

REPORT
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON PSALMODY

1. **Introduction** The work of the Psalmody Committee continued throughout the year as normal. It is the Committee's prayer that the products and the special events organised by the Committee will help the Church to enjoy and appreciate the Psalms more and more, and thus to offer intelligent, tuneful and joyful praise to God in all her acts of worship.

2. **Sale of Psalmody Resources** During 2010, and into the present year, psalmody stock has been sold steadily through the Free Church Bookshop. The preferred item has been the *Sing Psalms/Scottish Psalter* combined edition, of which over 850 copies have been sold. Just over 200 copies remain, and the Committee is now considering a measured reprint to keep this item in stock. Also sold have been 168 copies of *Sing Psalms* (words-only), 108 copies of *Sing Psalms* in Staff, 92 copies of the *Scottish Psalter* in Staff, while the Sol-fa editions of these last two have been very modest by comparison: 33 copies of each. The *Manual for Precentors* (including CD), a truly excellent resource, has not sold as well as hoped for during this past year, and the Committee will be making a special effort to commend this manual to the praise-leaders of the Church. In CDs, *Psalms for All Seasons* has sold 69 copies, *All Peoples, Sing!* has sold 20, and the *Festival of Psalms* has sold 10. In DVDs, *Sing a New Song* has sold 18 copies. Eight copies have been sold of the *Gaelic Precenting* booklet.

3. **Book Agency in the USA** In April 2010, the Banner of Truth's consignment to the USA included 280 copies of *Sing Psalms* (words-only), 296 copies of *Sing Psalms* (Staff) and 24 copies of *The Scottish Psalter* (Sol-fa). Since then, the Trust has housed the Church's psalmody products free of charge in their Carlisle, Pennsylvania, warehouse, and although it does not act as a sales agent for the Free Church, it is able to put the Committee in touch with bookstores which may show an interest. One bookstore in Wilmington, North Carolina, recently bought several copies of *Sing Psalms* (words-only) and *Sing Psalms* (Staff). The Committee is now actively seeking to foster relations and promote sales with other US bookstores. Mr John Rawlinson, General Manager of the Banner of Truth Trust, has been especially helpful to the Committee: he has advertised the Church's psalmody products on the Banner website, promoted them through Facebook and Twitter, and featured them as part of an email 'blast' that goes out to over 10,000 people. This web publicity was repeated around Easter-time. The agreement with the Banner of Truth Trust is for two years initially, ending in April 2012, when a review will be conducted to see how things have worked out. The Trust provides the Church with a statement of sales every six months, with payment. The Committee is very much indebted to Mr Rawlinson and the rest of his team for their partnership in this enterprise.

4. **PCA Assembly** For a number of years now, the Free Church of Scotland has had a booth at the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, through which the *Sing Psalms* material, plus CDs and additional praise aids have been promoted. This year's Assembly is to be held at Norfolk, Virginia, between 7th – 10th June 2011, and after a year's absence, the Free Church will again be represented by Rev. Dr Malcolm Maclean. In the light of our newly delivered stocks of *Sing Psalms* to the Banner of Truth warehouse in Pennsylvania, this could be a prime moment for the promotion of our psalmody resources in the USA.

5. **Compilation of Psalms for Special Occasions** The Committee has been working to produce a selection, in handy booklet-form, of 50-60 Psalm portions for use in student and youth work, and on occasions such as evangelistic services, joint services with other denominations, etc. The selection is taken from the contents of *Sing Psalms* (Staff edition). There will be a tune printed with each psalm, and an index of themes. The Committee expects the product to be available by the end of the year.

6. **Central Belt Praise Workshop** A Praise workshop, attended by 31 people from the Central Belt, was held at Free St Columba's, Edinburgh, on Saturday, 9th October. Morning activities included sessions on general singing warm-up, practical exercises in breathing, confidence-building and range-extension; also pitch-setting, pace-setting and the introduction of new tunes. The afternoon included an introduction to precenting, pitch-setting practice and sectional practices in part-singing, followed by a plenary singing session led by different precentors. Much good practice was shared, and from the evaluations received afterwards, the Committee gained several insights on how to make such workshops even more practical, and so improve its provision for the precentors and people in the advancement of the Lord's praise.

7. **Northern Presbytery Praise Workshop** A day workshop is planned for Saturday 28th May 2011, in Brora Free Church. This event is designed for all who enjoy singing the praise of God in church, for

precentors, budding precentors and ministers. There will be practical sessions on achieving and maintaining correct pitch and pace, how to learn and introduce new tunes, singing in harmony, and other areas of good practice, delivered by experienced singers and musicians.

8. **Tutor CD** A valuable resource which has now been completed is the two-volume Tutor CD set, containing a large number of the less well-known tunes in *Sing Psalms*, sung to a simple accompaniment for better familiarisation. This now provides precentors, and others who wish to increase the repertoire of tunes in their congregation, with an excellent resource. Credit for the success of this enterprise is largely due to Colin Mackay, Dundee. The Tutor CDs will soon be available from the Free Church Bookshop.

9. **Children and the Psalms** The Committee has compiled a booklet containing a selection of “bite-size” excerpts from the metrical Psalms, mostly from *Sing Psalms*, which are suitable for children to learn and sing. The Committee hopes the booklet will be useful for Sunday School classes, so that children will be encouraged to sing these verses, and grow up with an appreciation of the Psalms and their place in the worship of the Church. Suggested tunes accompany the words. It is anticipated that the booklet will be available for the commencement of the new school session later this year. The Committee will be pleased to liaise with Sunday Schools on any matters relating to the promotion of Psalm-singing among children, including introducing children to precenting.

10. **Praise Pages on the Free Church Website** The Committee is immensely grateful to Mr John MacPhail for his ongoing help in building the Praise section on the Church’s website. Several excellent renderings of unaccompanied psalm-singing can be enjoyed, an attractive downloadable and locally usable article on Free Church worship is available, plus helpful printouts of talks given at the very successful Psalmody Conference held at Smithton in May 2009. Recently added were 11 video files of psalmody recitals, which include marvellous views of the Highlands and Islands, as well as ‘soundbites’ from able speakers. Visit the Praise pages by clicking on the middle icon at the bottom of the homepage!

11. **Copyright Permissions** *Sing Psalms* has proved to be popular in churches in other parts of the UK, and also abroad, and during the year, permission was granted for the use of the words of certain psalms and tunes in worship to churches in Sheffield, Tasmania and North Carolina. A request was also granted for the inclusion of the *Sing Psalms* version of Psalm 147 in an Occasional Paper by Rev. Dr Graham Deans, published by The Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland in 2011. Hymns Ancient and Modern were granted permission by Rev. Professor Donald MacDonald and Mrs Isobel Gordon for the inclusion of the tune *Bunillidh* in their new hymnal *Sing Praise*, in which the tune was set to a paraphrase of Psalm 27.

12. **Plenary Assembly’s Decision on Praise** Many will be aware of the decision taken by the Plenary Assembly to allow congregations the liberty to extend their repertoire of praise to include biblically sound hymns and paraphrases, and also to use instrumental accompaniment. A legitimate question would be to ask, “*How has this decision affected the work of the Psalmody Committee?*” In answering this question, we bear in mind that:

- a) The Free Church’s commitment to Scriptural authority has not changed;
- b) Our commitment to Scriptural worship has not changed: our worship must be God-centred, Scriptural and Spirit-enabled;
- c) The Psalms will continue to be a prominent medium of praise in the Free Church, since the Assembly’s finding prescribes that “*Psalms*” be sung in “*every service of congregational worship*”.

The Committee is happy to continue its work in promoting the singing of the Psalms to God's glory.

13. **Congregational Psalmody Practices and Family Worship** The Committee continues heartily to recommend to the people of all congregations in every presbytery the importance of maintaining regular psalmody practice-sessions, for the purposes of teaching and learning new tunes and harmonies, practice for precentors, and congregational fellowship. They also recommend the singing of the Psalms in family worship, in the hope that the young may grow up with the Psalms upon their lips, and the Saviour in their heart.

FINLAY H. MACKENZIE, *Convener*

PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

1. The General Assembly receive and adopt the Report of the Committee on Psalmody and thank the Committee for their work.
2. The General Assembly acknowledge with gratitude the steady sales of the Church's psalmody

products, and once again thank Mr Charles Douglas, Bookshop Manager, for his continuing hard work and commitment to this cause.

3. The General Assembly acknowledge with grateful thanks the thoughtfulness and generosity of the Banner of Truth Trust in the transportation of the Church's psalmody products to the USA, and storage in their warehouse there; also, for their considerable help in advertising these products on their website, and promotion through social networking sites and email systems. The Assembly directs the Committee to bring a report on the progress of this initiative to the 2012 General Assembly.

4. The General Assembly thank Rev. Dr Malcolm Maclean as he prepares to attend the 2011 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, for his work in commending to the delegates there the value of singing psalms, and of promoting to them the publications and products of the Psalmody Committee.

5. The General Assembly encourage the Committee in the production of Psalm selections for special occasions, including student work and evangelistic services, and also a booklet containing selections of psalms for the very young.

6. The General Assembly thank all those who have arranged and participated in local psalm-singing initiatives up and down the country, and continue to encourage presbyteries to make full use of the service being offered by Committee personnel to provide training for the improvement of precenting and congregational singing.

7. The General Assembly thank Mr Colin Mackay for all his hard work in finalising and producing *Sing Psalms* Tutor CD Vol. 2, and commend this product to the wider Church for greater familiarisation and use of the less well known tunes in *Sing Psalms*, and for the singing of some well known tunes more accurately.

8. The General Assembly thank Mr John MacPhail for his invaluable assistance in the construction of the Praise section of the Church's website, and recommend the Praise pages, including excellent audio and video resources, to the Church.

9. The General Assembly note with interest the favour with which *Sing Psalms* is being received by other churches, in the United Kingdom and abroad.

10. The General Assembly continue to encourage congregations everywhere to set up a regular session for psalmody practice, for the purposes of teaching and learning new tunes and harmonies, practice for precentors, and congregational fellowship. The Assembly also recommend the singing of the Psalms in family worship, so that, as they grow, the young will come to know and love the Psalms and the God who gave them.

11. The General Assembly thank the Convener, Rev. Finlay Mackenzie, and the Clerk, Mr Colin Rogerson, for all their efforts in carrying forward the work of the Committee.