

FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

**REPORTS OF
STANDING
COMMITTEES
OF SYNOD**

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REPORT OF THE RELIGION AND MORALS COMMITTEE

Convener: Rev. W. Weale

INTRODUCTION

IT is probably fair to say that, while within living memory there has been little in the sphere of the religion and morals of our nation to cheer our hearts, this is especially so over the past number of months.

As a people, our sins in Church and State, as brought out in this Report, cry out to heaven against us, and the pattern emerging in our land is very similar to that seen time and time again in the days of the Judges when a forsaking of the Lord was followed by His rod coming upon Israel in the form of a hostile power. Surely no one with any discernment can deny a connection between our departure from the Lord as a nation and the rise of militant Islam in our midst.

May we see these things as a challenge to us, as individuals, to repent of every known sin and to seek to “live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world”, and also as a Church, to boldly continue to speak out against sin as well as to cry out to the God of heaven that He would “arise, and have mercy upon Zion” . . . that “the time to favour her, yea, the set time”, would come.

RELIGION

The majority in our nation are nominally Christian, but the force of evangelical Protestantism has been greatly blunted, and “our enemies among themselves at us do laugh and flout”. The voice of true Christianity is almost disregarded, and almost the only public voice heard in matters of public morality is that of the Roman Catholic Church. Evangelical churches, including our own, are invited by Westminster and Holyrood to give their opinions on certain matters of religion and morals, as if what they will say will be part of the ultimate input but, in reality, in the last analysis, they are cynically disregarded. The Free Presbyterian Petition regarding the sanctity of the Sabbath was, however, successfully presented to the Public Petitions Committee of the Scottish Parliament on 15th November 2006 by Rev. Hugh Cartwright, and spoken to by himself and Mr. Ally Maclean. This was seen and heard by many, and for that we are glad, as were quite a number across Scotland. If only our voice could be more extensively heard, we believe that it would help leaven public opinion more for good.

The Roman Catholic Church

The Vatican is a sovereign state demanding all the privileges of a temporal kingdom, and at the same time showing its religious face to further its ambition of being supreme in the world, in both spheres. Henry VIII broke off diplomatic relations with the Roman Catholic body in 1534, and Great Britain

had no diplomatic relations with Rome until 1914. In 2005, Irish-born Francis Campbell was the latest ambassador to be appointed to the Vatican, and *The Tablet* states that the Foreign Office “has been scrupulous in stressing that religious affiliation played no part in the selection”. Campbell began training as a priest, and later studied at the Roman Catholic university of Louvain in Belgium, where he gained a Master’s degree in European Integration. Inter-faith relationships seem to be his mission, seeking dialogues between professing Christians, and also between Roman Catholics and Muslims.

The Church of Rome and Ecumenism

The March 2006 issue of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* reports that the Pope, when speaking to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, stated, “When Christian churches and communities are willing to admit that their members may have offended or misrepresented the teachings of others, they make important contributions to Christian unity”. This was prompted by statements put out by such as the Presbyterian Church, USA, and the Christian Reformed Church in North America, to the effect that creedal statements of the 16th century, with regard to the Roman Catholic Church, do not reflect the present-day opinions of these churches. At home a minister of the Free Church of Scotland went so far as to state on the website in 1999 that 75% of its ministers do not accept that the Pope is the Antichrist. Compromise over the practice of the mass and the doctrine of Justification by Faith has helped to blur many of the lines of distinction. The World Council of Churches has a membership of 347 churches in over 100 countries, representing approximately 550 million Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant “Christians”. The World Council of Churches too, has come to resemble the Vatican in its desire for political power. When the Gospel, which justifies a church’s existence, is left behind, the vacuum has to be filled with something, so worldly matters and politics become of more importance than spiritual matters in their agenda. The WCC now urges its members to hit Israel’s economy by a process of selective disinvestment from companies linked to the “occupation” (*Scottish Protestant View*, March/April 2005).

The *Evangelical Times* of July 2006 reveals that Inverness Old High Presbyterian Church intended to have Cardinal Keith O’Brien, Scotland’s most senior Roman Catholic churchman, and Rev. Fergus Macdonald, a past moderator of the Free Church of Scotland, conducting services during the summer months. This will only be the second time in four centuries since the Reformation that a cardinal has preached in the oldest church in the Highland capital. Cardinal Thomas Winning preached there in 1999.

On Saturday, 2nd April 2005, Pope John Paul II died at the age of 84, after 26 years in office. Hundreds of thousands of Roman Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and people of many diverse backgrounds, flocked to pay their respects during a three-hour long funeral mass. Present were presidents, prime ministers, monarchs and princes. Many were hailing him as John Paul the Great, and even urging that he be put on the fast-track to

sainthood. His coffin had a large “M” on it to signify his reliance upon the intercession of Mary. Billy Graham and his son Franklin insisted that, despite some doctrinal differences, John Paul preached the same Gospel as they did. The truth is that he promoted the extreme form of Marian worship. His successor, Ratzinger, was in 1981 appointed Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (formerly the office of the Inquisition). President George W. Bush hails him as “a man of great wisdom and knowledge”.

The Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church

It may seem surprising to some that the Church of England, despite its many Anglo-Catholic priests, and Rome, have not yet come together, but there are still too many obstacles to union. Forty years ago, Archbishop Michael Ramsey met with Pope Paul VI in an effort to bring these two churches together, and recently Dr. Rowan Williams, the present Archbishop of Canterbury, met the Pope to continue talks and co-operate on practical issues. The Pope expressed his disapproval of women priests and an openly gay bishop in the Anglican Church, and called these serious obstacles to union.

Rome and Islam

Both of these are antichrist, but it is the Man of Sin who resembles the angel of light, and who is mistakenly accepted in the nominal Christian world as leader. The Pope made a speech some time back in which he spoke of the aggression of Islam. It may be that he was testing the waters, to see if Islamists would accept such, in the same way as the so-called Protestant churches meekly accept strictures made upon them by the Papacy. If so, then Rome could seek to gather them in as it has gathered many heathen groups in, in past days, by embracing and baptizing many of their traditions and idols.

The Roman Pontiff used his annual Ramadan message to build bridges with Muslims after they reacted with anger to what he had said. He urged the necessity of urgent dialogue between the two faiths, and their need to unite against terrorism. His visit to Turkey was in the balance as many Turks demonstrated against him, and the Prime Minister said he was too busy to meet him. However, Pope Benedict poured a little Vatican oil on the wounds he had inflicted, saying he supported Turkey’s application to join the European Union, and then became only the second Pope ever to enter a mosque, where he removed his red papal shoes. He also spoke of Islam as “being peaceful and affectionate”. We wonder. Union with Rome always means being incorporated by Rome. Can Rome perform this “miracle” before a mesmerised world? If so, then Christians and Jews will undoubtedly be persecuted.

Muslim persecution

Thomas Schirrmacher, director of the Religious Liberty Commission of the German Evangelical Alliance, speaks of at least 55,000 Christians being put to death each year for religious reasons – Christians in India, Indonesia and

Pakistan running the highest risk of losing their lives. Rome is strangely silent about these matters, although some of these losing their lives must be Roman Catholic. Rome acted in the same way during the time of the Nazis, for its real aims are political rather than religious, so she will gladly suffer the loss of church members for the sake of political gain.

The Roman Catholic Church in Britain

A study by Tom Horwood and Anthony Spencer, entitled *The Future of the Catholic Church in Britain*, indicates that over the past four decades attendance at mass has dropped by 40%, baptisms by 50%, Catholic marriages by 60%, and confirmations by 60%. In 1991 attendance at mass in England and Wales stood at 1.3 million, compared with 960,000 in 2004. Deaths among congregations rose by nearly 40% between 1963 and 1991, reflecting the growing elderly profile of congregations.

The current scandals in the Roman Catholic Church involving child abuse have meant that fewer men are entering the priesthood, and there is the prospect of men from Eastern Europe and Asia being brought into the British priesthood. Ireland, which yielded an abundance of priests, is suffering badly through lack of priests. The fact that the Roman Catholic authorities were moving offending priests to other stations, rather than having them properly disciplined, has given a shattering blow to the moral status of the Roman Catholics in Ireland. The average age of priests today in Ireland is somewhere in the sixties. It is reckoned that if present trends continue there will only be about 500 nuns in Ireland in 13 year's time compared to 11,000 in 1999.

The moral authority of the Roman Catholic Church in Britain has also indirectly suffered through the revelation that the Archbishop of Warsaw, Mgr. Stanislaw Wielgus, was involved with Poland's hated Communist-era secret police. It had been widely taught and believed that the Church was bravely opposing the Communist regime. He has stepped down after initially denying the truth of the accusations. The fear of schism made the Pope step in to make him confess his criminality, and to resign his post.

The papacy and politics

At home, the political party called the Christian People's Alliance intimated that it would be addressed by Scotland's youngest Roman Catholic bishop, the Right Rev. Philip Tartaglia, Bishop of Paisley, in September 2006. This party is allied to the Christian Democratic parties across the European Union, which is simply the Roman Catholic – indeed Jesuit inspired – political party in the EU. The CPA has raised finance to run candidates on all of Scotland's regional lists, and intends to focus on the Scottish Parliament election in May 2007, under the claim of promoting the voice of the Gospel in politics.

Roman Catholic Church and the Bible

At the end of 2006 the Pope made a major speech in which he condemned homosexuality as deviant. Then he went on to state that the Italian people

should support and defend traditional marriage, and oppose “other forms of union”. He said that the Church should say “yes” to authentic love, to the reality of man as he was created by God. The only snag is, that in the same month, October 2006, in which he made that speech, we are told by Ruth Gledhill, writing in *The Times*, that the hierarchy of the Church now teaches that some parts of the Bible are not true, including the first eleven chapters of Genesis. As it happens it is in that very portion we find the origin of marriage and God’s blessing upon it. Why then are we now told that this portion of the Bible cannot be “historical”? At most, they say, it may contain “historical traces”. This comes from a teaching document issued by the RC Church called *The Gift of Life*. Only a century ago, Pope Pius X condemned Modernist Catholic scholars who applied critical methods of analysing ancient literature, to the Bible itself. So much for the Church which prides itself on never changing!

The speech went on to condemn fundamentalism for its “intransigent intolerance” and to warn of significant dangers involved in this approach. What the Pope was really trying to convey is that the Word of God must not be our supreme authority in which we exercise faith and trust, but rather the Roman Catholic Church, which claims to give the Bible an authority derived from Rome itself, and therefore elevating itself above God’s Word – and even God Himself.

“Similarly,” says Ruth Gledhill, in *The Times* of 18th December 2006, “they refute the apocalyptic prophecies of Revelation, the last book of the Christian Bible, in which the writer describes the work of the risen Jesus, the death of the Beast, and the wedding feast of Christ the Lamb.” We understand why they are sensitive regarding the death of the Beast of Revelation 19:20, who is spoken of as being cast into the lake of fire, and why it is classed as untrustworthy, for it seems to speak of the Roman Catholic Church itself. The text of Genesis 2:21-22, which explains the woman’s origin from the rib taken from Adam’s side, is classed as untrue. Now indeed, it all boils down to either taking the Word of God as our supreme authority in faith and morals, or the Pope of Rome. You cannot logically hold to both.

The situation is even more confusing when we remember that in 1816 Pope Pius VII had a Bull issued against Bible societies in which he speaks of them as “a pestilence which must be remedied and abolished; a defilement of the faith, eminently dangerous to souls”. The Trinitarian Bible Society pamphlet, *Ecumenism and the Bible Societies*, shows that the Roman Catholic Church nowadays participates in the actual work of Bible Societies. This leaves us thankful to the Most High for the Trinitarian Bible Society, which remains faithful to its origins, and which will have nothing to do with Rome, or Liberals, who tamper with God’s inerrant Word.

The Church of Rome and child abuse

Pope Benedict is accused of obstructing justice after it emerged that he had issued an order ensuring the church’s investigations into child sex abuse

claims be carried out in secret, and that the evidence be kept confidential for up to ten years after the victim reached adulthood. Ratzinger is accused by lawyers representing victims of abuse of wrongdoing, in issuing a letter in which he states that the “Church” can claim jurisdiction in cases where the abuse has been perpetrated with a minor by a cleric. If these crimes are kept secret for ten years plus the number of years the victim takes to reach adulthood, as he desires, it is possible that it may take twenty-eight years for some cases to come to light, and by then many of the criminals, and some of the victims, will have died. How can a “church” act in such an evil manner?

Cristina Odone, who edited the *Catholic Herald* in the 1990s, writing in the *Daily Telegraph*, on 22nd of February, stated that the Roman Catholic “Church bans birth control, but the majority practise it; condemns divorce while allowing annulment; forbids homosexuality, but shields paedophiles within its ranks”.

The Anglican community

Archbishop Rowan Williams, who is looked up to by the world-wide Anglican community, desperately attempts to mend his public image. He has shown himself to be a liberal who has published a paper defending sodomites, as well as ordaining such. He has spoken in contemptuous terms of God’s holy Word. It seems that more people attend Muslim mosques regularly than attend Church of England services, and on the world-wide scene the Anglican community threatens to break up over the long-running row over the consecration of homosexual USA Bishop Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire, as well as over the Church in Canada’s blessing of same-sex unions. The Scottish Episcopal Church is in turmoil over these matters.

Meanwhile the *Evangelical Times* of July 2006 informs us that the Bishop of Chelmsford, the Right Rev. John Gladwin, has been told by the Archbishop of Kenya, the Most Rev. Benjamin Nzimbi, that his official visit to Kenya has been cancelled because of his belonging to a pressure group campaigning for homosexual rights. Archbishop Jensen of Sydney, Australia, believes the fellowship of Anglican churches will break up over the issue of human sexuality. He said that the biblical ideal of sexual relationships specifically excludes same-sex relationships, and that this is clear both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament.

Nick Howard, the son of Michael Howard, the former Conservative party leader, has been turned down for ordination by the Church of England because of his unambiguous evangelical beliefs, and unwillingness to listen to other viewpoints. He has his theology degree, but his strongly held beliefs on homosexuality and multi-faith worship marked him out as a troublemaker, even though they reflect official Anglican doctrine.

In July 2006 the Anglican General Synod resolved “That this Synod welcome and affirm the view of the majority of the House of Bishops that admitting women to the episcopate in the Church of England is consonant with the faith of the Church as the Church of England has received it, and would be

a proper development in proclaiming afresh in this generation the grace and truth of Christ.”

The papacy and the crown

The Church of England’s chief lay official, General Synod Secretary, William Fittall, is adamant that, if Prince Charles becomes the reigning monarch, the service will not be a multi-faith service as desired by Prince Charles, and it has been pointed out that a multi-faith service would undermine the monarch’s position as Supreme Governor of the Church of England, and that the Prince’s duty would be to defend the historic faith of the church. There would be huge obstacles to a multi-faith coronation service, and the constitution would unravel if the prince had his way. Strangely enough, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Carey of Clifton, calls for a multi-faith approach to future British coronations.

Cardinal Keith O’Brien, leader of the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland, states that he would be happy to see Scotland become an independent country. When Pope John Paul kissed Scottish soil in 1982, O’Brien says that this was intended to remind “the world that Scotland is a nation among nations”. He speaks of the vibrancy of the Celtic tiger in the Republic of Ireland. He desires to re-make Scotland in the Irish image. He denounces the United Kingdom’s Act of Settlement as “state sponsored sectarian discrimination”, and a barrier to attempts to tackle discrimination and bigotry. The Act of Union between Scotland and England stipulates that the Union is automatically dissolved if a Roman Catholic mounts the throne. Rome longs to have a Roman Catholic on the Scottish throne. O’Brien shouts a lot about bigotry against Roman Catholics in Scotland. It is all part of the propaganda. An examination of his own ordination vows and those of Presbyterian ministers, would show where bigotry and sectarian hatred lie. He wants Catholics to report to him all the sectarian abuse they can so that he can compile a list to present it to the First Minister. He omitted to ask Protestants (or “non-Catholics”, as he would call Protestants) to submit a list of sectarian attacks against themselves from Roman Catholic sources.

Religious hatred

A true child of God loves his enemies. David Blunkett has said that he wants to “outlaw religious hate”. Surely then we should seek to end the blasphemy addressed at the Saviour Jesus Christ, day and night for 365 days a year, when His name is spat out as a profanity in what is shown in the cinema and on TV, as well as among so-called Christians.

In 1921, Roman Catholic schools became part of the state-funded system of education, and were allowed to retain their religious identity. In 1870, the Free Church of Scotland was persuaded to hand over all its schools into the keeping of the state in return for a promise that “religious instruction” (understood at that time to mean the religion of the Bible, or the basic truths of the Christian faith) would continue to be taught – a promise blatantly ignored over the last

two generations. Meanwhile the Reformation is blatantly attacked, and John Knox is airbrushed out of history textbooks, and never commemorated, despite being one of the greatest sons Scotland has been privileged to have, if not the greatest.

Political correctness

We have recently seen strife over the exhibiting of religious symbols. British Airways, which has a British flag logo on the tails of its planes, made up of various British crosses, had forbidden an employee, who has worn a tiny cross on her neck for seven years, from wearing it anymore outside her clothing while at work. A girl pupil too was told not to wear such to school. The Word of God forbids us to make or use images in the worship of the Lord, and in the early Church such things would not be found. Until recently such things were merely ignored, as are the many religious symbols of other creeds around us, but things have changed. As expected, Cardinal Keith O'Brien led the charge in support of the lady, but of course his church has "Adoration of the Cross", an idolatrous service carried out on "Good Friday" consisting of prostration before the cross and prayers addressed to it, as well as other idolatrous services.

The truth of the matter seems to be that a new religion of political correctness is being promoted in our land, which aims at destroying Christianity, and what purports to be Christianity. A sham political amalgam of religions is taught in schools in which absolute good or absolute evil is no longer to be taught, to avoid religious confrontation. The law of respect or political correctness, with its own commandments, is meant to displace the Ten Commandments and the Gospel. Scripture gave commandments, and to break any of these was called a sin. The State gave commandments, or laws, and to break one of these was called a crime. The distinction between crime and sin is no longer counted valid, for the State rules in all matters. This is nothing new. The Devil has tried this before. The State has become the parent, and political correctness impinges on deeds, words and thoughts. We see it reported in the *Daily Telegraph* of 14th February 2007 that, despite being the fourth richest nation, our children, regarding their moral condition, are in the twentieth place among the twenty-one best-off nations.

The case of Stephen Green highlights the above. He was arrested for protesting with banners against homosexuality. The banners quoted the Word of God and showed the way of salvation. He was charged with using "threatening, abusive or insulting words", but the Crown Prosecution Service decided there was insufficient evidence as the quotes were all from the Bible, and also in the light of previous cases.

Homosexual rights and adoption

A raft of new homosexual rights laws were supposed to go before a vote of MPs by the end of October, but it is thought the earliest they will reach Parliament is April 2007, after the government was deluged by hostile

responses to its consultative document, *Getting Equal*. Its aim was meant to be to protect homosexuals from being denied “goods, facilities and services on the basis of their sexual preferences”.

It will be an offence to refuse to rent a room to a homosexual couple, or for printers to decline orders to produce homosexual advertising or magazines. Northern Ireland has already been made a test-case region in January 2007. The Christian lawyer, Andrea Williams, said, “There are substantial concerns that these regulations may be contrary to the European Convention on Human Rights on freedom of thought, conscience and religion”.

The Roman Catholic Church runs almost a third of the voluntary adoption sector, finding homes for about 230 children each year, but it has threatened to stop adoption work, and even close homeless shelters if it is not allowed to discriminate against those who are gay or lesbian. Even if the law banning discrimination is passed in its present form, we can hardly see the Roman Catholic Church doing as it threatens, for it is desperate to have some control over children. The Roman Catholic already refers homosexual couples, who apply, to other non Roman Catholic agencies. The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham, Vincent Nichols, told Channel 4 News: “What we are not objecting to is the legal right of same-sex couples to adopt children.” The logic of all this is that the Romanists will look after their own, and plant these children in Catholic homes, while Protestant, or other children, can be handed over to homosexuals. On the other hand, true committed Christians, who express their convictions, have little chance of adopting children and introducing them to biblical Christianity. The point has to be made that the abysmal conduct of many of her priests in abusing children and adults, and also the cover-up of the Roman Catholic Church regarding these matters, must be a contributory factor towards the very existence of homosexual unions and the cry of these people for such rights.

In December 2006, the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Bill was overwhelmingly passed in Scotland. The Executive said Scots wanted homosexual adoption, yet consultation documents revealed that 90% of Scots were against it. Roseanna Cunningham stressed that no couples, including homosexual couples, had absolute rights in adoption, and that the debate should be about the children’s rights, and theirs alone. She stresses that those who supported the Bill were in the business of saying that nature had got it wrong, and that adding a further burden to children deprived of their natural parents only risks producing a generation of emotionally damaged children. It seems that sodomites must be appeased at all costs, but the same God who wiped out Sodom and Gomorrah is still on the throne, and it is to Him we cry to have mercy upon our nation.

Religious observance in schools

The Scottish Executive has been redefining religious observance in schools as “community acts which aim to promote the spiritual development of all members of the school community”. It is no longer mere political correctness

but religious correctness. A chaplain at three schools in Renfrewshire says that Christianity has been removed and that there is but a sense of vagueness, with no reference to the Christian faith. What has gone wrong with the Scotland of John Knox?

The Church of Scotland

At the Reformation the people of Scotland embraced Scripture as the inspired and infallible Word of God. The Word itself declared that its authority was that of God, unlike the Roman Catholic Church which declared that the Word's authority is that given it by fallible men. Today we weep when we see what our national church is reduced to. You can hold the highest office in the Church of Scotland, reject ninety-nine per cent of the Bible, and not be disciplined, but rather feted. When the Roman Catholics fight so strenuously for spiritual and political privileges, the Church of Scotland has lost its way, and many in the church of John Knox seem unable to sound the glorious trumpet of the Reformation any more but, on the contrary, seem ashamed of its origins.

Rev. Sheilagh Kesting, who is moderator-designate of the Church of Scotland in May 2007, proclaims that homosexual couples should have their relationships blessed in church. She indicates that she would be happy to bless such unions and recognise same-sex partnerships. The national Kirk has already, at assembly level, approved the idea of blessing civil partnerships in principle. The majority of the Church's presbyteries have not endorsed this principle. She will be the second female Moderator of the Church of Scotland after Dr. Alison Elliot, who is an elder. The Bible is the supreme standard, and forbids such, but those who think they are wiser than their Creator, and overrule His law, therefore making God's Word a lie, only reveal that the light which is in them is really darkness.

The *Stornoway Gazette*, of 2nd October 2006, reports that Miss Kesting is secretary to the ecumenical SCIFU (Scottish Churches Initiation for Union), and that she is involved in continuing talks with the Free Church, and also joint-secretary of the Joint Commission on Doctrine between the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church.

Atheism

In the census of 2001, 72% of the people called themselves Christian. In Britain between 1979 and 2005 the number attending church on the Sabbath halved. The *Free Presbyterian Magazine* for January 2005 states that surveys carried out by ICM Research reveals that 90% of all adults owned a Bible in 1954, but the figure in 2005 had come down to 65%. Belief in the paranormal has increased 10% since 1954. Last year the Summer solstice drew 21,000 to Stonehenge. We are sinking back into heathendom as the true preaching of the Gospel, and Christian witness, wanes. Atheism too is very militant among us and we are attacked by intolerant evolutionists. An ambitious campaign to spread this Gospel of darkness was launched by the Christian-hating writer Richard Dawkins, with his latest book entitled *The God Delusion*.

Should we then wonder when the Lord punishes our nation in permitting Muslims to come among us in such great numbers? If so much hatred is shown by them to each other in opposing factions, what can Christians expect? It is time our nation was realistic about false religions, for there is but one way of salvation, and that is through Christ. There is no doubt that this is one of God's rods upon our country, and the terrible thing is that we do not know that it is such. Mohammed seemed conciliatory to Jews and Christians to begin with, but when rejected by them he became confrontational. The break-up of the Russian empire has released many Muslim groupings, and recent happenings in the Middle and Far East are but warnings to the Church of Christ that the roaring lion is out to devour. May the Lord give us, as a people, to turn in repentance to Himself!

"Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries" (Psalm 81:13-14).

MORALS

Alcoholism

This has been an increasing problem over many years in Scotland, especially among the young and sadly among the under-age, many going out in the evening with the express purpose of getting drunk. The country, once renowned as the Land of the Gospel, has now become notorious for alcohol abuse. NHS statistics for England show that more people than ever are being admitted to hospital as a result of misusing alcohol, more than doubling in a decade, reaching 35,400 in 2004/5. Death rates linked to alcoholic liver disease increased by 37% between 1999 and 2004 to over 4,000. Professor Ian Gilmour, of the Royal College of Physicians, described the figures as "shocking". He pointed out that alcohol is too cheap and too readily available. Recent figures released by the Scottish Executive disclosed that there was a massive 85% leap in fatal cases of alcoholic liver disease. The disease killed 7,150 people between 1997 and 2005. The number was 527 in 1997 but in 6 years had jumped to 976. Deaths among women more than doubled during this time from 161 to 338 and men increased from 366 to 638. Aberdeen Royal Infirmary had 207 deaths, going from 9 in 1997 to 32 in 2005. Ninewells Hospital, Dundee, was even worse with 241 deaths over 8 years. Raigmore Hospital, Inverness, reported 120 deaths during the same period.

A report in late 2005 by NHS Quality Improvement Scotland offered more evidence of sharp rises in alcohol-related diseases, costing Scotland £1.4 billion per annum including £1 million to the NHS. A separate NHS study showed alcohol related deaths had soared by more than 250% in 25 years to 2,052. Children as young as 8 were referred to children's hearings for drink and drug problems. Drunkenness accounts for about half of all incidents of violent crime and results in much sexual misconduct. Experts say it is the result of 20 years of liberal drinking laws, an increase in the number of public

houses and off-licences, and the easy availability of alcohol, which is 54% cheaper in relative terms than in 1980. Despite the increase in alcohol addiction in society, the Scottish Parliament has further relaxed the law, allowing some pubs and clubs to open 24 hours a day.

Most people in the society in which we live lack a solid foundation for their lifestyle. What a need there is for a return to biblical truths: “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise” (Proverbs 20:1). But the saddest and most solemn fact is that those who die as impenitent drunkards are shut out from heaven: “Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:10).

Gambling

This evil is now rife throughout society with new forms coming continuously before the public. The Government plans to make the UK the world capital for Internet gambling, despite the USA passing a bill banning most forms of Internet gambling. Russia’s interior ministry recently closed three casinos in Moscow because of links to organised crime, the city’s Deputy Mayor stressing that Moscow has no intention of becoming the Las Vegas of Russia. In November 2006, Professor Mark Griffith, of Nottingham & Trent University, who is Europe’s only Professor of Gambling Studies, said millions of children face becoming addicted to gambling because ministers are “naïve” about the dangers of slot machines. In a submission to the Culture Department’s consultation process on how the Gambling Act in 2007 will be implemented, he said gambling addictions start on the low stakes machines.

With Government Ministers proposing to establish the UK as the world base for Internet gambling, the Christian Peoples Alliance says that the burden will fall on local Councils who will have to prepare for more broken homes, rising mental illness and other social problems linked to debt.

Another of the Government’s misguided schemes is to have a Las Vegas style super casino in the UK with strong bidding for it from London, Manchester, Blackpool and Glasgow, amongst others. At the end of January 2007, the Casino Advisory Panel’s decision was announced to award the super casino to Manchester. Up to 1,250 unlimited jackpot gaming machines will be housed in the project. In addition a further 16 smaller casinos are to be built with one being allocated to Dumfries and Galloway, the prime candidate being Stranraer. While thankful that the Glasgow bid failed, it is deplorable that this massive expansion of gambling facilities is planned for the near future, in breach of the 8th Commandment, which requires the lawful procuring and furthering the wealth and outward estate of ourselves and others (the Shorter Catechism, Q74).

Murder

Newspaper reports (6th November 2006) show that Scotland has the third highest murder rate in Western Europe according to a United Nations report.

The homicide statistics, fuelled by a “booze and blade” culture, puts Scotland on a par with troubled countries such as Israel, Iran and Azerbaijan, with Scots three times more likely to be killed as those living in Italy and Denmark. A total of 130 people were murdered in 2004, which is equivalent to 2.56 homicides per 100,000 population, with England and Wales in 7th position with a rate of 1.62. This is a fruit of abolishing the God-given death penalty for murder in the 1960s; thereby bringing divine displeasure upon the nation with restraining grace being largely removed, leading to mass murders by serial killers such as Neilson, Sutcliffe (the Yorkshire Ripper) and Dr. Shipman (the Manchester Doctor) who slew possibly over 200 of his patients. The most recent incident involved 5 prostitutes being murdered in Ipswich in a period of 6 weeks, the killings only ceasing when a suspect was arrested.

Adultery

This sin is rife from the highest to the lowest in the land. More than 40% of children born are from single mothers or cohabiting couples. In the election for a new leader of the Liberal Democrat Party (the previous leader was forced to resign because of alcoholism) it was revealed by the Press that two of the candidates were guilty of homosexual practices. One of these who betrayed his wife and children described his depraved conduct as “an error of judgement”. The other expressed the view that in a few years’ time his lifestyle would be regarded as perfectly normal and would prove to be no impediment in seeking political office. The former withdrew from the ballot but the latter continued as a candidate. It was gratifying to notice that he lost the election.

The Deputy Prime Minister was exposed by the press for adultery and marital infidelity, which not too long ago would have brought about instant resignation from office, but he was allowed to continue with his salary and the perks that go with it being retained; his only demotion was loss of some of his previous responsibilities.

Political correctness

Christian pensioners, Joe and Helen Roberts, were interrogated by the police in their own home because they telephoned their local council to complain about its promotion of homosexuality. After quizzing them on their Christian beliefs, the two officers said that they were “walking on eggshells” and in danger of being jailed for seven years, which is untrue, according to Mr. Colin Hart, Director of the Christian Institute, there being no such law. The Christian Institute was supporting Mr. and Mrs. Roberts in the legal action that they were taking against the Lancashire Police and the Wyre Borough Council. A leading constitutional lawyer has argued that what happened was police harassment. A judge decided that the issues were so important that he allocated a five-day hearing in the High Court in January 2007.

In December 2006 both the police and the Council backed down on the case with a full apology to Mr. and Mrs. Roberts, paying them their legal expenses, together with £10,000 in compensation, which they were going to donate to a

Christian charity. It is a cause for thankfulness that this case was a victory for free speech and religious liberty.

Exeter University Christian Union: The Christian Union (CU) at Exeter University has been temporarily suspended from the official list of student societies, has had its Student Union bank account frozen and has been banned from using Student Guild premises or advertising events within Guild facilities because the Student Guild claims the CU constitution and activities do not conform to its recently-introduced Equal Opportunities Policies. Christian students are now threatening legal action against the Student Guild and Exeter University if they do not support their rights as Christians to the freedoms of speech, belief and association.

Edinburgh University: Student leaders here were the latest to appeal for the removal of Bibles placed in University halls as these could prove offensive to students professing religions other than Christianity. The students' President is quoted as saying that "the Student Association strongly believes in the importance of ensuring that students of all faiths feel at home in their University accommodation".

Leicester University: The University of Leicester NHS Trust considered banning Bibles from its bedside lockers in order to avoid offending other faiths. This move was opposed by Leicestershire's Federation of Muslim Organisations and the Sikh Chairman of the Council of Faiths. The Trust backed down after being attacked in the Press.

Homosexuality

The readiness of some police forces to intervene when homosexuality is criticised is disturbing. A member of the public complained to police after author Lynette Burrows told a phone-in programme on Radio Five Live in December 2005 that she did not believe homosexuals should be allowed to adopt children. An officer contacted her the next day to say that a "homophobic incident" had been reported against her. "I was astounded," Mrs. Burrows said, "I told her this was a free country and we are allowed to express opinions on matters of public interest. She told me that it was not a crime but that she had to record these incidents. They were leaning on me, letting me know that the police had an interest in my views. I think it is sinister and completely unacceptable." A spokesman for Scotland Yard said "it was policy for Community Safety Units to investigate homophobic, racist and domestic incidents" because they were "priority crimes" yet admitted that no allegation of crime had been made.

Strathclyde Fire & Rescue: Nine Firefighters have been disciplined for refusing to hand out leaflets, containing advice on fire safety, to people attending a homosexual parade in Glasgow. A Watch Manager has been demoted with a £5,000 cut in pay. The others were given a written warning. Now the nine are to undergo "diversity training". This will presumably include instruction that what the Most High calls serious sin is perfectly acceptable and must not be opposed. Later the Watch Manager was reinstated but he and the

other eight remain under a final warning. The Christian Institute is pressing for all of them to be exonerated and disciplinary findings rescinded.

Sexual Orientation Regulations (SORS): These are intended to cover the provision of goods, facilities and services, and education applying to schools, businesses and voluntary organisations, including Churches, and have already become law in Northern Ireland. (A challenge by the Christian Institute has granted a judicial review in the High Court to be heard in March 2007.) SORS are expected to become law in the rest of the UK in April, recently being passed by the House of Lords by 199 votes to 66. Their declared purpose is to make it illegal to harass or discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation.

The Word of God strongly condemns homosexual behaviour putting it on the same level as adultery, incest and bestiality (Leviticus 20:10-16). In the UK sodomy was criminal until 1967, but since then the law has been turned around in its favour and SORS takes a further step in this direction. The long-term purpose of the homosexual lobby, under guidance from the prince of this world, is to silence any condemnation of this sin. "On each side walk the wicked, when vile men are high in place" (Psalm 12:8, metrical).

Conclusion

The Psalmist, under divine inspiration, penned these words: "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?" (Psalm 94:20). The time could be near at hand when Christians will be prosecuted (fined and imprisoned) for daring to preach against these abominations. If that becomes the case they will need grace to say like Peter and the other Apostles, "We ought to obey God rather than men" and follow the example of our godly forefathers who were willing to resist evil laws even unto death.

In May 1953, when Rev. John Colquhoun was presenting his report on religion and morals to the Synod, he wrote: "One is constrained to look upon this world as a great battlefield between Christ and the Devil and between grace and sin. One of the things revealed concerning Christ's Kingdom is that 'He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth'. That shall take place but, in our day, outward appearances would indicate that the kingdom of darkness is carrying everything before it. Its forces are numerous, strong and well accustomed to their work; it has taken hold of the riches of the world, together with the brightest talents that are found among the children of Adam, and has taken full advantage of that propensity to evil, inherited through the Fall of man and which is found in every individual of the human race. The highest and most brilliant literary attainments, the power of the mightiest nations, the sciences and philosophies of the most advanced schools of learning, yea, the most of what passes for religion itself, seems to have but one goal, that is the serving and advancement of the kingdom of darkness. This report will show how true this is and how clear it is in our day that the prince of the kingdom of darkness is the god of this world."

He concludes his report on a more optimistic note when he writes: “Through the various Bible societies and agencies the good seed is being disseminated, and, although we may see very little fruit in our day, we must remember that it is the Spirit alone that quickens and that, therefore, we must look to him who says, ‘For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth 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.’”

Let us also have this optimistic outlook – for the reign of the wicked shall be short – and be looking to Him of whom it is written:

“His name for ever shall endure;
Last like the sun it shall:
Men shall be bless’d in him, and bless’d
All nations shall him call.”
(Psalm 72:17, metrical)

SABBATH OBSERVANCE COMMITTEE’S REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. J. MacDonald

IN presenting our Report to this year’s Synod there is little new to say. It is undeniable that Sabbath profanation increases with every year. The British Parliament, the Scottish Executive, as well as most Local Authorities, are failing to give any support to Sabbath observance. They can publish the increased number of visitors and of jobs created as a result of Sabbath profanation, but they have not looked at the situation in terms of God’s Law or in the light of an endless eternity. This charge can be made against the whole nation. And we are particularly guilty because of the godly heritage left to us by our fathers. Their Sabbath keeping was much superior to what is the general practice now.

It is to be clearly seen that Sabbath keeping, or the lack of it, is an indicator of the spiritual life of a village, city or nation. Today it would be impossible but to conclude that the greater part of our land is in spiritual darkness. Our leaders in Church and State are setting a very poor example to the people whose good they claim as their objective. It is sad indeed to see in national newspapers the photos of the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland watching a football match on Sabbath in the company of Cardinal Keith O’Brian, the leading Roman Catholic dignitary in Scotland, with the ubiquitous Jack McConnell also, displaying his anti-sectarian credentials. It is surely in the displeasure of the Most High that such an event took place. One can only reflect sadly on the words of a well-known historian: “People get the rulers they deserve.”

Last year's Synod approved of the Committee's intention to petition the Scottish Executive requesting that the Sabbath be fixed on as the national day of rest. The Petition was presented by Rev. H. M. Cartwright and Mr. A. MacLean, who were given a courteous hearing. The Public Petitions Committee of the Scottish Executive replied that as Working Time Regulations were not a devolved issue, the Petition should be sent to the Department of Trade and Industry at Westminster. This Department ruled that as Sunday Trading laws "are not a 'reserved' matter", the Petition was an issue for the Scottish Executive and so it was returned to them for their consideration. The Public Petition Committee of the Scottish Executive are to consider the position again on Tuesday, 20th March, at 10 a.m., D.V. We shall, therefore not be able to comment on it before this Report is sent to Committee members but they will be informed as soon as possible. We trust that Mr. Cartwright will be able to give the Synod a briefing on their visit to Holyrood.

The Committee and the Church as a whole owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Cartwright and Mr. MacLean, for all they have done in bringing the matter to the Executive. We must pray that their endeavour to thus preserve a Sabbath in Scotland will have the blessing of God on it and that it will not be altogether in vain.

As noted in last year's Report, it is very difficult to elicit a meaningful reply from the Prime Minister, the standard reply being: "Thank you for your letter of 26th October. It will be passed on to the Prime Minister who will, no doubt, give your concerns his consideration." So far we have heard nothing further from him on the matter. The numbers of acknowledgements we receive are getting fewer with each passing year. Clearly Sabbath breakers are getting more and more bold and feel under no obligation to keep God's Commandments so they do not even trouble to reply to those who seek humbly to show them where their duty to God lies. Can we not rightly say of this nation what the prophet Jeremiah said to Judah as a message from the Lord: "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:13).

We live in an ungodly generation where, on all sides, God's law is ignored or is not even known. With few exceptions there is no clear message of "Thus saith the Lord" from the pulpits of our land. It is, indeed, a difficult time to testify on the Lord's side against the flood of ungodliness that is being poured out on every side.

Though this Report is primarily written for members of Synod it will, we hope, get a larger readership than that. We as individuals and as congregations are in a branch of the visible Church which has held a scriptural view on Sabbath observance and, as it is written, "unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required". We who have known better days spiritually and have seen true Sabbath observance in the past cannot but be grieved at the level of Sabbath breaking at the present time. It is our duty to set before the succeeding generations the scriptural practices and principles which we

have been taught. The Fourth Commandment, like all the Commandments, is meant for all generations till the end of time. It is sad indeed that so many of our fellow citizens are unaware of its existence or requirements. The sad fact is that the visible Church in Scotland has become irrelevant to the majority of the people and until their eyes are opened to the importance of Law and Gospel we cannot expect much response to our protests.

It is our duty as individuals and as a Church to hold fast the precious teaching: “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. . . .” It is also our duty to protest against Sabbath breaking by high and low and to witness on behalf of the Lord’s Day.

JEWISH AND FOREIGN MISSIONS COMMITTEE’S REPORT

Convener: Rev. J. MacLeod

General

The Jewish and Foreign Missions Committee has, over another year, endeavoured to attend to the duties laid upon it in connection with reaching sinners beyond our shores with the gospel. The sowing of the good seed of the kingdom has continued in all places where we have established a presence and, as is already well known, we seek to engage in this activity mainly in three countries – Zimbabwe, Kenya and Israel. The interest and support our friends in Holland is much appreciated and acknowledged with gratitude. This year we have to acknowledge a substantial additional contribution to meet a budgetary shortfall. Were it not for the generosity of the many thousands in that country, whose contributions are handled by the Mbuma Zending and then regularly passed on to us, the work in African lands could not possibly continue at its present level. The expenses incurred in initiating and hitherto continuing the work in Israel are met entirely by our own people. Other Reports being submitted to the Synod by those actually labouring in the field will provide details of the work being done and this Report will therefore be brief.

Zimbabwe

The long ministry of the Rev. Petros Mzamo came to an end in December 2006 when he retired and left the Nkayi area to take up residence in Bulawayo. Needless to say, Mr. Mzamo’s absence at Mbuma will be felt and we hope and pray that the Lord will, in His time, provide another pastor who will tend the widely-scattered flock over which he so faithfully exercised oversight throughout the years. We hope Mr. Mzamo will be spared for some years yet and sustained in health to the extent that he will still be able – even if retired from the active ministry – to labour on in his Master’s service. We are thankful that the other ministers, Rev. Z. Mazvabo at New Canaan, Rev. S. Khumalo at

Bulawayo and Rev. M. Mloyi at Zenka, have been sustained in health and enabled to continue the unfurling of the banner of Truth where their portion has been allotted them. The Rev. Alasdair B. MacLean, Probationer, has been supplying at Ingwenya and his labours are much appreciated. His work permit has now been granted and we hope that he will soon be permanently settled at Ingwenya, where, as pastor, he will find so many souls gathered together before him and – unique in our day – most of them young and impressionable. May it prove to be a field white already to harvest!

The John Tallach School, as other reports will indicate, continues to flourish and goes from strength to strength under the able, tireless leadership of Mr. Bonekele Ncube and Miss Norma B. MacLean. Its excellence as an educational institution is now well known throughout the whole of Zimbabwe and educational authorities are keen to see it become a sixth-form school. Miss Eleanor Wylie completed her contract in December and returned to her native Ulster. The same month Mr James Macleod likewise completed his contractual period of service. The devotion to duty of these two young people was exemplary and their contribution to the raising of the John Tallach School to its present status was considerable. We express our gratitude to them. Ingwenya is still home to Miss K. M. MacAulay, but she now spends most of her time in Bulawayo engaged in the work of revising the Sindebele Bible with Mr. Teus Benschop, Mr. B. Mziya and Mr. N. Mpofu. The Trinitarian Bible Society are almost ready to produce the completed New Testament. The team are now well on with completing the Old Testament revision. Future generations, we believe, will appreciate their work.

At Mbumba, the Hospital continues to supply much-valued medical services to the area. Dr. A. Snoek's presence is of great benefit to the people, as, of course, is that of the nursing staff, under the charge of Sister W. Geurtsen and consisting of Sisters G. Wijngaarden, E. van Breda and C. Rennes. We are glad to report that Sister P. Beukers, after becoming seriously ill, is now well on the way to recovery and we hope that she will soon return to Mbumba where, we believe, her heart is. To these ladies we express our gratitude. We believe that theirs is a labour of love and that the God who is righteous is not forgetful of that.

The Committee engaged the services of Mr. Hugh MacKenzie, "to carry out a review of the running of the Zimbabwe Mission, including infrastructure, transport and finance", and in his own characteristic, efficient way he discharged that duty to the satisfaction of the Committee and all concerned. He was further appointed as co-ordinator to oversee the implementation of the recommendations resulting from the review. We are most grateful to Mr MacKenzie for all the work that he has done and we believe that as a result of our harnessing of his skills, the Mission will now be administered in a more efficient manner.

These are difficult times in Zimbabwe with rampant inflation and the whole economy in a perilous state. In the circumstances, our mission staff have coped admirably and are to be commended for the way in which they have performed their duties in the face of such adversity.

Kenya

In Kenya the work continues. The Rev. Keith Watkins is now labouring on his own and in addition to his spiritual duties has to attend to the duties of administrator as well. In this latter work he is helped by his wife and the Committee have to place on record its appreciation of that. It is hoped that a Mr. A. Ploeg from Holland will be recruited to help with the administrative work. Wherever the ambassadors of Christ are and Satan finds his lordship threatened, we may be sure that difficulties will arise. But whatever the discouragements, the great encouragement is that wherever the Master sends His servants the sound of His footsteps is never far behind. We are thankful that Mr. Watkins has been sustained in good health and has been able to attend to his multifarious duties over another year. The Rev. Alasdair B. MacLean, Probationer, has been able to relieve Mr. Watkins so that he has been able to take his furlough and that arrangement, it is hoped, will be in place this Summer when Mr. and Mrs. Watkins are due home for a well-earned rest. Mr. Watkins will be present at the Synod meeting as retiring Moderator and will, no doubt, supplement the meagre information we have provided here. The Omorembe Clinic continues to provide all the help possible to those in need of medical attention and care.

Mbuma-Zending's continuing support of the work in Kenya is much appreciated.

Israel

As the Rev. John Goldby will, hopefully, be present at the Synod meeting, he will, himself, present a Report. He has, commendably, made progress in speaking modern Hebrew. As in Zimbabwe, the political situation in Israel, as throughout the Middle East, gives rise to concern. Having, however, gained a foothold in Israel, we hope the Gospel we have brought there will be blessed to those of God's ancient people with whom contact is made.

Conclusion

We would ask the Lord's people among us to remember at the throne of grace those to whom attention is drawn in this Report and all others. We are to seek the Master's blessing on their labours. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."

JEWISH REPORT

Rev. J. Goldby

AFTER formally being set apart for the work among the Jews in Israel, on 16th August 2006, in the Glasgow Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, my family and I returned to Israel on 30th August. Church services were resumed in the Finnish Mission and St. Andrew's Church of Scotland on Sabbaths and

a weekly Bible study was held in our flat on Rechov HaAskan in south Jerusalem within sight of the Old City and the Mount of Olives.

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) wrote: "The Jewish nation have, from their very beginning, been a remarkable standing evidence of the truth of revealed religion. . . . With respect to the time since Christ, their preservation as a distinct nation has, in many respects, been still more remarkable. . . . What are left of this people have ever since remained in a total dispersion over all the world, mixed everywhere with other people, without any thing like a government or civil community of their own, and often extremely harassed by other nations; though still they remain a clear and perfectly distinct nation from all other people." How very solemn and remarkable has been the history of the Jewish people since Edward's time.

In 1967 Israel was attacked on three sides by the combined armies of Syria, Egypt and Jordan, with units from other Arab countries. A notable defeat was inflicted on the Arab armies in the "Six Day War". As a result, the Golan Heights, and part of Sinai came under Israeli control. More importantly, in God's providence, Jerusalem was restored to Jewish control for the first time in two thousand years (Luke 21:24). At the present time there are political moves afoot for Israel to return to the pre-1967 borders in return for Arab recognition of Israel. In God's providence, whether or not such a move will be permitted, remains to be seen.

In any event, Jerusalem is a highly significant place in the purposes of God and has become the base of our work among the Jewish people. Concerning her, God declared of old, "This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her" (Ezekiel 5:5). Jerusalem literally marks the border between the East and the West and politically Jerusalem is truly in the midst of the nations. World leaders travel to and from Jerusalem, scrambling desperately to find a solution to the so-called Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The powers that be have tried and failed to set their agenda for the Middle East for almost a century but we wonder how many have asked counsel of God? His purpose alone will prevail and our wisdom is to seek His way. Religiously and culturally Jerusalem is a melting pot of the nations. The world's religions are represented here, together with many sects and branches of Christianity. Furthermore, Jerusalem is home to the largest concentration of Jewish people in the world. From all parts of the earth Jewish people, in recent times, have been gathered to their ancient land. A political restoration has been effected and a spiritual restoration remains to be accomplished in God's time.

From the beginning of February both of our Sabbath Church services have been held in the YMCA Chapel on King David Street, directly opposite the famous King David Hotel, where many dignitaries stay when visiting Jerusalem. Over the last year we have lost several of our regular adherents who have returned to their own countries. The last two of our faithful regulars are due to leave the country in June. On the other hand, since moving to the YMCA we have seen a few more casual visitors from Holland and elsewhere

attending. These visitors are very helpful to us in keeping the door open at this early stage. In the longer term, if a regular church situation is to be established, we really need local people to join us. To that end we would urge friends worldwide to pray, especially for a local assistant to be raised up, who might in due course become a member and office bearer.

From a small number of Jewish believers in Christ in 1967 the professing Jewish Christian community in Israel has increased to an estimated 10,000 persons. Although the theology of the Jewish Christian community is Evangelical it seems for the most part to be dominated by Arminianism with much charismatic influence. Their theology has been shaped by mainly American evangelical and Pentecostal churches. During this period of development there has been little attempt by the Reformed Churches to cultivate and contribute to a more solid theological doctrine and practice among the growing body of Jewish believers. However, it is not an easy matter to move the theological direction of Jewish believers to a better path, the majority of whom will not even call themselves Christians but “Messianic believers in Christ”. Many in the Messianic movement mix Judaism with Christianity and some even deny the deity of Christ.

We recently met with Rev. Baruch Maoz of the Grace and Truth Congregation in Rishon L'Tsion (about a forty minute drive from Jerusalem). Mr. Maoz is a Reformed Baptist and a Calvinist. According to our information his position on eschatology is Amillennial. The congregation, like all the Messianic fellowships, worships on the Jewish Sabbath, although Mr. Maoz himself believes that the Lord's Day is the Christian Sabbath. The form of worship follows the Messianic pattern of instrumental music with Messianic songs. We attended a service and found that their worship, whilst not following the regulative principle, was more orderly and restrained than most in Israel. The preaching was sound and the mainly Russian-speaking congregation of around two hundred were very attentive as also were a number of deaf people for whom a sign language translation was provided. The congregation is engaged in building its own church which project is on hold at present due to lack of funds.

There are few Reformed pastors in Israel. One is Pastor Menno Kalisher of the Jerusalem Assembly. This congregation, of two hundred plus persons, worships in the dining hall of Kibbutz Ramat Rachel in south Jerusalem. We know Mr. Kalisher better than Mr. Maoz, due to our living near to Ramat Rachel. We have spoken with him and heard him preach on a number of occasions. The preaching is sound, though not of a style to which we are accustomed. The worship has instrumental music and Messianic songs of human composition, though many are based on portions of Scripture. We are encouraged that Mr. Kalisher takes a strong line against the errors of Pentecostalism. Both congregations receive some funding directly or indirectly from overseas churches. They are not branches of these churches and seem to be free to administer the Gospel as they see fit.

Some in Israel are wealthy but many are poor and many more have low incomes. Russian immigrants often experience hard times, whereas immigrants

from the USA and Western Europe are generally more prosperous. Wages seem on average about a half of those in the UK. Israeli soldiers in non-fighting units, for example, are only paid around forty pounds a month. Front-line soldiers receive around seventy pounds. Given the economic climate, it is likely that Messianic groups will welcome overseas support for some time to come.

For three months from September 2006 I attended a full-time Hebrew Language Ulpan. This course was of great benefit, although taking up a lot of time. God willing, we hope to resume study at the same Ulpan later in the year. Meantime a part-time course is being followed at a different Ulpan, two evenings a week. The study of Modern Hebrew is an integral part of life for us here as it is for most Jewish immigrants.

In God's good providence we have been kept safe so far. Nevertheless, acts of terrorism are constantly being thwarted and tension is always in the air. Israel is a land which, since its inception in 1948, has suffered repeated aggression, not only from individual terror groups but from the neighbouring Arab nations. Some Christian churches maintain a bigoted anti-Israel stance. They unjustly blame Israel for everything and often manifest an unbiblical and unchristian attitude towards the Jewish people. This serves to bolster prejudice and makes Jewish people very suspicious of Christians. We consider it to be the duty of Christian churches to stand by the Israeli people and seek to properly understand their situation in history and providence so as not to judge with unrighteous judgement.

One of our neighbours is Rabbi Haim of the local Synagogue which I attend fairly regularly. In this way we get to know the people and I improve my biblical Hebrew and understanding of Synagogue worship. In recent times I have also attended a study group in the home of a Rabbi Mordecai. He also acts as the assistant Chief Rabbi of Poland. In the Rabbi's home we have had useful discussions on various passages of Scripture. I have recently heard two Rabbis speaking on the importance of faith and the insufficiency of external services alone. What they mean by faith is a question but this is a step in the right direction. One has to be very sensitive as to what is said and to whom but my contributions to these discussions have been well received so far. As I write, the Passover is being observed in Israel and this has provided an occasion to speak with a variety of Jewish persons on aspects of this feast. We have had opportunity to point out to some that the lamb is the Passover and without a sacrifice there is no Passover and that Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.

The population of Israel is somewhere around six million persons of whom five million are Jewish (not including the West Bank and Gaza). Approximately 76% are Jews (of whom about half are secular), 16% Muslim, 1.5% Druze, 2.5% Christian and 4% unclassified. Most of the Christian population is Arab, 1% are Catholics (Greek Catholic, Maronite Catholic or Latin Catholic). Of the remaining 1.5% Christian population most are Greek Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, Russian Orthodox or Armenian. Protestant and Evangelical groups are very small. The Arab Christian population is under a lot of pressure from Islamist groups. The result of this has been an exodus of Arab Christians

(mainly RCs and Orthodox). This is happening within Palestinian Authority areas and among Israeli Arabs. For example, it has been calculated that the Christian population of Bethlehem in 1945 was 80% but now stands at around 20%. The Roman Catholics and the Orthodox Churches hold massive amounts of property in Israel, disproportionate to the number of their followers, and Rome has built ornate and idolatrous structures on many biblical sites.

Since WWII the Vatican has been trying to repair the damage done by the wartime Pope who has been described as “Hitler’s Pope”. Naturally the process of conciliation has been pursued by Rome in their own interest and not that of Israel and the Jews. In 1993 a “Fundamental Agreement” between the Vatican and Israel was drawn up and later signed. Full diplomatic relations between Israel and the Vatican were in place by 1994. This was the first time any Government in Israel or Palestine had recognised the Papacy in 500 years. In 1997 Israel signed the “Legal Personality” agreement with the Vatican. In recent years Rome has been working to strengthen her legal and fiscal position here and a high level meeting in the Vatican to seek agreement on these matters was scheduled for 29th March 2007 but was cancelled by Israel with only two days’ notice on 27th March. We hope that this is a good sign and that the Vatican will not be permitted to blind the Israelis with their pretences. Despite attempts at conciliation, Rome remains basically anti-Israel. On the Jewish side Israel perceives Christianity largely in terms of the Papal system and it is our constant need to point out the distinction between the Roman Catholic and biblical Protestant attitude toward the Jewish people. In 2002 during a security crisis, when the Israel Defence Forces were deployed against Palestinian terrorists, the then Israeli Ambassador to the Vatican was summoned by the Pope and told that Israel was oppressing the Palestinian people. This was untrue then, as it is now, but it serves to demonstrate the underlying attitude of the Vatican. Interestingly, the aforementioned Ambassador is a Jewish man born in Glasgow. I met him on one occasion, when he told me that he had been the Israeli Ambassador to Vatican. I took the opportunity to express the view that the Vatican was the enemy of both Jew and Gentile. The Vatican is not a real State nor is it a true Church. May the Lord revive His own cause in this land.

INGWENYA MISSION REPORT

Rev. S. Khumalo

“CRY aloud, spare not, and lift up thy voice like a trumpet and shew my people, their transgressions and the house of Jacob, their sins” (Isaiah 58:1). This was the cry, the voice, the trumpet of the Gospel in all our pulpits at Ingwenya and her stations every Sabbath and weekday prayer meetings, enabled by the grace of God. We have come to the end of the year with a thankful heart for the kindness of the Lord for preserving us as a church and as individuals to see another year in time.

We are thankful that by God's providence, the Rev. A. B. MacLean resides at Ingwenya and supplies all the stations there, which has been a great relief to me. What concerns us all is his work permit, which has not, at the time of writing, been approved. We commit all things into the hands of the Lord.

Ingwenya has five additional stations, namely Cameron, Gadade, Insiza, Matapa, and Inyathi. Cameron and Gadade are nearer to Ingwenya than the other three stations. We are thankful for the elders who supply these stations every Sabbath and conduct weekday prayer meetings in addition to the occasional visit from a minister.

Communions are held in three stations: Ingwenya (March and September), Cameron (July), and Inyathi (November). At Matapa the sacrament of Baptism was administered, when one male adult and a boy (son of Joseph Maduna) were baptized.

This year has not been very good in terms of rainfall, especially in the southern part of the country. Crops in some places are a total failure. Neither have Ingwenya and her outstations been spared. There is great concern regarding food and drinking water for livestock and people in both the rural areas and Bulawayo. Despite all these difficulties, the Lord ruleth. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1).

JOHN TALLACH SECONDARY SCHOOL REPORT

Miss Norma B. MacLean

THE school routine has continued much as in previous years – there are changes in the faces around us but the daily operations are much the same from year to year.

The major new development of 2006 began with the arrival of Mr. Hugh MacKenzie to undertake a review of the work of every department of the mission. At Ingwenya, Mr. MacKenzie's review was an extensive exercise which described the operations of the mission here and collated the needs and desired developments. The next step after the review was to formulate a development plan. Mr MacKenzie's assistance and guidance in this has been invaluable. The biggest item on the Ingwenya development plan is a feasibility study into the possibility of introducing Form 6 to John Tallach School. Those who have read previous reports will remember that, since 2002, we have been under considerable pressure from almost every group with which we come in contact to make a commitment to Form 6 development – former pupils, parents, the local council and the Ministry of Education have all been exerting heavy pressure in that direction. It has been very difficult to respond to requests that we make some definite commitment, as the school is clearly perceived to be among the best managed and top performing schools in

Matabeleland North Province. When there is so little quality Form 6 provision in the province it has been difficult to justify our stance of limiting our provision to Form 4 only. Mr. MacKenzie has shouldered most of the burden of producing the feasibility study and Mr. J. MacLeod has managed to produce most of the projected costings. It has been very exciting to reach this stage and we await the response of the Jewish and Foreign Missions Committee.

The success of the school was recognised again in a public way in 2006 when the Permanent Secretary for Education insisted on a visit. Dr. Mahere was Guest of Honour at our Prizegiving Ceremony in November and it was an honour and a pleasure to have him among us as he was clearly appreciative of the efforts being made at the school.

Staffing

After being Acting Headmaster since June 2000, Mr. Ncube was at last officially appointed to the post by the Ministry of Education; Miss MacLean continued as Acting Deputy and a full complement of staff was in post. Many schools in Zimbabwe have serious teaching staff shortages because of emigration to South Africa and other places. There are well documented accounts of headmasters and other senior and well qualified staff who have managed to obtain work in South Africa, returning to Zimbabwe to offer posts to their ex-colleagues – in some cases emptying the school concerned of all the experienced staff. We are very thankful to have been able to retain a core of long-serving teachers on the staff: of the 26 Government paid staff in post during 2006, 9 of our teachers have been in service at John Tallach School for 10 years or more.

Three expatriate staff were in post throughout the year: Miss MacLean, Mr. MacLeod and Miss Wylie, although Miss MacLean was in the UK for two periods (as her mother was seriously ill), firstly on furlough during January to April and secondly on compassionate leave from August to November. During these two periods both Mr. MacLeod and Miss Wylie cheerfully and ably shouldered many extra responsibilities and were of great help to Mr. Ncube. Miss Wylie's contract ended in December when she returned home to the UK; Mr. MacLeod's contract ended in July but he agreed to extend his period of service to September and then again to March 2007. Both made a significant contribution to the work of the school, not only in their own specialist subject areas but especially in the teaching of Bible Knowledge and in Sabbath School. Their departures leave us very short staffed in both these areas and we are in desperate need of other expatriate staff to assist.

We would issue a plea yet again to any suitably qualified people to seriously consider offering a term of service to the work of the church in the school here. A suitably qualified person would hold a university degree with teaching subjects, preferably in recognised shortage areas in Zimbabwe: science, computing, mathematics or a qualification in Fashion and Fabrics.

Christianity is widely respected in Zimbabwe and we are in the most remarkable position of being able to teach Bible Knowledge using the national

curriculum, in total accordance with the beliefs and practices of the church. We have under our care and instruction children from many different religious affiliations but we have no difficulty whatsoever in organising their whole routine, both during school time and during recreation time, in a way which is consistent with the beliefs and practices of the church and we enjoy the total support of their parents and of the Ministry of Education officials in these efforts. It is a most rare situation which certainly would not exist in the UK and it gives an unrivalled opportunity to present the truth of the Gospel to a large number of children and to instruct them as to the duty God requires of them. Is there no one at all who will ask the Lord to make them willing to serve Him in this capacity? There is a huge need here – the work is demanding and life in a boarding school is very busy but the rewards are second to none: these are not the transient rewards of time but they are for eternity. When you have 150 children from such a variety of backgrounds in front of you in Sabbath school or in class repeating the answers to such significant questions as: “Who is the Redeemer of God’s elect?”, “What does God require of us that we may escape His wrath and curse due to us for sin?” or “What is faith in Jesus Christ?” or reciting passages from the Scriptures such as “By what means shall a young man learn his way to purify?” . . . seed is being planted, the fruit of which is eternal.

Pupil enrolment

Enrolment remained steady at around 590, with 60 children attending on a daily basis and approximately 530 boarding at school. As usual, we enrolled children from a wide variety of backgrounds and different religious affiliations. Two of the children are blind and one has serious visual impairment: two boys in Form 4 and one girl in Form 2. These children are fully integrated into the everyday school routine but benefit from the services of the specialist teacher who gives braille instruction and transcribes all their work into and out of braille. One of our happier failures is that it is now very difficult to find children who need the services of our visually impaired unit!

O Level results

The O Level results for 2006 have not been published at the time of writing so no figures are available.

In June 2006, at the annual Awards Ceremony hosted by the Ministry of Education in Hwange for the 2005 O Level results for Matabeleland North, the school yet again received many trophies and certificates:

1st Religious Studies	1st Biology
1st Geography	1st History
1st Integrated Science	1st Mathematics
1st Ndebele	1st Physical Science
1st Principles of Accounts	1st Agriculture

Best Overall School Performance (Boarding) at O Level
Highest Number of Pupils with 5As (O Level)

The school was 9th in the national league tables for O Level results.

Finance

The hyper inflationary environment in Zimbabwe has continued unabated. In August 2006 the currency was revalued by knocking off the last 3 digits of each note denomination so as to make the figures more manageable. We are currently being warned to expect an annual inflation figure of over 1,500%. School fees continued to rise but did not keep pace with inflation as controls are in place to limit the level of school fees' increases. It is, of course, difficult to contemplate rises which do keep pace with inflation as most wages are not rising at the same level. However, all supplies have to be purchased at inflationary prices, so keeping to the budget is very difficult and many unpleasant cuts have had to be made. We did, however, manage to finish 2006 in a break-even position so, unlike most other schools, we did not have to surcharge parents.

Vehicles and buildings

We still have the same vehicles as for the previous few years but the Venture, primarily used by the Headmaster, is in desperate need of replacement and this is scheduled for June 2007. We have had this vehicle since 1998 so the mileage is very high. The 3 ton truck which is so essential to the smooth running of the school, being the vehicle used to bring most supplies from Bulawayo, is also needing to be replaced – we have had it since 2000 and, as it is a very busy vehicle, the mileage is also very high. There has been a sharp deterioration in the reliability of this vehicle during 2006 and many expensive repairs have been necessary. The expatriate staff were very thankful to receive a car for their own use in September – this makes day-to-day life much more flexible as it was becoming increasingly difficult to borrow the very busy school car.

The maintenance programme has been kept to a minimum due to rapidly rising costs. In the middle of the year a donation was received which was spent on paint so we have been able to continue with the painting programme. Two very old thatched cottages near the girls' dormitory complex underwent a major renovation and are now occupied by 3 of our lady teachers. Thanks to the able management of Mr. MacLeod, the new science laboratory was finished by the end of the year and classes began to use it in the new term of 2007. This is a most valuable addition to the school as all science classes can now be accommodated in a laboratory setting. Mr. Ncube successfully managed to negotiate an amicable closure on the contract to upgrade the school kitchen facilities; however, little progress has been made since then due to lack of funds. A new diesel engine was purchased for one of the boreholes, giving enhanced reliability, and the system at the dam was repaired satisfactorily, much improving the performance of the pump.

Security

We again had security concerns when 2 computers and a new printer were stolen from the school in May. We were convinced that there had been “inside” knowledge for this theft and eventually the night guard on duty at the time of the theft was implicated and confessed to the theft. A rather more bizarre incident was the theft of over 20 pairs of shoes from the girls’ dormitories during the night as the girls were asleep – the thieves broke in through the main security fence and forced open the dormitory door. We were much more concerned about the risk to the girls than the loss of the shoes. A review of the mission’s security took place: the first step was to employ two, rather than one, night guards, and it was decided not to employ local men in these posts in an attempt to reduce “inside” jobs; security lighting was improved at the girls’ area, heavy-duty bolts fixed to the interior of the doors and a large bush clearance exercise was undertaken. Further improvements are to be considered in the development plan.

Conclusion

The support of friends, known and unknown, is again much appreciated. We are very thankful for all the donations which help in so many areas. One of the more original gifts received was a donation with which to purchase books for a Sabbath reading scheme. Over £1,000 was donated which allowed us to buy several hundred books for the religious section of the school library: the children are now allowed to borrow 2 books each from the library, one of which must be from the religious section which they can then read on Sabbaths – the children very much appreciate this facility. We received 2 separate donations of laptops, 2 from an individual donor and one from JFMC funds, all of which are in use in the administration offices at Ingwenya. The old computers which were there had become unreliable and it was quite beyond the financial capacity of the school to replace them, so we are very thankful for these laptops.

The Oikonomos Foundation continued to support the development of the computer laboratory. St. Jude’s Deacons’ Court continues to regularly support our unit for the blind children. For the last few years the fees for these children have been paid by charitable organisations in Zimbabwe but this source of funding has become another casualty of the economic situation, therefore we are very thankful to St. Jude’s Deacons’ Court for undertaking to support these children at school. The monetary gift which was used to purchase paint has already been mentioned. As in the past, we receive regular donations which help with children’s fees, uniforms, library books, and even treats from time to time.

Many other mission schools have been complaining of a lack of interest and support from their church authorities. At the end of the year one mission school near us brought one of their church representatives from the USA to see how a “properly supported mission school” (as they put it) is run. In fact they

brought the representative to Ingwenya first before proceeding to their own mission station so that the disparity would be very clear. The representative was clearly overwhelmed by the level of support we enjoy. We perhaps are guilty at times of taking this ongoing support for granted and an incident like that reminds us of how greatly privileged we are. We therefore wish to record anew our heartfelt thanks to the Jewish and Foreign Missions Committee and to Mbumba Zending in Holland for their unfailing support and deep interest in the work of the school.

ZENKA MISSION REPORT

Rev. M. Mloyi

IT was in the providence of God to yet again see another year in time. The year has been wonderful in that there were good rains and most people had a plentiful harvest from their fields. We do pray for a spiritual downpour on the souls of many so that they may turn to God and have faith in Jesus Christ for their salvation. Many these days are not thirsting and hungering for the Gospel but are taken up by the world. The blessed Saviour said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled".

There was sadness in the Zenka/Nkayi congregations on 20th of August 2006, due to the death of Mrs. T. Mpofu, the mother of the late Rev. A. Mpofu. She was one of the most outstanding old ladies since the mission was established at Zenka and died at the age of 92.

Doors were kept open in places of worship every Sabbath in all the four preaching stations at Zenka. Mr. Judea Sibanda was elected by the Zenka congregation to the office of elder and Mr. Willie Nkomo to the office of deacon. These two men help in addition to Ngwenya, another elder. Prayer meetings during the week are conducted at Zenka and Katasa, but not yet at Mabayi and Fudu, as they are without a church building and classrooms are occupied until 4 p.m. during the week.

The Lord's Supper was dispensed, as usual, in February and August.

As most of the people locally had a good harvest, Food Aid was stopped until the year end. In the beginning of December 2006 the government gave permission to non-governmental organisations to help as the rains were late for the planting season. The Red Cross has now stopped its help to terminally ill patients and orphans. Those in need of maize buy from the local Grain Marketing Board.

We pray and desire a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our lands for an ingathering of many souls to the Saviour.

NKAYI MISSION REPORT

Rev. M. Mloyi

WE have to be thankful that the Lord God has been merciful to us – we are still spared on mercy's ground and were carried through another year.

Places of worship on Sabbath and weekday prayer meetings were opened. I had to visit these places fortnightly with the help of the elders. If it is raining, the Nkuba station is difficult to reach because the roads leading to it become slippery and as a result they suffer. If the River Tshangani floods, cycling is impossible.

The Lord's Supper was dispensed twice during the year in the Nkayi congregation, in January and June. The sacrament of Baptism was dispensed at Nkuba, when a man and a woman were baptized. This congregation has now begun to build a church building using moulded and fired bricks, so we hope that this will be completed in due course.

At Donsa Dam the Lord's Supper was dispensed once, as usual, in May. The elder there helps to keep the door open on both the weekday prayer meeting and Sabbath. I try to visit them at least once a month; more frequent visits are difficult because of the distance and workload. We concur with the words of the Saviour in Matthew 9:37-38: "Then saith he unto his disciples, the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."

We pray for the Spirit of grace to strengthen us in His work and that many may be turned to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

ZVISHAVANE MISSION REPORT

Rev. Z. Mazvabo

AT this time of the year, the sun has been passing overhead through Zimbabwe. It will make such journeys through Zimbabwe, twice every year without failure, because this marks seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, which will not cease while the earth remains. First the sun passes overhead through Zimbabwe in the month of December, on its way to the Tropic of Capricorn. Then it again passes overhead through Zimbabwe on its way to the Equator. This shows the great authority of the Word of God over all events, when the seasons continue as it is written. The months of November, December and January are the summer months or seedtime. They are usually hot and wet, which is good for seedtime or for planting. But this time they were hot and dry, which is not suitable for sowing seed. It follows that the harvest time will be bad or poor. That is how it is in Zimbabwe this year. In the southern parts of the country the harvest will be very poor indeed. These facts of life are simple, straightforward and true,

but they are placed where they are to teach us great lessons of everlasting consequence. “He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.” Or, “He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him”.

Famine often comes upon the people of Zimbabwe when they are ill prepared for it. The scourge of AIDS has been ravaging across Zimbabwe for many years. There are more orphans and widows than the country can afford to look after. Many children are being looked after by their grandparents after their own parents have been swept away by this cruel disease. There are homes where children are struggling not only to nurse their remaining parent, but also to provide food for the whole family. In some homes only children have been left behind to fend for themselves. To make things worse, the greater part of the orphans and widows are themselves sick and desperately in need of medical care, not to mention food and clothing. Hence there is an increase in the numbers of thieves and robbers. Happily there are organisations that try to provide shelter, food, medical care and education to the destitute but the task is too great for them, even without the interference of corruption. We, in our small way, when and wherever we can, give out clothing donated to us from Holland, for which we are very thankful and which the orphans and widows appreciate very much. We have not been able to do anything in the way of home-based care because we are short of means. The Bible instructs us to remember the poor and when we have an opportunity to visit them we cannot fail to notice that they listen attentively and happily receive the tracts and whatever else we can give them. There is a great need for sound but short tracts or, better still, for Gospels such as those according to Matthew, Mark, Luke or John, for free distribution.

We encourage our people to buy and read Bibles for themselves. But Shona Bibles – and, I suppose, Ndebele Bibles as well – are not readily available in the country just now. Therefore I think it is expedient that the Ndebele New Testament translation be printed and made available for sale to our people and the revised Shona New Testament be revised and printed again and made available for sale to our people first and then to all who want to buy them, as a matter of urgency. We are pleased to mention that we now have the Shona Psalm book in full. We are allowing the people to use it as it is so they can pick out any mistakes and correct them before sending it for printing.

The congregation of Zvishavane, which we call Ebenezer, has still not got a suitable place of worship. This is a matter of concern to us because the town of Zvishavane is central to all the surrounding districts in which we have congregations. The people come to hospital in Zvishavane or to shop or to visit their children or to visit the offices of the district administrator, so that it is a pity no suitable place of worship can be found. Beside this, Zvishavane is a growing town as mining companies near it come to build houses for their workmen here. We have only one base in Mashonaland and that is in Zvishavane. The authorities say that they would allocate a site to us if we could

show them proof of availability of funds to develop it. “Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.”

We crave the prayers of all that desire the prosperity of Zion and believe that, though the water pots are being filled with water and the planting is being done, what remains is that the Lord alone can give the increase. “And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest.”

MBUMA MISSION REPORT

Rev. P. Mzamo

“I WILL never leave thee nor forsake thee.” We as a visible church, made up of individuals, families and congregations at home and abroad, in spite of our short-falls and failures have much reason to reflect on the fact that the Lord has continued over the years to speak thus to us. He continues to raise up labourers in His vineyard – ministers to declare the everlasting Gospel of the Son of God, teachers for secular education, others to teach the Bible to the young, and doctors to heal the sick. All are devoted to their duties and doing the work of Him who promises to be with His people to the end of time. The Lord’s promises will never fail and where there is a true and faithful witness on His side, fruits of it will be seen in the daily lives of His people.

Church work continued as in past years, the Lord adding to the number of office bearers and communicants. Services are conducted every Lord’s Day; in some preaching stations where there are no male members only one service is possible. Where the mobile clinic visits, worship is conducted; first a psalm is sung, then the Word is read and then prayer offered. The sacraments of the Lord’s Supper and Baptism were administered in a Christian manner as set up by the Lord, the Head of the Church. On these occasions, large numbers come from as far afield as Sipemba and Bhubhu. The ministers, being invited to assist, glorify the crucified Saviour, edify the Lord’s people and warn the wayward in their preaching. At the end of the communion a living soul would say “it is good for us to be here”.

At the Somakantana Communion the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was administered by the Rev. M. Mloyi, as I was not able to travel long distances. Three elders assisted. I am very much in debt to both the minister and the elders. The Lord gives strength to all who faithfully witness on His side and says, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness”.

To our dear friends in Holland – saved by the Saviour and the elect of God, united to Him by a living and saving faith and who continue to be strong and faithful supporters of the Gospel work in the Mission field – we give hearty thanks. “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

We received a donation for the use of the Binga congregation. This enabled two elders to visit, when they preached the everlasting Gospel and, before returning on Monday morning, they handed out clothes to those in need of them.

MBUMA MISSION HOSPITAL REPORT

Dr. A. Snoek

IN comparison with reports of previous years, which always mentioned serious staff shortages at Mbuma, it is a big change to be able to report that, since the beginning of this year, 6 expatriates have been employed in Mbuma. However, there was hardly any time when more than one of them was performing medical duties. This made it again a year of strenuous work, but the Lord has enabled us to continue with it. And how thankful we should be that after so many years of staff shortages, He has now provided additional workers who, in the near future, will share the medical and also the spiritual work. The vacant post of evangelist and a retiring minister has left a lot of work to be done, although daily worship and Bible classes have continued with the help of the elders. On Sabbath afternoons we have the Bible class for Nursing Staff, when the Shorter Catechism is discussed. On Thursday afternoons a Bible class was started for the workmen under the guidance of Mr. Mhlanga, the foreman, Sister Celia and Mr. Nkiwane, a primary school teacher. On Saturday afternoons the Bible class for children was strengthened by having Sister Celia.

At the end of December, with much regret, we said goodbye to Mr. Mzamo and his wife, who for 53 years laboured at Mbuma and the many outstations, and since June 1957 as minister. The 17th December was the last Sabbath Mr. Mzamo preached in Mbuma. Many people from other congregations gathered in the church. During the morning service he preached from Jude 1:3: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." As a shepherd leaving his flock, he sincerely warned us against all false prophets and teaching with which we are surrounded and pointed out the only way of salvation in Jesus Christ and Him crucified. We hope that there may yet be further fruit from all his many labours.

Staffing

We started the year 2006, while Sister Willie Geurtsen was on furlough, with two expatriate staff, Sister Petra Beukers and Dr. Anneke Snoek. At the end of January, Sister Celia Renes and Sister Gilia van Wijngaarden arrived from Kenya. Although they were not allowed to do nursing duties, they proved to

be very helpful in all other duties in and outside the hospital, and decided to apply for a Zimbabwean work permit. In February, Sister Erica van Breda arrived in Zimbabwe. She first went to Ingwenya for language study until her Nursing Council registration arrived in May, when she joined the staff in Mbumba. When Sister Willie arrived from furlough, she worked for a short time in Mbumba, after which she went to Mpilo Hospital in Bulawayo for her Midwifery training (which will finish in May 2007, all being well).

Sr. Petra went on furlough in April, May and June, while Sr. Celia, Sr. Gilia and Dr. Snoek went on furlough in July, August and September. During this time, Sr. Petra became very ill and went home on sick leave where she has been until now, although she is recovering, for which we are thankful to the Lord. Also Sr. Gilia stayed in Holland for 4 months sick leave after her furlough and recovery from the difficult situation in Kenya. Thankfully she was enabled to return to Zimbabwe recently.

Mr. J. B. Moyo, our Zimbabwean qualified nurse, has been a reliable help for the hospital. Besides him, our qualified staff was extended with 4 Primary Care Nurses on top of the 2 PCNs who were already working with us. Due to their presence we were able to improve our EPI (Expanded Programme of Immunisation), PPTCT (Prevention of Parents to Child Transmission of HIV) and HBC (Home-based Care) programmes and also had a better coverage of night duties and calls, which relieved the expatriate nurses.

Two Nurse Aids went for Health Orderly training – these are expected to control infectious diseases, upgrade the water and sanitation situation and do the follow-up of defaulters, in co-operation with our Home Based Care team. Until now they have proved an important link between the hospital and the community. Two Nurse Aids went for PCN training, after which we expect them to return to Mbumba.

We lost one of our Nurse Aids, G. Bhebhe. Although on regular injections, in March, after an injection in our hospital, she got a severe reaction. Help given by the staff present failed. We were very distressed. We also lost our domestic workers, C. Mpofo and D. Sibanda, after several month of illness. Two Nurse Aids removed to South Africa.

Until the last month of 2006 there was no doctor in Nkayi District Hospital which meant that patients from far beyond our catchment area were coming to Mbumba. Therefore, besides our normal staff we were still depending on locums who are qualified staff from other hospitals and willing to work during their holidays. Most of the locums we had this year were prepared to work hard and some of them came back on a regular basis.

Buildings and electricity

In December 2005, Mr. Van Praag arrived from Australia. He stayed with us until April 2006 and completed quite a number of projects in a short time with the help of extra workmen. Besides a new wing of the hospital, which is now in use as an OI Clinic, a new staff house was built which can lodge three families. The nurses' dormitory was changed to a 10 bedroom dorm, a

teachers' staff house was completed, two class rooms at the Mbumba Primary School got their roofs replaced, and a new roof and trusses were put on our church in Simbo. Never-ending problems with the electricity were supposed to be resolved with the coming of two new generators which Mr. Van Praag purchased from South Africa. Unfortunately both generators broke down after some months and left us with the old situation of electricity being available for only a few hours per day. In the second half of the year we started with the extension of the Isolation Ward. The male side has been extended, while the female side will be done in 2007, all being well.

Transport

The old Mazda was sold, while a new ambulance was purchased from South Africa, which has been very useful until now. The old ambulance was used for collecting firewood and for mobile clinics, but will need to be replaced in 2007.

Finance and administration

The economic situation in Zimbabwe is at a stage which has never been experienced before. Apart from the normal difficulties we experience as a hospital, it has been even more difficult for our hospital staff to cope with hyper-inflation. In December, only one trip to and from town by bus consumed the equivalent of the combined salary of our workers.

We much appreciated the review of our department which Mr. Mackenzie carried out recently. The long-term running of the hospital should benefit from it.

Hospital

Since the beginning of the year, all the wards in the hospital have been used. The Isolation Ward for TB patients, which had been closed due to staff shortages, has been in full use since it was re-opened and even needed extension due to the still increasing TB prevalence which accompanies the AIDS pandemic.

Although the number of out-patients remained the same, there was a 40% increase in inpatients, together with a near doubling of the number of deaths. This is mainly due to AIDS and HIV related illnesses, where immuno-suppression was the underlying cause of death in more than 80% of the cases in our hospital. We lost 3 women who were pregnant; 2 mothers died while 7 months pregnant due to cerebral malaria and tuberculosis. The third mother gave birth at home but passed away due to puerperal sepsis in our hospital 10 days after delivery.

Although during the past years a lot of effort has been put into the counselling of patients, as a hospital we did not have an integrated and systematic approach to the gigantic AIDS problem. As a first step in this direction, in April we formed an OI Clinic team from staff members culled from different departments. Since then this team has organised the OI Clinic

which provides medical, social and spiritual care for patients with HIV. The government did two assessments of this clinic and, depending on their report, we will get governmental supply of ARVs, the special drugs used to control the HIV infection. Thanks to extra remittances received in the last months of 2006, we were able to start administering ARVs early, which was very much appreciated by the community.

In January, the doors of our theatre were re-opened. The main operations which have been performed are caesarean sections. The number of transferrals-out for maternity reasons have, therefore, been reduced, while the number of transferrals-in increased, due to the fact that there was no doctor in the Government district hospital. The increase in the number of still births is also related to the fact that we were operating as a referral centre.

Besides caesarean sections we were able to perform laparotomies for ectopic pregnancies and bowel obstructions, hernia repairs, a few orthopaedic operations and other procedures.

STATISTICS 2006

	2005	2006
Admissions	1,542	2,211
General.....	618	1,125
Paediatrics.....	390	459
Maternity	534	627
Bed occupancy rate	27%	43%
General.....	24%	50%
Paediatrics.....	46%	40%
Maternity	21%	31%
Deaths	109	206
General.....	78	154
Paediatrics.....	27	49
Maternity	0	3
Outpatients	27,279	27,332
New.....	21,620	20,768
Repeats.....	5,659	6,564
Live births	504	610
Still births	4	8
Theatre/OPD	220	593
Major cases.....	0	105
Minor cases.....	220	488

<i>Dental services</i>		
Number of patients	206	316
Number of procedures	122	179
<i>Radiology services</i>		
Number of films	115	1,100
<i>Laboratory services</i>		
Number of lab tests	2,402	3,625
Number of HIV tests	867	1,482
<i>ANC (Antenatal Clinic) attendances</i>	3,696	2,921
<i>CWC (Child Welfare Clinic) attendances</i>	3,628	4,410
<i>Ambulance</i>		
Number of transferrals.....	66	36

BULAWAYO MISSION REPORT

Rev. S. Khumalo

WHEN the year comes to an end and one observes the behaviour of many people in cities like Bulawayo, where I reside, one would wonder if people knew that the time is short and that it is time to awake from sleep. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."

We are brought to mind of these things as we acknowledge the kindness and goodness of the Lord for enabling us to see yet another year in time. Being one of the few churches in this country which endeavour to preach the true doctrine of the Word of God, it is our prayer that by the grace of God we continue in the truth of the Bible, which is the Word of God bequeathed to us by those who have gone before us and of whom some are still present.

As I write this report, I do it with thankfulness to the Almighty that the preaching of the Gospel has progressed throughout the year smoothly and unhindered. It is pleasing to note a stable attendance every Sabbath and also encouraging to see families of young people congregating under the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We pray that the Lord would grant the Holy Spirit to reveal to poor sinners the love of God, the redeeming love of Christ and the sanctifying love of the Holy Spirit.

Services are held every Sabbath in all our preaching stations and mid week prayer meetings. On Sabbath the services are held at both Lobengula and Nkulumane at 11.30 a.m. and Umguza at 9.00 a.m. Prayer meetings are held in Thembiso on Tuesday, Nkulumane on Wednesday, Umguza on Thursday and Lobengula on Friday. Fortnightly, on Saturdays, we have a Confession of Faith class, mainly for the youth but also for others who are interested.

Communion seasons are held in June and December in Lobengula (the main station). I am also pleased to have amongst us Rev. Mzamo, who has now retired and resides in Bulawayo. He has been a great help in taking services when able. We also appreciate the local and foreign visitors from overseas, who, on their holidays, join us for our services.

Our prayer is that the Lord would bless the work of the Gospel amongst us and bring about what the Holy Spirit speaks of, saying, "A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this" (Psalm 22:30-31).

NDEBELE BIBLE REVISION REPORT

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

WE are very happy that the printing of the revised New Testament in Ndebele by the Trinitarian Bible Society is now under way and will soon be in our hands, if all goes well. The TBS is also funding the project, so we are grateful for that. The New Testaments will be very welcome in Zimbabwe as there are no Ndebele Bibles available in the country. They are usually imported from South Africa by the Bible Society of Zimbabwe, but they do not have the necessary numbers to hand. In the meantime, Mr. Benschop will print a few copies of the Gospel of Mark for Mbumba Hospital tract distribution.

The Old Testament translation work has covered up to the end of 2 Kings, but we have now started on the Book of Psalms and hope to finish it within the next few months.

Mr. Benschop was on leave with his family for 6 weeks in April/May 2006. While he was away, the translation team revised the translation of *The Holy War*, by John Bunyan (simplified) and *Line upon Line* Part One. The disc for *The Holy War* has now been submitted for printing and also the disc for the *Confession of Faith* with full Scripture references. The latter took some time to prepare as each reference was revised. Funding for these has been made available; a donation from Holland is to pay for the printing of *The Holy War*. The *Confession of Faith* booklets (with the listed references) have been printed with attractive covers, similar to the Free Presbyterian Publications' English copies, and are now on sale in our Church Bookroom. Prices have escalated with the steep rise in inflation. The printers, the Baptist Publishing House, are very helpful.

Rev. Mazvabo and his men have added more metrical Psalms in Shona to their collection, but they were also in need of new Psalm books in Shona. Two hundred copies were printed and bound with ring binding by Mr. Benschop and team; this was funded partly by the Shona congregations and partly by the Mission. The people were very happy to have them available for the Chiedza Communion in November.

The translation team remains as before, with the local men, Mr. N. Mpofu and Mr. B. Mziya working with us on a regular basis, and some proof reading has been done by Mr. Dickson Mhlanga, a former catechist at Mbumba Hospital who has now retired to Ingwenya.

We held a panel meeting in February 2006, when ministers, elders and language specialists from the Church came together to settle queries, especially on language. Rev. P. Mzamo, now retired in Bulawayo and still available for discussion of queries, took an active part in the translation work of our Mission in past years.

Much work remains to be done and the Lord's guidance is needed for the task. "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever" (1 Peter 1:25).

EBENEZER SCRIPTURE MISSION AND THEMBISO CHILDREN'S HOME REPORT

Mr. S. B. Mpofu

ONCE again we have come to the end of another year and when one looks back at the year 2006 we find that a number of challenges were faced. We have to be most thankful that we pulled through because the Most High was on our side and we believe what Paul wrote to the Philippians: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." This has been true regarding us in 2006.

Thembiso Children's Home

We had an average of 54 children whose health varied as months passed by. We lost a baby boy, aged 10 months, in December, whose short illness shocked both staff and other children. We have sent children to both the clinic and the hospital in almost every month.

In December our Mbumba Mission Hospital doctor conducted a workshop at Thembiso to alert us to the danger of HIV. Children were tested but, thankfully, only a few proved positive. This was a great relief to us as we were afraid that a far greater number would test positive. Talent Ndebele, who joined us in May, is now at Mbumba for TB treatment and has greatly improved.

2006 visitors to Thembiso

A good number of visitors from overseas came to our institution and brought goodies for the children. We were happy to receive a visit from the President's wife, who donated shoes to each child at Thembiso. Many local visitors came towards the end of the year. Children enjoy these occasions.

Bible classes/Sabbath school

Sister Truus Ringelberg commenced a Bible class whilst she was with us. This will now be taught by Mrs. Mhlanga, a former Ingwenya Primary School

teacher. We were very pleased when she complied with the request of Rev. S. Khumalo. Miss Dube continued taking the older children in Sabbath school. I, as Superintendent, take the intermediate children, whilst the matron and her assistant take the little ones in turns. Our children also attend another Sabbath school at Lobengula church prior to the services.

Staff

Two staff members resigned in September of last year. These were Mrs. S. Dube and Mrs. S. Moyo. They were replaced by those who normally serve as replacements when staff take leave. Staff members continue with their services, though with transport becoming so expensive, things are rather difficult for them as they opt to walk.

Problems met

(a) Theft

We were hit hard by thieves on a number of occasions. The school meter box was twice vandalised and our engine room was twice broken into when the starter motor was stolen. The new school toilet was also damaged. Police were, on each occasion, called to investigate but did not come up with anything tangible. When the groundsmen were involved in theft of fuel it became my belief that these incidents could have been planned from the inside.

(b) Power cuts

Our institution faces many power cuts which, at times, make cooking difficult for the chefs who then have to turn to an open fire. When these occur it also affects things that could have been stored in the cold room.

(c) Financial assistance

We normally get financial assistance for children sent to us by the government. However, last year was difficult for, though our claim forms were sent in every month, we received nothing.

Bookroom

The Reformed Bookroom went through the year with its three staff members and we got on very well with only minor problems from time to time. Religious books and Bibles were ordered from overseas by Miss K. Macaulay, who has always been of good service to the Bookroom. Bibles were, however, delayed this year, due to postage and clearance regulations which are in force in our country. Bookroom rental fees continue to rise every three months due to high inflation.

ZIMBABWE MISSION ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mr. E. B. Zikhali

THE LORD has enabled us to witness another passing year. It is a wonderful experience indeed that we are still spared – not that we are any better than others who have passed away but because He has not treated us according to our iniquities (Psalm 103:10).

The year 2006 was a turning point in the financial administration structure in the Mission in Zimbabwe. The arrival of Mr. H. MacKenzie, though only for a short time, was a welcome development in helping us and the General Treasurer's work has made easier our accounting for the use of money in the Zimbabwe office, expenditure and the monitoring of bank balances.

The head office structure too was greatly improved by him as it now resembles more an office rather than a residential house. The building was restructured and subdivided thus creating a more business-like atmosphere in contrast to the former position where confidential documents were exposed to all and sundry entering the room.

Mr. James Macleod during the year introduced very reliable and handy phones called PABX. These have greatly improved the system in the head office. The clerks have been trained in the use of computers by Mr. Macleod, a development with which we are very pleased as the communication system between the General Treasurer in Glasgow and the heads of department here in Zimbabwe has been much strengthened.

Several welcome visitors came during the year from Holland, Scotland and South Africa. The Word of God continues to be preached at all stations without disturbance, so we have every reason to be thankful. The Field Committee also continues to meet three times a year to investigate the financial affairs of the Mission.

Mbumba Hospital operated efficiently, in spite of the hefty cost of drugs and shortage of manpower. Locums were heavily depended upon. Our Mission doctor was required to visit Nkayi Hospital fortnightly because the hospital was without the resident doctor.

John Tallach Secondary School continues to produce good results at "O" level and is the envy of many other schools in Zimbabwe from as far away as Harare in Mashonaland. The teachers are very committed to their duty, in spite of the poor government salaries which are below the poverty datum line. Primary schools under the auspices of our church continue to be supported by the Oikonomos Foundation, who supply textbooks and furniture. All this is a welcome gesture in the right direction.

The Grade 7 results slightly improved in some of our schools, but it takes time to realise the improvement after supplies of books have been provided. I have noted with regret that the deacons' courts in Zimbabwe are failing to maintain their church buildings in a reasonable condition, in spite of the fact that most of them are employed. The appearance of some church buildings

is poor; cracks are not filled, paint is peeling and repairs take a long time to be completed.

The year 2006 has ended and we progress to another which seems to be gloomy – no rain and basic commodities very expensive and beyond the reach of many. The country will soon run short of water because there has been very little rain. Wells are drying up and animals will die for lack of water and grass. There is absolutely nothing in some of the fields. The country is facing serious inflation and may be heading towards financial collapse if nothing is done shortly. However, the friends of Ingwenya continue to work very well with the school and the support is wonderful.

BUILDING AND TRANSPORT REPORT

Mr. E. B. Zikhali

Mbuma Mission

The expatriate houses have been improved by renovating and mending cracks and repainting them. The hospital has been repainted and the OI Clinic built to the accepted standard. The workers' houses were also renovated – all the houses at Mbuma are always cracking due to the poor ground.

Engines

The generators are always causing problems because of breakdown and there is an urgent need to overhaul everything electrical at Mbuma. The two new generators did not last and we resorted to using the big old generator, which is more reliable than the two new ones – but it is very heavy on fuel. The water engines, though old, continue to perform very well.

School

Two old classrooms were repaired. The teachers' houses are in good condition and are sufficient for the present number.

Zenka Mission

The approved new manse building has not been started because the plan proved to be too large. A new plan is awaiting approval by the JFMC. The classrooms are sufficient and in good condition. Church doors were improved.

Ingwenya Mission

The teachers' cottage has been completed and teachers comfortably accommodated. The outbuildings in general are in good condition though there is need that painting should go on throughout the year if funds permit. The school buildings are in good condition, including the secondary school,

expatriate houses and the church buildings. Since there was little rain during the year, wells may dry up in October.

Bulawayo

The approved new manse has not yet been started. The condition of the church at Lobengula is bad – the roof is leaking, the ceiling falling down and other church buildings continue to crack. Paint is peeling off and there is urgent need to repaint it.

Nkulumane church

This building is still strong but ceiling paint is peeling and there is urgent need to repaint the whole building. The gate in the fence was replaced by the deacons' court for the sum of \$100,000.

New Canaan Mission

The repair of this building was approved by the FMC and materials have been purchased and delivered to the site. The sum approved was £500.

Transport

There is great improvement from last year in relation to the condition of the Mission vehicles. There are thirteen new vehicles and six old ones used by the Mission during 2006. Of the six old vehicles, the John Tallach Secondary School bus started to give problems and may need to be replaced soon. The Toyota Venture, used by the school, may also need replacement. The Drifter, used for orders by the main office, is now 14 years old and is always in the garage for various repairs. This also needs replacement.

The old school bus, used by the Bulawayo congregation, is old but strong and will, hopefully, continue for another year. The big Mission lorry is 10 years old but still runs very well. Fuel is becoming very expensive in the country and we are very thankful to the General Treasurer who purchases this from South Africa every year end and is refunded through the General Account on an instalment basis. This solution has served the Mission in Zimbabwe well during these hard times of fuel shortage.

KENYA MISSION REPORT

Rev. K. M. Watkins

WE are thankful to the Most High that the work of the Kenya Mission has been sustained through another year. Encouragements have been mixed with some sore disappointments.

Religious presumption abounds here in Kisii. Vast numbers claim to be born again. However, the majority are unable to say whether Jesus is God; whether

salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone; whether hell is a reality; whether stealing and lying are serious sins; whether killing by a mob is murder; and so on. They do not understand even the basics of how the Saviour's death atones for sin. They are strangers to a true sense of sin, the felt preciousness of Jesus, and the inner struggles of the true Christian. Ignorance, deceitfulness, wickedness and religious charlatanism are everywhere. The people walk in darkness but believe they have the light of life. The work of addressing the dead, undeceiving the deceived, rebuking the ungodly, exposing soul-destroying heresy, condemning unbiblical worship, intensely testing lightly-made professions, warning of ulterior motives (usually financial) and unmasking hypocrites can feel so negative. But it is the Lord's work for such a time and place.

This has been emphasised by the dismissal of three mission workers for stealing – the works supervisor and both the office clerks. The trusted senior clerk had been stealing continuously since the beginning of 2004. With the help of the police, more than £1,000 has been recovered from his bank account. He and the supervisor appeared to be so useful in the Gospel work. They were both Sabbath school teachers. One knew the Shorter Catechism thoroughly and often argued for the Reformed doctrines, but now his attendance at church is rare. The other was the second interpreter, the main precentor and an important member of the translation team. Such events are discouraging, but we see the hand of the Lord again in this mission revealing evil-doers. The Gospel having false friends is not a strange thing when we review the New Testament. Our prayer for all three is that they would find real regeneration and true repentance.

Some at home have expressed concern at the lack of sealing ordinances in Sengera, but time is vindicating the caution of the Sengera Kirk Session. It is almost unbelievable how much deceit goes on here in the name of Christ. Those will be great days indeed when baptism and the Lord's Supper are properly dispensed in Kisiiland.

On the other hand, we hope that a growing number are realising that the true Gospel of the Bible is very different to the nonsense that usually goes under the name of the Gospel in this place. There is reason to think that the Lord is working in a few souls at least. One recently said that for a number of weeks he has felt that the preaching was directed to him alone. I had no idea that such a thing was occurring. Another explained that she could not stop weeping for her sins when she heard of Christ and His dying love. We visited a young woman who had never come to church, but whose mother usually comes. She has the same reputation as the "woman in the city which was a sinner" (Luke 7:37). Her first "husband" has died of AIDS, and now she is sick herself. Whilst explaining the Gospel to her, especially from Psalm 130:3-4, her eyes welled with tears. She asked for a Bible, promising to read it prayerfully. An Ekegusii New Testament has gone to her. May the Word be blessed to her needy soul, for one cannot hope that her body will last long.

I have reported before about the lame boy in the wheelchair whose first attendance at our church was during a sermon on lame Mephibosheth. It was such a signal providence that one always hoped to see the grace of God at work in his soul. He has now died. I visited him in hospital and he seemed to be getting better, but two hours later he passed into eternity. Just after we left, he told his mother that he was dying and that he wanted our church to bury him, even though his family are Seventh Day Adventists. The bereaved family received us very courteously and were attentive to the family worship. Many came to the funeral and heard the short address at the grave side. We would like to think that the boy is now eating bread continually at the King's table above, as one of the King's sons. We are told that on the Sabbath he would steadfastly refuse to be wheeled from the house to the roadside where the family kept a small shop open on the Lord's Day.

Services continue at Sengera and the three outstations with good-sized congregations. At Ogembo recently we had 65 in attendance, instead of the usual 30 to 40. Nearby is a tea-buying centre, but the tractor had not come to collect the tea the previous day, so when we arrived at noon, the people were still waiting. Many came to the service and listened to the address on 1 Timothy 1:15, explaining why Jesus came into the world – to save sinners. Immediately the service finished, the tea tractor appeared! May the Word be blessed. They certainly listened well. It will be good when we have a church building there – this was an encouragement in that direction. The land has been given by the local people, and a substantial contribution was received from the London congregation. Bricks have been made near the site. We hope to start building soon.

On the translation and publishing side, we have another 10 metrical psalms or parts of psalms ready for insertion into a larger Ekegusii psalter. Thousands of TBS calendars have again been distributed, in both English and Ekegusii. Gospel tracts in simplified English have been written and are being distributed as opportunities occur.

A new gate house was completed earlier in the year and the large water tank under the carport has been repaired. The main water tank under the round hut now needs repairing again as it appears that the repair previously undertaken had not been well done. A powerful new water pump is required to ensure that the clinic has running water again, instead of having hosepipes poked through the windows. The compound grounds continue to look very attractive and the buildings are in a good state of repair.

The mission has continued its involvement with the local primary school and after many negotiations has succeeded in the registration of two male teachers and their appointment to the school. Both are long-standing adherents of the congregation and were sponsored through their teacher training by the mission a number of years ago. Another adherent of the congregation is employed using private funds and, with the weekly catechism class taken by the minister, it is hoped that our reformed doctrinal position will have a greater impact on the pupils and the staff.

The two-storey building (designed to be utilised as three classrooms with a library/resource basement) that had been constructed under the direction of the former administrator had to be demolished in the early summer. It transpires that numerous concerns had been raised about the safety of the building during the course of its construction. With the district Ministry of Works, the Provincial Chief Surveyor inspected the building. The report was damning and required the building's immediate demolition. As much material as possible was salvaged and Ministry plans have now been obtained for a single-storey replacement. The old church has had to be utilised meanwhile, partitioned into temporary classrooms, as the old mud-built classrooms were at the point of collapse. Hence the weekly catechism class is now held outside. This is not satisfactory and we hope to begin construction of the new classrooms soon. Even the single-storey classrooms reported on by the administrator in 2005 have needed serious remedial work to ensure their safety which we are in the process of doing, on the instruction of the District Surveyor and Architect.

I want to thank the mission staff and those who help with the Gospel work for their contributions during another year. Following the dismissal of the senior clerk, all the interpreting/translation work has fallen on Mosoti. It is a heavy workload and I am grateful for his uncomplaining assistance. He has also taken over the Sabbath school class of the dismissed clerk and my wife has taken over the class of the dismissed works supervisor. Most of the work from the clerks' office has fallen on my wife who now does a major part of the petty cash, staff savings scheme, payroll, computerised accounting entries, as well as clinic duties. I am very grateful to Rev. A. B. MacLean who covered the spiritual work last summer to enable us to take our furlough. We are extremely pleased to hear that he has now been granted a work permit and we pray that his labours will be blessed in Zimbabwe. Our hope is that the Lord will provide a suitable person to take care of the office. I also want to thank all our supporters from overseas, including those who send donations for the work and for the congregational poor fund. These are much appreciated.

This report shows that the Kenya Mission had its ups and downs in the last year. We live in ploughing days, breaking up the hard soil. But if we or others reap later, how worthwhile all the hard work! And even if not, we have done what was our duty in our own day. Isaiah's commission was not encouraging (Isaiah 6:9-10), but it did not make him turn back. He had said, "Here am I, send me".

KENYA MISSION
OMOREMBE HEALTH CENTRE REPORT
Rev. K. M. Watkins

THE main purpose of the clinic is to be a handmaid to the Gospel. The registration of the Kenya Mission was largely dependent on our engaging in medical/educational work in Kenya. The last year was a good one for the

clinic. The dedicated work of the sister in charge, Mrs. Gladys Asande, and her staff has ensured that the clinic continues to provide a high standard of medical care to the needy community all around us. The all-Kenyan staff complement consists of: 5 staff nurses, 2 part-time laboratory technicians, 5 support staff, 1 receptionist/clerk, and 2 part-time cleaners.

The Ministry of Health (MOH) are doing more rigorous inspections of government and private health facilities and in the last year we had several unannounced visits from District, Provincial and National level MOH. The feedback has been very encouraging indeed and better than many would have envisaged. Omorembe is seen as a vital medical facility in the District and a major support to the Government hospital in Ogembo. We are implementing a new UNICEF/WHO scheme for managing illness in children under 5. All countries with a death rate of over 40 per 1,000 children under 5 are being encouraged to adopt the new system. Kenya has a death rate of 70 per 1,000. Omorembe was the only health facility to receive no criticism in the National MOH report for this area. The inspection included the Government hospitals as well as private and mission health facilities. The pharmacy has also been inspected and received 100% for the variety of drugs stocked and management according to recommended guidelines.

In July we were selected to be the immunising centre for our area for measles. Our nursing staff worked tirelessly and managed to vaccinate over 1,900 children in just 4 days. The clinic continued to offer its usual services alongside the immunisation campaign. The mission pick-up and a driver were also made available to the Government to ensure that the more isolated areas were not missed.

In early September we lost a qualified nurse to a huge government recruitment campaign and the nurse left suddenly without serving a notice period. Many complaints were made by the faith-based health facilities and the government eventually admitted that the recruitment had been badly mishandled. For almost 4 months our four staff nurses worked a gruelling duty rota with no holidays to ensure continued nursing care 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I am grateful for their unselfish co-operation.

Our maternity and ante-natal services continue to be very popular. The clinic has been rearranged so that we now have 2 extra maternity beds. In the past, ladies in labour had been put on mattresses on the floor in busy periods, which we considered unacceptable. A gift for the newborn is given at each delivery and we are grateful to friends at home who have generously collected second-hand baby clothes and knitted booties. These used to come largely from Holland. We are always needing baby and toddler clothes. One of the workers sews the soft flannel baby wraps and does clinic mending in the afternoons. A vital part of the work is PMTCT – Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV. The clinic's already good performance has been further improved over the last year and has been highly commended. The results have been so encouraging that extra financial support was given by the Christian Health Association of Kenya. MOH feedback shows that the number of

women who agreed to an HIV test increased from 93% in 2005 to 97% in 2006, and the number of positive mothers receiving treatment increased from 67% in 2005 to 80% in 2006. Four of our qualified staff have now been trained in PMTCT.

One corner of the clinic has been attractively decorated to make it child friendly. A number chart has been painted on the walls, along with pictures of animals and letters of the alphabet, which makes it look brighter and more welcoming. Pale green notice boards now cover the clinic walls where suitable medical, educational, and Scripture posters are fixed. This has greatly enhanced the look of the clinic and gives a more professional appearance.

On Mondays and Tuesdays the Child Welfare clinic is held. Numbers attending on Mondays were so great that it was decided to spread this important clinic over two days. To encourage the mothers to continue with the full immunisation regime, an item of clothing is given to the toddler on completion of the measles vaccination. A short time of worship is held with the mothers and toddlers attending these clinics. All patients were again given and gratefully received the attractive TBS Bible calendars. Numerous requests have been received by local schools for HIV/AIDS lectures by our nurses. We hope to restart these in April 2007, and it is anticipated that the minister will accompany the nurse where possible to deal with the more spiritual issues which such lectures generate in the question and answer sessions.

We are continually reminded of the uncertainty of our lives in this world. A few months ago, a young man, 18 years old, walked unassisted into the clinic one morning complaining of a bad chest. The nurse on duty referred him to hospital immediately. Sadly news came in the mid-afternoon that he had died. The nursing staff often have to cope with horrific injuries. On one occasion a young man died on his way to hospital in the mission ambulance. He had been chopped up like a vegetable. The cuttings were so severe that the nurse had no place to put in an emergency drip. This was a particularly sad case, as his wife had recently given birth to a son in the clinic. They had several daughters but no son until then. When the boy was born, the husband was so happy that he purchased a soft drink for all the nursing staff on duty. Two weeks later he was dead. These things are emotionally draining for all concerned.

It has been important to segregate duties in the clinic since the European nurses left in January 2006. To begin with, on weekdays the two mission clerks assisted my wife and I in stocking the consulting and delivery rooms with medicines from the pharmacy and collecting clinic receipts to pay into petty cash. We covered weekends and out of hours, and to relieve me as much as possible my wife did the monthly order of medicines and consumables and handled other matters like dealing with ministry officials and inspectors, repair of equipment, and so on. Since the clerks' dismissal at the beginning of 2007, all the duties have fallen on my wife, but she has been training an African member of staff who is now able to cover for her when necessary.

Statistics for 2006 appear overleaf.

OMOREMBE HEALTH CENTRE STATISTICS 2006

	<i>General Outpatients</i>	<i>Malaria Cases</i>	<i>STD Cases</i>	<i>Antenatal Clinic</i>	<i>Deliveries</i>	<i>Child Welfare</i>	<i>Referrals</i>	<i>Lab Tests</i>
Jan.....	187	108	27	210	58	580	17	245
Feb.....	228	140	24	218	55	450	22	263
Mar.....	201	130	10	182	49	475	25	368
Apr.....	171	94	29	151	37	410	21	311
May.....	211	123	48	198	41	424	22	394
Jun.....	224	139	23	162	44	494	16	371
Jul.....	136	98	10	185	52	503	12	372
Aug.....	128	116	12	206	61	434	13	327
Sep.....	87	45	17	162	61	452	24	237
Oct.....	151	93	36	144	43	487	17	322
Nov.....	155	86	17	133	28	535	11	160
Dec.....	167	78	37	145	45	628	20	320
Total	2046	1250	290	2096	574	5872	220	3690

DOMINIONS AND OVERSEAS COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. A. Ross

THIS report, like others in the past, presents just an overview of the Committee's work. Fuller information about individual congregations is found in the reports of the ministers in New Zealand and Australia and of the deputies who visited most of our congregations overseas.

In the good providence of the Most High, Rev. Bruce Jardine was able to spend seven weeks in Australia and New Zealand, and Rev. Donald MacDonald was in Chesley for two weeks. Revs. George G. Hutton and Neil M. Ross, as interim moderators respectively of the kirk sessions of the congregations in Chesley, Canada, and Santa Fe, Texas, have been very attentive to the needs of these congregations. (The Santa Fe congregation was formerly known as the Richmond congregation.) At the beginning of the year, Rev. David Campbell, who visited New Zealand as an assessor minister appointed by Synod to the Australia and New Zealand Presbytery, spent three Sabbaths there taking services in some of the congregations. At the end of last year and the beginning of this year, Rev. Lyle Smith was able to give three months' pulpit supply to the Santa Fe congregation as well as assisting the interim moderator, Rev. Neil Ross, during the communion season there. Mr. Ross was asked by the Committee to act as deputy for one of his visits to Texas and has reported to the Dominion and Overseas Committee.

The Committee is deeply indebted to all these ministers for their help. Also the overseas ministers and congregations much appreciate the help given by our deputies. We only wish much more could be done to help.

The work of the Gospel in Chesley and Santa Fe is not without fruit. As services have been conducted and the Word preached, the Lord's people have been fed and others brought from the kingdom of Satan into the Kingdom of God's dear Son. It was with sorrow that we heard of the death of Mr. Gerrit Schuit, a diligent and loyal elder of long standing in the Chesley congregation. God in His kindness has raised up others who are following on in the essential work of the eldership.

Vancouver congregation, where the Gospel was preached over many years to a considerable congregation of adults and children, has had several setbacks in recent decades, not least its diminishment when most of the people broke away to form a congregation of the Associated Presbyterian Churches. The few who remained resolutely struggled on for some time but were unable to keep functioning as a congregation. It was therefore agreed at the last meeting of Synod that the Vancouver congregation be no longer a sanctioned pastoral charge but be given the status of a preaching station. The congregation is now under the Chesley kirk session, which intends to hold services there from time to time if possible.

It is with sadness that we witness these situations of decline not only in Vancouver but also in other congregations throughout the Church. What need

there is that the Lord's people would increasingly bring these burdens to the throne of grace, pleading with the Lord to halt and reverse such decline and to revive His cause among us.

We were able to visit the little congregation of people in Fornici di Barga, most of whom are not inclined to the Reformed position of the Free Presbyterian Church, a fact which does not auger well for the establishing of a sound, Reformed witness there. It is much appreciated that Mr. Lucio Strata was once again our able interpreter at the services. He also gave valued help in communicating to the people once again, in their own language, their great need to be reformed in every area of doctrine, worship and practice. At the same time we thankfully acknowledge that the large donations received from the congregation for the work of the Gospel is a great credit to the few people there, and an indication of their desire that we do not forsake them and that they would have the Gospel preached to them.

We were also able to visit members of the family of Mr. Strata in Casella and to give them a Gospel address. They also gave donations for the furtherance of the Gospel. It appears to us that among them some interest in the only way of salvation through Christ is deepening. It is no small matter for those brought up in the Church of Rome to be able to reject the superstitions of the priests of Rome. One person brought up in the errors of Romanism, willingly received clear direction from a friend about the true way of salvation. Nevertheless she continued to submit to the dominion of the priest, justifying herself by saying, "But you do not understand what it is to be brought up as a Roman Catholic". It is wonderful, therefore, when some people get beyond that superstitious thralldom and desire to worship the one living and true God through the only Mediator, Jesus Christ.

We are glad to gather from the reports of Rev. Edward Rayner, Australia, and Rev. Johannes van Dorp, New Zealand, that they are being given grace and strength to carry on in the work of the Lord. They have several congregations to oversee, but with the added and willing help of the elders, they continue to this day. Those members of Synod who remember Ron and Ritchie Kidd, gracious and faithful elders for many years in the Grafton congregation, have been saddened to hear of their deaths.

Since our last report, a number of people in our congregations in the Antipodes have made a public profession of a saving interest in Jesus Christ. Also, several children have been baptized. For all this we are deeply thankful. We think of our children as those who, by divine grace, will yet be that seed who shall serve the Most High, for to this end He gives us children. By having them baptised, parents profess to desire that God would be the God of their children, and they His people.

Another cause for much thankfulness is an increase in the congregation in Singapore. It would be wonderful if we had the same Gospel prosperity in congregations where we see decreasing numbers. It has sometimes been the case that communities which have had the Gospel over several generations have come to despise it and turn their backs on it, whereas other communities

which have the full Gospel for the first time show greater appreciation and have increasing numbers attend. It is rather alarming that in Singapore there is now a law which forbids the criticism of other religions, under the pain of severe penalty. There is need that we be remembering in prayer the Singaporean believers who have the threat of this persecuting law hanging over them.

With regard to the Eastern Europe Mission there is, of course, a separate report. But we record here that despite many difficulties, our congregation in Odessa continues its worship and work and has grown a little over the last year. Certain ungodly persons have threatened to take steps to close our place of worship, that is, the rooms in Mr. Igor Zadoroshney's home which have been specially adapted to form one room as a place of worship. The threat sends the congregation to the throne of grace for the Lord's deliverance.

The building of the new depot for mission work and worship has begun and we hope that in the good providence of God it will yet be finished, albeit at a total cost in excess of £100,000, due to increasing inflation. May provision be fully made for its completion in the mercy of God, with whom we plead that He would continue to show Himself as the God who sees and provides for the needs of His Church. Under present Ukrainian law this new place of worship will not have threats of closure hanging over it.

We look to the Lord to bless our every endeavour as a Church to further His cause and extend His kingdom in these other lands. We have the Gospel in its fullness so wonderfully systematized in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, and therefore have much more to offer than certain other churches. It is this Gospel alone which can be, and is, "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16).

AUSTRALIAN REPORT

Rev. E. A. Rayner

IT was a great encouragement to have Rev. B. Jardine visit our congregations this year, especially as it was nearly three years since the previous deputy visited us. His ministry and help in visitation in Grafton were very much appreciated. The time devoted to each congregation in the Presbytery, although short, no doubt gave him a good, comprehensive view of our situation in this part of the world. By visiting all our congregations he was able to minister to as many of our people as possible in the allotted time: a method which I believe has its merits. On the other hand, the visit of a deputy to one or even two of our vacant congregations (for example, Auckland or Sydney) for the same period, in order to give a longer and more concentrated period of supply to that congregation, would also be greatly appreciated.

In last year's report I noted the passing away of our elder, Mr. Ron Kidd. Sadly, his older brother, Mr. Ritchie Kidd, also an elder, passed away about a year later. All the older generation of office-bearers, who were in Grafton when I became minister of the congregation in December 1976, are now gone and greatly missed. When I visited Grafton in the previous February as a deputy, it was elders Ritchie Kidd and Donald Shaw who were waiting at the bus stop in the main street in Grafton to give us both a warm welcome.

It seems that Ritchie Kidd was already converted before serving in the Second World War in Papua New Guinea, where he proved to be a man of Christian principles. He later managed a car-wrecking firm in Grafton, and when people came knocking at his door on a Sabbath to seek second-hand spare parts for their vehicles he was gracious and faithful in the way he spoke to them about the Lord's Day. He had the cause of Christ at heart and in his earlier years he and his daughter, Margaret, would distribute tracts from our Church around the district. He was an active supporter of the Trinitarian Bible Society and collected funds for it from door to door in the South Side of Grafton and the nearby town of MacLean. He was a highly respected and discerning member of our Session who gave sound advice. His like-minded widow survived him for a short time but passed away also recently. Their once hospitable home is now greatly missed from our congregation.

While church attendances have been maintained, there were no new communicant members added to the roll in either the Grafton or Sydney congregations. There were two marriages in the Grafton congregation. We pray that the Lord would raise up the children in the place of the fathers to have a saving interest in Christ. Thankfully we still have three elders in Grafton.

I have been enabled to continue with the usual commitments of supply and assistance at the communions in our Presbytery but time is running out for replacement of the ministry. Therefore we ought the more urgently to plead that the Lord of the harvest would send forth labourers into the harvest. During November I supplied Singapore for two Sabbaths and was encouraged to see the increase in attendance there. I supply Sydney from time to time and also conduct all the services of each annual communion season there. Otherwise the services are dutifully and faithfully conducted by the two elders in the congregation who either read sermons or speak as enabled.

The battle to maintain the Bible-based standards of our Church is not easy in a day when the pressures of an evil world seek to conform us to its ungodly standards. How difficult the narrow way is and how unappealing to the natural man, especially the young. This is particularly true in our more isolated situation, far from the centre of our denomination. Only as we are kept by the power of God can we continue to fight the good fight of faith. Brethren pray for us and continue to send what reinforcements are available. May the Lord revive His work in the midst of these years of dangerous and delusive influences. Hitherto the Lord hath helped us.

NEW ZEALAND AND SINGAPORE REPORT

Rev. J. A. T. van Dorp

THE Gospel continues to be proclaimed in our congregations in New Zealand and Singapore in spite of the worldwide declension which can be seen wherever one goes. We should take courage from that, and also note the Lord's hand in maintaining His own cause in the world in the teeth of all the activities of the kingdom of darkness which seek its destruction. Satan's kingdom manifests itself not only in the very overt ways of atheism, evolutionism and liberalism, but also in the more subtle way of arminianism, with its deplorable lack of purity in Reformation standards which is evident, for example, in its use and promotion of modern versions of the Scriptures based on an impure text.

As our only minister in New Zealand I am much indebted to the office-bearers for their help in keeping the Gospel door open in the four places in New Zealand where we have had a presence now for a considerable number of years, and in Singapore.

The sacrament of baptism was dispensed in Auckland to one child, in Gisborne to one child and in Wellington to one child. Our prayer for these children is that in God's own time they would receive the blessings represented by the sign. There is a good proportion of children and young people in each of our congregations except Tauranga, and I believe we are all conscious of the great need of the work of the Holy Spirit to remove the hearts of stone and to freely give hearts of flesh according to the promise. Then there will be prosperity indeed; not the prosperity merely of numbers but also that of disciples being raised up to follow the Saviour through good and evil report.

We believe that some in that category were added to the communion rolls in two of our congregations in the past year. Two communicants sat at the Lord's Table for the first time in Gisborne and two persons were admitted in Auckland. We pray that they will have many years of usefulness before them. In Gisborne also two communicants were admitted by disjunction certificate.

The Cramp family, who came to us from Scotland, has settled in well in our remote locality. Whilst this area is indeed far-flung with respect to Britain, we are not isolated in terms of contact with the congregations in Scotland. The Church magazines, the Internet and visits by church deputies and friends, as well as the throne of grace, are fertile points of contact with our brethren in Scotland and in other parts of the world. With the easier availability of air travel even the Church youth conferences are beginning to play a role in international fellowship for those who are eligible to attend them. Some young people from this part of the world have already taken part in these conferences, we hope with enduring spiritual blessings, and others are contemplating doing so in the future, God willing

The congregations are thankful that a Church deputy was able to visit us this year. Rev. Bruce Jardine visited our congregations for seven Sabbaths, spread

over the period 30th October to 20th December 2006. I regret that when he visited Gisborne I was unable to be present because I had to visit Singapore for the communion season there. However, in view of the fact that the frailties of old age prevent three of the four Gisborne elders from conducting public worship, it was good that the congregation had Mr. Jardine's services in my absence.

I was pleased I had his company at the Tauranga communion season, when he was able to assist from Thursday to Monday. The small congregation, consisting of four communicant members, was augmented by Mr. and Mrs. Vermeulen from Gisborne, Mr. Hicklin and four of his children from Wellington, and the two ministers and my wife: the whole company amounting to 14 worshippers. May this little one become a thousand.

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is dispensed in Tauranga once a year, as also in Singapore and Wellington. In Gisborne and Auckland the sacrament is dispensed twice a year in each congregation. The Rev. E. A. Rayner usually assists me during the Auckland and Gisborne communion seasons.

When I wrote my report about Singapore last year, I indicated the number of the worshippers there to be about twenty. For some time that number has been about thirty, at least on the Sabbath morning, so that numerically the congregation has been strengthened by about 30 per cent. May the number of communicants also increase, if that be the Lord's will, to give glory and honour to the great mediatorial King. During the communion season in December it was very helpful that the YMCA was able to give us a larger room for the services on Sabbath and the preceding Saturday.

During our visit to Singapore it was very obvious that the city is fully identified with other western centres of civilization in enthusiastically embracing the supposedly Christian festival of Christmas. Indeed, with respect to the trimmings and trappings of this highly commercial event, one can say that Singapore surpasses even Paris, London and Amsterdam. The well-worn carols, including "Come All Ye Faithful" and "Jinglebells", are not off the air from about the middle of November. Christmas trees, complete with fake snow, make their appearance like mushrooms in autumn.

In Singapore, the Religious Harmony Act forbids all public criticism of any religion, whether Christian, Muslim or Heathen. If one spoke out the truth untimely there is the distinct possibility of one ending up in gaol. However, the sect of the Russellites (Jehovah Witnesses) is banned because its followers refuse to engage in military service, will not co-operate in the Salute the Flag ceremony, and decline to swear oaths to the state.

Our prayer is that all false religions may be swept from the earth to make way for the worldwide, holy and catholic Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, the great, the glorious and the only Head, who has all might and power. "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 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 28:18-19).

EASTERN EUROPE REPORT

Rev. D. A. Ross

THE Eastern Europe Mission is the result of our Church's long-standing concern for persecuted believers in former Communist countries, especially in Eastern Europe. Our first steps were no more than corresponding with certain Christian organisations which worked covertly in distributing the Scriptures in those countries. Thereafter a few of our people, as a result of a decision of our Synod, ventured into Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Moldova and the Ukraine, but, because of the repressive regimes in those countries, we had to exercise much care in meeting with believers and giving out Bibles. These endeavours eventually developed into our taking humanitarian aid in small amounts, plus Bibles, to persecuted Christians. On one visit our consignment of Bibles was confiscated by the authorities. Eventually larger amounts of aid, Bibles and Christian literature were transported by truck to several churches, and also to institutions such as orphanages and Christian missions. We did not have much success by way of people accepting reformed teaching and therefore we were prayerfully anxious to meet with people who would be willing to be taught and among whom we could plant a Church that would be reformed in doctrine, worship and practice. This, in the good providence of the Lord, actually happened when we met two families in Odessa who wished to know more fully the teachings of the faith. We now have a small reformed congregation there, with one of their own men an elder in it, and a young man of the congregation studying for the ministry of our Church with a view, God willing, to his ministering in the Ukraine.

During the past year we were able to visit Ukraine more than once. On one of those occasions, the Kirk Session of the Odessa congregation, consisting of myself as interim moderator, and elders, Mr. Kenneth Macleod and Mr. Edward Ross, visited the congregation. During the visit we held a communion season and ordained Mr. Igor Zadoroshney to the eldership in the congregation. The presence of a local elder will be beneficial for the functioning of the Kirk Session, considering that the other elders reside in Scotland. Our visits to Odessa are essential for the progressing of the work of the Gospel there.

Our plan to visit Romania last October did not succeed because the officials there hindered the processing of the paperwork necessary for our visiting certain churches in the country, and therefore it became impractical for us to proceed. However, the calendars and Bibles we were due to take from the Trinitarian Bible Society to the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe arrived there safely by another route. One of their pastors writes: "The Bibles and the 2007 Hungarian and Romanian calendars were again a powerful tool in attempts to reach sinners for Christ. Most of those who received calendars and Bibles in past years were already waiting for the new calendars. Many people, who had no Bibles, were very glad for the

possibility of getting free copies of the Holy Scriptures. We pray that our Lord might bless the seed of the Word, in order to bear fruits for the glory of God and for the good of His people.”

Mr. Igor Zadoroshney steadily continues our Scripture and literature distribution work. He reports that throughout the year he placed adverts in regional newspapers offering Bibles, books and tracts, and that he has received numerous requests. Bibles in both Russian and Ukrainian are sent out. The main items of literature given out (some of which are also in Russian and Ukrainian) are the *Shorter Catechism*, the *Mother's Catechism*, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and *Sermons by Rev. D. MacFarlane* (which is not long in print). The *Mother's Catechism* is in great demand for work among children. In response to sending out *Sermons by Rev. D. MacFarlane*, Mr. Zadoroshney has received several letters of warm gratitude, some of which testify to the receiving of spiritual benefit from the book. We have also been distributing other good literature received from Holland and other parts but which we have not ourselves translated or printed – for example, Calvin's *Institutes*.

Our Bibles and literature are sent to Bible Schools and Churches as well as to individuals and families. Surprisingly, one Seventh Day Adventist pastor asked for 70 copies of the Shorter Catechism and various Gospel tracts, the teaching of which, if truly received, must inevitably bring to an end certain errors of these people. One missionary, who ministers to seamen arriving at the port of Odessa from other countries, distributes our edition of the Shorter Catechism to the Russian-speaking sailors whom he meets.

We also distributed tracts warning against the cults, such as Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons, Pentecostals, Seven Day Adventists, and *Be Warned – Occultism!* There were 1,160 of each of these distributed. One recipient of *Be Warned – Occultism!* wrote: “I live in Transcarpathian area, Truskavets, which is a health resort where many people gather to take the waters. False missionaries are preaching their false doctrines near the wells of mineral waters. People here are very superstitious and trust extrasensory individuals more than doctors. Your tract is like spiritual glasses for the blind. Some time ago I was almost lost in the meshes of occultism. But praise be to the Lord, He found me and led me out of the kingdom of darkness and deceit! Please send me spiritual literature.” Most requests for Bibles and literature come from Ukraine but some also from other countries, mainly Russia, and as far away as Germany, where Mr. Zadoroshney has contacts.

Our Mission in Odessa also distributed 8,000 copies of the TBS *Words of Life* calendars to various institutions, such as prisons, military depots, old people's homes, hospitals, city council offices and other centres, where they are openly displayed. One person who gives out Gospel calendars in his area wrote: “I have received calendars from you for distribution among miners of Donbass area. We are very thankful to God and Christians in Britain who sent us this wonderful gift. Calendars with quotations from Bible are very helpful in preaching the everlasting Gospel of Jesus Christ. Once I was riding my

bicycle and met a well known woman. I had several copies of calendars in my bag. I realized that she was concerned about something. I turned round my bicycle and presented her with a copy of the calendar. As our conversation went on I found out that because of money problems she wanted to commit suicide. The calendar, which she received from me, made her glad, her eyes brightened up and I could see a spark of hope in her eyes that the Lord will not leave her desolate.”

During the last six months of 2006, Mr. Igor Zadoroshney replied to 417 requests for Bibles and Christian literature, and in return received donations to the amount of £334.93, which were remitted to the distribution fund there.

Mr. Zadoroshney also reports that the Church services continue from Sabbath to Sabbath and on prayer meeting evenings. At all these meetings sermons are read. There is a slight increase in the number of people attending. One person who used to worship with them but who left, because working at his trade on the Lord's Day was more important to him than attending the means of grace, has come back. It appears that he has come to see the wrong of Sabbath breaking and now attends regularly. There is also an increase in congregational funds, the total for the year being £215.82.

Mr. Zadoroshney concludes his report by saying: “In our everyday life we feel God's blessing and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We ask that you pray about our congregation as a whole, and for our families apart, for the enemy of the souls of men withstands us through ‘the children of disobedience’ (Ephesians 2:2).”

The population in Ukraine is being depleted because many are emigrating. Some of these emigrants have come to know about our literature, probably through the Internet. We are aware, for example, that some church people in Eastern Europe put all our literature on the Internet without our permission. We ourselves are in the process of doing so officially. We delayed posting our material on the Internet because we had evidence earlier that our work would be hindered by regional government authorities if they had excessive knowledge of our activities, but thankfully this is no longer the case.

The progress made with the Odessa Mission building has already been reported in the March issue of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*. As soon as money is available we will proceed with the second stage of the building which will serve as a store for literature, a centre for distribution, a place for public worship and a residential flat. One matter of which we are assured, despite galloping inflation and the ever-increasing amount of money needed to complete the building, is that the gold and the silver are the Lord's, and that there is nothing too hard for Him. This project is, we believe, for the glory of God and the good of precious souls and we proceed prayerfully in the hope that the sovereign God of all mercies will continue to provide for us.

Last January, as noted above, there was a communion season in the congregation. We are indebted to the elders for the time they took off from their families and employment in Scotland to work in Odessa for about two weeks. We are grateful to them also for all the other work they do for the

Mission there. Besides, there are many other people who put their shoulder to the work, all contributing to the furtherance of the Gospel there, not least Mr. Chris Lamont and Mr. Edward Ross, who transported a load of aid to the Children's Hospital in Odessa. We are indebted also to those who gave articles for aid, and to the ladies of Inverness and other places who did much work in preparing the load for Odessa. We are deeply indebted also to the Trinitarian Bible Society for their ongoing grants of many calendars and considerable numbers of Bibles from time to time. Of course, none of our work could possibly continue without the generous financial support of our people and friends, and we are thankful to the Most High for putting it into the hearts of so many to support the work.

We also continue to post Bibles and literature from Scotland to various countries in Eastern Europe, including regions where Islam is the main religion. We are grateful to Miss Norma Morrison and other helpers for packing and posting these items. One Ukrainian, who receives our literature from Scotland for distribution in his area, tells of the poverty of the people there, and how very happy some of them were on receiving the free gift of a Bible and literature.

We look to the God of all grace to prosper our comparatively small work of spreading the Christian Faith in Eastern Europe. We hear very little of the good effects of our endeavours, but even supposing we did not hear of any spiritual blessing being given, it continues to be incumbent on the Church to spread abroad the Word of the truth of the Gospel. At present, it is in a very limited way that we do this work by actual preaching (although we hope and pray that the Church's regular preaching of the Word there will be the outcome of Mr. Dimitri Levitskiy's studies). Meantime, we have the responsibility of distributing the Scriptures and Christian literature, which pertains very much to the great commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO SINGAPORE, AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

Rev. B. Jardine

I FLEW out from Heathrow on the evening of Tuesday, 31st October, and arrived the following afternoon in Singapore, where Mrs. Yong kindly met me. On Thursday evening, I took the weekly prayer meeting at which 19 people were present, many of them under 16 years of age. The services are held in a large YMCA building well situated for the congregation's needs. When we met on Sabbath there were 30 people present in the morning and 22 at night. About one third of the congregation are under 18 years old and all are under 50.

It was very moving to hear the Singapore congregation harmoniously singing the metrical Psalms. It was obvious that the people, though not brought up in the Church, have a strong commitment to the Reformed position and the Westminster Standards. On Tuesday, I took a short trip into Johor Baharu, Malaysia, and was impressed by how easy it could be for a minister of the Gospel in Singapore to branch out into that country. Singapore is very cosmopolitan and can be considered to be the linchpin of Asia in many ways. There appears to be great potential for growth of the Church in the city and surrounding areas. There were 18 present at the Tuesday evening prayer meeting. "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:37-38).

On Wednesday, 8th November, I flew on to Sydney where Mrs. Nella van Praag and her daughter Martina met me. I stayed with the Van Praags during my time in Sydney and was made to feel very much at home. I conducted the weekly prayer meeting on Thursday, when we had a congregation of 19, most of whom were under 21 years old. On Friday evening, Mr. and Mrs. Calvin Mackenzie kindly entertained me to a meal in their home. The congregations on Sabbath numbered 26 in the morning and 23 in the evening, even although some were missing. Fifteen were present at the prayer meeting on Tuesday.

On Thursday 15th, I travelled on to Grafton in the smallest plane I have ever been in. There was no hostess and the pilot himself served the juice and biscuits! At the evening prayer meeting there were about 35 present, most of whom were under 25. Rev. Mr. Rayner took me to visit people of the congregation on Friday, and in the evening we had a short prayer meeting in the Church, after which I went to Mr. and Mrs. Richard van Dorp's home for supper. The Friday night meeting was established by Rev. William Maclean during his short ministry there. Next evening I received kind hospitality from Mr. Geoff Kidd and his family, and while with them I was pleased to see the familiar faces of Mr. and Mrs. George Harvey, from Dingwall, who were on holiday. On Sabbath, in the Grafton church, we had a congregation of over 60 in the morning and about 50 in the evening. We were able to visit several more people of the congregation on Monday.

Again it was noticeable that a large percentage of the congregation were under 25 years of age. This was something I would see again in most of the congregations I visited. Many of the office-bearers to whom I spoke set before me the need to encourage these young people to travel to the Church Youth Conference in Scotland and meet others of their own age. However, due to the cost of travel this would be impossible for many of them, but perhaps the home Church, working with local Deacons' Courts, could provide some kind of financial assistance.

On Tuesday, 21st November, I flew on to Auckland where I was met by Mr. and Mrs. Cornel van Kralingen and my brother-in-law, Alasdair Campbell. I stayed with Alasdair and his family for the next 11 days. On the Wednesday evening I took the weekly prayer meeting in the Auckland church, when 26

were present. Most of the congregation in Auckland, and indeed in our other congregations in New Zealand, are of Dutch extraction. Next day I had the opportunity to visit Mr. Duncan Macintosh, originally from Inverness, and it was good to hear him talk of some of the godly people of his generation whom he knew in Scotland many years ago. That evening I conducted a short prayer meeting. At the Sabbath services there were just over 40 present both morning and evening. Approximately 70 per cent of the congregation were under 18. The prayer meeting on Wednesday was attended by 29 people.

On Thursday morning, Mrs. De Boer, who had moved to New Zealand with her husband and young family only a few years ago, drove me to the airport on my way to Gisborne. After a very bumpy flight I was met in Gisborne by Mr. and Mrs. Peter Vermeulen – the minister of the congregation being in Singapore for the communion season there. On Saturday, 2nd December, I had the opportunity to visit Mr. and Mrs. John Geuze and family with whom I had dinner. I took the evening prayer meeting at which 11 were present. On Sabbath the attendance was just above 40 at both services. The majority of the congregation met together for a barbecue on Monday evening, when I presented books to the Sabbath School children. There was a very pleasant family feeling among the people and it was good to get time to speak to them in such a relaxed atmosphere.

On Tuesday, 5th December, I travelled on to Napier where Miss Jocelyn Cox met me. I took a service in the evening with a congregation of 20. One family, the Hicklins, had driven the considerable distance from Wellington to attend. It was good to meet all the people there and to have an interesting talk with Mr. Jim Brown, originally from Greenock, and his family.

Next day I was driven on the five-hour journey to Wellington by Ben Hicklin and two of his sisters. On the way we spent a short time in Palmerston North. Although at present we have no meetings in the city, the Church had a small group there at one time. In Wellington there were 20 present at the prayer meeting that evening. On Saturday 9th, Mrs. Hicklin drove me to the town of Carterton, about a one and a quarter hours' drive away, where I visited Mr. Optland and his wife and family. Mr. Optland is one of the Wellington elders and teaches in a Dutch Reformed school in the town. That evening I received a phone call from my mother to say that my grandfather had died after a short illness. Just over 20 people attended the Sabbath services. Wednesday 13th was held as a Day of Humiliation and Prayer in the congregation, and we had 10 present at the morning service, including two visitors, and 15 at night. During my time in Wellington I was made to feel part of the Hicklin family.

On Thursday, Mr. Hicklin, with some of his family, drove me to Tauranga for the communion season there. There were 14 present at the evening service, including visitors from Gisborne and Wellington. On Friday morning, I took the morning service, again with a congregation of 14. The question meeting was held in the evening and three men spoke to the question. I personally received some benefit from what was said, and I believe that in the meeting there was a sense of the fulfilment of the Saviour's promise that "where two

or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). There is need to guard against despising the day of small things. The language of grace is the same no matter which country we may be in. On Saturday there were again 14 present at the services. Ten people sat at the Lord’s Table on Sabbath, and everything was done in accordance with the practice of the Church at home. We had much to be thankful for that day. After the service on Monday I flew back to Auckland, where I took the prayer meeting in the evening.

Next day, Tuesday, 19th December, I had to return to Scotland. Mr. Paul de Bruin and his brother-in-law drove me to Auckland Airport. After a very long flight I arrived at Heathrow, only to find that all the British Airways internal flights were cancelled due to fog. I did not reach my home in Tarbert until Saturday evening.

All the people whom I met were very appreciative of ministerial supply from the home Church but many of them expressed concern over deputies only being able to visit once every two years and usually only spending one Sabbath in any congregation. It was suggested that it would be a better use of financial resources and more profitable for the deputy and the people if these visits were shorter but more frequent, with each congregation taking its own turn of having the deputy for a four-week visit. This would avoid the cost of expensive internal flights and give each congregation an opportunity to receive consistent ministerial supply and pastoral visitation. If deputies were to go away for four weeks and not seven it would be easier for their Presbyteries to allow them to visit more frequently.

It was also brought to my attention that it is not always financially feasible for all the members of the Australia and New Zealand Presbytery to sit on the Synod each year. Some are concerned that this, in practice, means that they are not able to take an active role in making Synod decisions that affect them.

I wish to thank everyone, named and unnamed, who looked after me and showed kindness to me during my time away from home. I also thank my Presbytery and congregation for freeing me for the duration of the trip, and I am grateful to those who upheld me at the throne of grace. I wish especially to render thanks to the Lord for travelling mercies and for strength given me to fulfil the duties required of me. I trust that a blessing will follow. “The Lord hath been mindful of us: he will bless us; he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron. He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great” (Psalm 115:12-13).

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO CHESLEY

Rev. D. Macdonald

HAVING been invited by the Dominion and Overseas Committee to go to Chesley, Canada, for the first two weekends in March, on the second of which there was to be a communion season, I left North Uist on Tuesday, 27th February. I travelled to Glasgow by air, then flew to Toronto on the morning of 28th February, arriving the same day at 1 p.m. their time. I was met by Mr. Rick Bouman, a Deacon in the Chesley congregation, and after a journey of two and a half hours we arrived at his home, where I was hospitably entertained. He then took me to the Chesley manse, where I was to stay for the next two weeks.

Despite a heavy snowfall in the region, we were able to meet for the prayer meeting on Thursday, 1st March, and for the Sabbath services of the first weekend. Although we had difficult weather conditions, all the services were well attended.

On Friday, 2nd March, I went with the local elders to Dundas, near Hamilton (a car drive of two and a half hours), to address the Lord's Day Association meeting which was attended by about eighty people.

As we approached the communion season, on the second weekend of my stay, there was a renewed sense of loss in the congregation at the passing away of their esteemed elder, Mr. Gerrit Shuit, last December. His death has left a great blank among them but we believe their loss is his gain. Our sympathies are with his bereaved widow and family, and also with the congregation.

The communion services began on Thursday, 8th March, and continued to the following Monday, as in Scotland. Five men spoke at the fellowship meeting on Friday, fourteen tokens were given out on Saturday, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered on the Lord's Day morning, followed by the evening service, and the thanksgiving service was held on Monday evening. The services were well attended on the whole, and we had some visitors from Texas and Grand Rapids present during the weekend.

I left Chesley on Tuesday, 13th March, and arrived home safely on Wednesday, having enjoyed my stay among the people of the congregation who showed me much kindness.

There is no doubt that there is potential for growth of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in Canada and North America. There is quite a lot of interest in our Church in some quarters there, and in my view if the Chesley Congregation had a minister settled over it, there could be such growth. However, it is the Lord alone who can provide a pastor, and He alone who can give the increase.

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO TEXAS

Rev. N. M. Ross

IT was my privilege to once again visit our congregation in Texas, USA, for two weeks in the middle of November 2006, this time as a deputy of the Church rather than the interim moderator of the Kirk Session. I was welcomed at George Bush International Airport, Houston, by Mr. Jett Smith, the deacon in the congregation, and now a student for the ministry of our Church. After he and his wife Evelyn kindly entertained me to a welcome meal at their home, we proceeded the short distance to the prayer meeting in the congregation's new church building. The meeting was conducted by Rev. Lyle Smith, a Santa Fe man from the congregation who was recently licensed to preach the Gospel after his successful studies in Scotland. It was both a relief and refreshing to have his help on my arrival in Santa Fe after a tiring journey and when the time of the 7 p.m. meeting was actually 1 a.m. UK time.

For the next dozen days I was very kindly looked after in the Santa Fe home of Mr. Joseph Smith and his wife Carolyn and their little daughter Julie. (I may mention that before I left their home they were blessed with the arrival of another baby daughter.)

Next day, Thursday, I went to inspect the building in Santa Fe which the congregation now leases as its place of worship and in which they worshipped for the first time on the previous Sabbath. It is part of a four unit commercial building on the main thoroughfare and is very suitable. It has sufficient parking space at the front of the building plus necessary facilities inside. Some of the young men of the congregation, not long before I arrived, purchased church pews of modern design from a church in Atlanta and transported them to Santa Fe in a very large hired truck. By the time I arrived they had successfully completed the arduous task of nicely fitting the pews into the building. They transferred the reading desk from their former church building in Richmond but they are in the process of procuring a more appropriate church pulpit. We found the new building to be very commodious, comfortable and convenient for all the services.

The congregation's lease of the Richmond building is now relinquished because most of the people now live in the Santa Fe area. For this reason also the Kirk Session has decided that the congregation be now known as the Santa Fe Congregation instead of the Richmond Congregation.

On Sabbath, I administered the sacrament of Baptism by which the infants of Mr. and Mrs. Jett Smith and Mr. and Mrs. Carl Smith were solemnly admitted into the visible Church. We thought of the fact that they, as the infants of believing parents, were already members of the visible Church, but prayed that they and the other little ones in the congregation would become living members of the mystical body of Christ – the great blessing symbolised by the sacrament – and that they will be a godly seed in their own day. “A seed shall serve Him” (Psalm 22:30).

On the following Thursday the communion season commenced. We were pleased to have with us elders A. MacPherson, Scotland, and D. Kuiper, Canada, and it was a pleasure for me in my preaching duties to have the welcome and able assistance of Rev. Lyle Smith. On Saturday the Kirk Session interviewed and received into full communion a young man and two young women, bringing the communion roll up to 18 communicants. The services on Sabbath and weekday were well attended by the people of the congregation plus a few visitors. Altogether it was a most encouraging and refreshing communion season.

Indeed, the whole situation in the congregation is encouraging. Since I was present at the previous communion season in April, two new homes have been set up in the area, and there have been additions to some families. The Kirk Session decided to hold an election of deacons in the congregation. This has now taken place and it is intended that the two deacons-elect be ordained on the Sabbath before the next communion season. The Kirk Session has also requested the Southern Presbytery to petition the Synod to raise the status of the congregation from that of a preaching station to a church extension charge in order that the congregation will be in a position to call a pastor.

The congregation was grateful to have Rev. Lyle Smith giving them pulpit supply for several weeks following the sad loss of his dear wife. We deeply sympathise with Mr. Smith and his young family in their sore bereavement. The people long to have a pastor settled over them. Meantime, Mr. Jett Smith and Mr. Joseph Smith are conducting the services. May the congregation have the fulfillment of the promise:

“Both small and great that fear the Lord,
He will them surely bless.
The Lord will you, you and your seed,
Aye more and more increase.”
(Psalm 115:13-14, metrical)

TRAINING OF MINISTRY REPORT

Convener: Rev. J. R. Tallach

DURING the past year, Mr. Jett Smith has been pursuing his academic studies at the University of Houston. He expects to sit his Entrance Exam for Divinity in August this year and to join the class studying under Rev. H. M. Cartwright in September.

Mr. George B. MacDonald passed the Entrance Exam and joined Dr. Allan MacColl studying divinity under Rev. J. MacLeod in London in September 2006.

Mr. Dimitri Levitskiy failed his A Level in English Literature and returned to Ukraine early in 2006. He has been studying for the Cambridge Certificate

in Advanced English taught at the London School of English in Odessa. Arrangements are being made for tuition in Hebrew and Greek and Mr. Levitskiy has been told to prepare himself for the Entrance Exam for Divinity in August 2008.

As noted above, Dr. Allan MacColl has been studying Theology in London.

Mr. Nopel Sibanda was received as a student for the ministry by the Zimbabwe Presbytery at its meeting on 13th March 2007. Mr. Sibanda has a degree in Technology of Environmental Health and is a Divisional Environmental Officer in Bulawayo. It is hoped that Mr. Sibanda will sit the Entrance examination for Divinity in August this year. Rev. P. Mzamo and Rev. A. MacLean have agreed to help Mr. Sibanda prepare for this examination.

The Committee have discussed the possibility of dividing the thirty-week session into two semesters. This would give more flexibility in the way the course is delivered and might allow tutors in specific subjects to be appointed.

The Theology Conference for 2006 was deferred until December 2007 because of the pro re nata Synod held in December 2006.

As a church we stand in grave need of more ministers. We commend this as a plea at a throne of grace, that the Lord would give ministers of the Gospel, "the messengers of the churches and the glory of Christ".

THEOLOGICAL TUTOR'S REPORT

Rev. J. MacLeod

THE students attending the classes this year were Dr. Allan W. MacColl and Mr. George MacDonald. The problem of finding suitable accommodation within easy travelling distance to the manse in Sidcup was wonderfully resolved when, in the Lord's providence, one of the students happened to meet a man in the north of Scotland who informed him that his parents had rooms available to let and were looking for suitable tenants. It so happened that the people concerned were professing Christians, the husband being an elder in the Thornton Heath Evangelical Church congregation. The kindness shown to them by Mr. and Mrs. Powell will always be remembered by the students. The journey by car to Sidcup from their place of residence takes about half an hour.

The class met for the first time on 3rd September 2006 in the manse sitting-room and, if the Lord spares us and maintains us in health, will meet for the final time on 26th April 2007, when the students are due to sit their final exit examination. As mentioned on the last occasion that I submitted a Tutor's Report, the burden of preparing orderly courses for the study of Theology and Apologetics was much eased as a result of the Rev. Donald MacLean making available to me the series of lectures which he had prepared over his long

period of service as Tutor. These Lectures, having been typed out by Dr. John Mitchell, as a labour of love, were photocopied, wire-bound and then issued to the students. On this occasion I am indebted to Mr. Hugh Campbell for bearing the burden and cost of copying and binding these documents.

As is customary, the class was opened with prayer, after which we endeavoured to maintain contact with the original languages by reading, on alternate days, verses from 1 Timothy and in Exodus chapters 19 and 20 and later in Isaiah chapter 53. For interest we read Ellicott's comments on the former two portions and Poole's on the latter. We also, in our own time, endeavoured systematically to read as much of Volume 1 of Beveridge's translation of Calvin's *Institutes* as was possible and, before turning our attention to the main subjects, we briefly discussed what had been read.

Systematic Theology

In our Theological studies we made use, principally, of A. A. Hodge's *Outlines of Theology* and Louis Berkhof's *Systematic Theology* referring, as we went along, to other authors and works which shed further light on particular doctrines as they came under our consideration. Among these authors we may mention James Durham, George Smeaton and Thomas Halyburton.

Apologetics

R. C. Sproul's *Defending Your Faith: An Introduction to Apologetics* was read through and was found useful as he approaches the subject of Apologetics from the Classical viewpoint. The fact that the Scripture quotations throughout are from the English Standard Version rather than from the incomparable Authorised Version reduces its appeal as a text book, but apart from that and the fact that in one or two instances when, in our view, inappropriate illustrations are used, it lives up to its title. We again relied heavily on the Rev. Donald MacLean's Lectures. Without infringing copyright, portions of B. B. Warfield's *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* were photocopied and distributed to the students, together with other useful, freely-available, relevant material downloaded from the Internet.

Scripture

The portion of Scripture prescribed was Job to Malachi.

Conclusion

It was a great privilege for me to have been assigned the duty of leading these two young men in their studies. It was work and labour that afforded me much pleasure and the time has passed all too quickly. It is to be hoped that tutor and students gained spiritually as a result of being found together seeking, as we trust was the case, to deepen our knowledge of the things of the Spirit of God. That both students attended to their studies in a most diligent, dutiful manner goes without saying. I have to express my gratitude to them for supplying the

congregations within reach when called upon to do so. It is our hope and prayer that they will be polished shafts in the hand of their Master, useful to Him in their day and generation, and faithful in following in the footsteps of those who stood so nobly for the Truth in 1893.

WELFARE OF YOUTH COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Rev. D. A. Ross

LAST year's Youth Conference, as has already been reported in the 2006 Synod Report and more fully in the *Young People's Magazine*, was held at Strathallan School, Forgandenny, Perthshire. The school is about seven miles south west of Perth and, although out in the country, was fairly accessible by public transport and had all the facilities necessary for a conference. The School Management Board and staff were very helpful to our house mothers, meeting with them regularly to ensure that all our needs were attended to. The food and service in the canteen provided by a private firm was of a high standard.

The conference was a profitable occasion for our young people – and, indeed, for adults also. The speakers and their subjects were noted in our last report, and we may add that, in the content and presentation of the topics dealt with, there was a depth of spirituality and moral guidance for our young friends which, if taken to heart and blessed to them, cannot but be beneficial to them. There will always be those who are indifferent to such instruction – it has ever been the case – but there were those present who evidenced a concern about, and appreciation of, the scriptural guidance given.

The speakers and subjects for this year's conference, to be held at Edinburgh Academy, is as follows:

- 1. *The Wise and Wealthy King – Lessons from the Life of Solomon***
Rev. W. A. Weale
- 2. *John Knox – His Life and Legacy***
Rev. H. M. Cartwright
- 3. *Reliable Bible Translations – The Need, the Difficulties and the Process***
Mr. D. P. Rowland
- 4. *Church History in Edinburgh – A Tour***
Conducted by Rev. D. Campbell
- 5. *The Holy War (Part 2) – Conquered by Love, Overcome by Grace***
Rev. R. MacLeod

6. “As the Lord Commanded” – How We Should Worship God
Rev. D. W. B. Somerset

The Committee is, as always, indebted to those who shoulder the burden of preparing and delivering papers and organising tours, answering questions put to them by our young friends at discussion sessions, and spending time with some of them in conversation in a profitable manner at recreation times. There was, of course, the constant domestic oversight of the conference by the house mothers, Miss Margaret MacAskill and Mrs. Norma MacLeod, without whom the conference could not run smoothly. Their work consisted mainly of registering the conference members at reception, instructing them about the rules for residents in the Halls of Residence, ensuring that these rules were kept, liaising between the conference members and residence staff, and attending to the many enquiries and needs which ordinarily arise among a group of more than 70 people. When the conference drew to a close, the house mothers were given large bouquets of flowers by the young people, who purchased and presented them in grateful appreciation of the caring help given to them.

The Scripture and Catechism Exercises continue to be prepared and corrected by our faithful helpers. We are pleased that a number of children outwith our church complete the exercises – their interest and participation is to be much encouraged. Although most of the children and young people complete the three prescribed sets of exercises, some do only two, despite some correctors actively encouraging the children to complete all three. This is a great pity. Not only do they miss the benefit of doing a third exercise but also lose the opportunity of receiving a good book as a reward. The numbers doing the exercises in each group continue to be much the same as in the past, but some young people discontinue before they reach the upper age limit. We know that as children get older they have an ever-increasing demand made on them by secular studies and other things in life, but it is a great pity when they prematurely cease to do these beneficial exercises. We hope that all who do them will see the great value for time and eternity of so studying the Bible and memorising the Shorter Catechism. In the Senior Section especially the standard of work is very high both in presentation and the answers given. All the ladies who prepare and correct the exercises are careful not to err to the extremes of making questions too difficult or too easy. They also encourage and commend the young entrants in the prayerful hope that spiritual good will be the result. At the end of each session, prizes and awards are presented to those who do all three exercises, which are much appreciated by both our young friends and their parents.

It is a great concern to the Committee that young people in many state schools are exposed to sex education which fails to teach the scriptural requirement of abstinence outwith marriage and faithfulness within marriage. A leaflet, *Sex Education in Scottish Schools*, is to be published by the Committee, which we hope will prove helpful to parents. However, we

acknowledge that in some schools abstinence is emphasised, as well as the propriety of marriage. We also note that there is provision for parents who have concerns to withdraw their children from sex education classes, as well as from Religious and Moral Education classes which they find offensive. While it is difficult for parents, and especially the children, to be involved in withdrawing from certain classes, we believe that in some cases it would be by far in the best interests of the children to do so. With regard to the moral and spiritual welfare of young people, we live in times when a Scripture-based approach has been overtaken by humanist and secular ideas, which are in opposition to the principles laid down by God in His Word for all people. We pray that our every endeavour as a Church to maintain true moral and spiritual teachings be acknowledged by the Most High to the preserving of our young people from the many evils with which they are continually confronted. The promise is, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

BALLIFEARY RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. J. R. Tallach

THROUGH the past year Ballifeary has been fully occupied and has benefited from a full complement of competent and caring staff.

We record with sadness the passing away of Henrietta MacLennan on 24th April, Catherine MacLeod on 9th July, Elizabeth (Elma) MacPherson on 23rd September, and Murdina MacIver on 13th December.

A large proportion of the residents have been very frail and have required a higher level of care and support from the staff through the year.

We are pleased to report that 10 members of staff have completed their SVQ2.

Expenditure in the Home during the year included the refitting of the kitchen and the purchase of a variety of new items of furniture.

In the coming year the authorities intend putting a new emphasis on quality assurance. The financial support given by them will be linked to a quality assurance marking scheme which is in the process of being drawn up.

The Committee thank our two auditors, John Fraser and Kenneth MacLean, together with all others who gave of their time and energy to the temporal and spiritual welfare of the residents.

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

LEVERBURGH CARE HOME COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. Macdonald

THIS is my first report as Convener for the Leverburgh Care Home Committee. I would like to thank Rev. K. D. Macleod for his work, who served as Convener over several years; I would wish also to thank the Committee for their help and support.

The Home continues to function as it has done over the past nineteen years; there have been many changes over this time, not least with the establishing of the Scottish Parliament and the changing face of legislation governing Care Homes, which are now under Care Commission Scotland.

As the Leverburgh Care Home is a Church Home, the Christian ethos is important. As well as looking after the physical needs of residents there is the benefit of the church services being relayed to the Home and also the provision of family worship night and morning.

Although for a part of 2006 there were some vacant beds, affecting significantly the overall finances for the financial year, I am glad to report that at the end of 2006 and the first quarter of 2007, the Home was again full. The finances of the Home are in a satisfactory state; these can be seen in the statement of accounts.

Sadly there were a number of residents who passed away over the past year: Mrs. Jessie Ann Mackay, Tarbert; Mrs. Margaret Nicholson, Tarbert; Christina Shaw, Tarbert; Donald Buchanan, Amhuinnsuidhe, North Harris; Miss Agnes Maclean, Strond; Mrs. Agnes Maclellan, Horgabost; and Katie Bell Mackay, Leverburgh – all from Harris.

SVQ training is ongoing; the Matron has been accepted as a Registered Manager and issued with a certificate; she must do ninety hours, or fifteen days of a post registration course over three years.

The issue relating to the use of private sacraments in the Home has been satisfactorily resolved.

I would wish to thank all involved in the running of the Home, which is to a high standard. This is borne out in the twice yearly inspections carried out by the Care Commission which have so far given very good reports on the running of the Home. We are indebted to the Matron and her staff for this success and also to the Administrator for her competent handling of the administration and the Home finances.

I should also acknowledge the support of the local community for the Home and the various expressions of kindnesses shown from time to time

Above all we should be thankful to the Most High for His goodness to us over the past year. We have to say with thankfulness, "The Lord of us hath mindful been".

OUTREACH COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. A. Ross

ALTHOUGH we cannot say that we hear of any persons coming under the saving influence of the Scriptures through our outreach activities, we know that genuine interest is evidenced in one way or another in the various aspects of the work we do.

We now have a mobile bookvan which is in use in North Uist at present. The minister there, the Rev. Donald Macdonald, along with his willing helper, Mr. Allan Boyd, engage in door-to-door work, a major part of which is the free distribution of Gospel tracts and other suitable material, as well as the sale of Bibles and Christian literature. The bookvan will be sent later to North Harris to be under the management of Rev. Bruce Jardine. We intend to have a bookstand at the agricultural shows there.

We are indebted to the Inverness Congregation through its Deacons' Court for donating the van, which was their church bus prior to the purchase of their new vehicle. With the able design and fitting skills of Mr. Duncan Macaskill, the bus was fitted with shelving to make it suitable for door-to-door work and literature distribution at agricultural shows.

It is our intention this year to visit the Black Isle and the Portree agricultural shows once again. Last year both shows were in the same week, which put us under greater pressure. Rev. W. Weale and I attended both places, since there is the need for two persons to man the literature tent and speak to people who come in. We are grateful for the help we got from friends at both these shows. Because the bookvan will be used in the Outer Isles, we shall use the Eastern Europe Mission truck and a large tent for continuing our work on the mainland. The preparation and erection of the tent involves considerable work and it would be so much easier to be able to drive a ready-made stand to the agricultural shows. Perhaps we may be able to design and fit out the interior of our next vehicle for Eastern Europe so that it may be used for both Eastern Europe work and as a walk-in bookvan – thus saving the labour of erecting and dismantling a tent.

The response from our presence at the agricultural shows was encouraging. Quite a number of books were sold, donations received and free literature offered and received. It was rather sad, however, that the tourists visiting Skye seemed to show more interest in our literature than the local people did. It is evident that the Gospel has largely departed from our islands. At the request of the people of Gadara, Christ took His leave of their country; nevertheless He left His witness there. We believe that our distribution of Christian literature year by year is a contribution to the Christian witness already in Skye. Indeed when witnesses on the side of truth are diminished a greater burden falls on the few who remain to do what they can to bring sinners under the influence of the Word of God. What need we have of praying for one another in connection with such witnessing.

We are anxious to move to other areas with our literature work but one of our problems is the limitation on manpower. There are numerous sites in the Highlands where we can set up bookstalls and at much less cost than at the Black Isle Agricultural Show. However, the Black Isle site has a very large number of visitors and some of these from abroad, which is an advantage. It would be a wonderful provision, in our opinion, if someone were raised up to do this work on a permanent basis. We ask our people to make it a matter of prayer that the Lord would raise up such a person.

With regard to other contacts made by the Committee, many of these are in foreign countries and made through the Internet. They ask questions about the Reformed Faith and the Free Presbyterian Church; some ask about joining the Church and others request help in one form or another. What help we give is mostly by sending literature, especially tracts, which are sent out by Mr. Kenneth Hutton, the Church Bookroom Manager. One person, in thanking us for sending a copy of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, said that he uses it in his personal devotions. Some Muslims have contacted us. One such in Turkey was afraid that his contacting us would be discovered by his family. A few people say they are offended by our witness, and accuse us of being self-righteous and exalting ourselves. We try to answer these grievances in a wise and compassionate manner. Small though our work is it is encouraging to know that with the Lord's blessing great things can ensue.

With regard to our tracts, we changed the format of all of them and increased the size of the print for easier reading. We continue to advertise these in the *Evangelical Times* and *British Church Newspaper*, with the result that there is a steady interest in the tracts and some people take large quantities. Indeed, large stocks have sometimes been depleted quite quickly. We pray that the distribution done by many people in Britain and abroad will bear fruit. Many of those who use our tracts do so because the teaching is sound and the scripture quotations are from the Authorized Version. Some complain of the nonsense found in many so-called Gospel tracts, saying they are glad to have discovered ours and to use them for distribution. As has been reported already, some of our tracts have been translated into French, Dutch and German, but we are glad to report that all our tracts are now translated into German. We intend to advertise these tracts in periodicals in Holland, Germany and France.

It is undoubtedly our duty as a Church to continue outreach work, and we pray that the repetitiveness of the work will be so blessed that it will be like the repeated blows of a hammer to eventually break some stony hearts. There are many reasons to continue with the work, not least that ungodliness, instead of being checked by the laws of the land, is more and more encouraged and strengthened by government legislation.

It is encouraging to know from the Scriptures that our work is not hopeless, as some tend to think. While it is attended with many discouragements, we are assured that there is, and ever shall be, the bringing forth of fruit from the sowing of the seed of the Word of God. "But other fell into good ground, and

brought forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold” (Matthew 13:8).

MAGAZINES REPORT

Rev. K. D. Macleod, Editor

OVER the last 12 months, the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* and the *Young People's Magazine* have gone out month by month as usual, and the *Gaelic Supplement* every three months. An effort is made to provide a variety of material that will, by God's blessing, affect both the head and heart of the readership.

Costs for printing and postage of the Magazines have again increased in the last 12 months, and adjustments have had accordingly to be made to the cost of individual copies and to subscriptions. There has been a marked improvement in the health of the Magazines Fund, partly as a result of price rises, but also as a result of increased numbers being sent to Zimbabwe. As a result, during the past year, there has been a small increase in the number of copies of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* sent out, while the circulation of the *Young People's Magazine* has gone up by more than 50 copies per month.

I would once again thank all who have given help in various 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. Now that his much-appreciated series on the Book of Ruth has come to an end, it may be appropriate to thank Rev. Keith M. Watkins particularly and to express the hope that further contributions will be forthcoming from his pen. I would again specifically mention Dr. J. Mitchell for his continued help in checking the contents of both Magazines month by month.

May the Lord use these Magazines to the good of those who come in contact with them, including those who look at them on the Internet.

PUBLICATIONS AND BOOKROOM COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. K. D. Macleod

Publications

We have continued the re-issue of the early volumes of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*; Volume 9 is now available and we are proceeding with Volume 10. In addition, as stocks of Volume 3 have run out, we are having some further

copies printed. Last year the Committee expressed the hope that two other books, John Colquhoun of Leith on *Saving Faith* and Rev. Donald Beaton on *The Reformed Faith*, would be available before too long. However, this hope did not materialise due to delays at the printer. We do hope that there will be no further hold-ups in their production.

The reprints of the two booklets, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the *Larger Catechism*, went ahead as anticipated in the last report. We find it encouraging that there is a continuing steady demand for them.

We are at present preparing for publication a life of Miss Jean Nicolson, entitled *A Heart for Africa*. Written by Miss Dolina MacCuish, we hope it may be available by the end of the year.

Sales of Free Presbyterian Publications books in 2006 were almost the same as in 2005; this again reflects the fact that no major new title was produced in the year.

Bookroom

In 2006 sales were somewhat lower than during 2005 but were still significantly higher than in the previous year. 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.

The Committee remains convinced of the importance of the Bookroom as an outlet for sound literature, especially when religious bookshops in Scotland's main towns seem to stock an ever-decreasing selection of Reformed books; and this presumably reflects the quality of religion in the country today. This is also, no doubt, why some customers travel a considerable distance to take advantage of the wide variety of reliable literature available in the Bookroom. Sales by post, of course, go to many parts of the world – helped by the website (www.fpbookroom.org) – and this plays its part in making the Church more widely known. We request the prayers of the Lord's people for His rich blessing on this work of the Church.