

FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

**REPORTS OF
STANDING
COMMITTEES
OF SYNOD**

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INDEX

Report of the Religion and Morals Committee	page 3
Sabbath Observance Committee's Report	19
Jewish and Foreign Missions Committee's Report	22
Jewish Report.....	25
Ingwenya Mission Report.....	29
John Tallach Secondary School Report	30
Zenka Mission Report.....	35
Nkayi Mission Report.....	36
Zvishavane Mission Report	37
Mbumba Mission Report	38
Mbumba Mission Hospital Report	39
Bulawayo Mission Report	44
Ndebele Bible Revision Report	45
Ebenezer Scripture Mission & Thembeiso Children's Home Report	46
Zimbabwe Mission Administrator's Report	48
Transport Report	49
Kenya Mission Report	50
Dominions and Overseas Committee's Report.....	56
Australian Report.....	58
New Zealand and Singapore Report.....	59
Eastern Europe Report	61
Report of Deputy to Kenya and Zimbabwe – Rev. J. MacLeod.	64
Report of Deputy to Sengera, Kenya – Rev. J. R. Tallach	67
Report of Deputy to Texas – Rev. N. M. Ross	67
Report of Deputy to Vancouver – Rev. J. MacLeod.....	68
Report of Deputy to Zimbabwe – Rev. J. R. Tallach	69
Training of the Ministry Report.....	70
Theological Tutor's Report – Rev. K. D. Macleod	71
Welfare of Youth Committee's Report	71
Ballifeary Residential Care Home Committee's Report	73
Leverburgh Care Home Committee's Report.....	74
Outreach Committee's Report	75
Magazines Report	77
Publications and Bookroom Committee's Report	77
Report of Ad Hoc Committee.....	78

REPORT OF THE RELIGION AND MORALS COMMITTEE

Convener: Rev. W. Weale

FOLLOWING the usual format of this annual report to the Synod, we highlight some matters of significance which reflect the religious climate that prevails and also those aspects of our society which may be taken as a gauge of its moral health. The Church of Christ within any nation ought to be a light to guide men in the way of uprightness and as salt to preserve society from decay and depravity. We must again mourn over the fact that, for the most part, the professing Church and the leaders of it are blind guides who lead poor souls astray and that, to an ever-increasing extent, the “salt has lost its savour”. This report on the Church within the nation is further evidence of the Lord’s controversy with Britain. It strongly suggests that judicial blindness prevails.

The National Churches

Sadly, the protracted spiritual decline in the Church of Scotland has continued. Evangelicals within its pale are protesting formally against the acceptance by the Church of the right given to sodomites to adopt children. The Church has also given freedom to its ministers to perform ceremonies in connection with the Civil Partnership Act.¹ It seems that whatever evangelicals may hope to do within the Church of Scotland, they have failed thus far to stem the tide of liberalism and heterodoxy that has engulfed the organisation as a whole. In its official documents, it has all but rejected the Westminster Confession, and the theology emanating from most of its pulpits is so far from the Calvinism of the Scottish Reformation that no true Calvinist could feel at home in its communion.

A significant organisational change has been effected in recent times in the Church of Scotland. The Church Committee structure has been completely overhauled and replaced with five larger and more powerful Church Councils. While the national Church remains Presbyterian in name and while Church courts continue to operate, there is a growing sense that real power and influence lies in these Councils rather than in the Church’s Courts. Alas, however, the voice of the Scottish Church is increasingly being drowned out by the arrogant claims of the papal antichrist to represent Christianity in the public arena. Without a complete return to Reformation principles and practices, the Church of Scotland will soon be unworthy of the name of a Church of Christ at all. That it no longer represents the Reformed Church in Scotland is clear for all to see.

The Church of England has done nothing to reveal any substantial sympathy with the Word of God in its declarations concerning the sin of sodomy in the past year. A growing sense of alienation now exists between the Church in the UK and the African bishops who stand more consistently for biblical morality.

1. *Scotsman*, Tues., 21st Feb. 2006. See <http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=337&id=268852006>

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, has been accused of having personal views on sodomy which are contrary to the teaching of the Church and being therefore unable to give proper and effective leadership. A report in the *Daily Telegraph* in November 2005 revealed that 17 primates, representing nearly half of the 38 provinces that constitute the worldwide Church, indicated that they were losing confidence in him.² The unbiblical office of Archbishop itself greatly hinders true reform, but the acceptance of sodomy by the Church generally, while it is officially disallowed, is at the root of the present division that is threatening to fragment the Anglican communion.

Rome

True Protestants have always contended that Romanism is not Christianity but is a false religion. The place given to false religion in the United Kingdom is now so conspicuous that any claim to being a Christian nation is fast becoming a wish of the Church's rather than a reality. Not only in our public media but in our institutions of government and from the throne itself, statements are made which reveal an apostasy from the religion of the Reformation. This apostasy is very apparent considering the place given to Popery within the nation. As true Christianity declines year by year, Romanism wields further power and influence and increasingly represents itself as Christianity to the common people.

The death of Pope John Paul II in February 2005 was preceded by almost constant media coverage and followed with an outpouring of lamentation almost universally. The whole world gazed Romeward again when he was buried and when his successor was chosen to that seat he has usurped over the nations of the earth. As the world "wondered after the beast", very little of the public comment highlighted the undemocratic and unrepresentative nature of the papal system. This, in times when our country goes to war in distant lands in professed attempts at transplanting democracy, suggests at least an element of hypocrisy. Even before his departure to meet his Maker, there were calls made for Pope John Paul II to be proclaimed a saint. Protestants need to be reminded that the doctrines of Rome have not changed.

Little sense of shame exists any longer in Scotland when the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland pays homage to Pope Benedict XVI.³ Little sense of shame is found among so-called Protestants when our elected representatives and the heir to our throne go out of their way to acknowledge what the Scriptures describe as the antichrist system. Attention was drawn by the *Scotsman* in December 2005 to the death of Professor John McIntyre, who, as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1982, publicly welcomed Pope John Paul II to Scotland, under the statue of John Knox.⁴ Rome has made a lot of further progress in Scotland in the intervening years.

2. See <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2005/11/17/>

3. Several other Protestant Churchmen did likewise.

4. <http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=337&id=2439862005>

Islam

Much attention has been given recently to the question of the degree of toleration and protection to be given to the religion of Mohammed. While some commentators are justly fearful of what the future might bring if the present growth of Islam continues in Britain,⁵ the government insists on extending further liberties to this dangerous system of delusion. We have been given a stark reminder of the deadly cruelty of this religion in the past year. In the heart of our capital city in July of 2005, suicide bombers took the lives of over 50 British citizens.⁶ Strangely, what surprised many commentators was the fact that it did not need foreign agents to carry out this atrocity. Young men nurtured within the country itself have shown their treasonable disregard for human life and for the liberty of their fellow citizens. Sadly, suicide bombing is not without expressions of sympathy amidst the general clamour of condemnation.⁷ The discovery that both the successful and the failed suicide attacks were the work of British nationals sits uncomfortably with the present government's appeasement policy towards militant Islam.

The re-publication of cartoons mocking Mohammed in January 2006 produced an extreme reaction from Islamic countries around the world with several embassies being destroyed and attacked and ambassadors being withdrawn from European countries. Violence was even threatened on the streets of London and was brought to the doors of media centres. The British Foreign Minister, Jack Straw, pandered to this inexcusable response by criticising the publications. No such defence was offered when the name of Christ was blasphemed so wickedly in a nationwide television drama. Many Muslims in Britain seek to distance themselves from those whom our government chooses to brand extremists. They attempt to convince us that Islam is a democratic and peace-loving religion that can easily co-exist in harmony with Christianity and western civilisation. What is becoming more apparent, with daily reports of murder and violence in the name of Islam, is that increasing numbers of Muslims throughout the world reject this theory.⁸ The acceptance of it by our rulers is a desperate effort on their part to defend an impossible multi-cultural and multi-faith harmony. The choice we have made in giving such extensive freedoms to Islam is leading us closer to civil unrest and conflict, which could have drastic results in this nation.

5. One interesting example can be found in the *Salisbury Review*, Summer 2005, page 11, "The Muslim Conquest of Britain", by Christie Davies.

6. See "Notes and Comments" in *FP Magazine*, Vol. 110, No. 8, August 2005.

7. Dr. Patrick Sookhdeo, the International Director of the Barnabas Fund and the Director of the Institute for the Study of Islam and Christianity, comments in an article in response to 7/7 that, "Some of the 'condemnations' of 7/7 given by the British Muslim leadership have little value, hedged as they are with provisos and get-out clauses. What good is it," he asks, "to condemn suicide bombings in London and affirm them in the Middle East?" See www.barnabasfund.co.uk

8. A list of acts of terrorism in the name of Islam, world-wide, since 9/11, has been compiled by a group called "Islamist Watch" and makes disturbing reading. See www.thereligionofpeace.com

In February 2006, two BNP activists were cleared of inciting racial hatred for describing Islam as “a wicked faith”.⁹ We deplore much of the BNP policy and practices and have reservations over the case, yet we agree with their statement on this point. There can be no doubt about the wickedness perpetrated by the most zealous advocates of Islam and there can be no question about the heretical nature of the doctrines of that system of religion. The jailing of a prominent Muslim cleric for incitement to murder during the course of “sermons” in Finsbury Park Mosque, is an encouraging sign that the forces of law and order are taking such extreme threats to our liberties seriously. However, until our rulers and our people acknowledge that Christianity is an exclusive religion and cannot exist alongside a doctrine that blasphemes and wars against Christ Himself, we see no prospect of deliverance from the dreadful scourge of militant Islam.

Religious Freedom

If we have understanding concerning the times in which we live, we will not have failed to recognise an erosion of religious liberties, which were purchased for Christ’s Church in our land at so great a cost.¹⁰ The sense that our freedoms are under attack is widespread. Yet freedom is extended to false religions in our nation as never before. What was once accepted as plain truth is proscribed as intolerance and bigotry. The way of truth is increasingly “evil spoken of”. Light is put for darkness, sweet for bitter and good for evil. As in the days of Isaiah, when the teachers were “removed into a corner”, so it is today in our land where once our Parliaments were guided by the Word of God. The Church of Christ is indeed “as a cottage in a vineyard . . . as a besieged city.”

The efforts of our present government to further weaken the voice of opposition to false and pernicious religions were seen in the proposal to make a new law against “incitement to hatred on grounds of religion”. Christianity has always stood firmly against hatred of every kind. To condemn as hateful a religion which was founded on hatred, has grown by hatred and still thrives on and encourages hatred, is now deemed incitement to religious hatred. While there is no merit in causing unnecessary offence and animosity, there are times when the truth concerning false religions must be spelt out clearly. The scriptures set the standard for us in this regard when they exhort us to “speak the truth in love”. Our denunciation of Popery, Islam and every other false creed should be regulated and measured by this divine precept. Yet many are offended when their hatred is described as that which God hates and it seems that the proposed law would have made such declarations unlawful. The Bill as proposed by the Government was happily defeated in the House of Commons, in a manner that surely highlights the hand of God at work in the

9. See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/4671026.stm>

10. The interference of government agencies in the life of the Church can be seen in issues relating to child protection, employment law and the care of the elderly.

defence of His cause.¹¹ The amendment that was passed, and which will become law, ensured that only “threatening words” should be banned, not those which are only abusive and insulting, and the offence has to be proven to be intentional. The amendment also specified that proselytising, discussion, criticism, insult, abuse and ridicule of religion, belief or religious practice would not be an offence.¹²

An interesting, if unsettling, example of restricted freedoms came to public light in a recent court case involving the Church of Scotland. A female minister who had been suspended for adultery took a complaint before an industrial tribunal and then to the Court of Session without success. In both instances the ruling was given that the Church was not her employer and that, as a minister, she was effectively employed by God. This has been the basis upon which the relation between Church and State has operated since the passing of the 1921 Church of Scotland Act. However, the complaint was taken to the House of Lords and in what is seen as a landmark ruling, it was sustained and the Church was required to treat the malcontent as an employee with employment rights.¹³ This imposition of the State on the Scottish Church is akin to the interference protested against by the Covenanters and the Disruption fathers. It is indeed an alarming prospect for our own Church if civil law can force the application of modern day employment law on cases of discipline and ecclesiastical appointments by Church courts.

The Persecuted Church

This part of our report on religion would not be complete without some reference to the afflicted and persecuted Church of Christ in other parts of the world. We do not know for how long open persecution may be kept back in our own nation, but we should ever remember those who, as in former days in Scotland, are “persecuted for righteousness sake”. The charitable work done by organisations like the Barnabas Fund which also draws media attention to suffering Christians, is to be commended to the prayerful people of the Church.¹⁴ While many persecuted Christians abroad are greatly in need of doctrinal teaching and reformation, their devotion to Christ under the fear of death signifies a sincerity in their religion which may be lacking in our own more peaceful society. We heartily commend such troubled saints to the prayers of God’s people among us.

Marriage

The deteriorating respect for the institution of marriage in our nation is but another indication of our spiritual decay as a nation. The bad example of the

11. A Government motion was defeated by just one vote. The Prime Minister had not waited for the vote, having apparently been told by his officials that the majority in favour of the Government motion would be large enough to secure victory without his personal vote.

12. See http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/uk_news/politics/4664398.stm

13. *Scotsman*, Friday 16th December 2005. See <http://news.scotsman.com>

14. A regular newsletter can be obtained from this body. See their website at www.barnabasfund.org

heir to the throne, who married his fellow adulterer in a civil ceremony on Saturday, 9th April 2005, highlights the lack of seriousness about marriage vows which prevails, and is encouraged, among the people of our country.¹⁵ (The date of this ceremony was changed to accommodate the funeral of the Pope of Rome, which Prince Charles attended.) Our rulers do very little to advance and promote the sacred institution of marriage, however loudly they profess to do so. In Scotland, the devolved Parliament took upon itself to effect changes to Family Law which not only make divorce easier, but which also blur further the biblical distinction between marriage and cohabitation. It is sad indeed to read the comments and speeches on this subject by those who rule over us.¹⁶ The Committee's response to the proposed Family Law Bill, sent to the Justice 1 Committee of the Scottish Parliament, can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

To the majority of right-thinking people in Britain, the enforcement of the recent Act of Parliament relative to Civil Partnerships is a disgrace to our nation. The disgusting displays of unnatural and sinful depravity by sodomites, which our national media glamorised, revealed the true meaning of this ungodly Act. We have as a nation now officially sanctioned and protected the sin of sodomy. In this we invite the woe of those who "declare their sin as Sodom and hide it not". May we not expect the judgement of God for these things? Amidst the almost universal acceptance, it is heartening to see that in one Local Authority, councillors and registrars took a stand and have refused to conduct any ceremonies in connection with this Act.¹⁷ This perfectly legal decision, taken by the Western Isles Council, received the support of the local MSP and we cannot but pray for sufficient resolve to be given to hold this position against whatever opposition might be raised.

Immorality

That marriage is undermined by the implementation of the Civil Partnerships Act and the passing of the Family Law Bill, is vigorously denied by the legislative authorities responsible. Yet the reality is becoming increasingly apparent that our nation is no longer willing to come under the moral law of God and the liberty that most demand is to freely indulge their depraved and sensual appetites. Freedom is almost universally confused with licence and the supposed liberty to express oneself. Gone are the days when even politicians saw that "men are qualified for civil liberty in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetites".¹⁸ The complete

15. In Spring 2002 around a fifth of dependent children in Great Britain lived in lone parent families, almost twice the proportion in 1981. See www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk

16. See www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/officialReports/meetingsParliament/or-05/sor1215-02.htm#Col21824

17. The Western Isles Council received hate mail and condemnation on public radio, and attempts were made by MSPs to have their decision reversed. (See *Stornoway Gazette*, 12th January 2006.)

18. Edmund Burke, quoted in *The Spectator*, 4th February 2006, page 16.

denial of our original corruption and our need of regenerating grace accelerates the decline into more flagrant ungodliness.

Immorality in society is seen in many areas. Sexual offences against children continue to cause grave concern and deep revulsion in the minds of ordinary people. While the evil perpetrators of these crimes are rightly condemned in the public media, increasingly offensive material, encouraging the breach of the seventh commandment, is available in newspapers, television, and the Internet and in the media generally. Promiscuity and licence in our society, together with degrading standards of dress and the overt sexualisation of young people, are surely responsible to some extent for this depravity and other evils. The content of television programmes, video games, and even of children's magazines, are areas of great concern to parents seeking to protect their children in this "evil and adulterous generation".

Recent surveys have shown that there are 50,000 people living with HIV or AIDS in the UK today, which is the highest number ever. Sodomy accounts for about 50% of the transmissions of the HIV infection in the UK. Of the heterosexual infections diagnosed in the UK, most were acquired abroad. Seventy-one per cent of heterosexually acquired HIV infections diagnosed in the UK in 2000/2001 were in people from Africa, or were associated with exposure there.¹⁹ On top of this, sexually transmitted diseases and teenage pregnancies are still increasing in the UK. Such facts as these seem to have no effect on government policy. With blinded persistence, government sexual health strategies make contraception freely available to schoolchildren and the claim is ever made that the problem is solely an educational one.²⁰ In January 2006, Sue Axon lost a case in the High Court over her right to know if her under-age child was going to have an abortion.²¹ This ruling is bound to encourage children to continue in promiscuity without the risk of being found out. These are examples of how perverse our society has become. By turning aside from the morality of the Divine Ruler, we have become a nation that is "pure in its own eyes but has not been washed from its filthiness". It ought not to be any surprise to us that our nation has become polluted with diseases and infections marking it out for its sexual immorality and we should ponder seriously the warning that "whoremongers and adulterers, God will judge".

Violence

Figures for 2004/2005 reveal that the murder rate in Scotland is as high as it has been for 10 years.²² According to British Crime Survey interviews taking

19. Economic and Social Research Council – www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk – Fact sheet "HIV and AIDS".

20. A recent Sexual Health Strategy proposed by the Scottish Executive purports to promote abstinence, but the catch-phrase "abstinence plus" is in reality sidelining the meaning of abstinence and promoting what educationalists call "choice".

21. See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/manchester/4636666.stm> (It is still a criminal offence to have sexual intercourse with a child aged under 16.)

22. Figure given by Annabel Goldie, MSP, in a Scottish Parliament Debate, Official Report of 15th December 2005.

place in 2003/04, it is estimated that there were approximately 11.7 million crimes against adults living in private households in England and Wales. One in four crimes in the UK in the same period went undetected and over 40% of violent crimes go unreported.²³ Knife attacks are becoming a common event in our cities and violence and bloodshed are not being reduced by government social policy strategies. In 2000 there were 4,448 suicides in the UK (12 every day) and the rate in Scotland is nearly double to that in the rest of the country. These very sad details are given here to illustrate something of the moral evils that take place in our own nation on a daily basis. They give cause for much sorrow and lamentation. As in Noah's day, the earth is "filled with violence".

Those who attempt to tackle these evils in society claim that better housing and a higher standard of living would reduce the crime-rate. Yet Britain is hardly a poor country. Most definitions of poverty in the UK focus on relative poverty (being deprived in comparison with other people) rather than absolute poverty (not being able to afford the basics like food, water and shelter). The Government defines a household in poverty as having income lower than 60 per cent of the median.²⁴ In 2003-4, 44 per cent of offences involving violence were related to alcohol. According to a Government report from 2003, alcohol-related crime costs the UK £7.3 billion every year.²⁵ Our affluence as a nation has never been higher and yet our depravity has increased with it. As the Scriptures teach, violence and murder are symptoms of the depravity of the human heart and are to be dealt with in any society by the terror of the sword. Mechanisms such as an automatic early release policy for violent criminals, suggest strongly that our rulers bear the sword in vain. With re-offending rates soaring, it is high time our rulers carried out what they have promised, and reversed this unjust and destabilising policy.

Abortion

Abortion figures for England and Wales, released in July 2005, show an increase of 2.1% over the previous year's figures. On their website, the campaign group "Pro-life" make the following valid and important comment: "Despite increased access to contraception, relentless sex education programmes, and easy availability of the morning-after pill, the abortion figures in England and Wales are climbing towards 200,000 a year and are likely to continue to rise."²⁶ When abortion was first legalised, around 5 women per 1,000 had abortions; this figure has risen to 17 per 1,000 today. Yet those following the issue closely, complain that the information available on abortion (and particularly the full extent of illegal abortion) is today much more restricted than formerly. The previously mentioned article asks the

23. See "Facts and Figures" – Economic and Social Research Council web-site: www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk

24. According to this definition, 21 per cent of children and pensioners, and 14 per cent of all adults live in households below the poverty line.

25. See www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk

26. See www.prolife.org.uk

pertinent question, “Why in an age when the Government continually preaches increased transparency and public accountability, is less detail about abortion now available than it was five years ago? Illegal abortion remains a criminal act and no attempts of any kind should be made to bury information relevant to assessment of correct practice in this area.”

In a disturbing article in the *Daily Telegraph* a comparison is made between the holocaust and murder of the Nazi regime in Germany and the modern practice of abortion in the United Kingdom. We quote a portion of the article to highlight some of the evils which are going on and the perspective which some are taking on the matter.

“To abort an unborn child beyond 24 weeks’ gestation is recognised in British law as infanticide – but only if the child is thought to be ‘normal’. If doctors diagnose physical or mental handicap, including, it seems, a cleft palate, it is lawful to kill the unborn child at any time up to its birth. This is a programme for eliminating the handicapped. Its justification is that it is better ‘not to burden’ either the present or future generations with their care. It differs in practice from the mass murder in Nazi Germany – but it is not easy to articulate how it differs at the level of moral principle. The State is killing unborn children because we do not want to live with them, or to bear the costs of looking after them. It is a justification the Nazis would have appreciated.”

About 200,000 unborn children are aborted every year in England and Wales, many because doctors have decided they will be handicapped. That is a killing rate of nearly 550 a day: less than the number of people gassed daily at Auschwitz, but a horrifically large number none the less – and larger than the numbers of defenceless handicapped murdered by the Nazis.”²⁷

Euthanasia

The murder of innocent children in the womb is a dreadful blot on this nation. Yet there is a further moral evil in euthanasia which increasingly cries to God for vengeance. In June 2005 the BMA Annual Representatives’ Meeting voted against a pro-euthanasia policy but in favour of a neutral policy on the issue. Commenting on this important and far reaching decision, the Pro-life Alliance reminds us that “the result does not reflect the strong opposition of doctors and nurses to a change in the law.”²⁸ There was also considerable opposition to attempts made in 2005 by Jeremy Purvis, MSP, to legalise euthanasia in Scotland. His proposed private members Bill did not receive sufficient backing from MSPs and therefore could not go forward. It was widely reported that 56% of respondents to Mr. Purvis’ consultation were in favour of the Bill while only 33% were opposed. This overlooked the fact that a significant number of respondents represented large organisations, including the Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care (SPPC), an umbrella body for 53 organisations, including all Health Boards, Hospices and many community teams caring for

27. Reproduced on website of “Pro-life”.

28. “Pro-life” Press release, 30th June 2005.

the dying, representing thousands of people. SPPC had held a Day Conference on the Purvis proposals and came down resoundingly against.²⁹

The difficult decisions over life and death taken by doctors and nurses on a daily basis must surely place enormous pressure on members of that profession. When those who make rules and regulations on their behalf show at best an ungodly indifference to such a fundamental duty to maintain life, the implications for Christians in the medical profession could be far reaching indeed. Examples of voluntary euthanasia in the UK have increased in recent years.³⁰ The well publicised assisted suicide of British woman, Anne Turner, in January 2006, was given somewhat approving coverage by the BBC and other news media sources.³¹ This is a truly disturbing precedent and one which further highlights the spiritual darkness into which our nation has descended.

Sport

Like heathen nations in the past, our nation, having forsaken the fountain of living waters, is bent on hewing out for itself broken cisterns that can hold no water. One such broken cistern is the god of sport which increasingly devours the time, attention, money and heart of the people of our nation. As Paul foresaw in his own day, the time would come when men would be “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God”. While this can be said of many, if not every, generation to some extent, we believe that sport has in the past 50 years become such a powerful influence in the nation that we have in it one of Christianity’s greatest adversaries. In America leaders of some young football and baseball teams have special prayer meetings with the players before important matches.³² Such confounding of religious worship with worldly pursuits, illustrates the low state of the religion that engenders it. Sadly, however, within some professed evangelical circles much place is given to sport. Sporting heroes, who profess Christianity, are feted as role models for young people. This is done even by some who claim to promote Sabbath observance, when the law of the Sabbath is flouted by these very role models.³³

At a national level we have become addicted to sport. Sporting heroes are honoured in formal ceremonies for their supposed contribution to national life and a vast amount of public money is spent on promoting sporting excellence and career sportsmanship. The past year saw a successful bid by London to host the Olympic Games in 2012. This was responded to with euphoria. Such events often bring fewer financial or social advantages than promised or expected but, more sadly, they contribute immeasurably to the idolatry and devotion given by young people to what is spiritually worthless. Recreation

29. See www.jeremypurvis.org/consultation1.htm and www.carenokilling.org.uk

30. The Swiss organisation Dignitas have been involved in over 40 UK deaths since 2003.

31. See http://news.bbc.co.uk/newswatch/ifs/hi/newsid_4700000/newsid_4701600/4701642.stm

32. Article in *New York Times* – www.nytimes.com – for 30th October 2005.

33. The footballer Brian Irvine, the rugby player Jason Robinson and the athlete Jonathan Edwards have all participated in their sport on the Sabbath day while professing to be Christians.

has its place in the nation and also in the lives of God's people. However, it is becoming increasingly obvious that a Christian would usually have to accept many compromises in order to be a professional sportsman. We need to warn our people against this powerful temptation.

Television

Another very powerful and effective source of temptation is the television. Much of what pours into the living rooms of nearly every home in our land has now reached such a depth of ungodliness and worldliness that it is strange indeed to think of true disciples of Christ spending their time watching it. He who says plainly that His people are not to be conformed to the world, also taught His disciples to pray, "lead us not into temptation". It is difficult to imagine a more obvious source of temptation to worldly mindedness than that which appears daily on television screens. Television has obviously changed a great deal in the past number of years. Modern technology has made terrestrial television become a thing of the past for many. With an almost unending variety of channels and with an increasing amount of degrading and immoral material available, the spiritual and moral health of our nation, and indeed of our Church, is very much at risk.

Recent figures show that the average person in the UK spends 171 minutes (just under 3 hours) every day watching television, while the average time spent listening to the radio is 46 minutes and the average time spent reading a book is only 40 minutes.³⁴ This is not simply a statistic highlighting a shift in the media intake of our society, it is a reflection on the moral health of the nation. As Mediawatch-UK explains, the quality of programmes is deteriorating fast. The amount of pornographic material available on digital television, which is soon to become available to every household, is cause for grave concern.³⁵ Parents of young children would do well to be warned of the great danger television poses to children's welfare. Believers with a concern for their own souls and a sense of the power of indwelling corruption will have a similar concern for their own welfare and that of society in general.

Conclusion

The past year has given little cause for the people of God in this nation to rejoice. The loss of our Reformation heritage goes on apace. While false prophets and hirelings fill the pulpits of the land, the people love to have it so. The state of religion and morals is as desolating and grieving to the discerning people of God as in former years when this report has been submitted to our Synod. We have the melancholy duty of drawing attention to further evidence that the Lord has a controversy with this nation. It is becoming increasingly

34. See www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk – "Media in the UK".

35. "Despite being criticised as having the 'strictest censorship laws' in the world [Britain] now has 27 licensed TV channels dedicated to showing pornography. Anyone with a Sky digital package will know where they are." Mediawatch newsbrief, Autumn 2005 (see www.mediawatchuk.org)

apparent that by judicial blindness we are advancing further in our course of rebellion from Him and if mercy does not prevent it, we are bound to reap His judgements. The contents of this report for yet another year provide ample material for prayer and lamentation at the Throne of Grace for that mercy to be vouchsafed.

Yet, the Lord dwells in the midst of His Church and therefore “nothing shall her remove”. She is founded on a rock and the gates of hell cannot prevail against her. Her present duty is the same as in all previous generations – to go into all the world and to preach the Gospel to every creature and to do so in the certain knowledge that Christ is with her always, even unto the end of the world. A further source of encouragement to the troubled and tried Church is the exceeding great and precious promises concerning her future glory in this world. Kings and queens will yet be nursing fathers and mothers to the Church. The good hope that the whole earth will yet be filled with His glory, ought to stir up that spirit of prayer mentioned by Isaiah. “I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: 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).



APPENDIX 1

The following edited response to the then proposed Family Law (Scotland) Bill 2005 was sent by the Religion and Morals Committee to the Justice 1 Committee of the Scottish Parliament. While the Justice 1 Committee in fact recommended a compromise position to the Executive in which Divorce could be given after a period of 18 months with consent and 3 years where no consent existed, the Executive did not accept this and when the Bill was presented to Parliament the amendment which contained the compromise was defeated by a large majority.

THE Religion and Morals Committee of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland has considered and discussed the proposed Family Law (Scotland) Bill 2005 and has been following the scrutiny of this Bill in your Committee. We are conscious that representations from certain religious bodies have already been considered by your Committee, but are confident that even at this stage you will be willing to consider a point of view which, as far as we can see, has not yet been made. While we are encouraged that the Bill addresses the moral and social evil of forced marriages, we wish to convey to you our views and responses to certain parts of the Bill which concern us. We believe that if these are implemented, they will have a very serious impact upon the nation at a cultural, religious and spiritual level.

We are strongly opposed to the view that the laws in our society should reflect the trends, conditions and circumstances in the society. This view if

acted upon, will almost certainly lead to the further erosion of the foundation of law and justice and to changes of a retrograde nature. We commend to you the changeless law of God as the absolute standard upon which all human laws should be based. Firm adherence to this standard would, we believe, promote the good, stability and happiness of the nation.

Changes to Divorce (Scotland) Act 1976

We note that from sections 10 to 13 of the proposed Bill, changes are made to the present law on divorce. We would like to register our strong opposition to these changes believing that they will if implemented, contribute to more family breakdown and an increase in the number of divorces with the unhappiness that follows. As lawmakers you are obliged and committed to support the institution of marriage and we firmly believe, as many others do, that these changes are extremely corrosive of the institution of marriage.

(1) We are of the view that the time limits for divorce are too short at present and the changes proposed are therefore an aggravation of an evil which already exists. Divorce has become easier since the Divorce (Scotland) Act of 1976 and the result of this is that it has become more common.ⁱ We see no advantage in making divorce any easier and consider that sufficient time is not given to attempt reconciliation and mediation.

(2) The Bible teaches that there are only two grounds upon which the marriage bond can lawfully be broken and that these necessarily involve one or both parties in fault. These two grounds are adultery and wilful desertion.ⁱⁱ The Westminster Confession, which for centuries has been highly esteemed by Presbyterian Churches in Scotland and which is still the subordinate standard of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, teaches that such wilful desertion is only a proper ground for divorce when it cannot be remedied by the Church or by the State.ⁱⁱⁱ This implies a sufficient time period to attempt such a remedy.

(3) We are opposed to sections 12 and 13 of the Bill as the removal of these bars to divorce make divorce easier still and unfairly discriminate against those who are unable to consent to divorce on financial grounds. Any indication that collusion in divorce is looked upon with ambivalence will further erode respect for the institution of marriage.

Cohabitation in the proposed Bill

We are very alarmed at the series of proposals which relate to the state of cohabitation and the clear attempt in these proposals to place cohabitation on a par with the married state. These two states are very different and this difference is a moral as well as a social one. We urge you to rethink these

i. Census information and government statistics reveal this to be the case.

ii. Matthew 5:31-32; Matthew 19:9; Romans 7:2-3; 1 Corinthians 7:15.

iii. *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 24, Section 6.

iv. SPICe Briefing, "Grounds for Divorce (updated)", page 14.

proposals and to take consideration of the tendency to further promiscuity which this legislation will encourage in our society.

(1) Marriage is the only state in which a man and a woman ought to have a sexual relationship or nurture a family. We strongly oppose the provisions of the Civil Partnership Act of 2004 and are alarmed at the influence which this Act is now having upon the institution of the family in our nation's laws. The Bible clearly teaches that all manner of fornication and promiscuous sexual relations are utterly immoral and therefore unchristian. We urge the Executive to refrain from giving further licence to sin by giving sinful relationships legal recognition.

(2) We are opposed to the provisions and implications of the Gender Recognition Act of 2004 and we are greatly alarmed that these are also influencing the legal standing of the institution of the family in our nation. This abandonment of truth and morality to satisfy a vocal minority will, we believe, end in much shame and misery for our nation and is bound to bring down God's deserved judgements on our rulers and people.^v Behaviour which the Bible clearly describes as sinful is now being defended and promoted in our laws and we fear that the consequences will be catastrophic for the moral health of our nation.

(3) We notice with dismay in the SPICe briefing 05/11 of 3rd March 2005 that the strongest defence of the proposed changes to the law regarding cohabitation is the trends which prevail in the nation. We see these trends as reason to legislate against cohabitation rather than in favour of it. We reiterate our position that the law ought never to be based upon the conditions or trends in society but rather upon a standard of right and wrong which must be absolute. This absolute standard is the law of God.

Forbidden degrees of marriage

We are also strongly opposed to further change in the area of degrees of affinity proposed in section 1 of the Bill. We find it highly reprehensible and immoral that in-laws can marry each other. This unnatural and distasteful proposal has no valid argument in its support and is forbidden by the moral law of God which is binding on all. We would be interested to know why this proposal has found a place in a Family Law Bill and would suggest that rather than promoting the good of families it will lead to confusion and deterioration of the extended family which has been so fundamental to the stability of our society.

v. While we heartily adhere to freedom of speech in our society, we are dismayed at the attention being given to the Equality Network and the statement from them which far exceeds in length that of any other group.

APPENDIX 2

The following paper was prepared for the Committee in response to the publication of the English Standard Version of the Bible and its use in professed evangelical circles. The content of this paper is largely based on material produced by the Trinitarian Bible Society (Quarterly Record, No. 563) and is used here with kind permission.

THE Revised Standard Version, published in 1952, had been a theological, spiritual and translational battleground for fifty years. Liberals, Neo-orthodox, and even those of conservative background, have used it, and even endorsed it. There were those, however, who were not completely satisfied with the RSV, and they determined to make a conservative revision of it, and the English Standard Version is the result. As a result we have a light revision of the RSV, and because of its textual basis and translational errors, carried over from the RSV we cannot call it a trustworthy translation of the Word of God.

An agreement was gone into with the National Council of Churches, whereby the Revised Standard Version could be used as the basis for a new translation. We must remember what the introduction to that same RSV said about the AV: "The King James Version of the New Testament was based upon a Greek text that was marred by mistakes, containing the accumulated errors of fourteen centuries of manuscript copying." In 1998 permission was given to rid the original text of the RSV of de-Christian translation choices.

It is clearly stated in the ESV itself that the ESV "is adapted from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA". The tendency of translators over many years now has been towards dynamic equivalence, seeking to find the thoughts behind the text rather than being concerned with the words themselves. The RSV used eclectic principles for each variant, but the text used approximates the Nestle 17th edition of the NT. The ESV used similar modern principles of textual criticism, and for the most part followed the United Bible Societies' 4th edition/Nestle-Aland 27th edition. As a result the following verses are omitted from the ESV in their entirety, but are found in the Textus Receptus Greek New Testament:

Matthew 17:21; 18:11; 23:14.

Mark 7:16; 9:44; 9:46; 11:26; 15:28.

Luke 17:36; 23:17.

John 5:4.

Acts 8:37; 15:34; 28:29.

Romans 16:24.

1 John 5:7. The Johannine Comma is omitted without a footnote explanation as to why.

There are also many hundreds of omissions and changes from the AV which are retained in the ESV. In the genealogy of Jesus, given in Matthew chapter one, Asaph is retained instead of Asa, and Amos instead of Amon.

John 7:53-8:11 is placed in square brackets, and its place in Scripture questioned in footnotes.

The RSV has over six hundred instances of making conjectural emendations of texts considered ambiguous or insufficient. These are mainly in the Book of Job, and the ESA translators corrected most of these. The OT text used by the ESV translators, or revisers, was *Biblia Hebrai Stuttgartensia* (2nd edition 1983). They also made use of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Latin Vulgate and the Syriac Peshitta. The problem with these textual additions and changes is that they do not come from the Hebrew text, and the reader is at the mercy of the translator's interpretive whims.

In Matthew 19:9 the AV has, "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery".

The ESV has, "And I say to you; whosoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery". The prohibition of marriage to a divorced wife is omitted.

Some footnotes use the phrase, "Some manuscripts add . . .". The reason for the changes and omission is not given, so that the impression is given that the Word of God is being called into question.

In Mark 16:9-20 a set of in-text square brackets includes the statement: "Some of the earliest manuscripts do not include 16:9-20." What the footnote does not tell the reader is that the "long ending" of Mark's Gospel is included in every manuscript which includes this portion of the Gospel with the exception of three: the two famous Alexandrian uncial manuscripts, the Sinai (Aleph) and the Vatican (B), and the minuscule manuscript 304.

The ESV has dropped as archaic the AV and RSV practice of retaining "Thee", "Thou" and "Thine", as a special form of language used for addressing God, and given by God Himself. It does not differentiate between the singular and plural of the second person personal pronouns, you and thee. This tampering causes confusion.

Examples: Luke 22:31-32, ". . . Satan has desired to have you . . . but I have prayed for thee . . ."; John 1:49-51, ". . . I saw thee under the fig tree. . . . Verily, verily I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open. . . ."

One of the noticeable things in the ESV is the numerous changes in gender. Since 1986 most translators have made a point of removing male-orientated language. The removal of "patriarchal language" and the observance of political correctness seems to have been the aim. In 1997 the Colorado Springs Guidelines came into being to help modern translators. The ESV did not endorse such, but in the area of gender language the goal of the ESV is to render literally what is in the original. The term "anyone" replaces "any man" where there is no word corresponding to "man" in the original languages, and "people" is used in preference to "men" where the language refers to both men and women. This is done in an inconsistent manner; e.g. in Psalm 32 verse 1 is gender non-specific, while verse 2 is masculine. This has a jarring effect.

Common problems with modern translations are found in the ESV, where texts which speak specifically of blood atonement (Colossians 1:14) and the virgin birth (Luke 2:33, 43), and also the deity of Christ (1 Timothy 3:16), are either changed or omitted because they are not found in certain manuscripts. The “begotten” is missing from John 3:16 and from other places.

The ESV is 91% word for word with the RSV. It is essentially the same version as the RSV, but with some evangelical changes to make it more appealing to conservative Christians.

The AV used italics for words where the syntax, or grammatical structure, of the Greek or Hebrew made such necessary. The ESV has no italics whatsoever.

Conclusions

With this version, the ESV, as with all modern versions, we are still in the conflict which began in the Garden of Eden, in which Satan exclaimed, “Hath God said?”. Every modern version engenders doubt in the Word of God. The conflict ultimately is between God and the Devil.

We already have the infallible God-breathed Word, and it has the authority of the all-wise and all-holy God. The ESV attempts to readjust the RSV, which owes so much to the labours of Westcott and Hort, two Mary worshippers and spiritualists, who used discarded manuscripts to try to overthrow the Word of God. All these modern versions are but an attempt made by the evil one to break into the stream of the pure Word of God, which has been copied and reduplicated constantly by the Church of Christ since it came from God’s hand. The ESV is not an attempt to bring the versions back to the purity of God’s Word. It is the modern compromise Bible for all, with far fewer errors than the RSV, but God does not compromise. His Word is perfect.

The fact that evangelicals are involved in the ESV does not vouch for its purity. Its inadequacies rather show the spiritual weakness and blindness of those who undertook to produce it. “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matthew 5:18). “For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven” (Psalm 119:89).

In the matter of its copyright, mention is made of the National Council of Churches, which is no friend of Evangelical Reformed Theology.

SABBATH OBSERVANCE COMMITTEE’S REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. J. MacDonald

MOST readers of this report will know that the battle for Sabbath Observance is all but lost in the United Kingdom. We are reminded of the words of a much esteemed minister of our Church saying many years ago: “There will be no more Sabbath observance till the Spirit of the Sabbath is again poured out.”

Nevertheless we must do what we can to witness against the profaning of the Lord's day. Alongside personal witness we seek to protest against Sabbath breaking by writing letters to some of those who are wilfully and openly breaking the Fourth Commandment. Those we have written to range from the Prime Minister to the Scottish Executive, local authorities to supermarkets, and entertainers, openly advertising their vanities on God's day. We cannot give an exact tally of letters written but it must be in the region of seventy to eighty. At the time of writing we have not received one reply this year. This apathy is visible proof that those who do not even reply to a letter pointing out to them their sin in breaking the Sabbath have no wish to honour God. Like Israel of old they are saying: "Depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." How bold we have become as a nation of Sabbath breakers.

We consider ruefully these words in an extract from McCheyne in the *Young Peoples' Magazine* of June 1965: "We may safely say that the man or woman does not love the Lord Jesus who does not love the Lord's day." True Sabbath observance is a mark of those who are the Lord's servants. It is true that a man may be a Christian while holding unorthodox views. Bishop Ryle, C. H. Spurgeon, George Muller and others who were godly in their day held views, which we, as Free Presbyterians, consider to be contrary to the Bible teaching on various matters, but they had this in common that they were Sabbatarians. They loved the Lord and observed His day. To be termed "Sabbatarian" is now a term of abuse synonymous with "hypocrite" or "legalist". How far the tone of religious society has fallen in such a short time!

There appears to be few in the Westminster Parliament, and fewer still among the Scottish Executive, to raise their voice against ever-greater desecration of the Sabbath. An article in the *Evangelical Times* of November 2005 states: "The Government is set to ease restrictions to Sunday openings for supermarkets and other large shops." Allan Johnston, the Trade and Industry Secretary said it was sensible to consider the step after industry representatives argued that, "Sunday was now the busiest day of the week". Mr. Johnston has commissioned an analysis of the change that would bring England and Wales into line with Scotland where Sunday shopping hours are not restricted. How sad that Scotland, which was a trophy of the Reformation, is now giving Europe the lead in Sabbath breaking. There is less Sabbath trading now in most West European countries than in Scotland.

As Synod members will know, the Committee drew up a Petition calling on the Scottish Executive to establish the Sabbath as a nationwide day of rest. With Synod approval the Petition was forwarded to the Scottish Executive Petitions Committee. The Clerks of the Committee wrote back to say that, as the crave of the Petition had to do with employment the Executive could not deal with it as employment is not a devolved matter and therefore in the province of the Parliament at Westminster. We will be raising the matter at the Synod, D.V., seeking its guidance, though we fear that Westminster will be as reluctant to give heed as Holyrood was. It is a sad commentary on our nation that, in a day when "rights" of every kind are openly flaunted – civil rights,

animal rights, gay rights, etc. – there do not appear to be any Christian rights when such are contrary to the tide of public opinion. Much of the anti-Sabbath legislation has been introduced in response to public demand. The Committee view this as a serious dereliction of God-given responsibility on the parts of national and local governments. We are only doing our duty when we seek to point out to them that “Everyone of us shall give account of himself to God” (Romans 14:12). It will be vain for the Government or any member of it to plead in that day that they did what the majority of the people wanted.

While we are writing this report against a background of ever increasing and bolder Sabbath breaking, it is well for us to remember that we belong to a Church which, from its beginning, has held a scriptural stance on Sabbath observance. This has not brought us the praise of men, and never will. We can expect to be castigated more and more as society at large and the majority in the visible Church seem to cast aside the Fourth Commandment. We do not write this in the spirit of pride or self-praise, but would like our people, young and old, when beset by ever increasing temptation to compromise with a society which is largely ignorant of God’s Word, to remember the exhortation: “Hold fast that which thou hast” (Revelation 3:11). When we are confronted with the Pharaoh-like spirit – “Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?” – let us be encouraged by the Lord’s own promise: “Them that honour me I will honour.”

Though we write in general terms, we are called to remember that keeping the Sabbath holy is a personal matter. As has been said, Sabbath keeping begins in the heart, is supported in the family and is upheld in the public means. Thomas Watson in *The Ten Commandments* says: “Some people complain that they find no benefit from the Word preached: perhaps they do not pray for their minister as they should. Pray with and for your family on the Sabbath. Yea pray for all the congregations that meet this day in the fear of the Lord.” To quote a contemporary source, Stuart Olyott, writing in the *Evangelical Magazine*, says: “The blessings of the Sabbath are there for all to see; it reminds fallen men and women that there is a God whom they should worship; it gives believers the opportunity to gather around the Word and thus it maintains their spiritual life; it provides opportunities for Gospel witness; it strengthens family ties.

Though this Report is primarily for members of Synod we all need to bear in mind our duty to keep the Sabbath. It is worrying to witness among us a tendency to lightness and laughter, particularly among the young outside church after solemn Gospel sermons have been preached. As well as being a breach of the commandment it is a sad indication that much of the Word preached has fallen by the wayside. We all need to be reminded to keep God’s day holy to Himself – not just in church or at family worship but all the day, in our speech, our conduct and, by the grace of God, in our hearts. Heads of families are bound to keep the Sabbath and to endeavour to make their children do likewise. This duty was solemnly underlined by Rev. Archie Cook when he said: “See that your children will not be cursing you in eternity for allowing

them to use vain talk on the Sabbath; that they will not be crying against you for not checking them.”

The Committee would like to thank ministers, Kirk Sessions and individuals who have helped us in the past year. We may mention in particular the North Harris Kirk Session for their on-going opposition to the proposed introduction of Sabbath ferries by Caledonian MacBrayne in their area. The Committee would like to record its appreciation of the work done by the Clerk throughout the year and especially in connection with the Petition to the Scottish Executive.

JEWISH AND FOREIGN MISSIONS COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev J. MacLeod

General

As is well known, the Zimbabwean Mission celebrated its centenary on 9th September 2005. It was attended by the Rev. N. M. Ross and the Rev. J. R. Tallach as representatives of the Jewish and Foreign Missions Committee and also by several friends, most of whom had previously worked in Zimbabwe. At the beginning of August, the Rev. Alasdair B. MacLean, Probationer, arrived at Ingwenya. It is hoped, once work permit difficulties are resolved, that he will, in due time, be settled in that charge. Meantime, he is fully engaged in taking services at Ingwenya and further afield as occasion demands. His presence within the compound at Ingwenya is a great help and his work is much appreciated. The state of the Zimbabwean economy and especially the rampant inflation, has made the task of managing and continuing the work of the Mission that much more difficult and those on whom these administrative burdens are laid are to be commended for their tenacity and resourcefulness. Hitherto, Gospel ordinances have been maintained and the Hospital and the schools under the Church's supervision have continued to serve the purpose for which they were instituted; that is, as handmaidens to the Gospel. Problems of an entirely different nature were encountered in Kenya but we are glad to report that the Mission there survives. It is our hope that a line has now been drawn under these difficulties and that the work will continue and go from strength to strength. Mr. Hugh MacKenzie, whose work in Kenya over the years is much appreciated, has now resigned from the Kenya Mission and is now engaged in reviewing the work practices and the financial arrangements relating to the Zimbabwean Mission.

Zimbabwe

The Rev. Petros Mzamo, now at an advanced age, continues to labour on in the ministry. Over the years he has served the Mission well, especially at Mbuma and its many outstations, and we hope that he will be sustained in health to

continue to do so for some time yet. Not so far way, based at Zenka, the Rev. M. Mloyi has much work to do as pastor of many souls. We are glad that a new manse is to be built for him as the present one seems to be well below the standard desirable in this modern age. The Rev. S. Khumalo, labouring in Bulawayo and also, at present, as the interim Moderator of the Ingwenya Kirk Session, also stands in need of a new manse being built for him. Much work needs to be done at the Bulawayo church to make the building secure. In Mashonaland, the Rev. Z. Mazwabo, notwithstanding his sight disability, continues to preach and attend to his pastoral duties. There are many outstations established throughout the area and it is well that the Zimbabwe Presbytery has appointed two able lay-missionaries – Mr. N. Siziba and Mr. J. Mashavakure – to help with the work.

The Mbumba Hospital is now under the supervision of Dr. Anneke Snoek and, with the skilful and able help of the nursing sisters, it continues to provide much-needed medical services in the community. Sister Petra Beukers has now returned to Mbumba after spending some time in Bulawayo attending a course at Mpilo Hospital. Sister Willi Geurtsen was on furlough in Holland during January and February. At present, Sisters Gilia Wijngaarden and Celia Renes, who rendered sterling service to the Church in Kenya, are helping temporarily at the Hospital and it is hoped that the former will apply for a work permit and in due course join the permanent staff. The Committee was glad to recruit to the Mbumba staff Miss Erica van Breda, who worked as a nurse in a Glasgow Hospital and is well known to members of our Glasgow congregation. She arrived in Zimbabwe in February 2006. Sister Truus Ringleberg is assisting at the Thembeiso Children's Home, a place with which she was already familiar, having been on the staff of the Home at its inception.

In April 2005, Mr. J. B. Mpofu, a key member of the local staff, retired from his post of Building/Transport Manager. Before that he, for many years, taught woodwork at the John Tallach School and also carried out the onerous duties of Boarding Master. Mr. Mpofu is still active in performing the duties of an elder at Nkayi, often supplying there in the absence of the minister. We wish him a restful retirement and express the hope that he will be long spared to the Church in Zimbabwe.

The Committee is grateful to Mr. Jacob van Praag, an elder in our Sydney congregation, for answering a call for help. He arrived in Zimbabwe in December and has been busy since then attending to urgent repairs and renovations related to the Hospital and other buildings at Mbumba. In this connection, he has also been of great help in other areas of the Mission too. His help in taking services is also appreciated.

At Ingwenya as already noted, the Rev. Alasdair MacLean's presence has been of great help. When the school is in session a vast congregation is present in the church on Sabbath and also on prayer meeting occasions. The John Tallach Secondary School's reputation as an educational institution is second to none in Matabeleland. This is reflected in the fact that there are far more applications to attend than there are places available. The Church is much

indebted to Mr. Bonakele Ncube, the headmaster, and Miss Norma B. MacLean, his deputy, for their sterling work. Miss MacLean is also in charge of the Boarding School and this entails the carrying of many burdens which only those closely aware of the situation are able to appreciate. At the time of writing this report, she is on furlough at her parents' home in Glasgow and is due to return to Ingwenya at the end of April (D.V.). We are not forgetful of the contribution made by Mr. James Macleod and Miss Eleanor Wylie to the success of the school. As they will both be leaving this year, we take this opportunity of thanking them and wishing them well in their future careers. The Committee would welcome applications from others upon whom their mantles would fall.

Kenya

Based at Sengera, the Rev. K. M. Watkins continues to labour in word and doctrine. Outside of the ordinary services, much labour is expended in teaching young and old the foundation doctrines of the Christian faith, the Shorter Catechism being used as the principal textbook. The interest taken by those present and their apparent eagerness to learn would, we feel, impress any onlooker. We cannot but hope that this faithful sowing of the good seed of the kingdom will at last bear fruit. That the enemy of souls should be at work endeavouring to bring the work to nothing is to be expected.

Sadly, we have to report that there occurred a breach in the relationship between the Mission Superintendent and the other European members of staff. This led to Mr. and Mrs. Hugh MacKenzie and the nursing Sisters, Truus Ringleberg, Gilia Wijngaarden and Celia Renes resigning from the Kenya Mission. The Committee, in the difficult situation in which it found itself, decided to transfer them to Zimbabwe. At present the Omorembe Clinic is operating under the supervision of Kenyan qualified staff, but the Committee do not regard this as entirely satisfactory and are hopeful of recruiting European staff, who would, within their own sphere, bring the minds of patients into contact with the Word of God as they attend to their bodily ailments. To have withdrawn from Kenya and to have closed the Mission there was not considered to be an option. The sudden, unexpected death of Miss Peta van de Ridder came as a stunning blow which the Mission will take some time to recover from. However tragic the circumstances in which her life here came to an end, we believe that it is now well with her and that her death, coming after she had served her own generation by the will of God, was but a falling asleep. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." The Rev. D. A. Ross, the Rev. N. M. Ross and the Convener, as well as other friends from Scotland, attended her funeral in Holland.

Jewish Mission Work

The Rev. John L. Goldby was appointed to undertake work among the Jews in Israel and is at present engaged in that work as a deputy of the Church. It is

hoped that his designation as a Gospel labourer in Israel will be regularised when the Synod meets. It was agreed by the Finance Committee that the cost of sustaining the Mission to the Jews would be borne by the Legacy Reserve Fund at the rate of £50,000 per year for two years. Mr. Goldby will be submitting his own report. Our Church has always had an interest in the Jews and many prayers seeking their ingathering have been offered. We hope that that will continue in the present and into the future until the Spirit is poured out from on high.

Mbuma Zending

As on past occasions, we have to acknowledge the generosity and support of the Mbuma Zending. This year our Dutch friends have increased their giving by 15% and we are deeply indebted to them. The Convener, accompanied by Mr. R. A. Campbell, General Treasurer, met with the Board when it met at Opheusden on 24th February 2006. Since they support the work in Kenya in its entirety, they were appraised of the situation there as it is at present. The financial difficulties encountered in Zimbabwe as a result of inflation and escalating prices were also brought to their notice. Their support continues and we desire to express our gratitude to them not only for their financial support but also their prayerful interest.

Conclusion

We live in difficult and turbulent times when the enemy is coming in like a flood. We may be sure that the main thrust of his attack will be directed towards locations on the face of the earth where the pure Gospel is preached and where he perceives the danger of sinners' eyes being opened and their turning from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, obtaining the forgiveness of their sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith in Christ Jesus. We ask our praying people to be mindful of our Mission work in Africa and Israel and those who labour there.

JEWISH REPORT

Rev J. Goldby

THE Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland Synod discussed the work in Israel at its meeting of May 2005 and gave advice as to the way forward. Subsequently I made a formal application to the Jewish and Foreign Mission Committee to be sent as a minister to work in Israel. This being duly done and, having been released by the Western Presbytery from my charge in Scotland, we were privileged to return to Israel on 23rd August 2005 after an absence of seven weeks. The Lord's Day services were resumed in the Finnish Mission at 11 a.m. and in St. Andrew's Church of Scotland at 7 p.m. In October, a diesel Citroen Jumpy people carrier was purchased, which is proving very useful and

economical. Our labours began in Jerusalem, a city of 700,000 souls, 70% of whom are Jewish.

There is a counter-missionary organisation in Israel called Yad L'Achim (A Hand to Brothers). The *Jerusalem Post* reported that, "Anti-missionary activists pride themselves on using secret service tactics. They are extremely cunning and more than a little ruthless." The organisation employs sixty full-time activists and six hundred volunteers. Often those being targeted are false sects such as Jehovah's Witnesses but all the Messianic Jews seem to be fair game, of whom there are around 10,000 in Israel. The founder of Yad L'Achim, Rabbi Dov Lifschitz, "emphasises repeatedly that they have nothing whatever against Christians in Israel, just against missionaries".

One of its two main branches of operation is the counter-missionary division. Recently Yad L'Achim sent out a glossy insert and donation envelope with every copy of the *Jerusalem Post*. In the leaflet they claim to have shut down 18 missionary centres and made 267 home visits to counter missionary activity. They also claim to have "saved" 174 Jews from missionaries and to have been instrumental in having 12 senior missionaries deported, whilst dozens of others were prevented from entering the country! The organisation also puts out anti-Christian propaganda over the Internet. Nevertheless, the Churches in Israel are allowed to continue their work unhindered for the most part but there is serious opposition to anything resembling the evangelisation of Jewish people. Furthermore, many Churches do not follow strictly biblical principles, presenting a confused message of what the Gospel is.

Sadly, some ultra-orthodox sects of "Haredim" in Israel engage in intimidation, verbal abuse and some violence against Jewish Christians and their property. Many orthodox people totally reject this kind of behaviour but in Beersheva and Arad there have been cases involving hundreds of Haredim holding demonstrations against Jewish Christians outside their private houses and meeting places. Howard Bass, writing in the *Jerusalem Post* of 29th December 2006, reported that the Chief Rabbinate of Beer Sheba organised a demonstration of 500 ultra orthodox activists, some of whom invaded the property of the local Messianic congregation, overthrowing chairs and tables. "The mob broke and damaged equipment and physically assaulted and insulted men, women and children by hitting, spitting, pushing and punching." Another case was reported recently in the *Jerusalem Post* about a Haredi family in Beit Shemesh who became a target of some ultra orthodox activists. The family's two sons were beaten up, apparently because they had changed their allegiance from ultra to modern orthodox. The extremists then demonstrated outside the family home for a number of days.

In a text displayed at the new holocaust museum at Yad Vashem, Christianity is charged with persecuting the Jews. No distinction is made between the Roman Catholic Church, with her bloody history of persecution of Protestants and Jews and other Churches. Meanwhile the Vatican is currently labouring hard to mend her relations with the Jewish people. It would have been, no doubt, very pleasing to the Romanist hierarchy to read of the

comments of the President of Israel, Moshe Katsav, when he welcomed the appointment of Benedict XVI as the “new head of the Christian Church”. There is a great need here to witness on the side of Christ as the only King and Head of the Church and against the papal antichrist which is a major landowner in Israel. Everywhere Roman Catholic churches and their idolatry are to be found. I mentioned this deplorable fact in discussion with one Rabbi and that the sin of idolatry resulted in the Babylonian captivity, to which he replied, in anguish, “What can we do?”. The Roman Catholic Church’s history of persecuting the Jews has greatly prejudiced the Jewish mind against all Christians. This persecution is not something confined only to the Middle Ages or the Counter-Reformation. Dr. Robert Finaly, who now lives in Israel, was born in France in 1941. After his parents were deported to Auschwitz in 1944, Robert, and his brother Gad, were placed in a Roman Catholic children’s home. After the war the manager refused to return them to the family and instead had them baptised by a Romish priest. For five years the poor boys’ family battled in the courts to have them returned, during which time the children were hidden in various Catholic institutions in Italy and Spain before being finally allowed to resettle in Israel where they were brought up by their aunt. It is such behaviour towards Jewish people that has produced a very negative impression of Christianity, so that even some of the more conservative Jewish believers in Christ avoid calling themselves Christians.

We became friendly with most of the Jewish neighbours in our block. This is how we got to know one family. One day after doing business in town, whilst enquiring about a bus home, the orthodox Jewish man to whom I was speaking asked me where I lived. I replied that my home was in Talpiot. He then asked, “Where in Talpiot?”. To which I answered, “HaYarden Street”. He then asked, “What number in HaYarden?”. It transpired that he was a Rabbi who lived a few doors from us in the same block. There followed an interesting and friendly conversation on the bus journey home. He subsequently invited me to visit his Synagogue and introduced me to his family.

Regrettably, the owner of our rented house in HaYarden placed her property on the market during the summer and from the time of our return to Jerusalem in August prospective buyers were coming each week to view the house. Although the asking price for the basic four-bedroom house was high we hoped that it might have been possible for the Church to purchase the property and thus secure a regular and stable base from which to continue building relationships already established. However, we were not, in fact, able to purchase the house and this resulted in our moving to a rented flat in the Arnona district on 16th November 2005.

Recently we entertained an elderly Jewish friend from the Ulpan where my wife Isabel is studying for two mornings a week. This man was a boy of fifteen in Germany in 1938 and witnessed the awful events that took place on the night of 10th November 1938. Jewish businesses and synagogues were plundered and burnt all over Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia and 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and sent to concentration camps. It became known

as the Night of Broken Glass or “Kristallnacht”. It was a night when Nazi policy towards the Jews became known to the whole world. Also in 1938, 20,000 Polish Jews were transported from Germany to Poland in sealed trucks. Most subsequently perished in the Warsaw Ghetto. Among them was our friend’s father. We had an interesting evening and our guest asked us many questions about our beliefs. Another elderly Ulpan friend is from Greece. She and her family escaped the Nazis by being hidden in the houses of family friends but other family members, who were taken by the Germans, also perished in the death camps.

We still maintain contact with a number of the original fellow “Ulpan” students with whom we still have regular meetings in each other’s homes. The last meeting was in our house. Because most of our guests are “Kosher” we needed to make special arrangements for food and drink but with the advice and assistance of an orthodox friend from London the evening was successful. The husband of one of the students, with whom we have had very interesting discussions, has just completed his training as a Conservative Rabbi. We believe that it is vital to be engaged in friendly dialogue with Jewish people, bearing witness to our faith and Saviour as opportunity occurs. On the other hand we have much to learn about the varied Jewish ways of thinking.

Jewish people are understandably confused by the vast array of Christian churches around them and there is much work to be done in order to break down prejudice and spread the knowledge of biblical Christianity among the different segments of Jewish society. In order to pursue this objective, we may need to alter, somewhat, the fashion of activities. There is a need to produce leaflets on appropriate doctrinal and practical topics and to interact with groups and individuals not only in Jerusalem but throughout Israel.

Living and working in Israel over the past year has been a privilege and a challenge. We wish to acknowledge the Lord’s kindness toward us, the support of the Church and the prayers of His people. There have been many trials to remind us of our utter dependence upon the mighty God of Jacob, without whom we can do nothing. He alone is able to make the way straight, to open the hearts of men and to give the blind their sight. The debate between Christianity and Judaism must and will continue and eventually the truth will triumph. Judaism, as it has been said, is the Old Testament explained according to the traditional Oral law and Christianity is the Old Testament explained according to the New Testament. Some like to portray true Christianity as anti-Semitic. Nothing could be further from the truth. One author has stated the true position very well. “The first Christians were all Jews; so that, in discussing the truth of these respective systems, we are not opposing a Gentile religion to a Jewish religion, but comparing one Jewish creed with another Jewish creed. Neither in defending Christianity, do we wish to diminish aught from the privileges of Jewish people; on the contrary, we candidly acknowledge that we are disciples of the Jewish hope, and advocates of that truth which the Jews have taught us.”

INGWENYA MISSION REPORT

Rev. S. Khumalo

AS the chariot of time passes by, so the past year quickly came to an end, and now another one has begun. As we see these things may we be heeding the words in Psalm 90:12: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

The Lord in His goodness and kindness has carried us over to another year in time. Many people whom we knew have fallen by death. We have a reason to be thankful to the Lord who was with us in all the difficulties that we met with on our way.

The past year has been a very difficult one. It was a year of severe drought when people went without a harvest, an unstable economy, illness and deaths many – especially due to HIV and AIDS. The voice of death becomes louder and louder and many, dying without Christ, were rushed into a lost eternity. How solemn and how fearful it is to die without Christ. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

The past year included the celebration connected with the Centenary of our Church's presence in Zimbabwe. Ingwenya Mission was the host and we were wondering how to manage under these difficult conditions. Wonderfully the Lord helped us, so that the Centenary celebrations were a resounding success. Ingwenya was a hive of activity towards, during and after the Centenary celebration day. We witnessed a large number of visitors who came from Scotland and Holland. These included the Revs. N. Ross and Dr. Tallach. With them were Mrs. Ross, Mrs. Tallach and Marion their daughter. The Mbumba Zending delegation was led by Rev. De Jong, and with them were their wives. We were also pleased to have former missionary ladies among us who contributed so much to the Mission field in Zimbabwe.

Ingwenya congregation consists of six preaching stations. These are Ingwenya, Cameron, Gadadi, Insiza, Inyathi and Matapa, and a prayer meeting at Libeni. Services are held every Sabbath at 12:00 p.m., except at Ingwenya where services start at 11:30 a.m. I am thankful to the elders in all our stations who continue the supply. At Libeni there are no services on Sabbath but they join with Ingwenya. However, a pre-school prayer meeting is held there on Wednesdays at 8.00 a.m. and is conducted by Mr. I. Manzini.

Communion is held at Ingwenya twice a year, in March and September. At Cameron the communion is held once a year in July and at Inyathi in November. The Ingwenya communion in September was of special notice because it was the first communion after the Centenary and the first communion in the journey to another Centenary to come. The invited minister was Rev. N. Ross, who preached Christ and Him crucified in the Gospel. The administration of the Lord's Supper was a sermon to the ears and to the eyes. May the Lord of all mercies bless the preaching of His Word among our people, so that those who labour may not labour in vain. During the course of the year there was some addition to the communion roll. We pray that the Lord

by His Holy Spirit would “come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth” (Psalm 72:6).

At Insiza there is no house of worship, therefore services are held at a school. This has become unsuitable because of the noise made by another church’s meeting who hold their services in the same school. I am happy to say that an application for a stand has been approved and allocated but we now need to raise the necessary funds.

Matapa is another place where we are without a proper building. However, services are held at the home of Mr. J. Magunya, who is the only communicant, and we are very thankful to him for offering his home. As we are in the process of establishing ourselves in this place, a supply is arranged every month. Following the Sabbath worship there is study of the catechism and the Ndebele Confession of Faith.

We are very grateful for having Rev. A. B. MacLean, who arrived in Zimbabwe in August 2005. His place of residence is Ingwenya, where he resides with his sister. Being there, he has been of great help in supplying Ingwenya and when transport permits he visits other stations.

In conclusion I would like, on behalf of the Ingwenya congregations, to thank the people of our Church in Scotland and other parts of the world and our friends in Holland for their continued support of the work of the Gospel and the mission field.

Above all, we thank the Lord for the good rain which has fallen this year. May the Lord remember us with the rain of the Holy Spirit. “Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him” (Isaiah 62:11).

JOHN TALLACH SECONDARY SCHOOL REPORT

Miss Norma B. MacLean

THE year 2005 was a landmark in the history of Ingwenya Mission, it being 100 years since Rev. J. B. Radasi formally started mission work there. On 9th September 2005, friends gathered from all the Zimbabwe congregations and also from overseas to commemorate this event. We were delighted to have among us representatives from the Jewish and Foreign Missions Committee, a deputation from Mbumba Zending in Holland and also some old friends from Scotland. Staff and pupils of John Tallach School were heavily involved in the huge task of preparing the venue for the event. The children tackled the task of all the extra cleaning and setting out of chairs much more cheerfully than they do their homework; doubtless the prospect of a day off lessons and a tasty meal afterwards was considered to be sufficient compensation for all the extra duties!

In 1905 Rev. J. B. Radasi began education at Ingwenya, primarily to ensure that the people would learn to read the Bible – he promised a Bible to every child who successfully learned to read and he also gave out copies of the Shorter Catechism. The education offered at Ingwenya has changed dramatically over the one hundred years since then but it is still the case that every child is brought face to face with the teachings of Scripture and is taught what duty God requires of man. On entering Form 1, every pupil is gifted a copy of the Bible and also of the Shorter Catechism, another Bible is issued at the beginning of Form 3 and all pupils are presented with a pocket-sized copy of the New Testament before leaving school in Form 4. Morning and evening worship is held with the children every day and Bible Knowledge is a compulsory part of the curriculum for every child. The weekly prayer meeting is part of the school timetable and John Tallach pupils are required to attend all the Sabbath services – supply was well organised by Rev. S. Khumalo and in Term 3 we were glad of the ministry of Rev. A. B. MacLean among us. All the children do the Scripture and Catechism Exercises which appear in the *Young People's Magazine* and, in Sabbath School, over the course of their four years on the Mission, the secondary pupils learn various passages of Scripture and memorise all of the Shorter Catechism. It is surely true of them that they are without excuse. We would crave the prayers of the Lord's people that the Gospel which surrounds our impressionable teenagers would come to them not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost.

Staffing

During 2005 we had a full complement of teaching staff again under the able direction of Mr. B. Ncube, the headmaster. As in previous years it has to be stated that the co-operation of our teachers is deeply appreciated. In addition to the 26 local staff, three expatriates remained on the staff: Miss MacLean, Mr. James MacLeod and Miss Eleanor Wylie. As three of our local teachers are church members, Mr. Ncube, Mr. D. Dube and Mr. N. Khumalo, this gave a pool of six teachers to cover the Bible Knowledge lessons. A new development in the last two years has been the difficulty in retaining practical subject teachers – Fashion and Fabrics and Woodwork vacancies are no longer easy to fill. This is a concern to us as we are at times forced to employ poorly qualified staff in these posts and this has an adverse effect on the performance of our non-academic pupils who traditionally benefited from practical subjects.

In addition to the teaching staff, a significant number of ancillary staff are also employed and paid for from school funds: the school clerk, the boarding master, matron, one cook, one assistant cook, matron's assistant, two toilet cleaners, two kitchen hands, one dairy herd attendant, one miller/messenger, one night watchman and the foreman. In addition there are other workers who are employed by the mission and paid for from general funds: two builders/maintenance men, one water plant attendant, two gatemen, one night watchman, one electrical worker, one painter, one driver. This "squad" plays an important role in ensuring that the day-to-day operations at the Mission are

problem-free. Organising the workload and supervising all these workers is time-consuming and involving.

Pupil enrolment

Although more or less the same number of pupils are enrolled each year (around 590), we are experiencing a shift in the demographic trend, with fewer local children enrolling for places. This is due mainly to two factors: failure of children from the local primary schools to meet the entry requirements and lack of ability among local families to pay the fees required. Forty places are set aside in each form for local children but we are now having difficulty in filling even 20 places in each year group. In order to maintain a reasonable level of enrolment we are forced to compensate for this “shortage” of local pupils, who attend on a daily basis, by enrolling more boarding pupils. There is no difficulty in finding extra pupils for boarding, as places are heavily oversubscribed, but the dormitory space available is limited. Enrolment cannot be allowed to drop below the present level as we would then face a reduction in the number of teaching staff and this would have a detrimental effect on the curriculum we are able to offer.

Two major concessions are in place to encourage easier enrolment for local children: the entry requirements have always been set at a much lower level for children from the local primary schools and a large subsidy per local child is paid from the C. Morrison Bequest, so that they are not required to pay the full amount of school fees. In spite of these concessions, the number of local children enrolled continues to drop each year.

O level results

O level results improved again in 2005. However, when speaking of an “improvement” it ought to be remembered that we are consistently operating in an area of outstanding academic excellence and “increases” or “decreases” in results should be understood in that context. Any school anywhere in the world which consistently scores more than a 70-75% pass rate is a high achieving school. When a school consistently scores over an 80% pass rate, such a school is achieving outstanding results and that is the bracket into which John Tallach School happily falls. There are around 600 secondary schools in Matabeleland North and our O level results regularly place us in the top three of these 600 schools.

In the Form 4 class of 2005, 111 out of 128 candidates passed 5 or more O levels, giving a pass rate of 86.7% – 29 pupils managed to score 5 As or more, with two girls managing 9 A passes and another four pupils scoring 8 A passes. Needless to say, with results such as these, the Ministry of Education is impatient at our failure to commit to expanding to A level.

At the Matabeleland North Provincial Awards ceremony in 2005, run by the Ministry of Education, the school won many of the awards on offer – the headmaster stopped counting before the final one – number 18 – was called! Some of the more significant awards were:

1st in Bible Knowledge
1st in Accounts
1st in History
1st in Mathematics
1st in Ndebele
1st in Integrated Science
1st in Literature in English
1st in Physical Science
Highest % of pupils with 5 or more As
Most improved boarding school results
Best school – Public Speaking
Best school – AIDS education achievements
Best O level results for individual pupil

All schools have a motto which attempts to define the school ethos. We believe that the ethos defined by our motto is different to most other schools: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.” The main aim at John Tallach School is to bring children to the Word of the Gospel and, while it is a source of delight that so many of the children perform so well in their Bible Knowledge studies, yet how much greater would be our delight to see evidence of a heart knowledge and not a mere head knowledge. What need there is that, as they strive for academic success, the children would believe the truth of the words from Ecclesiastes: “Of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”

Finance

The economy continued to deteriorate during 2005 with hyper-inflation and many shortages of basic commodities. School fees, of course, had to rise during the year: at the beginning of the year these were set at \$1.5 million per boarding child per term but had increased to \$3 million by the end of the year. As in previous years, the increase in school fees was well below the rate of inflation but this was of no comfort to families on low incomes. A great deal of effort is needed to ensure that everything is in place for the day-to-day activities to continue. Details of all the difficulties encountered would easily fill the pages of this report! However, in the Lord’s kind Providence, we managed to cope with most of the difficulties and were relieved to reach a break-even point at the end of the year. This was made possible by an anonymous donation of £1,000 which we decided to set against the deficit so as not to burden parents by charging a supplement. The parents were greatly relieved and we record our thanks to the donor.

Vehicles and Buildings

The three vehicles, though now old – we have had no new vehicles since 2000 – still gave us good service throughout the year. The 3-ton truck and the

Venture are heavily used vehicles which are on the road most days for one reason or another. Children need to be taken to the local clinic, staff are often going to meetings/workshops, orders are regularly collected in Bulawayo, teachers are taken to Bulawayo on Fridays and then taken back to school again on Monday mornings, the water engine needs to be taken to and fro from the local dam. The 76-seater bus continues to be a reliable vehicle – we are always thankful that it is possible to transport the children to and from school at the beginning and end of each term on our own transport.

Inflationary pressures and the shortage of materials from time to time meant that it was very difficult to keep to an efficient maintenance programme. It had been intended to undertake a major painting programme in preparation for the centenary celebration in September but, due to the spiralling price of paint, it was not possible to complete the programme. However, a significant amount of painting was done and the mission now looks very fresh. The interiors of most of the school classrooms were painted, as was the exterior of most of the school buildings, all the workshops and all the mission houses. The interiors of all guest accommodation were also painted. It was not possible to paint the interiors of the boys' dormitories, the exterior and interiors of the girls' dormitories nor the exterior and interiors of the teachers' accommodation.

The new Form 3 boys' dormitory, which had been started in September 2004, was at last completed and the boys moved in during Term 3 of 2005. It is a large, bright, airy building which has made a big difference to the boys' comfort. It was also possible to purchase new beds and thick mattresses for all the Form 3 boys so that the only groups left on the mattress replacement programme are the boys in Forms 1 and 2.

There continued to be serious difficulties with the firm contracted to carry out the improvements to the school kitchen premises. This project started in August 2004 but, due to inflationary pressures and difficulty in sourcing stainless steel, progress has been unacceptably slow. At the time of writing, the headmaster has entered into negotiations with the firm to attempt to reach an amicable closure. It will then be possible to plan the completion of the project.

A new project which was started in 2005 was the erection of a new science laboratory. This is a long-awaited project as three dedicated science laboratories are necessary in order to have all science lessons carried out in a laboratory setting. At present there are only two dedicated laboratories, so one third of all science classes are conducted in the back of the main school hall which is the only other space available. All the construction will be completed by the Mission's two builders with some extra hired help but the internal fittings will need to be installed by a specialist firm. It was possible to proceed with this much needed project because of an unexpected grant of \$2 billion (Zim) from the Ministry of Education: we were very thankful for this generous grant as it arrived at a time when the Mission funds were low. The grant will not be enough to complete the project, as the internal fittings alone are estimated at more than \$2 billion but it will be good to have the basic construction completed at least.

Shortage of water remains an ongoing concern at Ingwenya but the situation was compounded in 2005 by problems with two of the water engines: the spare diesel engine for the most reliable borehole broke down completely and the electric engine for water from the local dam was unreliable, which meant that we were heavily dependent on the other two less reliable boreholes. There were a number of difficult periods in September and October, when strict water rationing was necessary, but the arrival of abundant rains in November eased the situation. These engines need to be replaced urgently in time for the dry season in 2006.

Conclusion

As always, the report must conclude with thanks for the support received from our many friends. Mention has already been made of the £1,000 donation which enabled the school to avoid ending 2005 in a deficit situation. Throughout the year many other donations were received which helped with children's fees, uniforms, library books, art equipment and other supplies – undoubtedly the most popular one with the children was a donation which paid for a dessert of jelly and ice cream every Sabbath during Term 3! The continued support of the Jewish and Foreign Missions Committee and of Mbuma Zending in Holland is deeply appreciated and it was a great pleasure to be able to show some of the achievements of recent years to the delegates from these committees at the Mission centenary. Above all, we desire that the Giver of every good gift and every perfect gift would bless all efforts which are made to bring all of the children, the teachers and the workers at Ingwenya, in contact with the Word of God which alone is able to make them wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

ZENKA MISSION REPORT

Rev. M. Mloyi

IN the Providence of God we have seen a new year beginning and ought to give thanks to Him for His wonderful and gracious care over us. The Zenka congregation has suffered the loss of two ruling elders during the past year – Messrs. Jeremiah Zikhali and Timothy Mafu. The congregation is now left with only one elder so the Presbytery has appointed Messrs. James and Charles Mpofu, of the Nkayi Kirk Session, to be assessor elders.

Though the voice of death was heard in every part of the country, we felt it hard at Zenka to lose two men within a year. I found them both strongholds of the Zenka stations at the time when I was inducted to the charge. Well, it was the will of God who saw it meet to remove them from amongst us. We pray the Owner of the Vineyard and the Lord of the harvest to send more labourers as the “harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few”.

In all the Zenka outreach stations the door remained open on each Sabbath. Due to the death of the two elders, Katasa, Fudu and Mabayi share services on a fortnightly basis. It is difficult to hold weekday prayer meetings at Mabayi and Fudu as the classrooms are occupied in the mornings but we are trying to arrange with the school heads to hold a prayer meeting in the afternoons.

The Lord's Supper was dispensed twice at Zenka and the sacrament of Baptism was held at Katasa.

We are thankful for the rains which began last November, marking the beginning of the ploughing season. These have continued up until the time of writing so we are hoping for a good harvest this year to alleviate the hunger and poverty experienced the previous year.

Food Aid has been supplied by charitable organisations to the poor, the needy, orphans and the sick. However, it is the Lord who is in control of the situation and we haven't heard of any recent deaths due to starvation, though maize is scarce in the country.

NKAYI MISSION REPORT

Rev. M. Mloyi

ANOTHER year has passed and the Lord has brought us to see another year in His wise Providence. We are thankful to be spared in the land of the living.

The work of the Lord is still upheld at the Nkayi stations. Though far apart, we try to supply them each Sabbath and weekday prayer meetings at Nkayi and Mathetshaneni. The Nkayi Kirk Session has resolved to hold a prayer meeting at Manomano on Thursday afternoons at 2 p.m. and we have sought permission from the school for this. A classroom was provided for us at a council school when some children and teachers attend the service. We do thank the Lord for this provision for the Cause of Christ.

My visit to Manomano is held alternatively with Katasa as, following the death of Mr. Jeremiah Zikhali, there is now no elder to replace him. Formerly these places were easily visited, when Mr. James Mpofu used the Mission car as the manager before his retirement. I now travel by car around the Zenka-Nkayi stations as far as Donsa Dam although, during the rainy season, it is difficult to travel on the bad roads which become muddy and very slippery. It is even more difficult using a bicycle.

The Lord's Supper was dispensed twice at Nkaki congregation during January and June and once at Donsa Dam in May.

The Nkayi Deacon's Court has a desire to erect a church building at Nkuba and Manomano, God willing. The only hindrance is the high cost of building materials.

Food Aid has been supplied by charitable organisations which is a help to the sick, orphans and the poor and needy. We anticipate a good harvest this

year, as the rains have been plentiful since the ploughing season began. The Lord has given this freely to all, but we pray for a downpouring of the Holy Spirit in our land, though we do not deserve the least token of His mercy.

ZVISHAVANE MISSION REPORT

Rev. Z. Mazvabo

PERHAPS the miserable days of the past should not be spoken about anymore for the sooner they are forgotten the better. What should now be spoken about is that we are thankful to the Most High that we can now see light – and a bright light it is indeed that we see at the end of the tunnel. Some already have something to eat from the first fruits of their fields. It is an interesting custom that when the first crops ripen and people begin to eat green vegetables – pumpkins or mealies – they hide these one from the other as they do not want others to know that they have started to enjoy the fruits of their labours. The husks, in the case of sweet-reeds or mealies are deposited in a secret place, the practice arising from fear of thieves and superstition that a bird will carry away a husk and show it to the god of Matoryeni who will then stop the rain because the crops are ripe! It is equally interesting to notice that during the time of drought, church services were less likely to be disturbed than during the period of rain. Perhaps one old lady failed to arrive at church or another fainted during the course of the service, upon which people became agitated. Sometimes when the rain came, half the congregation was kept away by swelling streams; many were unable to get out of their houses if the rain fell all morning. Rain still continues to fall unabated locally but in other areas the blue sky shows itself more frequently. It is the Lord's doing and wondrous in our eyes. He it is who "turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground; a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein. He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into watersprings. And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation." "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" (Psalm 107:33-36 and 8). In Isaiah chapter 35, verse 7, it is put like this: "And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water." Oh that the Lord would grant an outpouring of the Holy Spirit to water our parched hearts.

New Canaan, which was the first of our congregations, gives the impression of being an established station. We pray that the Lord would bless them. Makovere started as a very small congregation but is now increased to a reasonable size. Ebenezer is our town congregation and it is here the people come and go, either to their rural homes or other towns as they obtain new employment. There are, however, a few who have remained here for a long time and their hope is that the Lord would provide them with a suitable place of worship.

Maware has had to split into two small congregations due to the distances that people have to travel. However, they come together on the third Sabbath of every month, as do New Canaan and Makovere on the first and Chiedza and Akori on the second Sabbath of each month. At these times the minister conducts the services in these respective places. Ingezi is situated at the other end of Mazvihwa district near to a railway station and the river after which it is named. Chiedza has the large number of people attending and is in the centre of the district of Mberengwa.

During the last communion in November, a lady came from Munaka across the River Lundi in the Masvingo Province. The bus she had boarded was delayed in Zvishavane and arrived at the station in Mberengwa after darkness had fallen. Knowing the general direction of Chiedza, she found a path and followed it but, because of the tall grass and trees, could not continue with her journey so decided to sit down and await daybreak. She had not waited long when she heard people singing a short distance away by the side of a road and recognized the tune as that of a Psalm. Walking in that direction, she came to a dwelling where she was warmly received by familiar friends, it being the home of one of the families of the congregation belonging to Chiedza who were singing praises at their evening worship.

Akori, Chiwara and Munaka are the only other congregations to mention – Akori and Chiwara are those around Chiedza but Munaka is alone and far away from the others. At all these congregations we preach the same Gospel: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). If the Lord be pleased to give us grace in our souls we shall continue to fill the waterpots with water, hoping that the Lord in His own time would turn that water into wine.

MBUMA MISSION REPORT

Rev. P. Mzamo

THE Lord has, in His kindness and forbearance with us, brought us to another year, still in the unity of the Gospel, as a Church in the Mission field and a Church at home. He has continued to provide us with faithful men and women in all our Mission departments and also the necessary means to carry on the work over the years. All the praise and thanks go to the Lord of glory.

Church work continued undisturbed throughout the past year and restraining grace kept enemies largely in their own camp. I am indebted to the elders and other men who have continued with supply on Sabbath and weekday prayer meetings. Regular attendance by church members at the means of grace is an encouragement. The sacraments of the Lord's Supper and Baptism were administered throughout the year.

At our September communion we were honoured and strengthened by the presence of the Rev. J. R. Tallach, who officiated and preached in an edifying

manner. Others present included Rev. De Jong and his wife of the Staposte congregation in Holland and four ladies from our Inverness congregation.

The presence of Rev. and Mrs. Tallach and their daughter at Mbuma brought back pleasant memories of the time I spent with them at Mbuma in previous years. It was a happy peaceful time. The Sabbath before our communion we had a visit from our moderator, the Rev. N. M. Ross. We enjoyed his pulpit addresses morning and evening and his presence in the manse.

The Lord has blessed Zimbabwe this year with very good rains. The face of the country is now covered with a garment of greenness and the dry land has become a garden of beauty. How our souls and lives need the blessing resulting from an outpouring of the Holy Spirit – only then will our souls and lives become as the garden of the Lord adorned by the many graces of the Spirit. “Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits” (Song of Solomon 4:16).

In conclusion I express my sincere thanks to all our Church people and Gospel friends in Holland who continue to support our Mission. Gospel work is not in vain in the Lord. It is of His own work that He spake when He said: “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

MBUMA MISSION HOSPITAL REPORT

Sister W. Geurtsen

THE year 2005 has brought many changes – of which some were very sad and some were a joy. The sudden death of Sister van de Ridder has been a huge blow for us, while the coming of the doctor was a great joy. In the course of this year the staff situation improved further, which upgraded the services delivered in the hospital. Some of our Mission staff had to work quite a time in a government hospital, which meant that the hospital was still understaffed. Nevertheless the Lord in His goodness gave new workers to serve Him in this part of the Mission. Although the evangelist vacancy leaves a large gap, the preaching of the Gospel is still carried out on a daily basis. Beside the morning and evening worship, elders of the Church always hold family worship with the relatives when a patient has passed away. The Bible class, which is held each Sabbath under the supervision of an elder of the Church, is very well attended and staff appear eager to learn more about the Word of God. Every week a question from the Westminster Shorter Catechism is explained and discussed.

Staff

During the year on average 5 out of 10 posts of our nursing staff establishment were filled. Although these numbers seem quite high in comparison with previous years, the changes in staffing restricted further developments at the hospital.

Sr. van de Ridder went on her furlough in April and came back for the Centenary in September. After that she proceeded to Kenya where she suddenly passed away on the 29th of November. This was a heavy blow for the Mission staff and is still keenly felt.

In January, Doctor Snoek arrived in Zimbabwe. She settled down in Ingwenya and while she waited for registration she did language study in Bulawayo. After her registration was granted she worked in Mpilo Hospital from June till November and on the 1st December arrived in Mbumba Mission Hospital where she was welcomed by the staff and patients all singing Psalm 23. Mr. Mzamo addressed the doctor and wished her the Lord's help in her work. Sr. Petra Beukers was on furlough in March and April. After she came back she did an attachment in the maternity unit and in the theatre of Mpilo at the end of the year. We were thankful for the good news that a Dutch Sister, Erica van Breda, had been accepted by the FMC.

In July a locum Nurse from Nkayi, J. B. Moyo, expressed his wish to work at Mbumba, which was granted by Nkayi Hospital and he is still working with us. Another important improvement in the staff situation was caused by the coming of the Primary Care Nurses, of which two started in February and two in August. PCN Chanungunya and Sr. Mpofu expressed their wish to work in a government clinic and left us in October 2005.

Staff mutations

One of the locums from Nkayi, J. B. Moyo, expressed the wish to be seconded in Mbumba, Sr. Moyo is also an anaesthetic nurse which means that he will be of great value in the future when the theatre is reopened. Beside Sr. Moyo some other sisters from Nkayi relieved the work in the hospital.

From March till October two Primary Care Nurses joined the staff which also improved the health services being carried out. Two other PCNs started in August and they are still working with us.

Sick leave and deaths

Our driver and one of our senior nurse aids, who had been ill for quite a long time, passed away at the beginning of the year. Also a sister who was seconded from Nkayi died. Two nurse aids recovered after a serious illness. In the second part of the year we were very thankful that none of our staff was ill for a long time.

Resignations

After the death of her husband, a senior nurse aid resigned in order to stay with her children. The nurse aid, who was trained for the work in the laboratory, gave short notice and left us. One nurse aid went to Nkayi for the training.

Dismissals

Sadly we had to dismiss one of our senior nurse aids although she had worked with us for many years.

Electricity

Both the District Administrator and the Chief of the District made efforts to get electricity at Mboma. However, the hope is still not realised, which means that we still have to rely on very unreliable gas fridges to keep specimens and vaccines, causing increased vaccine wastage.

The big generator has not been working for months and also the small generator broke down once which caused a big problem to the hospital. In addition, the working hours of the generator have been reduced for a time due to fuel shortage.

Transport

In 2005 several cars were involved in accidents, including the new Toyota twin cab, which was badly damaged. It took quite a long time before it was repaired. The new lorry is a big help, especially since the old lorry broke down. Still, we are left with an old ambulance which needs replacement and a Mazda which is no longer trustworthy.

Accommodation

The extension of the old Isolation building was realised, which helped solve the problem of accommodation for the qualified staff. A new outside kitchen was built at the place where senior nurse aids once stayed. Extra housing is badly needed as several nurse aids have been sent for PCN training and are expected to return. Family houses are also required for staff who have children or are married.

Although a start has been made with painting, the hospital, with its associated buildings, and most of the buildings on the Mission, are poorly maintained.

Medical

Generally we see that the number of AIDS and AIDS-related health problems are still increasing. More than 80% of our hospital deaths are AIDS related. In the course of this year we have increased our efforts to reduce the pandemic. Counselling is given to most in- and outpatients. The PPTCT project, offered to pregnant mothers, has the effect that nearly all pregnant women want to be tested, which increases the awareness. However, it is still difficult to involve husbands in this project.

As the statistics show, the numbers of deliveries are still rising. This means an increase in ANC, PNC and CWC visits. Concerning statistics for bed occupancy they are quite different from the years before. After double checking they remain the same. We did not have a change in policy in admissions, we rather increased our admissions. The only explanation is that the statistics for bed occupancy appear to have been wrongly calculated for previous years.

We have put much effort into increasing the care in the community and hope to continue this next year. Together with the counsellors of some wards, we

have formed Ward Health Teams, whose aim is to improve working relationships between the hospital and the community and to improve the care which the hospital offers the community.

Since there are many children who contract HIV from their parents, we have started a project to send HIV positive children to the OI (Opportunistic Infections) clinic. This clinic focuses on counselling, teaching, supplying the antiretroviral drugs and prolactic treatment. In order to counsel and teach the people in Mbumba area we also see an urgent need for a good home-based care programme and an OI clinic in Mbumba.

Malnutrition is still a severe condition, often related to AIDS. Many efforts are made to stabilize the children and these are sometimes successful and sometimes not. When a family is short of food it is often the child who suffers the most.

Again this year we had an Anthrax outbreak which involved a lot of teaching in the community and intensive and expensive treatment of the patients. Sadly, Anthrax seems to be a recurrent problem as long as people continue to eat animals which have not been slaughtered but have died of the disease.

The statistics concerning the number of outpatients and the child welfare attendances in 2004 are not correct, which makes interpretation of the data difficult.

STATISTICS

	2004	2005
<i>Admissions</i>	1,446	1,542
General.....	949	618
Paediatrics.....	—	390
Maternity	497	534
<i>Discharges</i>	1,222	1,449
General.....	875	598
Paediatrics.....	—	315
Maternity	447	536
<i>Bed occupancy</i>	15,833	7,939
General.....	11,849	3,720
Paediatrics.....	—	2,533
Maternity	3,984	1,686
<i>Deaths</i>	109	105
General.....	109	78
Paediatrics.....	—	27
Maternity	—	—
<i>Outpatients</i>	29,455	27,279
New.....	20,732	21,620
Repeats.....	8,723	5,659

	2004	2005
Confinements		
Live births.....	474	504
Still births	7	4
NND (up to 1 month)	6	1
Antenatal Clinic attendances	2,568	3,696
Child Welfare Clinic Attendances	7,364	3,628
Minor operations	260	220
X-rays		
Patients.....	213	181
Films used.....	98	—
	115	—
Ambulance		
Number of trips	143	102
Km covered	32,270	9,225

Five major health problems for year 2005

Age below 5 years

1. ARI
2. Diarrhoea
3. Skin diseases
4. Malaria
5. Eye diseases

Age 5-14 years

1. ARI
2. skin diseases
3. Injuries
4. Malaria
5. Diarrhoea

Age 15 yrs and over

1. ARI
2. Skin diseases
3. Malaria
4. Dental conditions
5. Injuries

Although HIV and STDs are not mentioned in the top five they are, in fact, the leading causes of illnesses in the age group 15 years and over. The amount of HIV tests which are done has increased the awareness of the illness

which will, hopefully, bring about behavioural change. We pray that the Lord will bless all these efforts and that the lives of many people would experience a saving change, thus glorifying Him and resulting in a blessing to relatives and neighbours.

BULAWAYO MISSION REPORT

Rev. S. Khumalo

THE past year recently came to an end, and another one has begun. When we look back there is good reason for us to be thankful to the Most High for His goodness to us.

The past year was very difficult in the lives of many people. It was a year of drought, shortage of essential commodities, and the voice of death was, and is still, heard in many homes and families. I am kept busy visiting the sick, consoling the bereaved, the old and all for whom there would be a need, reading the Word of God to them and drawing their attention to Christ as the only hope for them in time of need, to everyone that trusts and comes to Him by faith.

The year 2005 was the year when we celebrated our Centenary as a Church in Zimbabwe. The minds of many people were occupied by the preparation of the Centenary celebration day and the high expectations of it. It was also the year we had a large number of visitors. The largest contingent we had was towards and during the Centenary day. Most of our visitors came from Scotland and Holland. I am pleased to say that Bulawayo had a share of these visitors. First to arrive in Bulawayo was Dr. Tallach, who preached on a Sabbath and administered the sacrament of baptism. The next to call was the Mbuma Zending delegation, led by Rev. De Jong, who visited all our preaching stations and Thembiso Children's Home. The other group that visited us consisted of the former missionary ladies, who were welcomed by all of us. We also had, after the Centenary, Rev. J. Macleod who, though having a busy schedule, did not bypass us but preached at Lobengula and Thembiso prayer meetings. We were very thankful to the Lord for granting him the grace and strength to enable him to preach among us. May the Lord bless the seed sown among us, that it may bring forth fruits of repentance.

Bulawayo congregation consists of Thembiso, Lobengula, Nkulumane and Mguza. The latter three preaching stations hold services each Sabbath. At Lobengula and Nkulumane services are at 11.30 a.m. and 1.30 p.m. At Mguza services are at 9.00 a.m. and the prayer meeting every Thursday at 3.00 p.m. At Thembiso there are no services held on Sabbath – instead they come to Lobengula for services. But there is a prayer meeting every Tuesday at 9.00 a.m. All services are well attended and Lobengula has the largest crowd. It is pleasing to note that the majority of those who attend our churches in Bulawayo are young families with their children and the young people. These

young people are coming out when, at the moment, in the minds of many young people it is foolishness and shameful to have an interest in the house of God, not knowing that the love of the world, the youthful lusts and pleasures of the world are all sin and the wages of sin is death. “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word” (Psalm 119:9).

Among these young families we have those who were born and brought up in God-fearing homes. They walk in the footsteps of their parents and bring up their children in the same way. We encourage them by the Word of God which says, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). Also there are some who came into contact with our Church via our institutions, especially our schools. We are thankful for the work done in these places. On the other hand, it is sad to note that many of our young people and families who were brought up in the homes and families where the Word of God was precious – and some were in contact with the true doctrine of the Word of God – how far they have strayed and how much they are choked by the world and sin. We pray that they may, like the prodigal son, come to themselves.

In an endeavour to bring to our young people the true doctrine of the Word of God, a Confession of Faith study class has begun. Held every fortnight on a Saturday, it is our prayer that the Lord would bless these endeavours which would then be to them the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, enabling them to withstand in the evil day.

Our communions were held, as usual, in June and December. There were some new members added to the communion roll. May this growth be spiritual also; “to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ”.

In conclusion I would like to express my gratitude and thanks to the people and Church in Scotland and other parts of the world, and our friends in Holland for their unwavering financial and material support they are giving for the work of the Gospel and the Mission field.

Above all we thank the Most High for the good rains we have so far received this year. May all this bring us to a oneness with the Psalmist: “How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. . . . O continue thy loving kindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart” (Psalm 36:7, 10).

NDEBELE BIBLE REVISION REPORT

Miss C. M. Macaulay and Mr. T. Benschop

WE acknowledge the Lord’s goodness to us throughout the past year. The team continued as in the previous year: Mr. N. Mpofu, Mr. B. Mziya, Mr. T. Benschop and Miss C. M. Macaulay.

We are now awaiting the publishing of the revised Ndebele New Testament by the Trinitarian Bible Society, as it is in the hands of the printer. We have continued work on the Old Testament and have completed up to the end of 1 Samuel. Re-reading for checking is done as we go along, all of which takes time.

In addition to the Bible translation, we have undertaken revision of Christian literature which had been previously translated but contained some errors, mostly due to typing and printing. This was done for the Shorter Catechism in Ndebele, and a thousand copies of the revised version were printed. Since then, we have revised the Confession of Faith in Ndebele. We are still involved in the translation of the Old Testament references so as to correspond with the proposed new Ndebele Bible. Meantime, we intend to print the Ndebele Confession of Faith as a pamphlet with the lists of references, but not written out in full.

The Ndebele translation of *Pilgrim's Progress*, by John Bunyan, came out from the printers in mid-December. Of the thousand copies printed, some have been distributed at Mbuma Hospital, at John Tallach School, to various individuals, and some are on sale at the Reformed Bookroom in Bulawayo. As with the printing of the Psalm Books in Ndebele, we were very pleased with the quality of production by the printers. The translation into Ndebele of a simplified version of the *Holy War*, by John Bunyan, is being continued by Mr. Mpofu and Mr. Mziya and is now nearing completion, in readiness for printing.

Mr. Benschop has acquired a printer for pamphlets, so hopes to be able to add to the selection of Bible-based leaflets which have been translated and printed for Mbuma Hospital.

There is still much work to be done in order to complete the revision of the Old Testament in Ndebele and the translation team need to be guided continually by the Lord. They would value prayer to the Lord for the work.

EBENEZER SCRIPTURE MISSION AND THEMBISO CHILDREN'S HOME REPORT

Mr. S. B. Mpofu

WE are very thankful to the Most High for being spared up to this time when we consider problems we went through. It is true He is the Good Shepherd of His flock (John 10:14).

Themviso Children's Home occupants

Our population at the home remained reasonable; i.e., between 56-60 throughout the year. Some of our children were re-integrated into the community. Among these we had some who were adopted; i.e., a boy and a girl

by different families. Three boys went to foster-parents, one was taken by me and two brothers by a fellow worker, Mrs. S. Moyo. Brian, who is being fostered by a white couple, is now in the process of being adopted.

Staff

Staff remained the same and have given good service to the children. Dedication to work is much shown, especially when we receive babies as young as two weeks old. At such a stage in life much care is needed and colleagues have not let me down.

We got a helping hand from Sister Truus, who was one of the friends previously in Kenya. She is really doing us good service and conducts a sewing class and Bible lessons at the home.

Buildings and ETC

Our buildings have been so maintained that some people can't believe they are now more than 30 years old. However, repairs are costing us a lot, especially the geysers which really need replacement. We had problems with thieves breaking into our premises who vandalised a few of our items. Many repairs were carried out to our water engine after it was vandalised. I had to apply for more security aids to the house. We failed to repaint last year and hope that in 2006 we will be able to find the money for this. Swings were repaired after one Harare company donated some ropes.

Problems/challenges

(1) Winter and part of spring saw us go through difficult times when we were without piped water from the municipality and depended on our borehole. This was a very trying time as we had to make sure no locals poached water from our premises.

(2) Because of fuel shortage in the whole country some donors now call us to collect donations which means me driving to the place. My office work is affected and monthly fuel consumption rises.

(3) More than half our children have no birth certificates. This again necessitates me making journeys out of town to try and obtain birth certificates. By God's Providence I was successful in obtaining birth certificates, a National Identification Card and identification in the case of three children.

(4) When we face food shortages we are not given first preference as an institution and this again means that I have to visit various places selling these commodities. In normal circumstances one would have thought institutions such as ours would be better supplied.

(5) We have children who are always in and out because they are HIV/AIDS positive. At times their drugs are hard to come by and, if found, prices are unaffordable. Thanks are due to Mbumba Mission Hospital that answers our calls.

(6) Some of our children are not accepted when we try to re-integrate them back to the community. As an example of this, a girl, whose mother was traced, was returned to her. However, she ended up living with her grandfather in a rural area and met problems she could not bear.

Pre-school

Because of rising costs, the pre-school was closed in December 2005. Parents could not afford the school fees and the pre-school was draining the finances of the home. Its teachers were to be reallocated in December but the process has not been finalised. Instead of the pre-school we now have zero grade classes that operate for half a day whose teachers are paid by parents who also meet any running costs.

ESM Reformed Bookroom

The bookroom still sells religious books brought from overseas. We also sell school books as we are members of the Book Sellers Association. We have to be thankful that we are able to obtain overseas books at affordable prices. Sales this year were much better than last year because translations done by our Church team also provided us with material to sell.

Our rental rates are rising each year, such that we thought at one time of leaving the premises but felt we would lose customers at a time when sales were good.

Finally, when one thinks of the many problems we have gone through, one really feels the Good Shepherd is at our side to guide us.

ZIMBABWE MISSION ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mr. E. B. Zikhali

THE year 2005 was unique in that Zimbabwe Mission celebrated the 100th anniversary of its existence. The mission has been kept going and the Word of God preached in sincerity, despite the many problems that confront all men.

The Mission infrastructure was maintained throughout the year. We should be thankful that we have not failed to continue to run the affairs of the Mission. The Field Committee, as usual, was able to meet three times a year to discuss the financial aspect of the Mission. Many projects that had been approved for 2005 were not finished.

Those completed were the Mbumba kitchen extension, the John Tallach boys' dormitory and the purchase of the Mbumba ambulance which was latterly approved to replace the Thembiso car. Most of the approved projects had to be abandoned because of lack of funds as building materials became so expensive. Inflation has reached alarming proportions – 810 per cent.

It was a year in which we went down the valley and up the mountain as we experienced vicissitudes in virtually all spheres of life. Some have described

2005 as one of the worst years in living memory, due to spiralling inflation, grim unemployment statistics, debilitating shortages of fuel, basic commodities, agricultural inputs and power. The year also witnessed the widespread bankruptcy of many firms within the manufacturing sector.

However, the worst development was the increase of the black market trading, involving nearly everything and whose growth was catalysed by an insatiable appetite for super profits by Zimbabwe's unscrupulous traders who have thrown business ethics out of the window. Most workers could no longer afford commodities that have been cruelly priced out of their reach by this new breed of insensitive entrepreneurs who hold sway in the shadowy markets.

The statistics revealed by the Ministry of Health shows that the rate of HIV/AIDS infection is tumbling because of changed sexual behaviour. However, much still needs to be done as the epidemic has decimated the strong and able within the nation's workforce, including ours in the mission stations.

It was pleasing to note that we are not alone in this physical task in Zimbabwe. This was witnessed by the number of people who visited us this year. We had friends from Scotland and Holland (the largest contingent) and Kenya. We cannot forget to mention the kind supply of secondhand clothes that we received throughout the year from Holland.

Finally, God's favour is upon us this year as the rainy season is promising to be an excellent one. Crops are good, pasture greenish and water levels in wells quite high.

TRANSPORT REPORT

Mr. E. B. Zikhali

ZIMBABWE Mission has a fleet of 21 vehicles, including the big bus purchased by Friends of Ingwenya Mission, and 1 trailer. Ten of these vehicles are old and urgently require replacement if funds are available. Some have been 13 years on the road and are draining a lot of funds from the Mission. Their fuel consumption is high and parts are damaged that cause problems with other parts of the car. Eleven vehicles are still sound and include a new 2006 model.

The greatest concern is the condition of our roads which, due to the shortage of fuel in our country, results in maintenance failure. Although the vehicles mentioned above may appear sufficient for our needs, they fall far below the requirement. There are six main stations in Zimbabwe which require maximum usage from these vehicles – the big lorry services all these and the distances separating each Mission contributes to its usage. The distance between Mbumba and New Canaan is 500km.

The country has virtually no fuel so the Mission entirely depends on expensive imported fuel from South Africa, funded by foreign currency

supplied by the Church in Scotland. We have to use this very economically so that it lasts us for a reasonable period of time.

The Mission in Zimbabwe is very thankful to both Holland and Scotland for the provision of vehicles which help towards the spreading of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19).

KENYA MISSION REPORT

Rev. K. M. Watkins

THIS past year will be remembered as one of change in the experience of the Kenya Mission. On 29th November 2005, Sister Peta van de Ridder, the matron of our Omorembe Health Centre since its inception in January 2000 after the Mission reopened, was tragically killed by a falling tree in Kakamega rainforest. For more than two years previously, Sister Peta had spent most of her time in Zimbabwe acting as matron of Mbuma Mission Hospital. When we welcomed her back to Kenya in September 2005 for a temporary period, little did we think that within two months she would be so suddenly removed from our midst. That caused great sorrow and wonderment. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Many have cause to thank the Lord for our late friend’s contribution to the work of the Gospel over the many years she gave to the Mission field in different parts of Africa. In her own thoroughly ladylike manner, she was always ready with a word in season to the souls of those she met in the course of her varied duties. She had been the teacher of the second youngest Sabbath School class here. May the seed she has sown bring forth fruit. Again we take the opportunity of assuring the bereaved family of our sympathy and prayers as they come to terms with their irreplaceable loss, and pray that Peta’s God and Saviour will become their own.

In January 2006 the other European staff resigned from Kenya and were transferred to Zimbabwe. We are thankful to the Lord for their work in Kenya, for between them they contributed many years of useful service here. We pray that their labours would prove a great blessing to the Mission in Zimbabwe. The handmaiden work in Kenya has nevertheless been maintained and the Gospel work has gone forwards. The clinic services, provided to the needy community near and far, go on as before. For this we must acknowledge the good and faithful work of the African staff, but especially the kindness of the Most High, without whom no house can be built nor city kept. Things were not going smoothly for the psalmist, yet he rose up on the wings of faith to look

to a day of Gospel blessing: “Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come” (Psalm 102:13). Looking to God’s promises we likewise hope for a day here in Kenya when we shall see the blessing of the Holy Spirit poured out on the endeavours of this Mission for the advance of the Lord’s kingdom.

The usual services and classes have proceeded at Sengera, the main Mission station. The numbers attending continue at about 250 and 150 on Sabbath mornings and afternoons respectively. The catechism class before the morning service has increased moderately to an average of towards 100 in attendance, most of whom answer the appointed question in either English or their mother tongue. The midweek class for those who might seek sealing ordinances has been maintained throughout the year. Three classes are held for different groups each Wednesday, and over 50 have regularly attended. There have now been some 40 weeks of classes. It was planned that the assessor elders from Zimbabwe would return to Kenya before the meeting of Synod with a view to holding Kirk Session meetings for examining applicants for baptism, but they were not able to come due to family sickness.

The Sabbath School has been held after the afternoon service as in previous years. Two of the five classes were already being taken by Kenyans. I am now taking the senior class (ages 16 to 18), which I often used to do when the teacher was away. Kenyans have taken over the remaining two classes. Both men had been involved with the Sabbath School for a considerable time. In February, about 200 youngsters were invited to the Mission on a Saturday as in previous years. These were the ones who had attended regularly throughout the year. They were addressed by Rev. Alasdair MacLean as well as myself. Others attended at different times during the year, but without the necessary consistency. Many children come from families which do not attend our Church. A young person coming even once gives us the opportunity to sow the seed of the pure Gospel in a heart that would otherwise be poisoned with the false doctrine that abounds all around us.

A real step forward in the last year was made with respect to the “outstations”. As well as regular mid-week services, a number of Sabbath services were held in all three for the first time since the Mission re-opened in 1999. This was made possible by the visits of Revs. John MacLeod and James Tallach as deputies of the Foreign Missions Committee in November 2005 and of Rev. Alasdair MacLean in February 2006. I am grateful for their willing co-operation in giving our faithful people in the outstations several Sabbath services for the first time in many years. Attendances continue to average towards 40 in each place, with a good balance between adults, young people and children.

The deputies have made their own reports to the Synod, but I would like to express my thankfulness for their labours here. Unlike the settled congregations in other parts of the Church, the people here do not get the opportunity to hear ministers other than myself, so the preaching and teaching of other brethren in the ministry is precious in this place. By means of the

sermon tapes in the library, we continue to encourage people whose English is of a sufficient standard to hear other ministers of our Church.

Rev. Alasdair MacLean's visit during February 2006 was heartening to us all, and I am grateful to him for his willingness and enthusiasm to undertake the many various spiritual duties that were allotted to him, especially during the time I was in the United Kingdom. A summary of his duties during the four weeks will give an indication of the breadth of spiritual work that the Mission is engaged in: preaching in Sengera on Sabbaths, holding two midweek services in Sengera (including the harvest thanksgiving), preaching at all three outstations Sabbath and weekday, taking the Sabbath morning catechism class, explaining the Scriptures in the weekday morning worships, teaching a Sabbath School class, visiting from house to house, counselling sad cases in the clinic, attending a translation meeting, explaining the newly translated psalms in the singing class, distributing TBS calendars in local schools and addressing the pupils there and taking the Rianyakwara School catechism class. We look to the Lord to open Mr. MacLean's way for great usefulness on the Mission field in Africa.

Over the years since our translation work began in earnest, it has been astonishing how much it has come under attack. No doubt this is a work against which Satan fulminates – but nothing will prevail against what the Lord seeks to do for the building of His Church. The Westminster Confession reminds us that the Scriptures “are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come” (section 1, paragraph 8). It was strikingly said by Rev. A. MacLean, on attending the weekly singing class when Psalm 127 was introduced and sung in Ekegusii, that he had been present on an historic occasion. He was right. It was the first time ever when that part of God's Word was sung in Ekegusii, the mother tongue of more than 2 million people. With the growing size of the psalm book a wire binding format was introduced, and this has proved durable and successful. A day is coming in this world when the Lord's praise from the psalms will be sung by every tribe, tongue and language then existing. Our ongoing translation contributes a little towards that, and we would love to see other congregations in Kisiiland won over to the biblical practice of psalm-singing. TBS calendars, in both English and Ekegusii, were again distributed to the congregations, local schools and others. This time 269 classes in 46 schools were visited, giving us the opportunity to directly address thousands of pupils about the welfare of their souls.

Further steps were taken to re-establish closer links with the local primary school, Rianyakwara. The project to replace dilapidated classrooms continues. Results from the examinations in December were disappointing, but it is hoped that these will improve through various measures being implemented this year. Families who appreciate the value of education do everything they can to send their children to private academies, especially if they are reasonably bright, so a government school like Rianyakwara is always going to struggle. Nevertheless the school remains an open door for promoting the Gospel, and

the weekly catechism class has continued throughout the year. In this class all the older children – well over 100 – recite the week’s answer individually; are tested on other questions as a group, and then the week’s answer is explained to them. Just recently we spent two weeks on Question 37: “What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?” We live in a place where heresy abounds on the subject – popery’s purgatory and the Seventh Day Adventists’ soul sleep and denial of hell – so it is a joy to hear so many children (including many from families connected with those false churches) saying in unison: “The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory, and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection.” The first week we dealt with what happens to believers at death, and the second week with what happens to unbelievers at their death.

On the Mission compound the work has continued as in previous years. Every working day starts with worship which can last up to 30 minutes or so. This past year has seen us complete consecutive expositions of 1 Samuel and Mark, as well as the first three chapters of Galatians and Psalm 90. We have just begun going through the first letter of John. In this way the Mission workers and a few other faithful attenders from the congregation are exposed continually to the teaching of God’s Word. Early morning patients at the clinic also attend, along with their relatives.

Development of the land adjacent to the Mission awaits the Lord’s providence to point the way forward. But at the moment parts of Kenya face starvation, and due to poor rains the harvest was low-yielding even here, one of the most reliably productive parts of the country. Therefore the land is a timely provision and has been planted with maize seed, which recent rains have germinated. We have had to purchase more maize stocks than usual for free distribution to the poor of the congregations later in the year, as we anticipate the need is going to be much greater. Both double-cab vehicles were due for replacement and were duly sold. Only one was replaced which is, at present, sufficient for the Mission’s needs, along with the ambulance and the general-purpose pick-up. The accounts backlog has been cleared at last, and it is hoped that the auditors will have the 2005 accounts ready in time for the Synod. The security situation in the area, especially more recently, has had its ups and downs, so we continue to ensure that our own security measures are robust.

Turning to the clinic, of course it has been affected by the passing away of the matron and the transfer of the other expatriate staff. But through the goodness of the Lord and the diligent efforts of the African staff, it continues to provide a very needy area with a high standard of medical services. The clinic has the full support of the local Ministry of Health, which enthusiastically acknowledges the quality of care given to a large catchment population as a key part of its medical provision to the district.

Usually over 100 mothers come every Monday to the child welfare clinic with their babies and children under 5 years old. Injections and other medical

care is administered in conjunction with the government's KEPI programme. Endeavouring to ensure that the clinic is as much a Gospel handmaid as possible, we have begun to have a time of prayer, praise and short address with them. Every Wednesday is antenatal day, when usually over 40 mothers-to-be visit. At the beginning of March 2006 we reintroduced a blood grouping test which had been stopped some time ago. We have been able to start it again for a very nominal fee (about 15 pence). The importance of the test can be seen in that one of the twelve mothers tested that day proved to have a blood group which, although it does not affect her first child, yet the second and subsequent ones will not survive. This had been the woman's experience. Her first child was fine; her second miscarried and her third died after a few days. It had been rumoured against her that she had rolled over on and suffocated the third baby which, of course, she knew she hadn't. Now her name is cleared, and with her fourth pregnancy she has been referred for the appropriate treatment which, in the Lord's will, can ensure the safe delivery and survival of her fourth child. Friday sees a number of patients coming regularly for TB medication. A strict programme needs to be adhered to for successful treatment and, if a patient does not appear, a follow-up is made by searching for the patient at his home. We have been commended by the Ministry of Health for our excellent follow-up of patients.

HIV/AIDS continues its scourge upon the community. The clinic heads up the whole district for success in having pregnant mothers tested and their husbands too. Antiretroviral drugs are not as readily and freely available in Kenya yet as much as they need to be. However, even without them much can still be done to improve and maintain a person's life by way of diet, lifestyle and prevention and early treatment of infections. A number of patients are under the clinic's continual care and supervision.

When our local clinic resources are not able to deal with a case, the 24-hour ambulance service is a vital lifeline for the community in ensuring a reliable swift transfer to hospital care, accompanied by nursing staff where necessary. Just recently, a young man was brought by strangers to the clinic with a terrible injury to his head. He had been savagely attacked with pangas and knives and injured all over his body. Immediately he was taken in the ambulance to the general hospital in Kisii, 27 km away. Again the number of malaria cases were not so many. The use of bed nets, of which we are a substantial supplier in the area, has contributed to this reduction. However, we still have cases throughout the year. As I write this, two malaria patients are being kept in the clinic overnight for treatment and observation. Recently a young man with cerebral malaria was brought to the clinic in a very serious condition. He was transferred to hospital immediately but passed away in the Mission ambulance on the way. Clinic statistics appear opposite.

	General Outpatients	Malaria Cases	STD Cases	Antenatal Clinic	Deliveries	Child Welfare	Minor Operations	Referrals	Lab Tests
2005									
January.....	241	136	18	149	53	344	9	17	352
February.....	253	189	8	176	43	309	8	19	374
March.....	238	132	25	223	52	281	9	18	408
April.....	216	119	31	183	47	426	6	12	310
May.....	241	126	63	189	46	390	8	18	330
June.....	293	172	27	161	64	488	9	25	349
July.....	254	148	22	219	50	481	6	20	365
August.....	306	207	37	243	54	584	5	22	464
September.....	221	137	13	190	65	527	6	25	367
October.....	253	153	20	222	53	584	6	16	312
November.....	223	121	36	231	55	412	8	21	369
December.....	180	94	15	206	42	462	3	18	262
Total.....	2919	1734	315	2392	624	5288	83	231	4262
2006									
January.....	187	101	27	210	58	580	3	17	245
February.....	228	140	24	218	55	450	1	22	263

As always, we earnestly seek the prayers of the Lord's people at home and abroad for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the work here. We thank each and every one who has supported the Kenya Mission – in whatever way – over another year.

DOMINIONS AND OVERSEAS COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. A. Ross

THERE were no deputies sent from the Church to our congregations in New Zealand and Australia during the past synodical year. The Committee at one period was in a position to send a deputy, but because a case was to arise in the Presbytery there, whereby that Court would become inquorate, it was thought wiser that the sending of a deputy be first brought to the attention of the Synod.

We are thankful that Rev. John MacLeod was able to visit Singapore as a deputy, and that he conducted the services of a communion season in the congregation there. Later in the year he was able to visit Vancouver. Rev. Neil Ross and Rev. Roderick MacLeod went on two separate occasions as deputies to the Richmond congregation in Texas and preached at communion seasons there. The reports of these deputies are included among other reports of the Church's work.

Rev. Neil Ross paid another visit to Richmond, this time as interim moderator of the congregation, to conduct the services of another communion season. Rev. George G. Hutton visited our congregation in Chesley, Ontario, as its interim moderator, and a communion season was held there also. Rev. Barry Whear was asked by the Chesley Kirk Session to supply its pulpit, which he did for five weeks, and also preached at the other communion season there. The reports of these ministers are very encouraging, but it has also to be said that, while the Texas congregation is in a healthy condition, there was discouragement on account of some members and adherents leaving the Church.

Both Chesley and Richmond congregations have a goodly number attending, most of them young people, and they earnestly wish the Gospel to remain with them for generations to come. They therefore do everything in their power to maintain the ordinances of the Gospel among them. Their constant wish and prayer is for a minister of the Gospel to be set over each congregation permanently. The same prayerful desire for a pastor after God's own heart is found among the people of our other vacant congregations in New Zealand, Australia and Singapore. It is, of course, cause for grief that the Lord is silent regarding our continued request at the Throne of Grace to supply pastors for the people according to His own promise. There is a reason for His withholding this blessing and it is for us to humble ourselves more than ever,

seeking that He would fulfil His promise: "I will give you pastors after mine own heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jeremiah 3:15). Your committee feels keenly that it is not able to do more in meeting this need by sending out deputies more frequently, but the demands on our ministers in their own charges in the UK continue to be great.

At the same time it is cause for encouragement that our congregations overseas continue to function and that in some of them there is an increase of hearers. At the last communion in Auckland there was one of the largest gatherings ever. In Singapore also there is an increase in numbers which we hope is a sign of a growing interest in the truth. In some congregations there were a number of communicants added to their rolls as well as several baptisms administered.

Sadly, there has been no advancement in our congregation in Vancouver. However, Mr. John Macleod the elder continues to maintain the stand taken by our Church as distinct from those who left to form the Associated Presbyterian Churches. Rev. J. MacLeod was able to visit the congregation and to conduct some services which were attended by a number of visitors. The church property, which belongs to the Free Presbyterian Church, continues to be unlawfully used by the Associated Presbyterian Church.

We are sorry to report that our attempts at continuing our contacts in Italy have not come to much but we hope that opportunities will yet arise to further our witness there.

There is a separate full report about our work in Odessa and other parts of Eastern Europe. We ought to remind ourselves that it was the express wish and firm decision of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, during the times of persecution of Christians under communism, to visit the Church behind the Iron Curtain and to do more to help it. Since then the Lord has been gracious to us in our modest attempts as a Church, opening one door after another, and therefore we now have not only a small congregation in Odessa but also a centre from which good is being done in Eastern Europe by way of distributing many copies of the Scriptures and large amounts of Christian literature.

To return to the situation in Australia and New Zealand, the two resident ministers there, whose reports are before the Synod, tell of a degree of spiritual prosperity in different congregations but, at the same time, give a dark picture of the low state of true religion throughout these countries. Nevertheless, they labour in hope. One minister writes: "While it is a day of small things, yet we may look to the future with considerable confidence, knowing that the great Head of the Church is daily adding to the Church such as should be saved, just as that is promised in Acts 2:47." The other minister writes (and with this we conclude our report): "Never has there been a greater need for a day of humiliation and prayer, pleading in the words of Isaiah 64:1-2: "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence! . . . to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence!"

AUSTRALIAN REPORT

Rev. E. A. Rayner

It was a privilege to once again visit our brethren in the UK while across to the 2005 Synod and to be able to attend various communion seasons. We very much appreciated the hospitality and fellowship on such a visit and trust that such occasions are for the maintenance of close ties with the Church in Scotland. There was also, I trust, the mutual blessing for our congregation and ourselves with a break in Singapore both on the way across and on the return from the UK. I was able to supply for the two Sabbaths as well as enjoy the fellowship and rest from the long journey to the UK.

Since my last visit there were new additions for the encouragement of the congregation. Thankfully we have both maintained good health that has enabled me to continue with the usual supply to congregations and communions both in Australia and New Zealand. On the other hand we lost a valuable member of the Grafton Session with the sudden passing of Ron Kidd. He was a very practical person and during his retirement was able to give much help to maintain the church and manse. In his office as an elder he was very exercised for the good of the congregation. He prayerfully and diligently sought out suitable sermons to read if the minister was absent, keeping in mind the needs of individuals and the congregation at large. He often sought out suitable Bible portions or extracts from writings he thought could be of help for the needs of the people. His older brother Richie, also an elder, has now become so frail that he is confined to the house. So it is a big loss to not have the help of those who have for so many years contributed to the spiritual and temporal wellbeing of the Grafton congregation. Thankfully we still have the three elders of the following generation. Nevertheless it is our great concern that the Lord would raise up from among the many young adults those who would maintain the witness and profession of former generations.

The Sydney congregation is strengthened with the addition of one new communicant member, a mature Christian man, who has come from outside but who has had close connection with our people for many years. Jacob van Praag will be missed for the few months he is on the Mission where, no doubt, his work will be very much appreciated. This leaves the burden of the services largely in the hands of our other elder, Calvin MacKenzie, who undertakes these duties cheerfully and with much acceptance. The congregation has many young adults and children and the need of a minister is obvious.

It is indeed very true that we are living in perilous times with the pressures to recognise so-called gay civil unions now accepted in the UK. Thankfully our Prime Minister, John Howard, has taken a very clear moral view of the whole issue and made this public. However, there are those within his party that do not share his convictions.

Again our land has seen the great swelling of Muslim immigrants. The assimilation of large numbers of young and often alienated Muslims, some of whom have proved radical, constitutes a huge social challenge as witnessed by

the gangs of troublemakers on some Sydney beaches this summer. The vice-president of Washington's Centre for Security Policy shows this to be a problem abroad too. He is reported as saying: "Muslims will take over Europe numerically, probably around 2070, but they will dominate the continent long before that because they will form a majority of the under 25s" (*Weekend Australian Magazine*, 26th November 2005). As the article points out it is the natives who will have to integrate. The Lord, however, reigns and will intervene, hearing the prayers of His people who are taught to plead, "Thy kingdom come".

Never has there been a greater need for a day of humiliation and prayer, pleading in the words of Isaiah 64:1-2: "Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence! . . . to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence!"

NEW ZEALAND AND SINGAPORE REPORT

Rev. J. A. T. van Dorp

IT is reason for thankfulness that the members and adherents in our congregations have had access to scriptural worship throughout our congregations. I have to acknowledge the much-valued help of the office-bearers in Singapore, Auckland, Tauranga, Gisborne and Wellington, where our places of worship are situated. In Auckland, Gisborne and Wellington the congregations have comfortable, debt-free buildings to assemble in and in Tauranga and Singapore suitable premises are rented.

In our Presbytery we experience what is called the Western culture in New Zealand, in which Christianity appears to be in steep decline, as it has been now for many years and which is the reason the Free Presbyterian Synod has instigated special prayer. The day of humiliation and prayer was conducted on the 14th December throughout our congregations; in some localities there were two services; in other places only one service was possible. Whilst it is not difficult to see that Christianity is in decline throughout the West, it is less easy to discern the reason for man's abandonment of God. Romans chapter one gives an indication of the enormity of this sin. "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:19-20). In spite of the mind-boggling complexity of the universe, with all that is in it, man has wilfully chosen to ignore God's handiworks and has refused to worship the Creator. The teaching at university level is that man has created God and is in control of his own destiny. Little wonder our generation have grieved the Holy Spirit of God (Ephesians 4:30).

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper has been dispensed in all congregations according to the patterns observed in the past and advertised in the magazine. One person sat at the Lord's table for the first time in Singapore. In addition, Baptism was dispensed in Auckland to one child and in Singapore to three children.

With the aging of our congregations and consequently the membership as well as the office bearers, I am thankful the way opened up for the ordination and induction of an additional elder. Alasdair Campbell was ordained and inducted and his name added to the roll of office bearers in Auckland on 26th June. Whilst it is a day of small things, yet we may look to the future with considerable confidence, knowing that the great Head of the Church is daily adding to the Church such as should be saved, just as that is promised in Acts 2:47.

The erstwhile militant atheist, David Aikman, gives an interesting account of the growth of Christianity in communist China. During his Oxford days, when studying for his PhD in history, he was anything but a Christian but later things changed and he certainly makes a profession now. When working for *Time Magazine* in Hong Kong and later as bureau chief in Beijing, he became thoroughly familiar with the house church movement in communist China and with the leaders who had spent many years in forced labour camps. In his book, *Jesus in Beijing*, he describes how in the 1980s many Chinese people were drawn to Christianity conducted in secret, in houses – i.e. in unregistered churches. It is estimated there are now 80 million professing Christians in China with a growth rate of seven percent per annum. The great need in this vast country of over one billion people, besides Bibles, is correct doctrinal theological statements; the kind of documents we take so much for granted. I am therefore interested and thankful to hear that members in our Singapore congregation are able to be helpful to the Outreach Committee in checking the Chinese characters in the Chinese version of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the Shorter Catechism.

The services at our communion season in Singapore in December were well attended and the move to a larger room just before the communion was providential. The congregation now even have a connection with the Mission field in that a former pupil of the John Tallach secondary school is studying on a two-year scholarship in this populous city republic and attending our services there.

May the prayers offered up throughout our denomination soon bear fruit so that a little one will become a thousand, for with God nothing is impossible.

EASTERN EUROPE REPORT

Rev. D. A. Ross

THERE are times when those involved in the work of the Eastern Europe Mission are afraid that it may come to nothing. However, when that work is begun according to the direction of the Saviour, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”, and when He has opened doors in His providence, we are assured by Him that His Word shall not return unto Him void. The parable of the sower also encourages us to believe that the Word sown will prosper despite disappointments. In fact, as we sow, the work is not so much ours as the Lord’s, for He is Lord of the harvest; therefore the work is bound to prosper more or less. Nevertheless, we must labour in sowing the seed, seeking to emulate the apostle and his fellow missionaries who could say, “For we are labourers together with God” (1 Corinthians 3:9). We are told that the disciples “went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following” (Mark 16:20).

From Mr. Igor Zadoroshniy’s report of the work in the Ukraine, we see that he continues taking the services each Sabbath, as well as the prayer meeting service on a weekday. Sermons in Russian for reading to the people are not easily come by and he therefore sometimes reads sound, clear expositions of portions of the Word from certain works available in Russian. Every Sabbath there is always a stranger or two who comes along to join the few who normally attend. Our hope is that once we build our permanent place of worship in the more public area waiting for it, additional people will attend regularly.

Because of the greater freedom which now exists in the Ukraine to meet for public worship, Mr. Zadoroshniy has printed invitation cards and gives them out to people whom he meets throughout the week – but he does acknowledge that it is hard for him at times to shake off the effects of the nightmarish restrictions of the communist era in which he lived.

Some of the strangers who have been attending have remarked on the absence of instrumental music, that no Christmas tree was seen, that there was no giving of gifts by way of reward for attendance, and have also noted the modest outward appearance of the women. We hope they will, above everything, take note of, and give earnest heed to, the truth presented to them.

Mr. Zadoroshniy also continues the work of distributing the Scriptures and Christian books. As well as sending out 727 Ukrainian Bibles and literature to individual families, he sent Bibles and literature in bulk amounts. For example, he sent 32 Russian Bibles to a missionary in Comsomolsk on the River Dnieper and 50 Shorter Catechisms to a school teacher in Kharkov. Many other pieces of small literature are distributed. He posts material not only to recipients in the Ukraine but also in Russia, Uzbekistan and Byelorussia.

As a token of their appreciation, some families send donations for postage expenses, and in recent months this has amounted to a total of £168.61. One grateful recipient writes: “Thank you for the holy book, the Bible. You have

brought happiness into my house. The Lord will reward you in hundreds of times. I send a donation along with this letter.”

Mr Zadoroshniy found on the Internet the addresses of churches and seminaries with Arminian based teaching. He sent 202 copies of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* to pastors and rectors of these institutions. One seminary which appeared to be sounder in its teachings than others replied asking for more copies of the Westminster Confession for its students. Contacts are made also with the Orthodox Church and there have been several requests from ministers and students for the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the Shorter Catechism.

The Trinitarian Bible Society has again given a liberal grant of 10,000 *Words of Life* calendars. As in previous years, these have been distributed to various institutions such as prisons, hospitals and judicial offices throughout the city. A quantity was given to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Odessa and they responded by giving a gift of useful books in Russian to the congregation.

Contacts were also made through different sections of the media. For example, Mr. Igor Zadoroshniy petitioned the President of Ukraine, through Odessa City Council, that the day for holding elections be changed from the Lord’s Day to a weekday. The appeal was well received by the City Council, before whom Mr. Zadoroshniy appeared, and other denominations did not contradict it. The media were very interested in it, and television stations gave it good coverage, including close-up shots of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* which Mr. Zadoroshniy had placed in front of him on the table in the Council chamber.

Mr. Zadoroshniy concludes his report by saying: “In our everyday work and life we feel the presence of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We ask you to pray for our family because the enemy of the souls of men stands against us through his sons and daughters.”

Due to Mr. Dmitriy Levitskiy coming to Scotland to further his studies as a student for the ministry of our Church, it is more difficult for us to visit Odessa because he is our interpreter. However, we did manage a short visit in the first week of March, when Mr. Levitskiy was at home. As well as interpreting in the services, he helped us in communicating with our lawyer and building contractor in connection with our proposed new mission building and place of worship, the commencement of which has been delayed due to lack of funds. However, sufficient funds are now on hand to lay the foundations and build the shell, and it is hoped that construction work will start soon.

Another proposal that was delayed in the providence of God was the ordination of Mr. Igor Zadoroshniy to the eldership in the congregation. Should he become an elder it will only be necessary in future, in order to have a Kirk Session quorum, to send two rather than three office bearers from Scotland to Odessa.

We have at last succeeded in delivering the translation to the printer for the *Sermons of Rev. D. MacFarlane* in Russian. The translator lives in Russia, and

the editor for the translation, whom we have now used for some time, lives in the UK. We are printing 2,000 copies at a cost of £1,600. We are also in the process of printing the *Mother's Catechism* in Ukrainian. We already have it in Russian and it is proving to be a popular little book with families. We have also reprinted some Gospel tracts.

It has become necessary that we publish our own translation of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* in Russian. There were certain restrictions, to which we could not agree, placed upon our publishing of the translation we presently use by kind permission. Our own translation has been done by Mrs. Natasha Hopkins, who has proved in the past to be very able, and it has gone through its first editing and now awaits a second. We employ a team of three editors. The Russian translation of *An Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith*, by Robert Shaw, done by Mrs. Tanya Ball, will be bound up with the new translation of the Confession. The fact that we decided to have our own translation of the Confession has delayed the printing of the Shaw *Exposition*. We believe that the end product will be another most useful book for propagating the Reformed Faith more widely in Eastern Europe.

We are also in the process of translating more material for children: first, the well-known book, *Line Upon Line*, already published by the Church, and secondly a set of four years of the Scripture and Catechism Exercises taken from consecutive volumes of the *Young People's Magazine*. *Line Upon Line* is ready for editing and the Scripture and Catechism Exercises will be ready shortly. It is planned that the Scripture and Catechism Exercises will be sent out from Odessa to families who keep asking for this kind of material. Correcting will be done by some of the people in the Odessa congregation.

The distribution of Bibles and literature from Scotland by post continues, although not so many were distributed this year. We are thankful to Miss Norma Morrison and others for organizing the sending of these parcels to various countries in Eastern Europe. For example, in response to a number of requests, 154 Bibles and 299 booklets such as the Shorter Catechism, etc., were distributed. A large number of copies of our Russian *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the Shorter Catechism were sent to a Church in Holland which does Mission work in Russia and the Ukraine. We appreciate their using our literature and donating to our printing costs.

A report has already appeared in the March magazine about our visit to Romania. However, since then we have received a report from Rev. Szasz Attila, of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe. He and his colleagues express their profound gratitude to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland and the Trinitarian Bible Society for the Bibles and calendars they have received. The calendars were distributed from their churches in Romania, Hungary and the Ukraine. They say that the calendars are very useful for introducing people to the Gospel for the first time, and that there is a constant demand made upon the 800 Bibles we delivered to them. The furniture, household items and clothing are used mainly to help believers

in poor circumstances. We are, of course, indebted to those who have donated useful articles and to the Inverness ladies for preparing them for transit.

It is those who donate to our Mission work in the Ukraine who are largely responsible, under God, for its continuance. It is obvious that if they did not do so, only a minimum amount of work, if any, could be done. The fact too that a good second-hand truck has been donated by Dutch friends is an enormous help. In these and other ways provision is made for the ongoing of the good work of the Gospel in Eastern Europe, and we have to wonder at the Lord's great goodness that it is so. May He in His sovereign mercy accompany it with a blessing.

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

(Psalm 68:11)

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO KENYA AND ZIMBABWE

Rev. J. MacLeod

Introduction

My four weeks' visit to Africa began in Kenya and ended in Zimbabwe. The Kenyan Mission Plan, drawn up by the Mission Superintendent and the Administrator and which envisaged the setting up of a Bible College, the building of a new church and the extension of the Omorembe Clinic facilities, had already been approved in principle by the Jewish and Foreign Missions Committee. As it was considered advisable that the feasibility of the whole project should be considered on the ground and with the Kenya Field Committee, it was arranged that the Rev. J. R. Tallach, Clerk of the Committee, would join me for the second week of my stay.

1. Kenya

Mr. Hugh MacKenzie, the Mission Administrator, met me at Kisumu Airport on the morning of 2nd November and, after he had completed a number of errands on behalf of the Mission, we departed for Sengera, arriving in the early afternoon. I received a warm welcome from Africans and Europeans. Over the next week I attended to whatever duties were allotted to me by the Rev. K. M. Watkins. This included taking the morning worship on a number of occasions and taking services in the Sengera church and also at Magencha. Later on I visited and took services at the Maiga and Ogembo outstations. I also accompanied Mr. Watkins as he visited some homes in his congregation and was also present when he conducted the Catechism Class on the Wednesday

afternoon. In the performance of his duties, it appeared to me that Mr. Watkins had established a rapport with the people and the extent to which he had mastered their language and was able to communicate with them in it, was, in my view, altogether commendable. With Mr. MacKenzie attending to all the administrative duties with his usual competence, and Mr. Watkins attending to these more spiritual duties, the Mission appeared to be in a very healthy state. In addition, the Clinic, under the efficient superintendence of the late Miss Peta van de Ridder, ably assisted by Miss Gilia Wijngaarden and Miss Celia Renes, was providing a medical service much appreciated by the community.

The Clerk duly arrived and we met with the Field Committee. As planned, the feasibility of the Mission Plan was considered in detail. Circumstances having changed after our departure, what was envisaged has regrettably thus far not come to fruition. After we left on 15th November, relationships within the compound, already under strain, ruptured, and the outcome was that four European members of staff decided to bring their period of service at Sengera to an end. This decision was taken after the lamented death of Miss Peta van de Ridder, an event which appears to have contributed to it. Before concluding this part of my Report, I must acknowledge the kindness and hospitality shown by the Rev. K. M. and Mrs. Watkins, Mr. and Mrs. Hugh MacKenzie and the nursing sisters who, time and again, entertained us in their homes.

2. Zimbabwe

Having travelled from Nairobi to Johannesburg on 16th November, I, the same day, joined the Bulawayo flight and arrived at the Airport there in the afternoon. There to greet me were the Rev. Alasdair MacLean, Mr. Edward Zikhali and Miss K. M. MacAulay. Mr. MacLean brought me from the Airport to Ingwenya, where the splendid new gates commemorating the centenary of the Mission immediately caught my eye. I took up residence in the new manse. It was good to be back in what were familiar surroundings. The school was still in session so that I had a huge congregation to preach to on the Thursday morning. The opportunity was given me to visit classrooms and to meet some of the members of staff. The record of the school speaks for itself and the prizes and trophies on display bear testimony to the dedication to duty of Mr. B. Ncube, the headmaster, and his deputy Miss N. B. MacLean, who, also, has the added responsibility of providing for the needs of the boarders and dealing with the multifarious problems which arise from time to time. The contribution made by Mr. James Macleod and Miss Eleanor Wylie in terms of teaching their respective subjects, but also Bible knowledge, has been invaluable. From Ingwenya, I travelled to, and took services at, most of the Mission stations in Matabeleland and completed my duties by assisting at the Chiedza communion in Mashonaland. At Bulawayo, I took the prayer meeting for the Rev. S. Khumalo and afterwards I was shown the damage sustained by the church building there as a result of ground subsidence. Mr. Edward Zikhali, the Mission Administrator, drove me to Mbuma via Zenka and, on the return journey three days later – as at Zenka – I took a service at Nkayi. Both these

congregations are under the pastoral oversight of the Rev. M. Mloyi. It is hoped that a new manse will soon be provided for him.

At Mbumba it was good to meet the Rev. P. Mzamo once again and to be entertained by himself and his wife in their home. I stayed at the home of Sister Willie Geurtsen, where we were all well looked after by Miss K. M. MacAulay, who had accompanied us for that purpose. At the time, Dr. Anneke Snoek was still in Bulawayo completing her orientation period at Mpilo Hospital and Sister Petra Beukers was completing a course at the same location. Miss Geurtsen was therefore found dutifully and valiantly attending to all the duties entailed in being in charge of the Hospital and on call night and day. There being no grid electricity supply, darkness descended on the Hospital and Mission every night at 9 p.m. when the generator was switched off. Mr. Zikhali and I were shown round the Hospital by Miss Geurtsen. In walking through the Hospital precincts we noted the amount of work that had to be done in order to bring the buildings and facilities to the standard desirable. Although so much occupied in looking after patients, Miss Geurtsen still found time to organise a weekly mid-day Bible/Catechism Class for the male staff. I took that class on the Wednesday of my visit and I could not but be impressed at the willingness to learn displayed by those present. Farther afield we noted the state of the Simbo church, the roof of which had been totally removed by a storm force wind.

The Rev. Z. Mazwabo had invited me to assist at the Chiedza communion and I duly arrived there on Thursday, 24th November. Mr. and Mrs. Mazwabo made me as comfortable as possible in their home near to the church. The days of the communion season were observed in their order and the sacrament was administered as prescribed in the Word of God – decently and in order. Many walked long distances to be present. On the Lord's Day, in between the services, the local congregation provided food for the two hundred or so that were present. At a time of drought and general scarcity, this gesture brought to mind what the Apostle says of the grace of God bestowed on the Macedonians, "how that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality". I felt that it was good for me to be among them.

Returning to Ingwenya on Monday afternoon, I was to prepare for my departure the following day. By now the school holidays had begun but Mr. B. Ncube and Miss N. MacLean were still as busy as ever attending to all the administrative duties falling to them in anticipation of the beginning of another session in six weeks' time. On the way to the Airport, the Rev. A. MacLean drove me to the home of Mr. Teus Benschop and his wife, Dr. Janette Benschop, where the ad hoc Committee engaged in the work of revising the Ndebele Bible meet on a daily basis. There we were glad to meet and observe the commendable work of Mr. T. Benschop, Mr. N. Mpofu, Mr. B. Mziya and, not least, Miss K. M. MacAulay. Having already completed the New Testament they were now well on in the revision of the Old Testament. We believe that future generations will much appreciate their work and labour.

I would express my gratitude to all who entertained me in their homes and made my stay in Zimbabwe so pleasant and memorable.

Conclusion

To our knowledge, there are no other missions on the African continent that come up to the standard maintained at our Mission stations in Kenya and Zimbabwe. The whole counsel of God is declared and the minds of many – young and old – are being brought daily into contact with the Word of God. It is little wonder that the god of this world is active in opposition, but we trust that the work will, notwithstanding Satanic hostility, continue, and that the Lord of the harvest will provide a succession of labourers to that end and until a brighter day dawns when, as predicted, “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea”.

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO SENGERA, KENYA

Rev. J. R. Tallach

ON Tuesday, 8th November 2005, I flew to Kenya and returned a week later. Providentially all these journeys were uneventful and, in the kindness of the Lord, I went and came safely.

While at Sengera, Mr. MacLeod, the Convener, and myself, had an opportunity to observe the work being done by Mission staff there. I was very impressed by the way modern technology in the use of computers and power point presentation were being used, along with traditional methods in the teaching of the catechism and in translation work.

I was asked to preach at Sengera on the Sabbath, when a congregation of around 200 in the morning and 150 in the afternoon sat quietly under the Word.

Discussion also took place over the manner in which translation work was being conducted and agreement was come to as to the way in which this might be carried forward.

I wish to thank the Mission staff at Sengera for their welcome and kindness during my stay.

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO TEXAS

Rev. N. M. Ross

I VISITED our Richmond, Texas, Congregation from the 11th to the 25th of October 2005. A deputation visit was necessary as three families in the congregation had decided to leave – one went to another part of the USA, and two heads of families withdrew their communicant membership. This

was in addition to the congregation having been diminished, as is already known to the Committee, by two other families removing to the UK for a temporary period.

I was met at George Bush International Airport, Houston, by Mr. Jett Smith, divinity student, who drove me to my motel near Santa Fe, and then very kindly entertained me at his home in Santa Fe. During the first week we met for a midweek service at Santa Fe, in the public meeting room of the local branch of one of the national banks. Two days later I performed the marriage of a young couple in the congregation – all the people of the congregation being present on the happy occasion.

The services on Sabbath were attended by about twenty persons, all of whom came considerable distances from opposite directions. During that week I visited some families, including two of those who had left and who still profess some attachment to, or regard for, the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

By the middle of the second week, two elders of the Kirk Session (Mr. A. MacPherson and Mr. D. Kuiper) arrived in time for the commencement of the communion season. After the Saturday service, one woman was received by the Kirk Session as a communicant. For some days of the communion season we had a visiting couple attend from Corpus Christi. We were thankful that once again the death of Christ was remembered in the congregation, and that the Lord's people had some measure of refreshing under the means of grace.

While there has been a regrettable depletion of numbers in the congregation, those who remain are hopeful about the future, believing that the Lord has established them as a congregation of our Church, and that He will bless them still and make provision for them. Our hope and prayer is that in the not too distant future they will be in a position to call and support a minister, and that the Lord will provide them with a pastor after His own heart.

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO VANCOUVER

Rev J. MacLeod

My short visit to Vancouver began on Tuesday, 13th December 2005, and ended the following Monday when we departed for San Francisco. Mr. John MacLeod, with his usual courtesy, met us at the Airport and took us (my wife accompanied me at her own expense) to the accommodation which had been booked in the city. We are much indebted to him and to his wife, Margaret, for all the kindness shown and help given over the period of our stay.

On the Wednesday evening – it was the day appointed by the Synod as a day of prayer – I kept a service in the church. The congregation numbered three. On Sabbath I took morning and evening services. In the evening the number present was augmented by the presence of Mr. Douglas Epp, an APC elder, accompanied by seven of his children.

The cause in Vancouver is very low. John MacLeod has proved himself as faithful to the Church and, with his wife's help, he has kept the door open pretty well all the time from the date in 1989 when the APCs took their departure. We appreciate his faithfulness but, as he agrees himself, the circumstances are now such that it cannot be expected that services will continue indefinitely. Mrs. Mary Hardy, the only other communicant member, lives in Vancouver Island. Regretfully – mainly because of the time of year it happened to be – it was not possible for me to visit her on this occasion.

Our daughter, domiciled in the San Francisco area, met us at the Airport there and took us to her home. On Friday, 23rd December, she drove us to Copperopolis, a small town about 200 miles inland, and where, in the old church there, Mr. Carl Smith and Miss Stephanie Losaya were joined in marriage. A congregation numbering around 95 souls was present. There, in the course of the service, I was able to draw attention to the love of Christ for His bride and the necessity of His substitutionary death in order to secure her everlasting salvation. Some of our members and friends from Texas were present and already enlightened in regard to these foundation doctrines, but in the case of some present the impression gained was that they were hearing these things for the first time.

In the Lord's kind providence we arrived safely home on 29th December.

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO ZIMBABWE

Rev. J. R. Tallach

ON Thursday, 1st September 2005, I left Scotland with my wife and daughter, Marion, for Zimbabwe and we returned on Friday, 23rd September. We would record our indebtedness to the Lord in that in all the many miles covered and different terrains traversed, we had not one adverse circumstance and were in good health throughout. The first Sabbath I supplied the two preaching stations at Bulawayo as Rev. Khumalo was at Zenka Communion. There were substantial gatherings at both Lobengula and Nkulumane and the numbers seemed to have been maintained since my last visit twelve years ago. I had the pleasure of baptizing Privelege Babongile Ncube, whose father is Headmaster at John Tallach School and whose grandfather is an elder on the Mbumba Kirk Session.

On the Friday of that week (the 9th) the Centenary meeting was held at the School at Ingwenya. There were 500 guests and 1,000 schoolchildren. A sermon on Ezekiel 34:11, "For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out", was followed by brief speeches from both visiting and local representatives. Everyone present was then fed with an adequacy and efficiency which showed the considerable organisation and preparation which characterised the whole event. The second weekend was spent at New Canaan with Rev. Mazvabo, where I supplied Chiedza.

People from four smaller preaching stations gathered, some walking for two hours, to form a congregation of over 200 souls.

On Wednesday, 14th September, we travelled to Zenka, where a prayer meeting was held with Mr. Mloyi interpreting. We then carried on to Mbuma and the communion started the next day. Rev. Mloyi was the other assisting minister. We were very pleased to see that Rev. Mzamo and his wife were well and we received a very warm welcome from them both as well as from many other Mbuma friends and the staff at the Hospital. The numbers attending were good, with a fair proportion of men, and an orderly, quiet attention to the Word throughout.

We returned to Ingwenya via Nkayi on Monday 19th. At Nkayi we introduced Dr. Snoek, who hopes to start work at Mbuma in November, to the District Commissioner's Office and made enquiries about the supply of mains electricity to the Mission. The latest promise is for April 2006. My last duty was to hold the weekly prayer meeting at 8 a.m. in the church in Ingwenya on Thursday 22nd.

I should like to thank all the Mission staff for their kindness to us all during our stay.

TRAINING OF MINISTRY REPORT

Convener: Rev. J. R. Tallach

THE Committee have to report that, following on the reception of Mr. Jett Smith of the Texas Congregation as a student for the ministry by the Southern Presbytery on 6th April 2005, studies were arranged for him at the University of Houston. These studies include Greek, history and mathematics and will extend over the next few years. Mr. Smith will add Biblical Hebrew, studied privately, to the above.

Mr. George B. MacDonald passed examinations in Biblical Hebrew and Greek during the year at the Highland Theological Institute in Dingwall in preparation for his entrance exam for Divinity in August. He is also studying Higher history and has completed a short course in philosophy run by Oxford University over the Internet.

Mr. D. Levitskiy was brought over to Glasgow in August 2005 to continue his study of A level English Literature. He then began studying Greek under Mr. John MacLeod, tutor, and prepared for his Presbytery exams. The Committee is grateful for the help of the Rev. R. MacLeod in Mr. Levitskiy's preparation for the Presbytery exams.

Dr. A. MacColl passed his entrance exam in August 2005 and has been studying with the Rev. K. D. MacLeod for the past year. Mr. Lyle Smith has also been with the Rev. K. D. MacLeod and this will complete his three year course.

The Committee is deeply aware that academic attainments, biblical knowledge, and doctrinal correctness is not enough. The “polished shaft” must be in “the hand of the Lord” to gain spiritual direction and power. The Committee commend these men to the prayers of the Church.

The Theological Conference was held in Inverness this year and the Committee was, as ever, indebted to those who drew up papers on the matters discussed. The Committee hope to make one area of the Confession of Faith central to each Conference. It is also hoped that the early intimation of papers to be read will encourage all those attending to consider and read round these subjects, making the event less of a series of lectures and more a conferring among the brethren. Included among the subjects for the Conference this year are, Law and Gospel, The Covenants, The Regulative Principle, The Lord’s Supper, and The Decrees of God, and it is hoped that attendance will be high and discussion profitable.

THEOLOGICAL TUTOR’S REPORT

Rev. K. D. Macleod

MR. LYLE T. SMITH and Dr. Allan W. MacColl spent the past session in Leverburgh, attending classes in Scripture, Hebrew, Old Testament Introduction, Pastoral Theology and Church History. The pattern of these classes was very similar to that followed in previous sessions, the only significant difference being that, in Church History, we returned to Owen Chadwick’s book on *The Reformation* as a basis for our study of that period.

This session, the students’ History essays dealt with the following subjects: a comparison between Luther and Erasmus, the evangelism of D. L. Moody, and the Free Church from 1843-1900. These essays give the students the opportunity to explore a few subjects in somewhat greater depth than is otherwise possible.

The students worked diligently and I trust they will be successful in their exit exams. I am grateful to them for the help they have given in taking services in the South Harris congregation and elsewhere. May the Lord make them useful in the great work of the ministry and may they be kept!

WELFARE OF YOUTH COMMITTEE’S REPORT

Rev. D. A. Ross

WE again record the Church’s indebtedness to the ladies who prepare and correct the Scripture and Catechism Exercises. That the children and young people continue doing the Scripture and Catechism Exercises from Lower

Primary to Senior Section shows that the parents give them encouragement, and for this we are grateful. Over recent years the numbers who do the exercises have been fairly static, but we do long for the day when many more will do them, especially because they point our young people to the reality of the eternal world and their need of being prepared for it by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I am told by the ladies who correct the exercises that the quality of work is of a very satisfactory standard (apart from that of a very small number). A few also fail to complete the full set of exercises. As usual, those who do very well receive the prize of a religious book selected from the Church Bookroom catalogue, and others who complete the exercises receive an award. The books are priced according to the age group, those in the older sections receiving more expensive books. There are several children not belonging to our Church who do the exercises and receive prizes and awards, and we are very pleased indeed to have them take an interest in this way.

In Zimbabwe, John Tallach Secondary School, Ingwenya, there are 600 pupils doing the exercises. The top ten in each section receive a prize while all others receive a book token. This is all supervised by the teachers there, which is no small undertaking, even although the exercises are corrected by an additional team of ladies in Scotland. No exercises come from young people in our congregations in Zimbabwe, but it is not to be expected that any completed exercises would be posted to Scotland when the posting of an ordinary letter costs the price of four loaves of bread. In Sengera, Kenya, the age limits for the number of young people doing the exercises are slightly higher since the education system there is different. There are also others in Sengera completing the exercises who are well above the senior age limit. Their names, of course, are not listed in the *Young People's Magazine*, but they find the work to be profitable.

As was reported in the *Young People's Magazine*, the Youth Conference last year was held at St. Leonard's School, St. Andrews, Fife. Sixty-five young people attended, a number of whom were from other countries, two of them from as far away as New Zealand. The Committee is much indebted to the ministers who prepared conference papers and led the historical tour. It is no small matter for them to prepare suitable material for the Conferences when they have so many other ministerial duties to attend to. The young people also encouraged us by the interest they took in the conference and their good behaviour during it. We are much indebted to the housemothers, Miss Margaret MacAskill, Gairloch, and Mrs. Norma MacLeod, Glasgow, for their caring so well for those who attend.

This year's conference, held at Strathallan School, Forgardenny, Perthshire, was a new venue for us. We always visit venues prior to a conference to judge their suitability prior to going there. This year's papers and speakers were as follows:

1. A Wrestler with God and Man – Lessons from the Life of Jacob
Rev. Angus Smith

2. *Running the Race – What the Bible Teaches About the Christian Life*
Rev. Neil M. Ross
3. *Chosen not for Good in me – The Life and Ministry of Robert Murray M'Cheyne*
Mr. Alex MacLean
4. *Church History in Southern Perthshire – A Tour*
Rev. Douglas W. B. Somerset
5. *Grace to Live in Killing Times – The Covenanters of South West Scotland in the 1680s*
Rev. Roderick MacLeod
6. *The Sabbath – Why Should We Keep It?*
Rev. Donald MacDonald

We have no doubt that the Conference and the Scripture and Catechism Exercises have a positive use for the furthering of true religion among our young people. We do receive expressions of appreciation of these activities from both parents and young people. However, while grateful for that appreciation, our chief aim is that the young people would receive spiritual blessing by the Holy Spirit applying the Word savingly to their hearts. We should have no doubt that this must be the case with some persons because God promises to bless His Word as it is sown. In the parable of the sower there is the activity of sowing the good seed of the Kingdom, but that is not the end of the parable. The parable comes to a climax when some seed “fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold” (Matthew 13:3-8).

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

FLAVEL is quoted as saying, “He who looks for providences will not lack providences to find”, and there are many occasions for thankfulness to be found yet again in the events of a past year in Ballifeary.

We record with sadness the passing away of Mrs. J. Cameron-Mackintosh on 2nd February; Mrs. Betty Clark on 8th August; Mr. Ellis Fraser on 16th November; and Mrs. Janet Morrison on 29th November.

The waiting list stands at 16, though 10 of these do not wish to come into the Home at the moment.

The Care Commission inspection of July 2005 passed well with no recommendations or requirements arising from the inspection.

We are pleased to report that Matron completed her Manager's training course. This was a considerable achievement considering the heavy workload during the year and her duties to her family. We are pleased also that 10 other members of staff are undergoing SVQ training.

Expenditure in the Home during the year included rewiring the lounge, hall and dining room, while valves were fitted to the en-suite hot taps. Outside, a sycamore tree was felled and paving completed around the Home. A mower and a food processor were also purchased. Reflecting rising world oil prices, the cost of oil for heating the Home rose by 40% during the year.

We are indebted yet again to our two auditors, John Fraser and Kenneth MacLean, for their work on our accounts, to Matron and her staff for their work and the kindly manner in which it was discharged, and to all those outwith the Home who gave of their time to the residents. Taking family worship and providing something interesting and instructive in an evening is especially welcome.

We commend this work to the prayers of our people.

LEVERBURGH CARE HOME COMMITTEE REPORT

Convener: Rev. K. D. Macleod

THE Home continues to care for up to 16 residents, but sadly, during the past year, there has been a greater than normal number of deaths. Since the last report was written, the following permanent residents have passed away: Mrs. A. MacGeddie, Mrs. M. MacKay, Mrs. M. Rodgers, Mr. J. Morrison and Miss W. MacCuish. We would extend our sincere sympathy to all their relatives.

We must again commend the hard work and dedication of the Officer in Charge and other staff; the Committee wish once more to express their sincere appreciation of all that they do for the welfare of the residents. A further member of the care staff completed her SVQ level 2 qualification in the course of the year and another is now taking this 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. Increasing standards of fire safety have meant that a significant sum of money had to be spent in recent months in upgrading the Home to meet these standards.

From the latter part of 2005 it has not been possible to fill all the beds made vacant by the death of previous residents. This has resulted in a poorer financial outcome than in most recent years (though the outcome for 2005 was significantly inflated by income which should have been received in 2004). Yet we are thankful that the Home continues to show a profit and that it can provide a caring environment for some of those, particularly in the local community, who now find it difficult to look after themselves. Most especially, we would wish to acknowledge the Lord's goodness over another year.

OUTREACH COMMITTEE REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. A. Ross

THE Committee continues to do the work assigned to it by the Synod; namely, the spreading of the Word of God and reaching out to people outside the Church. This we do in a number of ways. The Internet has proved to be a very useful tool in publicising our views and distinctives and, indeed, has been the means of broadening our witness to the ends of the earth.

We have made contacts with many people expressing an interest in the Reformed Faith and they have, on the whole, either been commending our presentation of it or asking what appear to be genuine questions about it. We hope we have been helpful to some and that we have brought them to a greater appreciation of our position as a Church. It is a tremendous advantage to be able to refer such to our subordinate standard, the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, which so clearly and succinctly presents the Bible doctrines we profess as a Church.

One person from Texas speaks of the help received: "I have been greatly blessed by the website and the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, so I would like to contribute some money to the Richmond TX USA congregation. I have the address off the website but I don't know the official name of the congregation, and how to make out the cheque. Could you please help or get someone there in south Texas to help me?"

Another from Colorado, USA, says: "Thank you very much for putting some text sermons on the website in easily accessible form with excellent visual format. . . . Since I cannot access the audio-sermons, nor the MP3 format, nor PDF files, it is a great pleasure to see such godly writing immediately available when turning to the website. There is nothing comparable to careful, earnest reading to really impress thought with the truths contained therein. I hope that you will be able to make more such texts available in future, as time and resources permit (in addition to the excellent material available in the magazines to which I subscribe)."

There are, of course, people contacting us occasionally who do not seem so much interested in the Reformed Faith as in posing questions which suggest a kind of legalism in their religion, but we endeavour to direct them to the Gospel of free and sovereign grace. Yet others communicate with us in an attempt to draw us into a debate about their pet subject, such as Saturday being the proper Sabbath, in which cases we try to leave with them some useful scriptural information. We hope and pray that overall some little good is being done by these contacts.

We get many requests from people in Third World countries and others for financial help. However, we are not in a position to know their genuineness, and even when we think we do know, we have found that our financial resources have been very limited and earmarked for certain projects; for example, the printing of our own tracts in Nepalese on two occasions. In any case, we do respond to such requests by sending out our Church magazines

and some small pieces of literature, where that is appropriate. This we do through the Bookroom Manager, Mr. Kenneth Hutton, to whom we are very grateful for his help, the cost coming out of the Outreach Fund.

Our tracts continue to be in demand and we do reprints from time to time. At the moment, the tract, *Which Church?*, is out of stock and will be reprinted shortly. The tracts are used by people both in the Church and beyond, and who can tell what the good effect of that will be by the Lord's blessing? As was reported in the past, a few of our tract titles have been translated into German, French and Dutch, and these are available from the Bookroom for those who have an outlet for them, especially among tourists who visit this country. We can now report that, in fact, all our tracts have been translated into German and are, at this moment, waiting to be printed. These will be sent to Germany for distribution by Christians there.

Try as we could, we did not succeed in obtaining a stand at the Black Isle Show last year, and it seems that it may well be the same this year. However, we did have a stand at Portree Agricultural Show and the interest was greater than the previous year. Of £489.65 received at our bookstall (which sells Bibles and literature), £26.48 was in the form of donations. There is no doubt that by our being at these Agricultural Shows we are right out there in the world with the Gospel where we should be. Of those passing by our stand, some evidenced a genuine interest, others a cautious interest and yet others hastily passed by. But even our placards with a Bible text in bold print by the door of the tent, present the Word of God which continues to be in the hand of the Holy Spirit that two-edged sword to bring sinners to conviction of sin. It is interesting too how sometimes we meet people who used to belong to the Free Presbyterian Church but now go nowhere to worship, and we welcome the opportunity to speak the Word of God to them.

While some people are of the mind our being at Agricultural Shows is too much identifying with the world, the truth is that the Gospel in a very significant way does identify with the world: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Paul did not shy away from daily going to the busy market in Athens to engage with people there, As Matthew Poole says, Paul was "throwing the net of the Gospel where there were most fish; and he himself preaching, as he exhorted others to do, in season and out of season" (Acts 17:17). May the Lord graciously use these small attempts as a Church to go out with the Gospel to a lost world.

Obviously we will never know, here in time, all the spiritual good resulting from our outreach witness by various means but we are assured by God's promises that we do not sow the good seed of the Kingdom of God in vain. "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

MAGAZINES REPORT

Rev. K. D. Macleod, Editor

OVER the past year, the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* and the *Young People's Magazine* have gone out month by month as usual, and also the *Gaelic Supplement* every three months. In the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* an effort has been made to provide a balance of material – new material as well as old – and a variety of devotional, expository and historical articles, as well as book reviews and comment on current affairs, etc. The *Young People's Magazine* also aims to give a variety of suitable material, bearing in mind the various age-groups for which this magazine is intended.

Costs for printing and postage of the magazines have again increased slightly in the last 12 months, and adjustments have had accordingly to be made to the cost of individual copies and subscriptions. Over the past year, there has been some increase in the number of copies of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* sent out, while the circulation of the *Young People's Magazine* has remained almost unchanged.

I would once again thank all who have given help in a variety of ways over the past year. I am especially grateful to all who have sent in articles and, in particular, to members of the Editorial Board of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* for their help throughout the year. I would again specifically mention Dr. J. Mitchell for his continued help in checking the contents of both magazines month by month.

May the Most High bless these attempts to send out spiritually-profitable periodicals, both to the people of the Church and to others beyond its borders! It should be remembered that there is the potential for large numbers of others, besides subscribers, to come in contact with our magazines through the Internet.

PUBLICATIONS AND BOOKROOM COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Rev. K. D. Macleod, Editor

Publications

In the past year we have continued the re-issue of the early volumes of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*; volume 8 is now available and we are proceeding with volume 9. The paperback edited by Rev. Alexander McPherson, *Pages From the Past*, was reprinted early this year with some extra material from his pen, as *Four Little Words*. This new edition is in hardback and will be more durable. We are grateful to Mrs. Nella van Praag for the painting which appears on the front cover. The Committee hopes that two other books: John Colquhoun of Leith on *Saving Faith* and Rev. Donald Beaton on *The Reformed*

Faith will be available before too long, with some of the other titles previously announced to follow.

At the time of writing we are reprinting the two booklets: *The Westminster Confession of Faith* and *The Larger Catechism*. We find it encouraging that there is a continuing steady demand for them.

We are disappointed that sales of Free Presbyterian Publications books have fallen to around £6,000, but this does reflect the fact that no major title was printed during the year 2005.

Bookroom

We are glad to be able to report that sales improved significantly during 2005 to over £64,000, in spite of the reduction in Free Presbyterian Publications sales. The website (www.fpbookroom.org) continues to be a useful source of orders.

We would once again express our gratitude to the men who have kept the Bookroom open on a Saturday morning and during the Manager's holidays. We would also request the prayers of the Lord's people for His rich blessing on this particular work of the Church. A generation as dark as this is has much need of scriptural literature and, more especially, of the Word of God itself. May the Lord be pleased to bless our limited efforts in spreading good books.

REPORT OF AD HOC COMMITTEE ON CHILD PROTECTION LEGISLATION

Convener: Rev. J. R. Tallach

THE committee is indebted to Mr. D. Campbell, advocate, for the information that there has been no changes in legislation in Scotland in relation to Child Protection. In England a Bill has been introduced to the House of Lords entitled "Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups". If this Bill is enacted it will bring legislation in this area into line with existing legislation in Scotland. Church courts in England would then presumably have to adhere to the practice established in Scotland. However, the legislation would have to be enacted before a clear view was gained of the effect on the Church. Mr. Campbell points out that interested parties can make representations to their Members of Parliament if they wish.

It now remains for the Synod to ascertain that all the Presbyteries have put in place the system of co-ordinators required by the motion passed on this matter by the Synod of 2004. The responsibility for oversight of this area would then pass to the Church Interests Committee and the Ad Hoc Committee would stand down.