Education's Merit Award for the best school in Matabeleland. The facilities available at the Thembiso Children's Home are being fully used and we believe that the children who were left orphans or were abandoned by their parents and were tenderly cared for under its roof, will yet remember this and hopefully remember also what they were taught from the Scriptures.

At the Mbumba Mission Hospital, the nursing sisters are dutifully attending to and treating as many patients as it is possible for them to help. They can only use the means available to them. It is hoped that there will soon be a doctor working there again. Dr. Snoek, a young woman from Holland, has been accepted by the Committee and has been in Zimbabwe since January 2005. Until her work permit is granted she will continue, as at present, to study the language. Miss Petra Beukers arrived at Mbumba in February 2004. Miss Willie Gertsen, having now practised for a year under supervision, is now fully registered. We are grateful to these young women for the work they do. We are also grateful to Miss Margaret Macaskill for going out to help at the Hospital for a period of six weeks in 2004.

Mr. Teus Benschop and Miss C. M. MacAulay continued the work of revising the Ndebele Bible and the New Testament was completed in 2004. It is now in the hands of the Trinitarian Bible Society for final revision and printing. The revising of the Old Testament was due to begin in March. This is a major undertaking and we are grateful to all that have helped.

Kenya

The Rev. Keith Watkins is now, we are glad to report, enjoying good health and continues to carry out his duties with undiminished zeal. More of the Psalms of David have been translated and set in metrical form to be sung in the public and private worship of God. It was agreed that the Committee would meet the travelling expenses of two elders from Zimbabwe in visiting Kenya. It was thought that it would be helpful if they were to visit Sengera and become acquainted with the congregation there and over which they are, as assessor elders, called upon to exercise rule.

Over the earlier part of 2004, Mr. H. MacKenzie filled the post of Mission administrator and then, on his return home, Mr. C. Gunn took over these duties for the remaining six months of the year. The Committee has advertised the post of Mission Administrator, but without success. Mr. MacKenzie self-denyingly agreed to return at the beginning of this year but not on a permanent basis. The Committee is – as a matter of urgency – looking for a suitable person to fill this post. We are very grateful to both Mr. MacKenzie and Mr. Gunn for standing in the breach.

The Magara land purchase, which met with much difficulty, was finally concluded in January 2005. This was done in a manner that was satisfactory to all the parties concerned. The Board responsible for the administration of the local primary school has now some new members on it and this has resulted in the Mission being able to have more access to it and more influence as far as religious teaching is concerned.

The Omorembe Clinic continues to provide all the help possible to those in need of medical attention and care. The Matron and her staff attend to the duties falling to them in their customary efficient and compassionate manner. The Matron's own Report will give details.

Israel

Following the granting of a visa and the Synod having given permission in May 2004 to “establish a presence in Israel”, the Rev. John Goldby and family moved to Israel in August, with the permission of the Western Presbytery. The arrangement is for Mr. Goldby to remain in Israel until the Synod meets when, it is hoped, the way forward will be agreed.

Conclusion

Those who continue to shoulder the responsibility of ensuring the smooth running of the Mission year after year are to be commended. Only those closest to the situation are fully aware of the amount of work which they have to get through, day by day, and sometimes in the face of unforeseen difficulties. Their devotion to duty is exemplary. Reports coming before the Synod will bear testimony to that.

JEWISH REPORT

Rev. J. Goldby

MY family and I arrived in Tel Aviv, Israel, on Wednesday, 17th November 2004. A brand new, very impressive airport terminal building had been built and opened since my last visit. A suitable house has been rented in the Talpiot area of Jerusalem. Our first task was to buy basic essentials such as bedding and kitchenware. Over the succeeding weeks we have purchased the principal items required to furnish the house and study. At first, as might be expected, there were teething problems with heating, computers, etc., but these have now, for the most part, been resolved.

One major problem in connection with church services in Israel is the Seventh Day Sabbath. Sadly the whole of Israel is working on the Christian Sabbath. Most, if not all, of the Messianic churches worship on Saturday and there are none we know of who keep to the principle of a Christian Sabbath. The Jewish Sabbath begins an hour before sunset and on Friday everything shuts down until the Sabbath ends on Saturday evening. On the other hand, the Sabbath “principal” of one day in seven is faithfully maintained; no shops open and no buses run and there are very few cars on the streets. A few churches hold services on the Lord’s Day. Our witness to the Lord’s Day and Christian Sabbath is exceptional and important in a country where there is little understanding of Reformed doctrine. In Jerusalem there is no truly Reformed witness as we would understand the term “Reformed”.

To date we have been holding church services at 11 a.m. on the Lord’s Day in the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran church at the Shelhevetyah Centre, 25 Shivtei Yisrael, and in the evening at 7 p.m. at St. Andrew’s Church of Scotland, 1 David Remez Street. This is a very fine building looking across the

Valley of Hinnom to Mount Zion. We are grateful to the ministers and managers of both organisations for kindly allowing us to rent their premises. The rental agreements are on a short-term basis meantime. For the future, and for obvious reasons, a building of our own would be highly desirable. Although attendances are minimal at present, I trust that given time and perseverance this will change.

A Mazda saloon car has been hired for six months from Budget car hire. The car is a great asset and though on the small side is adequate for most of our needs. Car hire is expensive and the purchase of a larger vehicle is desirable, our house being some distance from places of worship. The day after we arrived we were encouraged by a visit from Dominies Sonneveld and Neele from the Netherlands Reformed Congregations. More recently we had three students from the same Church staying with us. One of them is a medical student who had been doing an elective in a Tel Aviv hospital. This hospital treats many patients who have suffered in terrorist attacks. Among many tragic cases we heard of a young man who had lost a leg and the use of one hand whose body was full of shrapnel as a result of a rocket fired from Gaza. Undaunted, he was still determined to remain in his home, believing in the right of the Jewish people to live anywhere in the land of Israel.

On Friday, 7th January, we travelled north to Nazareth and stayed the night with Mr. and Mrs. Maarten Dekker and their two boys, Peter and Carl. Mr. Dekker represents the Netherlands Reformed Congregations in Israel. Nazareth is situated on and around the hills skirting the northern edge of the great valley or plain of Jezreel. On the way we stopped at the Hill of Meggido (Armageddon) which lies at the southern edge of the Jezreel valley. To the east one can see the mountains of Gilboa where Saul and Jonathan fell. A Bible study on Isaiah 53 was held in the Dekker home in the evening, attended by a number of Russian Jews, some of whom are professing Christians. The young man who translates for Mr. Dekker serves in the Israeli Army. The following day we travelled to Nahariya (about an hour's journey) where I was invited to preach to a group of Jewish believers, mostly of British origin, in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Albert Nessim. Mr. Nessim is a Jewish Christian in his seventies whose father was born in Iraq. We introduced them to the singing of metrical Psalms and one person asked if she could keep a Psalm book. The sermon was translated into Hebrew for those who had no English. About a dozen persons were present and after the service the Nessims kindly provided a meal for us and others. Nessim's son, Michael, is an able young man who reads the Puritans. He told me that at one time he felt that the solution for the Palestinian problem was political and military but now was firmly of the view that the real solution must be a spiritual one. Nahariya is about five kilometres from the Lebanese border. The people of this town have been subjected to frequent bombardment from Ketusha rockets fired from Lebanon by Palestinian terrorists.

We have pleasant Jewish neighbours with whom we are beginning to establish friendly relations. Several from different homes in the same block

have called in to chat and give us various tips on practical matters. One neighbour invited us for a Shabbat evening meal in the Jewish tradition. Another neighbour has spoken with us briefly about the Messiah.

Beit Tamar is a home for severely physically disabled young people run by an Israeli charity. Our daughter Shona is working in this home as a volunteer for which she is to be given a special visa by the Ministry of the Interior. The staff is composed of Israelis, some secular, some Orthodox, with a number of volunteers from various countries. Contact with residents and staff is a useful element in our integration process. Nearby is the splendid new Israeli Supreme Court and other government buildings and beyond them the Knesset.

Our younger daughter Jennifer attended the Anglican International School during November and December. The school is good educationally with many different nationalities among the pupils but the fees are high at more than £7,000 per annum. Some staff members are secular, some Christian, some Arab Christian and three Jewish teachers. The geography teacher is a Mr. Solomon whose father is a Rabbi in Oxford. The pupils are mainly children of diplomatic and UN staff.

Through a series of rather remarkable providences, we were offered a place for Jennifer in the Israeli school system free of charge. A number of Israeli civil servants were most helpful. The transition to an Israeli school begins with an intensive Hebrew course in an “Ulpan” school. This is a school for Jewish children aged 12-18 who have made “Aliyah” to Israel from a variety of countries. We were interviewed by the headmistress at her school which is within walking distance of our home. To our very great surprise the headmistress turned out to be the wife of Mr. Solomon! Apart from the significant financial savings, the transition to this school is proving a valuable means of learning the language and culture of Israel.

The importance of learning modern Hebrew and improving biblical Hebrew cannot be emphasised sufficiently. It would be of great benefit to the ministry and to us all to improve our knowledge of the Hebrew language. At the end of January I joined an Ulpan for full-time language study. This is a five months’ full-time course. A constant flow of Jewish immigrants pass through the adult “Ulpan” Hebrew language schools. Our class is composed of mostly Jewish people immigrating from different countries. There are also a few Israeli Arabs. The standard of Hebrew among the students is high and the pace demanding. The lessons are taught in Hebrew and the textbooks contain no English. Staff and students get on well and interesting questions have been raised at break times concerning the Person of the Messiah, the teaching of the Christian Sabbath and our relationship to the Law of God, etc.

The Jewish festival of Chanukka began on 7th December (25th of Kislev, the Jewish ninth month; there are two Jewish calendars in operation – one secular, one religious). This “festival of light” lasts eight days and celebrates the rededication of the Temple by the Maccabees after Antiochus Epiphanes profaned it. Judas Maccabeus appointed it about 164 B.C. Chanukka is a good occasion to discuss the Messiah for it was the festival called in the New

Testament the Feast of Dedication in the winter that Jesus walked in Solomon's porch, where He was asked by the Jews if He was the Messiah (John 10:22-39).

One of Mr. Smadja's (a Jewish Christian printer) fellow elders was pleased to receive a copy of the *Life of Rabbi Duncan*. Mr. Smadja himself told me of the good he had found in a sermon of R. M. M'Cheyne (on Isaiah 28:14-18) published in the December *Free Presbyterian Magazine*.

Mr. Sonderegger, an elderly Christian man of Swiss origin who lives in England, attended one of our services. He has some Jewish blood and speaks Hebrew. We also met his daughter, Natanya. Afterwards a young Orthodox man was interested to hear about the scriptures of the Old Testament which refer to the Messiah and asked us to sit with him. An interesting discussion and reading of Messiah texts in both languages went on for quite some time.

The translation of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* into Hebrew has begun. Our translator, Maya Rechnitzer, is professional, meticulous and painstaking in seeking to get the exact and best possible translation of words and phrases. Her previous experience in translating the *Pilgrim's Progress* and Jewish Christian authors such as Adolph Saphir will be of great assistance in the present work. I have no doubt that this historic statement of biblical Christian beliefs will be of great assistance in countering the confusion which beclouds the understanding of many in this land.

I am grateful for the prayerful and material support for this work by members of Synod, the Jewish and Foreign Mission Committee and individuals from within and without our Church who have a love for the Jewish people and a desire to promote the Cause of Christ.

INGWENYA MISSION REPORT

Rev. S. Khumalo

AS I write this report my mind is filled with wonder and thankfulness at what the Lord has done for us. We have come to the end of the year and, more than that, we have entered the year of our Centenary as a Church in Zimbabwe. It is here that Rev. J. B. Radasi, led by the Lord, established the witness of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. It was from this first mission that the witness spread to the Nkayi Forest and now has spread to Mashonaland. The witness still continues. We must say, "Glory be unto God". "The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen" (Psalm 98:2).

There is a shortage of labourers because some have been taken away by death, but if the Lord be on our side we need not fear.

Ingwenya, the main station, has now five other preaching stations. These are Cameron, Gadadi, Insiza, Inyathi and, recently, Matapa.

Ingwenya has two communions each year. It is pleasing to note that the attendance has improved and that through the year a few were added to the communion roll. I am very thankful to the elders, Mr. P. Moyo and Mr. I. Manzini, who have supplied Ingwenya on Sabbaths and weekdays. They have bodily weaknesses but the Lord has been their strength.

During the year, four elders and one deacon were elected to office. When I visit Ingwenya I also take services at the nearby stations of Cameron or Gadadi and end my day at Ingwenya for the evening service.

At Cameron there are services every Sabbath and Philani Mzamo, who is an elder there, takes these. I am very thankful to him, for he comes home every weekend in order to supply his home congregation and then returns on Monday to his work at Maphisa, which is far away from his home. Cameron has one communion per year, in July.

Gadadi is a small congregation in this small village, where Saul Ncube, who was elected to the office of an elder during the course of the year, supplies it every Sabbath.

Insiza is one of the preaching centres in the Matabeleland South province. Most of the people in that congregation are Xhosa speaking people who were settled there from Fingo Mbembesi area. Mr. Herbert Nyilika is an elder and Herbert Ntakana is a deacon. The services are held at a local school but it is not a convenient place due to the disturbances caused by the many churches which also conduct services there. There are plans to apply for a plot of land, if funds permit, and to build our own place of worship.

Inyathi is another station, opened a few years back in the time of the late Mazwi and Rev. Ndebele. There is one communion each year, in November, and we have two elders, Mr. Manjonzi and Mr. A. Hlabangana. They conduct the services every Sabbath. I visit this station regularly.

The last one is Matapa Circle C, a resettlement area where the majority of the people are Xhosa speaking from Mbebesi. It was during the time of the late C. Sobantu, the elder at Ingwenya, and during the late Rev. A. Ndebele's ministry, that this station was opened. It went on until the death of Mr. Sobantu. The preaching supply from Ingwenya continued for a time but, due to the shortage of manpower and the illness of Rev. Ndebele, this supply was discontinued until last year when, following a number of invitations, written and personal, the kirk session of Ingwenya decided to respond to the people of Matapa. They were like the people of Macedonia, praying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us". So we made an appointment to meet them and Mr. P. Moyo and myself went on a Thursday afternoon. On our arrival we found a crowd of over twenty people, waiting for us and eager to hear the Gospel. It was in the home of Mr. J. Magunya that we assembled and I preached on John 3:16, explaining to them: (1) the source of this love; (2) the manifestation of it; and (3) the benefit of this love to a poor sinner. After the service we had a discussion with the people and they expressed their thankfulness that their prayers were at last answered. May their hearts be opened, as Lydia's heart was opened by the Lord. We continue to supply there once or twice a month.

“Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth” (Isaiah 62:6-7).

JOHN TALLACH SECONDARY SCHOOL REPORT

Miss Norma B. MacLean

THE year 2004 brought one of the Ministry of Education’s highest honours to John Tallach School when we were awarded the Secretary of Education’s Merit Award for the best secondary school in Matabeleland North. This prestigious award recognises all-round excellence, taking note of examination results, curriculum development, structural maintenance and improvements, well disciplined pupils and teachers, and good relations with parents and community. We were very excited that the consistent success of the school and all the hard work which makes that possible was recognised in this way. A deputation from the Ministry of Education in Bulawayo, led by the Provincial Education Director, came to the school in October for the presentation ceremony. It was a very happy day when a special lunch was provided in honour of the occasion and all the invited guests were impressed with the developments which they saw at the school. Shortly after this event the school’s name was again seen in the local press when news came that one of our Form 4 pupils had done very well in a SADC (Southern Africa Development Community) AIDS essay competition. Belinda was third in the senior section for Zimbabwe, which included students at teacher training colleges and universities, so this was a very significant achievement for her.

Economically we had a much easier year; hyperinflation, of course, continued, but perhaps we had become more experienced in dealing with it! The school budget managed to break even by the end of the year and we did not face the same level of shortages as in the previous two years. Locally there was a very limited harvest so, although most people had enough to eat, there was little to spare to sell for other essentials such as school fees, so local children continued to face difficulties in paying school fees.

Staffing

Mr. Ncube, the headmaster, was on leave for the first half of Term 1 – his lively personality was very much missed around the school, so we were very pleased to welcome him back at the end of February. The Ministry of Education supplied and paid for 26 teachers and Miss MacLean and Miss MacKay were also in post.

This was a very difficult year in the Bible Knowledge department. Both Miss Dube and Mrs. Moyo, from the Bulawayo congregation, left the staff to pursue further studies and their departures left a big blank in the Bible

Knowledge Department as we were not able to source local FPs to fill the posts. This created an emergency situation as far as covering the Bible Knowledge timetable was concerned. Special thanks are due to Miss MacKay for agreeing to delay her leave so as to remain to assist for another term, although her original contract ended in December 2003. Again we have to record our thanks to the Jewish and Foreign Missions Committee for their sympathy to the school in sending out Miss Marion Tallach to assist us for Term 1. Miss Tallach agreed to come at very short notice – she adjusted amazingly well to the environment and the work and was a very significant help to us during her three months here. We were also able to employ Bongani Khumalo, a son of Rev. S. Khumalo, during the first and second terms as he was waiting for university entrance. When Mr. Khumalo resigned at the beginning of Term 3 to begin his university studies we again faced a blank in the department, so were very grateful for Miss MacKay's agreement to return from the UK in September at very short notice to help until the end of the year. Miss MacKay eventually returned to the UK in December 2004 after completing 3 years' service at the school; during that time she did not spare herself but threw herself wholeheartedly into the work, taking on most of the responsibility for the Bible Knowledge department.

It is obvious from the above comments that there is still a great need for assistance from expatriate teachers. It is still not easy for us to cover all the Bible Knowledge classes with suitable local church personnel, although we were very pleased to be able to appoint Mr. N. Khumalo, another son of Rev. S. Khumalo, to the staff in time for the new session in January 2005. Mr. Khumalo is a trained teacher and a communicant member in the Bulawayo congregation, so is well suited to assist in the Bible Knowledge department.

We were particularly delighted that Mr. James MacLeod, from Leverburgh, was able to join the staff in the middle of July 2004. Mr. MacLeod, as well as being able to teach Bible Knowledge, is a Computing Science graduate. By the time he arrived at Ingwenya, the O Level certificate class was being taught by their fifth teacher and the situation in the computing department was a matter of great concern to us. His arrival enabled us to look forward to a period of greater stability in that department. Mr. MacLeod settled in very well and quickly became very busy. Computing classes are now able to proceed with more continuity, he is conducting evening classes for the teachers and providing technical support for the networked system in the school office. We are very thankful, therefore, that he has now offered another year to the school. Miss Eleanor Wylie, a Science graduate from Larne, offered her services for one year and arrived in time for the new session in January 2005 but since her arrival she has extended that to a second year of service, for which we are very thankful as she is proving to be an able member of staff. We are very grateful that in the Lord's kind providence we are able to look forward to a period of enhanced continuity in the Bible Knowledge department in particular.

It is still reasonably easy for us to bring in teachers from overseas, particularly in recognised shortage areas such as Science and Computing, and

we would welcome applications from suitably qualified people. The main qualification required for expatriate applicants is a university degree with teaching subjects – teacher training is not necessary.

In spite of this dependence on expatriate staff to cover Bible Knowledge and Computing, we have a very competent, pleasant and able group of Zimbabwean teachers covering the rest of the curriculum. Noteworthy are the Heads of Department who have all been with us for over 12 years: Mr. C. Dube, English; Mr. C. Mhlanga, Science; Mr. T. F. Ncube, Maths and Woodwork; Mr. T. Bope, Geography; Mr. M. Mpofo, Agriculture; and Mr. N. Hamu, the Sportsmaster who, with Mr. D. Dube, the Senior Master and Miss S. Gumpo, the Senior Mistress, make up our Discipline Committee. These members of staff, in their support of the school administration and their commitment and dedication to their own subject areas, contribute in no small way to the success of the school.

Pupil enrolment

During 2004, 592 pupils were enrolled in Forms 1 to 4 – approximately 100 of these attended on a daily basis from the local community and the remainder boarded at school for the whole term. Ten children with varying degrees of visual impairment were enrolled with us. A happy development is that it is becoming difficult to find blind or partially sighted pupils to join our unit – with better medical care there are fewer cases of either total blindness or partial sight.

Sly Jaricha, who was mentioned in the 2003 report, continued at school throughout the whole of 2004 and kept well. He managed to obtain very good O Level passes, scoring 6 As and 3Bs. He is presently enrolling for Form 6.

O Level results

The O Level results for 2004 showed an improvement on 2003 with 100 of our 120 candidates passing 5 or more subjects; i.e. 83%. We were delighted that 24 students managed to score 5 As or more with one student scoring 9 As.

At the annual Awards Ceremony for the 2004 O Level results for Matabeleland North, hosted by the Ministry of Education in Bulawayo in July, we were presented with trophies for:

- 1st in Mathematics
- 1st in Physical Science
- 1st in Biology
- 1st in History

We were also awarded for the second year in a row the trophy for having the highest number of pupils with 5+ A passes in Matabeleland North.

While this academic success gives us great satisfaction and is indicative of the hard work being done by both teachers and pupils, we would plead the prayers of the Lord's people that our children would not be among those who are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth". Our

greatest desire is that they would obey the command of Christ: “learn of me . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:29).

Finance

As mentioned earlier, hyperinflation continued but we managed to cope with the situation better than in the previous two years. Fees, of course, increased massively – we began with \$400,000 per term in January and ended the year with \$800,000 but we were glad to be able to reach a break-even point. The 200% increase in fees over the year was well below the rate of inflation. However, expenditure was still maintained at a minimum level with only a little maintenance being done.

Vehicles and buildings

The three vehicles belonging to the school, the 3-ton “bus” for orders, the Toyota Venture and the 76-seater bus, were again very reliable throughout the year. The Venture is 8 years old but is still an economical and reliable car, even if now a bit scruffy. The 3 ton “bus” is now 5 years old and is the busiest of the vehicles, being used for school orders at least twice a week, and used to transport teachers to town on Fridays and back to school again on Monday mornings. It is also still a very reliable vehicle. Our 76-seater bus, which was donated by the parents, is giving marvellous service, particularly at the beginning and end of terms – it has already saved its purchase price of \$3.5 million many times over. At the beginning and end of terms this vehicle is used to transport the children to and from school and has removed the frustrations caused when hiring vehicles which do not arrive on time or perhaps at all. The continued bulk purchase of fuel by the Mission has removed our problems in sourcing fuel and has also reduced the expense.

It was possible to embark on a little more maintenance than in the previous two years, largely due to the Miss A. MacLeod legacy. Using finance from this fund, we were able to complete the mattress replacement programme in the girls’ dormitories. All girls are now sleeping on 15cm thick mattresses and are very much enjoying the improved comfort. We were also able to replace one of our old photocopiers which was becoming unreliable. Another project which was completed from this fund was the improvement of cooking facilities for teachers – cookers with ovens have now been fitted in all the teachers’ cottages. We were also able to purchase 60 new classroom chairs. There is still a large balance left in this fund for future use.

The resource room fund had accumulated a healthy balance so, as the room was badly in need of decoration, we decided to have it painted and we also acquired smart new furniture which has greatly enhanced the appearance of the room. It was also possible to paint the interior of the Form 4 boys’ dormitory which had last been done 4 years ago.

From school funds, helped by various donations received, we were able to construct a “slaughter post”. The oxen which are slaughtered almost weekly to provide the boarding school with meat, were previously killed under a tree.

This new structure, with proper drainage, means that the slaughtering is now done in much more hygienic circumstances.

Construction on our kitchen improvements began in August 2004 but progress has been disappointingly slow – some of our own workmen with extra men hired for the job worked on the construction side of the job. They worked well and all construction – an extension to the existing kitchen premises to house the cold room and a small outside emergency cookhouse for three wood-fired pots to be used in the event of power cuts – was completed by the end of January 2005. However, the firm contracted to supply and install the electric pots and the stainless steel fittings had difficulty in importing the necessary supplies, so that part of the work has gone well over the original timescale. Inflationary pressures meant that the project also very soon went over budget, so various items had to be cut from the original plan, including the cold room. The Parents' Committee was very disappointed to learn that we could not proceed with the cold room and after examining their own finances decided to step in to provide the finance for it. We were very delighted with this gesture and are presently awaiting installation. Again there has been a delay because some of the materials had to be imported.

September 2004 saw construction begin on a new Form 3 boys' dormitory; again, some of our own men with extra hired labour are working on this project which has made excellent progress. It is hoped that it will be ready for occupation by May 2005. Form 2 and Form 3 boys are presently crowded into three dormitory blocks – this new building will enable us to separate them into four blocks which will reduce the overcrowding. However, we were again disappointed that it seems likely that this building will also go over budget and that it may not be possible to acquire new beds and mattresses for the Form 3 boys as originally intended.

Conclusion

We have again to thank all those who contribute to the success of the school with their prayerful and practical support. We receive many donations through the year. The two large construction projects (kitchen premises and boys' dormitory) are completely financed by Mbumba Zending and the Jewish and Foreign Missions Committee. There are very few schools in Matabeleland North which are able to proceed with any construction projects in these inflationary times – the fact that we are able to do so is entirely due to the support from Scotland and Holland, for which we are deeply thankful. We are also very grateful to all those, known and unknown, who send donations from time to time. The bulk of the expenses of our resource room for the visually impaired are financed from Sabbath School donations received from Scotland. The school library is entirely supported from individual donations and several of our local children are only able to continue at school because of the generosity of overseas friends. We record our thanks to all who contribute to the work in this way.

The report cannot conclude without reference to our sadness at the death of our previous pastor, Rev. A. B. Ndebele, who passed to his eternal rest in June 2004. Mr. Ndebele had retired to Bulawayo early in 2001 after labouring faithfully among the congregation and school children here at Ingwenya since June 1966. It is no exaggeration to say that thousands of souls sat under his ministry over these years – may those of us who are left remember that “the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Peter 1:25).

ZENKA MISSION REPORT

Rev. M. Mloyi

WE have been brought through another year by the grace of God. The work of the Lord has been carried out in the Zenka Mission stations, all of which have been supplied every Sabbath. The elder who helps at Katasa is presently laid aside because of ill health. We hope, the Lord willing, that he will soon recover. Weekday meetings at Zenka and Katasa have been conducted on Thursdays. This is possible at these two places because there are church buildings. We are unable to have prayer meetings at Fudu and Mabayi because, during the week, the classrooms there are occupied. If possible, proper places of worship should be built at these stations because they were established by former missionaries when they expanded the work from Zenka.

The Lord's Supper was dispensed twice at Zenka, in February and August. In February the Sacrament of Baptism was also dispensed – a male member, who is on the teaching staff at Zenka, was baptised. It is encouraging to see young men coming forward to witness for Christ. We ought to thank the Most High that these preaching stations are now visited regularly because of the availability of the minister's car. I drive myself to these stations or send an elder with a driver to preach. I often visit the sick and seek to comfort bereaved families. For long journeys I have the assistance of a qualified driver as I am still holding a learner's licence. I hope in the near future, God willing, to obtain a full licence.

There have been many deaths in the community at large and also in the Church. We lost a female member, an old lady, the wife of an elder at Zenka. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.”

This past year the community had a good harvest. There was help given by the Red Cross Food Aid for orphans and terminally ill patients. We much appreciate their help. The new planting season has begun but there is little rain and at the present time crops are beginning to wither. If this situation continues there will be drought countrywide.

We are thankful also for the new security fence around the Mission which closes out stray animals and controls the movement of local people who formally made the Mission a passage to the shopping centre.

We pray for the Lord's blessing to be upon our land. May He prosper the work of the Gospel by sending forth labourers who will preach Christ and Him crucified. Then there will be repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

NKAYI MISSION REPORT

Rev. M. Mloyi

THE work of the Lord is going well at the Nkayi stations. The Lord's Supper was dispensed at both Nkayi and Donsa. We are thankful to the Lord that these places of worship are visited often and that I am able to visit frequently due to the provision of a car.

The kirk session has now revived the prayer meeting at Mathetshaneni on Wednesday afternoons as there is now a church building. It is difficult to hold prayer meetings in places like Manomano, Mathendele and Nkuba as we have to worship in classrooms which are not always available. This year, Nkayi congregation will have two Communions. The second will be on the second Sabbath of June, while Donsa is on the second Sabbath of May, God willing. We have resumed this Communion, which ceased in 1998 while Rev. Mzamo was the interim moderator for Nkayi and when his workload had become immense.

In January the Sacrament of Baptism was dispensed at Nkayi and Mathetshaneni.

The voice of death and illness is heard countrywide. We are to note with sadness the loss by death of an elder at Nkayi, Mr. Thomas S. Tshabalala, who passed away on the 5th of May last year. Thus a great blank has been made in Nkayi and the Church. He was a widower and died after a long illness.

The Nkayi community is also benefiting from the Food Aid for orphans and terminally ill patients from the Red Cross Society. We are thankful for such aid from these sympathetic organisations. We also pray for the prosperity of the Gospel and that it would be preached to many poor and needy souls. May the divine Owner of the Vineyard send forth labourers into His vineyard.

In this part of Nkayi, although the planting season began, the crops are withering as in other areas. We still hope and pray that rains will come but there will be little harvest, it seems, before the next ploughing season.

ZVISHAVANE MISSION REPORT

Rev. Z. Mazvabo

I REMEMBER this day what happened many years ago when we were still at school. Every Sabbath Day the principal used to give the children a plentiful supply of sweets and church magazines to help young minds appreciate the holy day. The magazines occupied us profitably, which was a most acceptable arrangement. But one day there were not enough magazines for the children to share. After a few careless enquiries the occasion was allowed to pass without being given serious thought. Surprisingly the very next Sabbath, whether it was coincidental or planned, the much desired supply of sweets was short. The head boy was angrily commanded to go back for more sweets. The answer was short and to the point: "Go and do with the sweets as you did with the magazines last Sabbath."

I remember this story because once more there is a drought in our land and, as usual, a lot of complaining voices are being raised. When all is well, or when there is a lack of spiritual nourishment causing a spiritual famine, there are no such complaining voices to be heard. People are carelessly content. However, this time the rains have again failed and the sky is, as it were, closed. Now the Name of the Lord is in every mouth, even those who do not know Him – as it was on the ship bound for Tarshish. How good it would be if we learnt to call upon the Name of the Lord, not only in bad but also in good weather.

Famine is not the only rod the Lord is applying to the backs of this stiff-necked nation. This is evidenced not only in our own continent but sadly across the seas and oceans to the ends of the earth. The deadly disease of AIDS is on the increase and if that was not enough there is also the increasing number of mosquitoes bringing malaria. This happens more in urban areas, perhaps because of the more plentiful availability of water compared with the countryside. Mosquito nets are used during the nights to cover beds but even the cost of these are out of the reach of many people. Even those who can afford nets use them only at night. All these plagues are upon us because we live in a far-away country. Generations come and go very quickly and what is particularly sad is that more young people than old are being swept away in death and many areas are decimated of the young in this way. The numbers of widows and orphans is ever on the increase and the means to care for and nourish them is very strained. In every community and every congregation the need to lengthen one's hand of assistance is very conspicuous.

Above all, we need to lay to heart that sooner rather than later sinners will be wiped away in death. The need of that blessed and glorious message of the everlasting Gospel of the Son of God becomes more and more necessary. Sometimes many seem to give attention but we need the Spirit of the Lord to impress upon them the Gospel of salvation. We crave the prayers of the Lord's people that the Word would be blessed; disappointments are many and encouragements few.

We are thankful that our own family are in their usual health and that the message of the Gospel is brought to the congregation every Sabbath Day. “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20).

MBUMA CHURCH REPORT

Rev. P. Mzamo

WE have to acknowledge the care and goodness of the Lord over us as a visible Church, in that the Gospel of Christ is still preserved in our pulpits, schools and hospital. We have godly ministers, elders, teachers and nurses who maintain the truth of the Gospel by teaching and by a Christian life. In spite of all our weaknesses and failures, the Lord says, “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”.

The Church work continued undisturbed throughout the year and the Lord gave us a good measure of health and grace to conduct services on the Lord’s Day and weekday prayer meetings. In three of our preaching stations out of thirteen we have church services fortnightly. The faithful come regularly to the means of grace.

The elders continue to go out on the Lord’s Day with the message of the everlasting Gospel of the Son of God, teaching repentance towards God and faith towards the Lord Jesus – the same Gospel that Paul taught the Jews and Greeks. This small army of elders battle with the mighty and numerous armies of spiritual darkness and false teaching, rising up like a mushroom cloud against the chariot of the everlasting Gospel. However, the Captain of the chariot is in charge of the battle and we need not fear. We are “more than conquerors through him that loved us”.

Both Sacraments of the New Testament were administered – the Lord’s Supper twice at Mbuma and once at Somakantana, where people came to hear the message of the glorious death of the Son of God, dying in the room of sinners, and who witnessed the keeping in remembrance of His death by His people. The Sacrament of Baptism was administered to adults and children of professing parents in several congregations.

There were several marriages to perform, numerous funerals – mostly of young people. The worship in the home warned the careless and comforted the bereaved.

Once again I sincerely thank all our Church people and our friends in Holland for their generous and continual support of the Cause of Christ on the Mission field.

MBUMA MISSION HOSPITAL REPORT

Sr. P. van de Ridder

DURING the year 2004 we again have been very much aware of the Lord's never failing goodness and tender care. Still being short staffed, mountains of work were almost daily facing us. We acknowledge that it is the Lord who gave us daily health and strength but also work satisfaction and enjoyment. This enabled us to continue our health services in the so needy and large catchment area of Mbuma. Sometimes in late afternoon, when most of the outpatients were attended to, a regular saying of one of our Nurse Aids would be: "Sister, the mountain has fallen", meaning that we were almost finished seeing outpatients.

Staff

Our nursing staff establishment should count ten qualified nurses. We have only three. For performing the nursing duties we are still heavily depending on Nurse Aids, of which we have 25 in number.

Apart from nursing duties they run mobile antenatal and child welfare clinics. They conduct also uncomplicated deliveries. One of them, after having had some training, is now able to do quite a lot of laboratory work. We also have a few of them working in the dispensary. Their work, indeed, is much appreciated and the hospital could not function without them.

Sr. Petra Beukers came from Holland to join us at the beginning of February 2004. We were thankful that the Nursing Council considered our staff shortage. She was allowed to do most of her one year practise under supervision at Mbuma. After about two spells of 6 weeks in the big city Hospital named "Mpilo" in Bulawayo, she completed her year at Mbuma. Reports have been submitted and it looks promising that she soon will get the green light to practise nursing independently. Sr. Willie Geurtsen, after also one year practising under supervision, has now been accepted for registration and is allowed to practise independently. Both of them have been very hard working and can be counted as each bringing two pairs of hands.

It is encouraging that the four Nurse Aids who left us last year for the PCN course (Primary Care Nurse training) are finishing, D.V., in 2005, two in February and the other two in August 2005. According to government arrangements we are supposed to get them back to Mbuma as qualified nurses. At the beginning of January 2005, one more senior Nurse Aid left us also to join the PCN training. Later on in 2005, D.V., we expect that another one or two Nurse Aids may go for training.

Another encouragement is that Dr. Anneke Snoek's papers are accepted and processed and we hope that her registration will soon come through. She then, most likely, will have to work under supervision for some time in other hospitals, before she can practise independently at Mbuma. While waiting, she is kept busy with the language study so that she will have some grasp of it before she starts her work.

Staff deaths

We are very sorry to report that two valuable staff members died in the course of this year – our bricklayer/carpenter and one of our senior Nurse Aids who served the Mission for years. Both were still young and had been unwell for some time.

Sick leave

One of our qualified nurses, who was seconded to us by our district hospital at Nkayi, fell ill some months after she had started work with us. She is still on sick leave up to this present time. One of our senior Nurse Aids has been unwell for some time and recently had to retire on medical grounds. Then one of our drivers has been quite unwell for more than half a year and is still on light duties.

Resignations

Our African, sort of permanent staff member, left us all of a sudden last November. A senior Nurse Aid, who had been working with us for nearly 25 years, took her retirement.

Dismissals

Our maintenance man, one senior Nurse Aid and a relief Nurse Aid had to be dismissed.

Absconded staff

Our hospital clerk and, some months later, also our Health Information Clerk, absconded to South Africa, followed by one of our ground workers, who also absconded to South Africa.

Medical report

Being still short staffed we also tried this year to limit the number of admissions. As the following statistics show, like last year, it again caused a rise in the number of outpatients. Among our inpatients the majority are still HIV/AIDS patients. The number of TB cases is also still quite high, with many of them HIV related. On average we have 6-7 TB patients among our total number of inpatients. Our total inpatient numbers vary between 20-35.

This year our total number of deaths was 109, of which 80-90% died with the underlying cause of HIV/AIDS. So far we do not see any signs of decline in HIV/AIDS or TB cases. Because of the great prevalence of HIV/AIDS, this past year we have been very active in promoting awareness, through teaching and counselling, about HIV/AIDS. It involves pre-test counselling before the test and often more than one session of post-test counselling after receiving the result. It is a very intensive and time-consuming activity, which needs a thoroughly Christian input. Since we have no such persons among our nursing staff, we keep the counselling in our own hand, wondering who we could send for counselling training.

Nowadays there are many counselling courses available, even Christian courses. Most of the so-called Christian courses, however, still allow immoral behaviour by promoting condoms without discrimination. So candidates for such courses need to be true, committed Christians who keep and are able to defend their principles. In looking around us, with a view of obtaining assistance, it comes to our mind whether some of our elders could be involved and attend a counselling course?

Under the column VCT (which is Voluntary Counselling and Testing) our statistics show a very high number of positive cases. The reason is, these cases clinically present themselves as positive and being tested usually confirm that fact.

Maternity and antenatal clinics

As statistics show, there is quite a rise in the number of births. Many happy births took place. Maternity can also cause a lot of worry. We sometimes had very complicated cases with, as it were, maternal death imminent – cases which needed immediate referral to our District Hospital at Nkayi. We are very thankful that we do not have to report any maternal deaths. This year we introduced the PPTCT programme to all pregnant mothers attending our clinic/hospital. PPTCT stands for Prevention of Parent to Child Transmission.

This programme entails: Counselling and health teaching about HIV/AIDS, after which the pregnant mothers are encouraged to decide yes or no for the HIV test. Then the HIV positive mothers are offered antiretroviral drugs (provided by the government) for themselves as soon as labour starts, also for the baby at a certain time after birth. After that the baby is followed up and HIV tests carried out at certain times. The programme is doing well. Many pregnant women have decided to be tested. Quite a few tested positive and the required treatments could be given. The programme is still a little too young to be able to test any of the babies who received the antiretroviral drugs. What is still lacking in the programme is to get the husbands involved and to be tested. Thus far they are not at all easily convinced by their wives to come.

Children's ward

Again we treated quite a number of malnourished and failure to thrive children. Despite good feeding they take a very long time to recover and gain weight and so occupy the beds for a considerable time. Last year Zimbabwe had good rains and, generally speaking, good crops. Because of that, in the course of the year, most of the famine relief organisations were stopped. So our malnourished and chronically ill are not benefiting any more. This rain season the rains have not been so good and in many place it begins to look as if Zimbabwe is going to face another year of poor harvest.

Notifiable diseases

One of the notifiable diseases is Anthrax. We kept having to treat cases all through the year and recently the number increased because of an outbreak in

the Nkayi district, but also districts further afield were involved. So far all cases responded well to the treatment and we are thankful that we did not need to report any deaths.

Since the recent outbreak, again the government undertook action by vaccinating the cattle. We have put quite an effort into teaching, especially among our outpatients, who come from all corners of the district and are valuable means of communication. With the people in our community it is still very much the custom that if one of their cattle dies, then they eat it. So we hope the health teaching about this deadly disease will change their health impairing practise.

Rabies is another notifiable disease. Over the year we had to treat quite a number of cases. Most of the dog bites have to be treated as being rabid unless one is sure that the dog was vaccinated. In rabies cases one cannot wait for signs and symptoms for by then the disease has already become irreversible, accompanied with a lot of suffering for the patient. Rabies vaccine has been out of stock for quite a while in this country. We kept having cases and were forced to buy it from private pharmacies who buy it in South Africa. It cost the Mission some millions.

Hospital expenses

The hospital expenses keep going up. The grants which we receive from the government are not at all keeping pace with the expenses. We often overspent our budget by giving only basic-care food and treatment. Drugs and other medical equipment are frequently out of stock and have then to be bought more expensively from private companies. To run the hospital in this way is far from easy.

STATISTICS

	2003	2004
Admissions		
General, including TB	726	949
Maternity	303	497
Discharges		
General.....	634	875
Maternity	281	447
Bed occupancy		
General.....	14,584	11,849
Maternity	5,798	3,984
Deaths, including NND		
General.....	89	109
Maternity	1	0

	2003	2004
Outpatients		
New.....	15,476	20,732
Repeats.....	8,042	11,327
Total.....	18,620	32,054
Confinements		
Total.....	287	475
Live births.....	286	474
Still births.....	1	7
NND (up to 1 month).....	2	6
Antenatal Clinic attendances.....	2,164	2,568
Child Welfare Clinic Attendances.....	3,846	7,364
Major operations		
General.....	—	—
Maternity.....	—	—
Minor operations		
General.....	222	195
Maternity.....	6	65
X-rays		
Patients.....	142	98
Films used.....	172	115
Ambulance		
Number of trips.....	155	143
Km covered.....	32,820	32,270

<u>Five major health problems</u>	2003	2004
<i>Age below 5 yrs</i>	1. ARI 2. Diarrhoea 3. ENT 4. Eye+skin diseases 5. Malnutrition	1. ARI 2. Diarrhoea 3. Skin diseases 4. Eye diseases 5. Malaria
<i>Age 5-14 yrs</i>	1. ARI 2. ENT 3. Skin diseases 4. Injuries 5. Malaria	1. ARI 2. Skin diseases 3. Injuries 4. Eye diseases 5. Malaria

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

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

PPTCT Programme	2003	2004
Total number tested	0	343
Numbers tested neg	0	271
Numbers tested pos	0	72
VCT Programme		
Total number tested	104	223
Numbers tested neg	16	60
Numbers tested pos	88	163
Numbers of mothers who received NVP...	0	10
Numbers of babies who received NVP.....	0	16

Medical supportive services

Fuel

Although very expensive, the fuel supply has been much better this year.

Transport

Most of the cars are old and also, due to the rough roads, are often in need of repair and therefore are not really dependable for travelling long distances. We are very pleased to receive a brand new Toyota twin cab for staff purposes mainly. It makes travelling much more comfortable and dependable. Good news also is that a new car for ambulance purposes is just about to arrive at Mbuma. We are also expecting a new lorry in the near future.

Gas

An adequate regular gas supply is still a problem in running fridges and our gas cookers. Because of that the hospital has the minimum number of fridges in use and we are still doing our sterilisation on wood fires, which is far from ideal.

Communication

At the time of writing this report (February 2005), we have just been reconnected to the phone after having been without it for almost a full year.

Our phone works by solar energy and the panels (which are outside the mission grounds) were stolen last year. They were recovered straight away but for many reasons only placed back in position after considerable delay. We are happy to have the phone working again for to be able to communicate makes work in many ways much easier.

Rural electrification

Throughout the year we have been trying to enquire at different levels to find out if the programme is anywhere near Mbuma. Physically it is quite close and according to different authorities we should get it soon. It will be a big help and solve many problems if that really becomes true.

Conclusion

We very much appreciated the continuous support in prayers and gifts by our Mission friends here and abroad and encourage you to keep up that support. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

BULAWAYO MISSION REPORT

Rev. S. Khumalo

WE have now come to another year and when we look back into the past year we have reason to be thankful to the Most High for the caring hand of His providence. "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Psalm 121:4).

The work in Bulawayo and its congregations has been going on very smoothly, with good attendances at the services and a satisfactory growth in communicant membership and in the number of adherents. We pray that there would also be spiritual growth, that is, in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We had our usual communion seasons in June and December, which are both held at Lobengula. They were memorable occasions to us as a congregation and to those who visited us. It was a time of spiritual refreshing in remembering the death of Christ. It was good that we had visitors from Holland and Scotland during these communions and we are very thankful that they made their holiday coincide with the communions. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1).

We have our usual service on the Lord's Day at Umguza at 9 a.m. and at Lobengula and Nkulumane at 11.30 a.m. and 1.30 p.m. Prayer meetings are held at Thembiso on Tuesday at 9 a.m., at Umguza on Thursday at 3 p.m., and at Lobengula on Friday at 4 p.m.

In all the preaching stations I take one service in each and am very thankful to the elders who are of great help in taking the remainder of the services

during my absence. With the psalmist we pray: “Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it” (Psalm 90:16-17).

Last, but not least, we would like to thank our friends in Scotland, Holland and other parts of the world, for their financial and material support, generously given for the prosperity of the Gospel of Christ.

As we approach our Centenary, we have all our overseas friends, past and present, before our mind, for they have contributed to the success of our Mission work in Africa. Above all we give thanks to the Lord, who gave you grace to abound in your love to us.

NDEBELE BIBLE REVISION REPORT

C. M. Macaulay and T. Benschop

OVER the past year, work has been continued by the translation team consisting of Mr. N. Mpofu and Mr. B. Mziya, along with Mr. T. Benschop and Miss C. M. Macaulay.

As was reported in the Trinitarian Bible Society’s *Quarterly Record* (January to March 2005), the intention, God willing, is to achieve printing and publication of the Ndebele New Testament before the celebration of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland Mission Centenary in September 2005. Final checks before printing are now being applied to the New Testament by the TBS.

We found it most helpful to consult Mr. G. W. Anderson, editorial manager and a Greek scholar, from time to time. Progress is now being made in the revision of the Old Testament.

We were requested to revise the Ndebele Psalm Book currently in use. This involved several months’ work, but we are happy that the new Psalm Books have now been printed. This was done by a local Christian printing press who charge sufficient only to cover their costs – but with the escalating costs for labour and materials it has been a big outlay for the Mission. Eventually they hope to recover their costs.

Another project undertaken was the Ndebele translation of the *Pilgrim’s Progress* by John Bunyan. At the beginning of last century this had been done in both Zulu and Ndebele by the early missionaries, but the language has changed considerably since then and a new orthography is in use; moreover, these books are now out of print. As both Mr. T. Benschop and Miss C. M. Macaulay were to go on leave, Mr. Mpofu and Mr. Mziya continued and

finished the work in their absence. They are making a final check so as to have it ready for printing soon as it is already on computer disc.

Again quoting from the TBS *Quarterly Record*, Dr. D. E. Anderson writes: "For centuries, those translating the Word of God from the Greek and Hebrew texts have recognised the great responsibility they have in producing accurate versions of the Bible, in which nothing can be added or omitted."

As in other branches of the work of the Mission, we need the help of the Lord and the prayers of the Church.

EBENEZER SCRIPTURE MISSION AND THEMBISO CHILDREN'S HOME REPORT

Mr. S. B. Mpofu

THANKS to the Almighty we are now in a new year. Last year we had a number of incidents but were pulled through because He was by our side.

Themviso Children's Home

The home has, presently, 58 children and we are glad to be almost near our required number of 54 children. We lost a 10-month-old baby girl in December. Another baby boy was hospitalised in December and his condition has worsened. An 8-year-old girl has been in hospital on a number of occasions and her health is very up and down.

Four of our number were in Form 4 last year and we await their results. All these have been discharged to relatives as they were already above 16 years of age. Of the 58 children, only 6 are too young to go to school.

Birth certificates are a real problem to obtain, especially those of children whose committal documents do not contain police reports. Last year I managed to help three children obtain birth certificates, which necessitated driving to their own districts to get them.

We are pleased to find that former inhabitants of the home, who are now adults, do remember us and they either come to help here or some send donations. Godfrey, who is now with the National Railways of Zimbabwe, has helped repair some electrical items, both at the home and at the Reformed bookroom.

Staff

Staff members are trying by all means to help our children grow up in a normal way and they give close attention to clinic visits when children are sick. Two staff members lost their husbands, one last year and the other early this year. One male staff member, a groundsman, was dismissed after it was discovered that he had stolen some items from the home.

Problems

Firstly, most of children do not have birth certificates. Efforts are made to obtain these but are not very fruitful. Requirements by the registrar are hard for our institution to meet.

Secondly, the cost of living is now so high that we find it difficult to supply children with necessary items, especially those requiring things for school. Secondary school books are very expensive for us to obtain for each child.

Thirdly, salary rises are going up at the minimum of twice a year, making it difficult for us to pay workers.

Pre-school

The three pre-school classes are operational, though parents are complaining about the high fees. The head of the primary school is doing a lot to make sure standards are kept high. Last year's classes had a very colourful graduation attended by many parents.

ALOZ classes

The last two operational ALOZ classes were closed in December. Fees paid by students were falling far short of meeting the costs of running them and so tutors were given their gratuities in December.

Reformed bookroom

Following the departure of the former bookroom manager, Mrs. S. G. Moyo was appointed and she has proved capable in the running of the bookshop.

Credits by the former manager have been paid. The bookroom is now looking to purchase books for selling on that are in great demand at this time of the year.

A former pupil at the children's home has helped repair some lights at the bookshop free of charge.

ZIMBABWE MISSION ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

E. B. Zikhali

The Field Committee was able to meet three times in the year, during March, June and October, when matters were discussed pertaining to the financial needs of the Mission. However, there is in addition to the above, a sub-committee which attends to urgent matters. This comprises four members of the Field Committee – Mr. S. B. Mpofu, the chairman, Miss N. B. MacLean, the minutes secretary, Mr. J. B. Mpofu, the transport and building manager, and Mr. E. B. Zikhali, the administrator. They meet occasionally to address the more urgent needs of the Mission (since there is a long interval between one

meeting of the Field Committee and the next) and their findings are reported to the Field Committee at its scheduled meetings.

The year 2004, compared with the previous year, has witnessed a remarkable improvement in the economic climate, with better availability of basic commodities and an improvement in inflation. The general supply of fuel and food has greatly improved.

The main office in Bulawayo continued to take care of all the affairs of the Mission field in Zimbabwe and the work of the Lord continued undisturbed, for which we have every reason to be thankful. The political situation was calm throughout the year. The approved building and maintenance work continued fairly well at all stations but at a slower pace, due to the ever-rising cost of materials. Ingwenya Mission manse is taking a long time to complete and many funds are being used in its construction. It is still a long way from completion.

We were pleased to have visitors during the year, some of whom came from Holland and some from Scotland. Others were from organisations such as Burgland Charitas Foundation, who were on a fact-finding mission; others were members of the Oikonomos Foundation, which is carrying out various projects in Zimbabwe.

A most disappointing development is that most of our hospital staff have had their Temporary Work Permits revoked. The reason may have been caused by some of our expatriate workers who, having applied for, and obtained, an extension, failed to turn up at work to collect it. We have several such from our own church, which requires that one makes up his/her mind before applying for a Work Permit. There is a serious shortage of staff at the hospital and out of ten posts for nurses we have only three people, including the matron. This shortage has resulted in a heavy load on these three persons who labour for 90 hours per week each, which is very unhealthy to say the least. However, everything is going on in spite of these difficulties.

All church stations in Zimbabwe are carrying on smoothly and we should be very thankful indeed. Some Mission employees have become full members, which is encouraging indeed to those who preach the everlasting Gospel of Christ.

The Church in Scotland continued to provide our Mission with monthly financial support, in spite of salary increases being revised three times in the year by the National Employment Council. We are very thankful that the Lord has opened the hands of those who care for us. Dutch friends, too, have continued to send parcels throughout the year, which is a kind gesture and much appreciated by our church in Zimbabwe. These continue to be given to the poor.

The New Testament revision has gone through smoothly and the committee have now started on the Old Testament. The Mission vehicle fleet is still roadworthy, although some vehicles are constantly giving problems, mainly due to the bad roads. Three new vehicles were added to the fleet since late last year which has improved the situation. Bulk fuel, purchased last year, has been

a most useful provision; there is still a good supply left and we are very thankful to the FMC for allowing us to obtain it.

To close, I would like to quote from Jude 24-25: “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

BUILDING AND TRANSPORT REPORT

Mr. J. B. Mpofu

Building

In my last report I spoke about the classroom repairs carried out at Mbuma. They were painted and the doors were also done. The work carried out at the Mbuma Mission kitchen hospital has been finished and the isolation house extension completed.

Zenka and New Canaan had no ongoing projects during the year but maintenance work was carried out.

Ingwenya projects include the manse, which has taken a long time to complete because the contractor only worked on and off until we replaced him with others. However, there is still more work to be done in order to finish it. Unfortunately those employed try to drag out the work in order to keep themselves employed because there is so little work in the area. We have again had to replace these workers. The cold room building has been finished at John Tallach School and a small kitchen built for use during times when we are without electricity. The boys' dormitory is halfway finished, with the roof on and plastering and ceiling in progress.

The church at New Canaan has been prepared for the installation of electricity because the mains have been brought near our church. The other work is maintenance.

Transport

The transport fleet has remained much the same as in last year's report.

Rev. Mzamo's vehicle is still in good condition and Rev. Mazvabo's car is still running well. Both Rev. Mloyi's and Rev. Khumalo's vehicles are in good condition. The Mbuma and Thembiso vehicles have done very well in the past year and are still very useful on the Mission.

The Leyland Comet is still going strong and the small school bus is still in good order. The big bus, which was bought by Ingwenya friends, is in good condition, as is the Thembiso Combie. The Venture, used by the staff at Ingwenya, is still in good running order.

The old school bus, used at Bulawayo to bring people to church, continues to be very useful, but the old ambulance, though still in use, has developed problems caused by over-heating of the engine.

The Mbumba lorry still carries orders from Bulawayo to Mbumba and is useful for many other duties. The Landrover is still in much use at the Mission and is mainly used for carrying firewood from the forest. Both the Mazda, used by the manager, and the car used by the administrator, are still in good condition.

We are very thankful to have two new cars on the Mission – a new ambulance and a staff car – which are both used for Mbumba Mission hospital.

KENYA MISSION REPORT

Rev. Keith M. Watkins

THE work of the Kenya Mission has continued for another year, for which we express our thanks to the Head of the Church. Separate reports cover administration and clinic in detail. Mr. Hugh Mackenzie and Mr. Calum Gunn between them covered the role of Administrator, and Sr. Truus Ringelberg the role of Matron during Sr. Peta van der Ridder's absence in Zimbabwe. Mr. Mackenzie is committed to continue only until July. The administrator's role is key to the Kenya Mission and we look to the Lord to provide a suitable replacement. This is a major need of the Mission at this time. Thankfully the European mission staff kept well throughout, and my own health has been improving steadily during the second half of the year.

We were very pleased to receive a number of visitors from other parts of the Church, all of whom contributed to the work, including the setting up of a congregational database. We are grateful to them. Most importantly, the two assessor elders of the Sengera Kirk Session came from Zimbabwe. They had a busy time familiarising themselves with the ecclesiastical situation here and making many home visits. Kirk Session meetings were held, and it is hoped that they will return for another visit in the next few months, with a view to beginning sealing ordinances in the congregation.

The main congregation of the Mission is based in Sengera, Gucha District, Kisii. Each Sabbath, a congregational catechism class and two preaching services were held, as well as five Sabbath School classes. Attendances fluctuated, but averaged about 80 for the catechism class to upwards of 250 for the morning service, with the afternoon service about 160. Services on New Year's Day, the Day of Humiliation of Prayer, and for harvest thanksgiving were held. Occasional mid-week services were held at three places within a half-hour's drive of Sengera, at Magenche, Maiga and Ogembo. Some 40 people can gather at these meetings.

It is our desire to see the two sacraments of the New Testament dispensed in Sengera. In other Kisii churches, people are used to partaking of the

sacraments with great ease. Also, there are deep-seated cultural practices among the people to combat, including female circumcision which is still followed in almost all cases. These evils have held us back from having Baptism and the Lord's Supper. A man cannot have his daughter baptised one week and circumcised the next. To ensure that the congregation understands sufficiently what is involved, mid-week classes for potential candidates have begun, one class in Ekegusii and the other in English. Over 50 people attend, many being heads of households. It is hoped that these classes, along with a further visit from the assessor elders, will make baptism possible before the end of the year.

The Mission has conducted a number of burials. To avoid pagan practices, careful planning and clear agreement are always required, but funerals command large gatherings in Kisiiland, and provide a real opportunity to introduce people to pure worship and faithful doctrine, especially in a culture heavily influenced by Seventh Day Adventist heresies like the soul not being immortal and the denial of hell.

We have now obtained registration for the legal solemnisation of marriages in Kenya. Our first Church wedding was conducted in October. However, most marriages begin in Kisiiland according to "customary law", without any official ceremony or legally binding certificate. This has already been rectified in the case of Mission workers, who all have certificates through the Registrar's office in Kisii. However, there are still couples in the congregation who are not legally married. The Mission is now in a position to put their relationship on a proper legal standing.

The translation work has continued. In September a fully revised and substantially increased metrical Psalm book was published in-house, now containing 44 Psalms or parts of Psalms. This has enriched the worship. Psalm books have been distributed among families for worship in their homes. The valuable work of increasing the number of Psalms in metre continues. Another project which came to fruition during the year was the first booklet of *Dear J* letters, translated from the late Margaret Macleod's letters published in the *Young People's Magazine*. A copy was given to all the older Sabbath School children. A second booklet is planned. Simple Bible picture story booklets for children were also printed in Ekegusii: *Hannah* and *Nehemiah*. These have proved very popular, and work on Ruth and Esther is proceeding. In conjunction with the Trinitarian Bible Society, Ekegusii *Words of Life* calendars (with a Bible text for each month) are translated and produced. 10,500 Ekegusii calendars and 2,000 English ones (half of which were a free grant from TBS) were distributed, mainly to local upper primary and secondary schools. This gave us a welcome opportunity to address freely a vast number of youngsters – 278 different classes in 49 schools.

Especially among the younger generation there is an enthusiasm for the English language. In general the standards as yet are not good, but it presents us with a growing opportunity to spread simple Reformed literature without having to translate everything.

The Mission has long operated a library, and hundreds of books are available for the congregation to borrow, as well as sermon tapes from various ministers of the church. Children's books (English and Ekegusii) and very simply written works are the most popular. Longer, harder English works are not often borrowed. Our aim is to expand the range and number of suitable, simpler materials and also of sermon tapes. Now that the Sengera sermons are being recorded, the preached Word is being spread in Ekegusii as well.

In January the Mission's former electrician passed away. Tuberculosis had paralysed most of his body. For almost a year, he was lovingly cared for on the Mission compound by clinic staff along with family members. From the beginning, his mind was turned to the salvation of his soul. The first night that he was in hospital, in the TB isolation ward, three men died. He thought that he was going to be next. He said that it was then that the Lord taught him that he had a never-dying soul, and that he was not ready to go into eternity. Over the months he gave every indication that the good work of grace had begun in his heart: a real sense of sin, clear views of the Person and work of the Redeemer, the spirit of prayer, a love for the Word of God, and a concern for the spiritual welfare of his family. A favourite text of his was "the Just for the unjust" – which indicates the prevalent inclination of his mind. He often remarked on the wonderful nature of the method of salvation. Another favourite text was experimental: "I held Him, and would not let Him go." He gave every sign that like the Thessalonians he had "received the word in much affliction".

I am thankful to all who have made these Gospel endeavours possible: the Mission staff, both African and European, together with praying and giving friends in different parts of the world. "For we are labourers together with God" (1 Corinthians 3:9). How we need the Lord of heaven to give the increase!

KENYA MISSION ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mr. Hugh Mackenzie

WE can look back over the past year with thankfulness to the Most High in continuing to preserve the witness of our Church in this part of Africa. The following report covers the work undertaken in the administrative areas.

During the year the church building was renovated under the supervision of Mr Calum Gunn while he occupied the post of administrator from July to December. The church ceiling was raised to create more space, the lighting was renewed and repositioned, a timber panel backdrop was fitted behind the pulpit and the interior and exterior painted. The result is a credit to the workmanship of the Mission staff and the organisational and design skills of

Mr Gunn. We now have a bright comfortable building in which to worship each Sabbath.

The main compound buildings are all in a good state of repair. Regular care and maintenance is carried out on a weekly basis and there are no immediate plans for further upgrading. The water storage and distribution project begun in 2003 is nearing completion with only one underground water tank to be renovated. The Mission has ten of these tanks where rainwater from the roofs is collected. As the water tanks fill up water is pumped between tanks so that there is an even distribution of supply, particularly during the dry seasons. Regular measurements are carried out to monitor consumption and distribution. The water quality has not been tested since 1999 when it was found to be satisfactory, although very low in mineral content. It is proposed to carry out another laboratory test this year. Later this year it is proposed to replace the existing rainwater gutters which are too shallow and inefficient, particularly during heavy rain. Deeper and more substantial gutters will be fitted to the main buildings which catch the highest volumes of rainwater.

All the Mission vehicles remain in a good state of repair as they are regularly maintained by our own mechanics. The general purpose Toyota Double Cab is being replaced this year. This is a year earlier than planned because we have received a very favourable offer from a neighbouring Mission allowing us to purchase a new vehicle at little extra cost. The minister's vehicle is due to be replaced next year.

The legal proceedings concerning the purchase of the land adjacent to the Mission were finally concluded in our favour in January 2005. The Title Deeds were issued in the name of the Church by the Land Registrar on 28th February 2005 securing, without contradiction, the terms of a Sale of Land Agreement entered into with the seller in November 1997. It has taken over seven years to achieve what, on occasions, seemed impossible and many lessons have been learned in dealing with lawyers, courts, land agencies and especially the cunning and deceitful seller of the land.

Although in Kenya one is never far from the threat of robbery, the Mission has experienced a good period of calm and stability in and around the community. However, a consistent awareness of security is maintained. Our primary concern is for the preservation of life and our secondary is for the Mission assets. Since re-opening in 2000 there has been a systematic development of security systems which has seen the deployment of non-local guards with bow and arrow skills, security cameras, a long-range remote triggered alarm and improved perimeter lighting and fencing.

There have been few staff changes over the year with the total complement remaining around the same as last year. Sadly our electrician passed away at the beginning of January this year after a long and painful struggle with TB of the spine. He has not been replaced because, before and during his illness, he was able to train one of our mechanics in electrical repair and maintenance. The other training programmes reported on last year are continuing as planned.

Progressive Mission involvement with the Rianyakwara Primary School continues. The new management committee have improved the running of the school and are keeping a tight control on how the finances are managed. In a joint funded project with the Mission, new classrooms are being constructed to replace the mud buildings which are crumbling. After many years of despondency there is now a general air of optimism amongst management, teaching staff, pupils, parents and the community, as gradual improvements are implemented. We pray for this to continue and that the influence of the Mission on the school and the community, especially in sound scriptural teaching, will bear fruit to the glory of God.

KENYA MISSION
OMOREMBE HEALTH CLINIC REPORT
Sr. Truus Ringelberg, Acting Matron

AS with the year 2003, our Clinic Matron, Peta van de Ridder, has been helping at Mbumba Hospital, Zimbabwe, for most of 2004 therefore the task of reporting on the work of Omorembe Health Clinic falls to me. It is to be hoped that it will reflect a correct impression of a year in which we were faced with many new challenges to add to the more familiar ones encountered from year to year. Our prayer is that the main work of the Clinic will continue to be that of a handmaid to the Gospel in Sengera and the surrounding area.

The Clinic staff complement is made up as follows:

- 1 Matron (European)
- 5 Staff Nurses (2 European, 3 Kenyan)
- 1 Community Worker (European)
- 1 Student Nurse (Kenyan)
- 2 Part-time Laboratory Technicians (Kenyan)
- 4 Supporting Staff (Kenyan)
- 1 Receptionist/Clerk (Kenyan)
- 2 Part-time cleaners (Kenyan)

Out Patients Department

The Out Patients Department has been running as usual, except that a TB programme has been started. Patients are referred from diagnostic centres and receive their weekly/monthly routine medicines at the Clinic. They continue to go for their check-up to the first centre where they were diagnosed. Meanwhile we are awaiting investigation by the local Department of Health authority at Ogembo to see if we are able to become a diagnostic centre for TB patients.

In December 2004 we started the Child Welfare Clinic for the under fives to receive their vaccinations as scheduled. This is part of a government sponsored programme of immunisation. At present we can only offer the service one day per week as we depend on receiving the vaccines from Ogembo Hospital, where they have special refrigerated storage. In the near future it is hoped to have similar storage facilities at the Clinic which will allow us to offer the service on a more regular basis. The numbers coming are very encouraging and hopefully as we extend the service this will continue.

The STD (Sexual Transmitted Diseases) programme continues as reported in previous years. We receive all the medicines from Ogembo Hospital free to distribute to those affected.

Ante Natal Clinic and Maternity

The Ante Natal Clinic is run every Wednesday and is very well attended. Three of our staff nurses have been trained in carrying out the PMTCT (Prevention Mother To Child Transmission) programme which means that all pregnant mothers and their husbands can be tested free for HIV/AIDS on a voluntary basis. Almost 100% of the expectant mothers are willing to be tested, whereas with their husbands it is still more difficult. A tract has been published by the Clinic and is given to all new attendees. It explains clearly and simply why we would like them to be tested. We hope that in the future more husbands will come along with their wives to receive the test. A number of husbands are agreeable to be tested when they come to collect their wives after the delivery. We are able to give ARVs (Ante Retro Viral medicines) to mother and child when the mother has been found to be HIV positive and we hope to keep in contact with them as they come to the clinic to get their child vaccinated. For their children, treatment is necessary for 1^{1/2} years until they are found to be negative, otherwise treatment is for life. The number of deliveries is quite a bit higher than last year, which is encouraging and we hope that the numbers will continue to rise as it is one of the nicest activities in the clinic! Where difficulties in childbirth arise which are beyond our capabilities, our ambulance is available 24 hours a day to transfer cases to nearby hospitals.

Laboratory

The main laboratory function continues to be in testing for malaria – a facility we ourselves at the Mission are glad to have throughout the year! According to our statistics, fewer tests are being carried out than the previous year due to the drop in malaria cases in our area. Although the laboratory is now also doing many HIV and VDRL tests, these figures are not yet included in the Clinic statistics but will appear in future summaries.

Health Education in Schools

Primary schools, Standard 6, 7 and 8, and secondary schools Form 1 to 4 are visited on a regular basis to give educational talks about HIV/AIDS. This is appreciated very much in most of the schools. In the future it is intended

to conduct a series of talks about other subjects, such as hygiene, malaria, worms, etc.

Community work

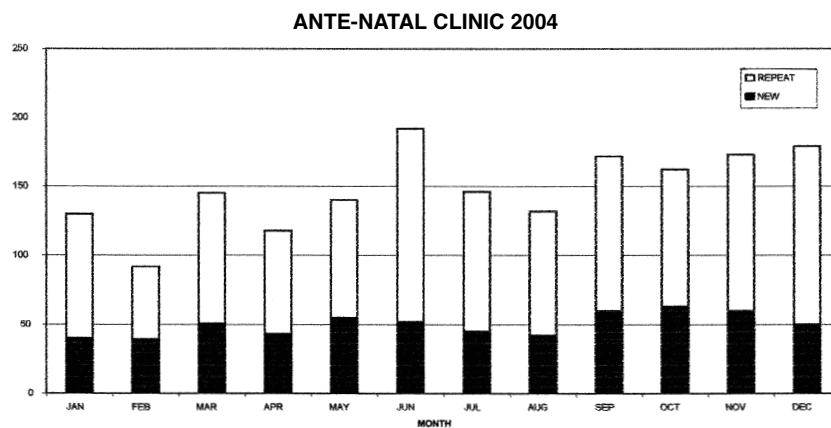
Home visitations are carried out to TB patients who default to find out why they have not come for their treatment in time. AIDS patients are also visited at home where advice is given, seeking to make them aware about the dangerous state they are in, encouraging them to come to the church, read their Bibles and prepare for eternity. We try to involve the family in taking care of the patients and we also try to speak with the other people on the compound, especially about the issue of AIDS prevention. While visiting those people we meet with others, such as drunkards, brewers, etc. We try to speak with them and point them to the evil of it, that from brewing comes drunkenness, from drunkenness comes adultery, from adultery comes AIDS. The newspapers tell us that 70% of AIDS cases are related to drunkenness.

The Clinic Bookshop

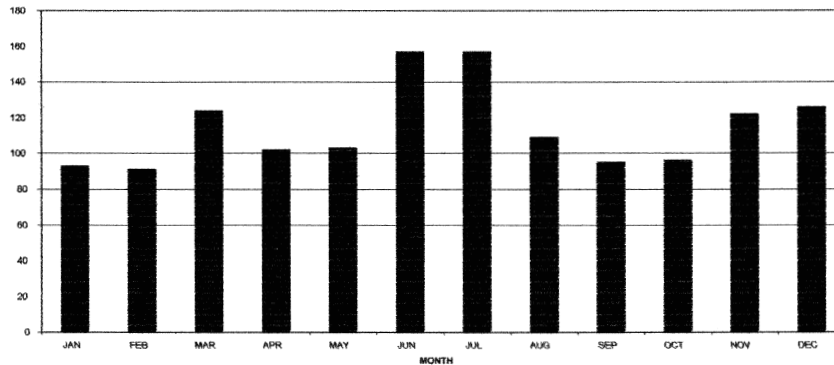
The small display cabinet in the waiting room attracts patients and relatives to Bibles and books. Although it is not a reading community, Bibles sell quite well. Every Thursday, market day, we put a small table just outside the Mission gate and most of these days something is sold.

Statistics

Graphical representations of selected Clinic statistics are given below.



MALARIA CASES 2004



DOMINIONS AND OVERSEAS COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. Donald A. Ross

WHILE a number of our ministers were asked to give pulpit supply to our congregations in Australia and New Zealand during the past year, they were unable to do so. However, it is hoped that one of them will be in a position to visit our people there in June.

As can be seen from the Synod reports of Rev. Edward Rayner and Rev. Johannes van Dorp, the preaching of the glorious Gospel goes on in our congregations without hindrance. Despite being surrounded with the liberalism of certain so-called Christian churches, our ministers and their congregations continue steadfast in the faith. There were a number of people admitted to the Lord's Table for the first time and the sacrament of baptism was dispensed in several congregations. It is cause for thankfulness to the Most High that there continues to be this spiritual fruit from the preaching of the Word.

Only two of our ministers are found in the expansive field of Gospel labour in Australia and New Zealand; it is therefore a cause for great concern that we do not hear of others being called by the Most High to preach the Gospel in those parts. For a time, there were a number of young men who claimed to have a call to that work but who later did not proceed further, which was a great disappointment to the Church. However, we believe God will provide pastors in His own time since He has promised His church, "I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jeremiah 3:15). It is for us to go on pleading this precious promise. We are indebted to the elders in the vacant congregations who

conduct services, some of whom exhort, while others read excellent sermons by Reformed divines.

By the receiving of the Singapore congregation into the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland some years ago, the borders of Australia and New Zealand Presbytery were extended into completely new territory. The accession of this faithful congregation has proved to be a great asset to the Church. The burden of the interim moderatorship falls on the shoulders of Rev. Johannes van Dorp, who is very attentive to the needs of the congregation. Mr. Bernard Yong, the local elder, has the unremitting task, when there is no supply, of conducting all the services. The Committee was grateful, as were Rev. van Dorp and the congregation, for the visit of Rev. John MacLeod to the congregation for three Sabbaths, one of which was the communion Sabbath. There were two new communicants received on that occasion. We hope and pray that they will prove to be a great help to the Cause of Christ there and beyond.

We are also indebted to ministers who visited our people in Canada and Texas. In April and May the Rev. Wilfred Weale visited Chesley and Richmond for two weeks in each place; and at the same time preached during the communion season in each congregation. The Chesley congregation is favoured now with having an additional elder, Mr. Gilbert Zekvelt, who takes his full share of the work there. There are no elders resident in the Richmond congregation, but the assessor elders from Chesley and Scotland continue in their duties, especially during communion seasons. It is gratifying, however, to see one man from the Richmond congregation preparing for the ministry and we hope he will yet be a polished shaft in the hand of the Most High. Rev. George Hutton continues to be the interim moderator for the Chesley Kirk Session but was not able to visit the congregation last year. However, he intends, God willing, to visit Chesley for three Sabbaths in April, one of which will be during the communion season there.

Rev. Neil Ross, the interim moderator of the Kirk Session of the Richmond, Texas, congregation has been able to visit the congregation in November and December for two Sabbaths. On the first Sabbath the sacrament of baptism was administered, and on the second the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. During the communion season two new communicants, both young men, were received. Also, as noted above, one young man applied to be received as a student to train for the ministry and was recommended by the Kirk Session to the Presbytery. It is hoped, God willing, that the Rev. Roderick MacLeod will visit Richmond for two Sabbaths in May and June when he will preach at all the services, including those of the communion season. He will also officiate at the marriage of a young couple belonging to the congregation.

There have been no visits by deputies to Vancouver but the Committee is grateful to Mr. John MacLeod, our elder in Vancouver, for his abiding interest in the principles of truth as set out in the constitution of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and his diligent maintaining of the property belonging to our Church in Vancouver. Rev. John MacLeod has been appointed by the Southern Presbytery as the new interim moderator for the Vancouver Kirk

Session and will no doubt do his utmost to visit Vancouver as soon as possible. It is gratifying that one person of the congregation, Mrs. Mary Hardy, now living at a great distance from the church, has been supporting the work of the Gospel in Eastern Europe for a long period by supplying quantities of Bibles for distribution there.

The work of the Gospel continues in connection with the small congregation in Odessa, Ukraine. Strangers come to worship with them from time to time but so far no one has come to stay permanently, apart from one man from another church who regularly comes each Sabbath afternoon. Mr. Igor Zadoroshniy, our administrator there, continues to distribute Bibles and literature, while Mr. Dmitriy Levitskiy is making progress with his studies in preparation for beginning a course in divinity. A fuller report on Eastern Europe is already in the hands of members of Synod.

We regret that there have been no visits to Fornaci di Barga in Italy. That certainly has not been for the want of being warmly asked by the group there, but it was impossible for a variety of reasons to visit them since the last meeting of Synod. All we can say is that the group appears to be no nearer a really determined resolve to follow fully the principles dear to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland – principles which we continue to remind them of as opportunities are afforded us in God's providence.

Thus concludes our report, and we are not without hope that as the Lord continues to be with us in our work overseas, so He will bless us still. What we need more than anything else (already having the Gospel in its fullness, we believe) is such an outpouring of the Holy Spirit as the Saviour encouraged His disciples to look for when He promised: “. . . I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8).

AUSTRALIAN REPORT 2004

Rev. E. A. Rayner

SINCE the last report, Rev. D. A. and Mrs. Ross were with us at the commencement of this year. The people in both the Australian congregations were refreshed and encouraged by the deputy's visit. Needless to say it was a pleasure for myself and my wife to be able to entertain our friends whom we have known and come to value over many years of contact. I asked Mr. Ross to visit a family in Victoria that had contact with us for a period of time as they were willing to pay for the fares. Mr Ross stayed overnight with them and conducted a service during the week. He was able to give first-hand impressions, which was of great help to myself. I refer you to Mr. Ross's report for 2004 for more details.

Too often those who have showed an interest in us have some special agenda they wish to promote and often display a somewhat unbalanced point of view on a particular point. While we hope that their contact with us might iron out some of the difficulties, it so often happens they are not prepared to review their position.

In Sydney we have had people who have come to us and continued for a time. However, one family which settled in well had to move to Bathurst because of work. As this is about two hours' drive they are not able to be regularly in attendance on the Sabbath but still retain their allegiance to us. The two elders have continued to take the regular services, for which I am grateful. There was one baptism but no new communicants.

Considerable work has been carried out on the recently purchased Sydney manse. There has been the addition of a double garage and an extensive verandah, the length of the house, to provide shade and access from the large sliding glass doors. Air conditioning has also been installed. At present one of the young families of the congregation lives there. We all hope and pray that the time will soon come when not only the manse but also the pulpit will be occupied by one of God's servants.

There was one baptism in the Grafton congregation but no new communicants. The only other addition to the services has been a man who retired from work in Sydney and has come to live near Grafton. He was originally from our Church in Scotland. Some of our younger generation that have now completed their education are entering the workforce. Others have gone on to higher education. Thankfully there are now university facilities not too far distant from Grafton at Lismore, Armidale and Coff's Harbour to train teachers and nurses, etc., without the need always to go to Brisbane or Sydney. I am encouraged that the teenage young folk continue to attend the senior Catechism study classes, though some are over 20, which is ably conducted by Mr. Geoff Kidd, elder. Although some of our older generation are quite frail the Lord spared them another year.

Apart from my regular duties in both congregations, I have made the usual visits to New Zealand for Presbytery meetings and communion seasons in Gisborne and Auckland. It is disappointing that I cannot show much progress from the previous report. I am very conscious that we come very far short in so many ways. Our witness is small but we have sought in much weakness to hold fast to the form of sound words. May the Lord revive His work among us till the little one become a thousand.

NEW ZEALAND AND SINGAPORE REPORT

Rev J. A. T. van Dorp

SINCE writing the last report, the work in these distant parts has continued as usual. Whilst that is a matter for thankfulness it also means a continuation of relatively small numbers of worshippers gathering on the Lord's Day and even smaller numbers that come to the weekly prayer meeting. Conversions have become quite rare occurrences. Our society, whilst probably more educated than ever before, is not known for a love of, or enquiry after, Christian knowledge. What Christian practice there is in this land is generally of the will-worship variety. Although most persons here have some connection with the Christian religion, the attention paid to the contents of the Bible is quite sparse. In most cases it does not go beyond the fact of Christ's birth, which sparks off a round of worldly activities marked by excitement and frivolity in the month of December leading up to the 25th. The sad aspect of this tenuous attachment to Christianity is that this is generally considered quite sufficient preparation for the vast eternity.

The New Zealand Government recently passed the Civil Union Bill which provides for same sex marriages. The Presbytery sent the following protest to the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition:

Being met in Auckland on 28th January 2005 the Presbytery considered the Civil Union Bill that passed into law recently.

The Presbytery wish to point out that this legislation is totally unscriptural and therefore most unsatisfactory from a Christian viewpoint. We believe that it is dangerous to ignore the guidance that is available to us in the realm of morality in the Scriptures of truth. We read that "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34).

The two following scriptures are most relevant in considering human relationships:

Genesis 2:24: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

Romans 1:27: "And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet."

We therefore add our voice of protest to the advice already given to the select committee and urge the government, even at this late stage, to review this unsatisfactory piece of legislation.

The attendances on the means of grace have been maintained in all our congregations with the help of the Elders, to whom we are indebted for the conduct of the services when there is no minister available.

The Sacrament of Baptism was dispensed in the Singapore, Auckland and Gisborne congregations. Four persons were admitted to partake of communion for the first time. Two of these were a husband and wife in the Singapore congregation, and one in Tauranga and one in Gisborne. In Tauranga the usual small congregation of seven worshippers more than doubled on the communion Sabbath with three visitors from Gisborne and ten from Britain, who were on holiday in New Zealand. The presence of the overseas visitors was much appreciated.

I am indebted to the Rev. John MacLeod for supplying Singapore for three Sabbaths in December, which included the communion Sabbath.

The room rented in the Metropolitan YMCA for the worship services in Singapore is suitable most of the time but can prove a little too small at times. On one occasion some people actually did not enter, although that was the intention, and went away as it appeared as if there were no vacant seats left. The congregation, therefore, continue their search for a suitable property.

The negotiations for a place of worship that were commenced in 2003 failed, as the premises were not registered for worship. The effort made more recently to purchase a place ended in failure as the vendors withdrew the property from sale. Patience is therefore needed to wait on the Lord for all our needs. The great need, however, is the divine drawing on our people throughout our congregations so that sinners will again be converted. Tauranga and Singapore are the smallest of the five congregations. The difference in composition, however, is very great. The Tauranga gathering consists entirely of elderly persons, so that the future of this congregation does not look particularly bright unless God in His providence brings in the younger generation. The Singapore worshippers, about twenty persons, are entirely comprised of young people. This gives us at least the hope that God has a purpose of mercy for that vast city republic. We therefore continue to pray and to hope that God will visit our congregations in His mercy.

There was one death during the past year on 21st September 2004. Inabell Christensen died in Auckland at Elmwood, home for the aged, after suffering from Alzheimer's disease for about ten years. It was a matter for thankfulness that she came to the saving knowledge of the truth well before she was deprived of her mental faculties. Her late husband, Ted Christensen, predeceased her by two years and three months. Before Inabell's illness she was a tower of strength to her husband in the days when he was treasurer of the congregation. They maintained a hospitable and open home for deputies and members of the Church and consequently she was well known to many of our ministers from Britain that visited New Zealand. May God soon appear in His glory to raise up the young generation to take the place of the old who are swiftly passing into the great eternity.

EASTERN EUROPE REPORT

Rev. D. A. Ross

SINCE the last Synod we have made two visits to Odessa, Ukraine. The first, for about a fortnight from the end of May, was made by Rev. Neil Ross and Messrs. Kenneth Macleod and Edward Ross. A communion season was held and a number of visitors from other churches increased the congregation. Rev. Neil Ross has reported this visit in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*. He and his colleagues had the extra work of conducting negotiations for the purchase of a site for building a charity centre for our Mission work in Ukraine. The site is about 200 yards from Igor Zadoroshniy's home, and is beside one of the city's busy main roads, from which the completed building will be readily seen by the people passing by.

Another visit was made in October, when it was intended to have the ordination of Mr. Igor Zadoroshniy to the office of elder. However, we were unable to conduct the ordination since we did not have the quorum necessary to form the Kirk Session because the sudden illness and hospitalisation of Rev. Neil Ross prevented him accompanying Rev. Donald Ross and Mr. Edward Ross to Odessa. We are much indebted to the Zadoroshniy and Levitskiy families for their warm hospitality during our stay.

We are thankful to record that we made considerable progress in finalizing the purchase of the new site. Since then, Rev. Neil Ross has produced a sketch design for the proposed building. It will be on two floors and will have a basement for storing Bibles and literature. The ground floor will contain a meeting place, office and a double garage, and the first floor will consist of living quarters. In the compound there will also be a secure parking area for the truck which we take from time to time to Odessa. The sketch plan is now with an architect in Odessa who will produce working drawings and oversee the erection of the building.

Our lawyer, Mr. Popov, has the difficult task of negotiating with government departments and officials in connection with building regulations and services, and he hopes that we will be in a position to start building by June. We have already paid about £10,000 for the purchase of the site. The Architect estimates that the cost of the completed building will be between £32,000 and £35,000. Therefore the total cost, including the architect's and lawyer's fees, is expected to be in the region of £45,000. This is a very considerable sum, but the Lord is able to supply this need as He has graciously done for us in the past.

The new building and compound will help us in establishing a presence in the city and will be a permanent place from which we can continue to distribute the Scriptures and literature throughout the Ukraine and other countries. Not least it will provide a meeting place to which we can invite people to the public worship of God.

Regrettably, translation work is at a standstill at present. Our main priority is to proceed with the printing of Rev. R. Shaw's *Exposition of the Westminster*

Confession of Faith and Rev. Donald Macfarlane's *Sermons*, but there is further editing to be done on these titles. Meantime, we have translated some pamphlets into Russian and printed 10,000 each of the *Seventh Day Adventists* and *Pentecostalism* by Ergatees. We have translated the *Mother's Catechism* into the Ukrainian language, and shortly hope to proceed with printing. The *Mother's Catechism* has already been issued in the Russian language.

The numbers of Bibles and amounts of literature continue to be distributed by Mr. Igor Zadoroshniy. Some of these are: Bibles 675; *Westminster Confession of Faith* 720 (some of which include the Catechisms); *Shorter Catechism* 600, *Children's Catechism* 600; *The Apostolic Church* 600, and many tracts and leaflets. With the help of friends, he has also distributed 10,000 *Words of Life* calendars received from the Trinitarian Bible Society. We are deeply indebted to the Society for their grant of thousands of calendars each year, not only for the Ukraine but also for Romania and Hungary.

Bibles and literature are also distributed to Eastern Europe from the Church Office in Glasgow under the direction of Miss Norma Morrison with the help of others. These were: Bibles 212; Gospels 3,100; *Westminster Confession of Faith*, *Shorter Catechism* and *Mother's Catechism* 403; Tracts and Leaflets 2,850, and *The Apostolic Church* 17.

In our Odessa congregation, church services continue to be held regularly, with Mr. Igor Zadoroshniy and Mr. Dmitriy Levitskiy alternating in reading sermons each Sabbath. There is now a good selection of suitable material for public reading to be found on the internet. For example, Mr. Levitskiy made use of some very helpful addresses on hyper-Calvinism – an error which seems to be getting a foothold in some parts of Eastern Europe, and against which warnings must be given. A number of strangers have come occasionally to the services, and one person has begun coming regularly for the Sabbath afternoon service. We are grateful to the Zadoroshniy family for converting two rooms of their home into one for a place of public worship. The conversion entailed a lot of hard work but turned out exceptionally well and can seat about 20 people comfortably.

Mrs. Inna Levitskiy continues to add to the number of Russian Psalms or parts of Psalms already translated into metre. With her home and family cares it is not easy for her to find as much time as she would like for this work, but we think she is doing wonderfully well. For music she draws from our Scottish Psalter and also composes some tunes. We understand that as far back as 1871, Psalms in metre were published in the Ukrainian language but we have not yet been able to locate any of these, nor any in the Russian language.

We are greatly indebted to Messrs. Christopher Lamont and Edward Ross for driving our truck to Romania last November, with a load of aid to a Presbyterian Church – the same denomination we visited in previous years and which professes to be Calvinistic in doctrine. While the aid was mainly humanitarian, there were also 640 Hungarian Bibles, 8,000 Hungarian calendars and 2,000 Romanian calendars. The pastors were particularly grateful for the Bibles and calendars.

We are finding it increasingly difficult to take aid into the Ukraine because ever changing customs' regulations are, at times, making it quite impossible for us to comply with them. For example, whereas previously aid for the Odessa Children's Hospital was stored in the Hospital on our arrival, the arrangement now is that we store the aid in customs' sheds and pay rent for doing so. Furthermore, if the goods are not cleared within three months, heavy fines are applied. However, in the kind providence of God, we have hitherto found ways of getting around such difficulties, and we hope to be able to continue bringing aid to needy children in Odessa. We are much indebted to those people in this country who help to provide and prepare the aid we send out.

Our work of spreading the Word of God in Eastern Europe is very small in comparison to the greatness of the need of the people, but we look to the Most High to bless it. There are many churches from outside seeking to establish a presence in these former communist countries. While we are glad that they send out the Word of God, we are concerned, of the few we have come in contact with, that they do not sound forth the truth in its entirety and purity, as that is so well systematized, for example, in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. This we seek to do by the grace of God. We bless the name of God for helping us hitherto, and we are very grateful to the many people who in one way or another are our fellow helpers in this vital work. We hope and pray that they will continue helping to further the work of the Gospel in Eastern Europe.

"The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it" (Psalm 68:11).

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO CHESLEY

Rev. R. Macleod

WE arrived in Toronto, Canada, after a very comfortable flight, on 31st July 2004. Erica Schuit, the wife of Mr. David Schuit, kindly met us and drove us to the manse in Chesley where we stayed for the next three weeks.

This was my third visit to this small town, which has built up around the banks of the North Saugeen River. Deep as it might be in the vastness of Canada, it is a very attractive and drawing place to those who have pleasant memories of Gospel ordinances there. It was very good to renew old acquaintances, which I believe were forged under the Gospel. The congregation was much the same as the last time I was there, though there were some changes. Several young children had been added to the total number of the congregation, which remains at around 35 to 40 persons. Some members have been added to the communion roll in the intervening years. The Kirk Session has an additional member in Mr. Gilbert Zekfeld, and Mr. Rick

Bouman has been added to the number of deacons. As is true of every congregation at home as well as abroad, one or two people were missed: some had become less regular in their attendance and some of the children had grown up and moved away. The congregation remains without a pastor.

While I was in Canada, news came of the tragic death of Warren Smith, who belonged to the Richmond congregation in Texas. Mr. Smith was killed in a road accident. I was asked, by his family, to go to Texas to conduct the funeral. In the providence of the Lord, I was able to do that, and return to Chesley in time for the communion services. I was glad that somebody from the Church was in North America at the time of their bereavement: a person who was able to conduct the funeral service. The Chesley elders would have found it difficult to go to Texas to take the funeral. It was obvious that Warren Smith was greatly loved by his relatives, both young and old, and I trust that the Lord will bless His Word to them in their bereavement.

The administration of the sacrament of the body and blood of the Lord was conducted on my third Sabbath there. The preparatory services began on Thursday, as is usual in the congregations at home. The services were well attended. The sacrament of baptism was administered on the Saturday of the Communion. There is a serious and solemn attendance at all divine ordinances, not least the sacramental occasions. Though many of the congregation work very busily, and though some travel great distances to the services, worthy effort is made to be there in time for the beginning of all the services. All the Communion services were well attended and some visitors travelled from the United States. It was pleasant to make new acquaintances and renew old ones.

The Chesley congregation seems to me to be in a good state. Services are well attended. Though we who have preached to them have many reasons to be ashamed of our handling of the Word of God, the people are appreciative. Those who cannot as yet have that appreciation are most respectful and attentive. There is a Sabbath School with two classes, one of which I had the pleasure of taking on two occasions. I share the desire that the members of the Kirk Session have expressed, that a minister would be set over them, the whole business of whose service would be to seek the good of their souls and the advancing of the Kingdom of Christ on the banks of the long Saugeen and beyond. All who have a care for the congregation there will be praying that the Lord would soon fulfil His Word: "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jeremiah 3:15); "The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it" (Psalm 68:11).

The people of our congregation in Chesley are very thoughtful and much kindness was shown to us. My wife and children went with me on this occasion, and Mr. Bouman gave us the use of a car suitable for the six of us. Because of this, we were able to visit some of the wonders of the Ontario landscape such as the immense expanses of part of the Great Lakes area and the thunderous Falls at Niagara.

We left Canada on 20th August 2004.

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO SINGAPORE

Rev. John MacLeod

THIS visit to Singapore was for a period of three weeks and began on 30 November 2004. Lai Yee and Shang Yu, the wife and son of Bernard Yong, were at the Changi Airport to welcome myself and my wife on our arrival in mid-afternoon. Bernard, as most members of the Synod will know, is the only elder and office-bearer in our congregation there.

My preaching duties began the following evening, when the weekly prayer meeting was held, and continued on Sabbath and weekday following the regular pattern until my departure for home on 21st December. On the way home our plane called for a few hours at Sri Lanka, whose eastern coast was devastated five days later when the tsunami struck the island. On Sabbath, 12th December, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was dispensed, the usual services being held on the preceding days, and on the following Monday, as is customary throughout our Church at home and abroad. In a day of widespread declension, we have reason to be thankful that this uniformity of practice is still found within our bounds. There were two new names added to the communion roll, those of Angus Lau and his wife Jean. This young man's professional employment was for a time placed in jeopardy as a result of his refusal to work on the Lord's Day, if and when this was deemed to be necessary in the eyes of his employers, whose views on Sabbath-keeping were far removed from his. It was encouraging to meet others also who had joined themselves to the congregation in fairly recent times and who appreciate the fact that our Church, however insignificant in the eyes of men, upholds, by the grace of God, the standards of the historic Reformation Church of Scotland in regard to doctrine, worship and practice. Many visitors from this country have now attended the services in Singapore, usually while stopping over in transit to other destinations, and we have yet to meet anyone who has not been impressed by what they saw and heard.

The congregation meets at present in a small room in the Metropolitan YMCA but it is hoped that sometime in the future a suitable place will become available for purchase. Meantime, Mr. Bernard Yong faithfully continues to take the services there on Sabbath and weekday and, behind the scenes, attends to many other things in the interests of the congregation. Such devotion to duty is exemplary. I felt that it was good for me to be among them again. We hope the praying people of the Church will remember this small congregation of ours situated in the heart of a vast, cosmopolitan Far Eastern city where the power and influence of the god of this world is evident in many ways. I would like to thank all who showed us much kindness, especially Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Yong. Above all, I would desire to be grateful to the Most High for taking us from destination to destination in safety.

TRAINING OF THE MINISTRY REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. J. MacDonald

THE Committee has to report that at its meeting of 2nd November 2004, the Southern Presbytery accepted Dr. Allan MacColl, a communicant member of the Edinburgh congregation, as a student studying for the ministry of the Church. Presently Dr. MacColl is studying Greek and Hebrew with a view to sitting the Entrance Examinations in August.

Mr. A. B. MacLean is in the final year of his Divinity Course, studying with Rev. H. M. Cartwright, and, on passing his Exit Examinations, will be ready for being taken on trials for licence by his Presbytery, D.V. Mr. Lyle Smith is also studying with Rev. H. M. Cartwright and, on successful completion of this part of his studies, is due to go on to his final year with Rev. K. D. MacLeod, the Church's tutor in Hebrew and cognate subjects, also D.V.

We would ask members of Synod and all praying people to pray that the Lord would keep our students so that they would become able ministers of the New Testament. We feel it is again timely to ask all concerned for the preaching of the Gospel to pray that the Lord would send forth labourers into His own harvest.

Last year's Theological Conference was held in Glasgow and we are indebted to all who prepared and read papers. The Conference in 2005 will be held in Inverness on 6th and 7th December 2005, D.V.

THEOLOGICAL TUTOR'S REPORT

Rev. H. M. Cartwright

THIS Report is written with half of the third term and the Exit Examinations still to come. The course of studies during Session 2004-2005 was taken by Mr. A. B. MacLean, third year student, and Mr. L. T. Smith, second year student. As usual, classes met each morning from Tuesday to Friday. The same general pattern was followed as laid out in my Report to the 2002 Synod and the same basic texts were used. The main departments of study were Greek and New Testament (including grammar, translation, exegesis, introduction, textual criticism and theology), English New Testament (studied privately but tested twice each term by written examination), Catechetics (systematically studying the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, after a brief introduction to the history and uses of Creeds and Confessions) and Church Polity and Practice (commencing with discussion of the Doctrine of the Church). As agreed by the Training of the Ministry Committee, advice was given to the students by Mrs. Sheena Campbell on the use and care of the voice and this assistance voluntarily given is appreciated.

Apart from the prescribed reading and class discussions, the students submitted essays and exegetical papers and preached occasionally with the tutor present. Both students have applied themselves seriously and diligently to the work of the class and appear to have a sense of the weighty nature as well as the inestimable privilege of the ministerial calling.

Whatever the measure of success may be, we have endeavoured to relate each part of the course to the aim of the apostle in 1 Timothy 3:15, "that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth", and, more particularly, with regard to his injunction in 2 Timothy 2:15: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Each passing year confirms the growing conviction that however frustrating it may be to the students and however it may affect the supply situation, the involvement of students in public preaching should be limited so that they can apply themselves without distraction to their studies and can sit under a regular pulpit ministry. It would help towards this end that it be a requirement for which provision is made that students reside during their course in the congregation of their tutor or, should that be impossible, in a congregation which has a settled pastor.

THEOLOGICAL TUTOR'S REPORT

Rev. K. D. Macleod

THIS is a report on the classes attended by Mr. Donald Macdonald in Pastoral Theology and Church Law according to the decision of the Synod in 2003. These classes began in early June and continued until the beginning of November 2004.

Over these twenty weeks, we covered the normal course in Pastoral Theology and studied, in addition, Louis Berkhof's *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*. In the Church Law course, we examined carefully the *Manual of Practice of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland*. The portion of Scripture studied was the New Testament.

Mr. Macdonald worked diligently and passed all his exams. Since then he has been ordained and inducted to the pastoral charge of North Uist. May the Most High bless him and keep him and use him greatly in the work to which he has been called!

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 the ancient town of St. Andrews, Fife. The venue of meeting is St. Leonard's College, founded in 1877, and possessing all the necessary facilities for our young friends as well as offering splendid walks for relaxing after the day's lectures. The 1994 Youth Conference was the last one to meet in St. Andrews. The city is full of interest suited to our historical tour that is normally held on the occasion of the conference. A renowned person associated with the town was the saintly Samuel Rutherford, who spent much of his time in St. Andrews labouring and contending for the Cause of Christ. Because of the unusually early dates of the Easter holidays for most schools, the conference had to be held from Tuesday, 29th, to Thursday, 31st March. Some schools and colleges had somewhat different holiday dates, so it was impossible to fix on a date that was suitable for all who had hoped to attend.

The conference papers were as follows:

- 1. *God the Father – What this Doctrine Teaches us***
Rev. J. R. Tallach
- 2. *“Go Ye into All the World” – Some Aspects of the Free Presbyterian Church's Mission Work***
Rev. J. MacLeod
- 3. *A Time of Surprising Conversions – Jonathan Edwards and His Work, 1703-1758***
Rev. K. D. MacLeod
- 4. *Sites of Religious Interest in St. Andrews – A Historical Tour***
Rev. J. B. Jardine
- 5. *Marriage – What the Bibles Teaches***
Rev. G. G. Hutton
- 6. *“The Man after God's Own Heart” – David the Son of Jesse***
Rev. J. Macleod

Last year's conference, held in Craibstone Agricultural College, Aberdeen, went smoothly and it is cause for thankfulness to the Most High that no less than 72 young people attended – the highest number for many years – some of whom came from as far away as Holland. There were also six ministers present and two housemothers. We were provided with a comfortable hall of residence and excellent meals. The usual interest in the lectures was evident, especially at question time, and in some cases there was deep thoughtfulness about the moral and spiritual issues confronting young people today. From conversations

we had with some of the young people it was evident they found the conference to be helpful and spiritually profitable and expressed the hope of coming to other youth conferences.

There were five papers given, and there was also a historical tour of Dunotter Castle. The first paper, "The Role of Women in Society – Some Biblical Principles", was given by Rev. N. M. Ross. There were several points noted, highlighting the Word of God as the source of direction regarding the role of women over against the anti-biblical views of feminism, which claims to liberate women from marriage, motherhood and domestic life.

The second paper, "Eastern Europe – the Free Presbyterian Mission and the Religious Background", given by Rev. David Campbell, presented a brief history of the religious and political scene in Eastern Europe. He described the different religious and political powers which held sway: Islam, the Eastern Orthodox Churches and eventually Communism, with its persecuting principles, which eventually fell and lost its control of religious bodies. The paper finally brought in some facts about our own Church's involvement in Eastern Europe mission work.

Rev. H. M. Cartwright dealt with the subject of "The Providence of God – the Doctrine and How it Applies to Our Lives". The main matters raised were: What is meant by the Providence of God; some problems which are raised in connection with the doctrine; some solutions which are offered to these problems; and lastly, some applications of the doctrine which are to be made in our personal lives.

There were two addresses by Rev. D. W. B. Somerset. One related to the "Historical Tour of Dunotter Castle", which lies about 12 miles south of Aberdeen perched on a high seashore rock. The principal interest for us was that in 1685 some of the Covenanters, for their adherence to reformed principles, were locked in this notorious prison for an eleven-week period of their total confinement.

The other lecture was entitled, "Dr. James Kidd of Aberdeen, 1761-1834 – a Barnabas and Boanerges". James Kidd, who was Professor of Oriental Languages in Aberdeen, was also a noted minister of the Gospel in the Church of Scotland. He had a congregation of 2,000 people – one of the largest in Scotland. In his preaching, Dr. Kidd loved to exalt Christ, was thoroughly evangelical, easily understood and very earnest in public prayer.

The final paper, "A Church Unique in Christendom – Some Free Presbyterian Church Principles", was given by Rev. R. MacLeod. The title of the paper, "A Church Unique in Christendom", is a quotation from Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones. During a debate on Church discipline, Dr. Lloyd-Jones described the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in this way. The lecture was based on Matthew 28:18-20, with particular emphasis on: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." We were glad to hear once again the principles of doctrine, worship and practice which, by the grace of God, are still maintained by our Church.

At midday on Thursday the Conference came to an end. It was evident that a lot of work had been put into lectures, which were well received. Yet again we are deeply indebted to those who presented the papers. We trust that under the blessing of the Most High their labour will prove to be profitable to our young friends for time and eternity. 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.

The young friends, as on past occasions, presented the two housemothers with a bouquet of flowers in appreciation of their care and guidance. Mrs. Catherine Ross will no longer be able to be a housemother and we are indebted to her for the labour of love she has put into the conferences for many years. Miss Margaret Macaskill, who has been a housemother for a number of years, will take her place as Senior Housemother and Mrs. Norma Macleod, from Glasgow, has kindly agreed to take on the task of being a housemother.

Scripture and Catechism Exercises

The very important work of Scripture and Catechism Exercises continues under the able direction of Mrs. N. M. Ross, Miss C. MacQueen, Mrs. E. Hymers, Mrs. C. M. Sutherland, Mrs. S. Campbell and Mrs. R. J. Dickie. The Church is deeply indebted to these ladies for the large volume of work they so selflessly continue to carry out – and certainly it is not without their having some encouragement from the Word of God, which leads us to believe that their labour is not in vain in the Lord. We are reminded of Timothy's godly grandmother Lois and mother Eunice and their diligent involvement in his upbringing, with the result that Paul could write to him "that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus". We believe, therefore, that the work of these ladies in helping to instruct the young in the Word of God will bear fruit.

As can be seen from the names of the children listed in *The Young People's Magazine* a considerable number do the Scripture and Catechism Exercises. They are found in practically every congregation of the Church in the different parts of the world. There are also others who do not belong to our Church. It is reason for thankfulness to the Most High that so many have the interest to complete the exercises. The new issue of Bible Reading Cards has been in circulation for some time now and we hope these are being regularly followed by our young friends day by day. A diligent and prayerful reading of the Word of God, along with the study of it, will prove profitable for time and eternity.

May we take all these endeavours of your Committee and its helpers to the throne of grace, pleading that the young people whose spiritual welfare is sought, "might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments" (Psalm 78:8).

**BALLIFEARY RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME
COMMITTEE'S REPORT
Convener: Rev. J. R. Tallach**

THE year 2004 was, in the Lord's kindness, a peaceful and peaceable year for the Ballifeary Care Home.

We record with sadness the passing away of Mrs. Martha MacDonald on 22nd April 2004; Mrs. Barbara Livingston on 4th May 2004 and Mrs. Annie Fraser on 18th November 2004.

The Home lost a good friend in Mr. Iain MacRae, who passed to his eternal rest just before the Synod last year. Mr. MacRae gave unstintingly of his considerable gifts as an adviser and overseer of the work at the Home and was ever diligent in what he put his hand and heart to. He is sorely missed.

The bed occupancy was 99.3% through the year and the waiting list at the end of the year was 22.

The Home was twice inspected by the Care Commission and the reports received were excellent.

The main structural improvements were in the up-grading of the fire protection system. This was done by fitting a system which automatically closes the door on the fire alarm being activated and the door of the room in which the fire has started is then sealed off. This helps to contain the fire and gives more time for the rest of the building to be evacuated.

The Home is in a healthy position financially. However, the level of increase in the rates paid by the Local Authority per resident has still to be agreed. Scottish Care, which represents Residential homes in Scotland, feel that the rise on offer from the Local Authority is much too small and discussion continues.

In order to comply with the Care Commission's requirement that 50% of the staff in the Home be qualified, 5 of the staff are undergoing Scottish Vocational Qualifications at the moment. Matron is also studying for a Registered Managers' Award. The Committee consider these qualifications to be very valuable for staff and residents alike. At the moment these courses are partially subsidised but all subsidies will cease in a year's time.

The Committee thanks our auditors, Mr. John Fraser and Mr. John G. MacLeod, for their close attention to the accounts of the Home and is indebted to others who gave of their time and strength to the care of our elderly. We are in the debt of our Matron and her staff for their devotion to duty, especially during those periods when there was sickness among the staff and staff levels were diminished.

Another year has gone to its account. The Word has been brought to the Home and family worship kept through the year. May the Lord give the increase.

LEVERBURGH CARE HOME COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. K. D. Macleod

THE Home continues to care for up to 16 residents and, during the past year, it has again normally been full. This is reflected in the very satisfactory financial outcome for 2004, although part of the income was earned in 2003 and payment was only made in the course of the following year.

In last year's report, the Committee referred to a significant extension being made to the main sitting/dining area. This has now been completed and is proving very satisfactory; it was finished to a high standard by local contractors. Residents now have a much more spacious area in which to gather, though there are two small sitting rooms elsewhere in the building which they can also use. The cost of the extension was substantial, about £54,000 including VAT; however, this figure does not appear in the accounts as it is treated as a capital cost.

The opening ceremony was performed by Rev. J. MacLeod on 15th June 2004. A number of guests were invited to join residents, staff and members of the Committee for the occasion. Now that Mr. MacLeod has moved to London, the Committee would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contribution he has made to the work of Committee, particularly during his years as Convener. This was especially true at the time when the Home was at the design stage and when it was under construction. His input was a very significant factor in making this project a reality which, since then, has benefited the many older people who have become residents of the Home.

During the past 12 months two residents passed away: Miss P. A. Stewart and Mr. D. E. MacLeod. We would extend our sincere sympathy to all their relatives.

We must again refer to the hard work and dedication of the Officer in Charge and other staff; the Committee would once more express their sincere appreciation of all that they do. Two of the care staff completed their SVQ level 2 qualification in the course of the year and received their certificates. Two other members of staff are now following the same course. The Care Commission continues to conduct inspections on a regular basis and the high standard of care given in the Home is recognised in their reports.

More especially, we must acknowledge the goodness of the Most High over the past year. The Committee would express the wish that, in the Lord's good providence, this work will continue on its present basis for many years to come.

OUTREACH COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Rev. D. A. Ross

IN giving a report once again of the Committee's work, we feel that the good seed we have sown is so very little in comparison to the vastness of the field. We look to the Most High to bless what we have sown so that there will be fruit – "some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundredfold".

Many contacts continue to be made with our Church through the Internet. The biblical principles we uphold are scorned by some, including Seventh Day Adventists, who contend with us about observing the Sabbath on the first day of the week. Others, however, are encouraged by our witness as given on our website and some wish to know more about the reformed faith. A number of people have expressed the desire to be near one of our places of worship in order to attend. One person in America, deeply upset by liberalism in the Presbyterian Churches in his area, is faced with the prospect of having to cease attending these churches and to meet instead in his home to worship God with family and friends. We try to encourage such as to the way forward in their trying circumstances.

Corresponding with contacts is rather time consuming, but time spent in witnessing to the truth is undoubtedly time well spent. While we deplore the evil uses to which the Internet is put, we are thankful that we are able to use it to spread the teachings of the Scriptures, and that ungodly men do not have as much control of this part of the media as they do of some others. It is now possible for ministers of the church, should they so wish, to put sermons on the Internet in audio format.

As stocks of some of our tracts have run low, we have had 30,000 reprinted. The last tract produced by the committee, *The Regulative Principle*, had a slight misprint and had to be redone. Tracts with a Gospel message are most in demand, but those dealing with controversial issues are slower to move. The few tracts which have been translated into Dutch, German and French are now available from the Church Bookroom for distribution among Dutch, German and French tourists who visit the Highlands. A certain Mr. Volker Jordon, from Germany, has requested permission to translate all our tracts and leaflets into German. He believes that he has an outlet for these in Germany and we prayerfully hope that the Lord's blessing will attend his work.

There has also been a printing of four tracts in booklet form in Nepali, the total number being 25,000 at a cost of £913.46. These were printed in Nepal and are being distributed over a wide area. Pastor Ram Chandra Gautam, the person in Nepal overseeing the printing and distribution of the tracts, writes: "We thank God and your mission, so that we can do this great job. Thank you for your kind help in evangelism through gospel tracts." We feel for Nepali Christians who are caught in the "cross fire" between the present government and communist insurgents. Because of the political situation, Ram Chandra Gautam says that it is becoming more difficult to spread the Gospel in Nepal. May the Lord be merciful to them.

We were able to have a book stall at the Black Isle Agricultural Show this year also. On this occasion, due to an administrative error, we were allocated a much smaller stand, but the interest, as on previous years, was reasonable. Some came into the tent to encourage us, and others were looking for Bibles and literature, especially children's books, of which there is a great shortage of really suitable titles. We ventured a little further afield than usual by appearing at the Portree Agricultural Show, but the interest shown was not as great as at the Black Isle Show.

The preparing and assembling of a tent at such venues is very heavy work, a minimum of three people being necessary to erect it; while the setting up of book stands and stock, and the later dismantling and packing up, take up a considerable amount of time. One way of easing this workload would be to purchase a book van. It could be used for our Eastern Europe Mission too, thereby spreading the burden of costs. So far, no suitable vehicle at a reasonable cost has been found. It is also hoped that such a van could be used by ministers who may wish to do Christian literature work in their area.

The total amount of sales for Bibles, books, booklets, leaflets and audio tapes of sermons and Psalm singing was £392.93. This amount does not result in monetary profit, and while that is what we aim for, we hope that there will be the greater profit of the truth being mixed with faith in those to whom it comes.

These and other elements of our outreach work are repeated from year to year, but they all are part of the principal good work of sowing the Word of God. We hope that our people are encouraged by such a work being engaged in by our Church and that they will be earnestly praying that it will prosper.

Again we express our indebtedness to those people who are ever willing, when and where they can, to further the work. Not least, we are deeply grateful to the people who continue contributing to the Outreach Fund, without which we could not reach out to a lost world. "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters" (Isaiah 32:20).

MAGAZINES REPORT

Rev. K. D. Macleod, Editor

ONCE again, in the Lord's goodness, it has been possible to prepare and issue the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* and the *Young People's Magazine* over another 12 months, and also the *Gaelic Supplement*. The attempt has been made to provide a variety of articles, both from present-day writers and also from that large treasury of excellent material which the Lord in His kind providence has preserved for us from past generations. We must look to the Most High to bless His own truth in what is an increasingly secular society. We might also express the hope that, whenever publicity is given in the media to

material appearing in the Magazines, some good may follow, however much that material has been distorted.

Costs for printing and postage of the Magazines have increased in the last 12 months. The increase in the cost of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* for 2005 partly reflected a decision to include in the cover price a proportion of the cost of distribution. As the *Young People's Magazine* is being subsidised from the R. W. Forsyth Bequest Fund, it was decided to leave its price unchanged. Subscriptions, except for the *Young People's Magazine* alone, were also raised to reflect the increased cost of postage. Over the past year, circulation of both Magazines has been substantially maintained.

I would again thank all who have given help in a variety of ways over the past year. 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, only one book has been published for the first time. It consists of the letters contributed to the *Young People's Magazine* by Mrs. M. R. Macleod and has been given the title *Dear J*. It was decided to produce this book in a more durable form than the paperback format which has for some time been used for books for young people published by Committee. We are grateful to Rev. N. M. Ross for contributing a biographical introduction and to Mrs. Nella van Praag for the painting which appears on the front cover. Volume 7 of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* has also been made available during the past year. The Committee hopes to proceed gradually with further volumes; it is hoped that Volume 8 will be available before long. It and three other books are at present with printers: John Colquhoun of Leith's work on *Saving Faith*, Rev. Donald Beaton's little volume, *The Reformed Faith* and a reprint of *Pages From the Past*, edited by Rev. Alexander McPherson. It is also intended in due course to reprint, in small quantities, volumes 1, 3 and 5 of Oliver Heywood's *Works*, those which were not republished by *Soli Deo Gloria*. These are to be followed, D.V., by John Love's *Memorials*.

Sales of books in 2004 were maintained at the reasonable level of £16,633. It was somewhat lower than in the previous year but this was not unexpected, because sales are always boosted significantly when the *Westminster*

Confession of Faith is reprinted, as was the case at the end of 2003. The small *Life of Samuel Rutherford*, issued several years ago, is now out of print.

All the Free Presbyterian Publications' book stock is now in Glasgow. Shelving has been erected in the General Treasurer's former office and the books previously in Dumbarton have been brought there. This is obviously a much more satisfactory position in every way.

Bookroom

Although the Bookroom continues to fulfill a useful function as a source of reliable Christian literature for people within the Free Presbyterian Church and beyond, the year 2004 was a disappointing year for sales, which decreased to a little over £50,000. New contacts, however, are still being made through the website (www.fpbookroom.org). As one goes around the larger religious bookshops in Scotland, one is conscious that they carry a much reduced selection of sound literature compared to, say, 30 years ago. It is clearly a sad reflection on the state of Christianity that this should be the case. We are thankful to have such a large range of sound literature on sale in the Church's Bookroom, though much of that stock has been available for many years. New stock which meets the standard we set for it tends to be somewhat limited.

We would once again express our gratitude to the men who have kept the Bookroom open on a Saturday morning and to others also who have given help in various ways. In particular, the Committee are grateful to Mr. Frank Daubney, who has agreed to cover for the Manager's holidays and at other times also. We would once more request the prayers of the Lord's people for His rich blessing on this particular work of the Church. The value of reading good books should never be underestimated. This generation of professing Christians would do well to remember the rich heritage of literature which has been bequeathed to them by godly writers of previous centuries. It is one of the means that God has given them for their "spiritual nourishment and growth in grace". May the Lord richly bless the work of the Bookroom!