

IV.
REPORT
OF THE
YOUTH COMMITTEE

(A) INTRODUCTION

The Youth Committee was again much encouraged by the quality and variety of the work among the youth of the Church over the last year, the main areas of which may be summarised as follows:

Sunday School Activities The new awards system is providing a useful framework for motivating our young people and it is encouraging to note that the overall number of youngsters participating in 2007 showed an increase on 2006. The high standard of work at all levels was also particularly encouraging. The new revised worksheets, professionally produced, were issued last August and the Youth Committee was greatly heartened by the uptake in our Sunday Schools. Another successful conference for Sunday School teachers took place in August of last year, in Stornoway on this occasion. Overall it was another good year.

Youth Work Activities The Committee is most appreciative of the excellent work done by Mrs Donna Matheson in her last year as the Church's National Youth Work Coordinator, which finishes at the end of April 2008. The Youth Work Strategy, put together by Mrs Matheson, has helped to provide an overall vision for youth work in the Church, as well as helping to make other organisations more aware of youth work within the Free Church. With regard to the youth workers in the Church at large, Mrs Matheson fulfilled an effective advisory and support role which was much appreciated by the youth workers as well as by the Youth Committee. She also represented the Free Church in the wider Scottish Christian youth work arena by networking and developing good relationships with other Christian organisations that work with young people. Once again, we are happy to report a successful Youth Conference last year, as well as another excellent Youth Camp programme.

Publications *The Instructor* had another good year, as did *Free* magazine, and we are indebted to the editors, Mrs Irene Howat and Mrs Chris Nicolson, for their continuing commitment and enthusiasm.

Working Party on Christian Schools The Working Party completed the task given to it by the General Assembly of 2006 – to investigate the potential of developing Christian schools and to report back to the Assembly. A full report is contained in Section (H) of this Report and it is proposed that the Committee now seek to take the matter forward in the wider political arena, in such ways as the Youth Committee may decide are appropriate.

Working Party: Support for Parents of School Pupils The Working Party deliberated on the best way forward in this matter and came to the view that the most effective action would be to seek to work more closely with CARE (Christian Research and Action in Education) Scotland, with a view to making CARE materials more readily accessible to parents of school pupils in our Church. A recommendation to this effect is contained in Paragraph 12 of the Committee's Deliverance.

All in all it was another year of good progress in the youth work of the Church, for which we are most thankful to the Lord.

(B) SUNDAY SCHOOL WORK

1. *Awards System* The number of youngsters participating in the Awards system in 2007 showed an increase on 2006. From 39 participating Sunday Schools, a total of 505 – an increase of 41 – young people completed Records of Achievement as follows: Infant Grade – 169; Junior Grade – 234; Bible Class Grade – 102. A total of 89 Explorations, an increase of 13, on *The Life of Gideon* were submitted as follows: Infant Grade – 18; Junior Grade – 55; Bible Class Grade – 16. As in the previous year the standard of work produced was very high, in completing Exploration pages in *The Instructor* and the additional work for Infant and Junior Grades. Several of the Bible Class Grade candidates, whose assignment involved individual research, submitted

work of an exceptionally high standard. For 2008, for all Grades, the topic is *Exploring How the Bible Came to Us*.

2. *Review of Free Church Material* In August 2007 the first set of new revised worksheets were produced in full colour, professionally printed by Woods of Perth. Sets of ten lessons were sent out at intervals during the year. Revised Teachers' Notes were also provided. The number of orders submitted was encouraging and the number of worksheets ordered went up substantially over the year. Work on the 2007-2008 Sunday School materials is already advanced. The response to the new material has been very positive. Work on the 2008-2009 materials has already begun. The Committee is most grateful for the committed and enthusiastic leadership of Mrs Irene Howat in coordinating and collating this work.

3. *Conference for Sunday School Teachers* A successful Conference was held in Stornoway on 11th August 2007. Those who attended felt that they benefited greatly from all the items on the programme. The attendance was reasonable, given that other things were going on. The Youth Committee would like to see more Sunday School teachers benefiting from such conferences.

4. *Regulations for the Organisation and Supervision of Sunday Schools* These have been revised as follows:

- 1 All Sunday Schools are under the supervision of the Kirk Session which shall take a particular interest in them and use every possible means to improve their efficiency.
- 2 The formal appointment of Sunday school teachers shall be made by the Kirk Session and be duly recorded in the minutes of the Session.
- 3 No person shall be considered for appointment as a Sunday School teacher unless the Kirk Session is satisfied as to his or her qualifications and suitability. Ordinarily, they should be a member of the congregation
- 4 Every Sunday School teacher shall have Child Protection clearance and be advised of their responsibilities before they commence their teaching duties.
- 5 The minister shall make every effort, where possible, to visit the Sunday School and take an active interest in its life and work.
- 6 The Kirk Session shall consider appointing an elder with specific responsibility for oversight of the Sunday School.
- 7 The Kirk Session shall appoint an overall leader for the work of the Sunday School, and that person shall be responsible to the Kirk Session through the elder where such is appointed in terms of 6 above.
- 8 It is recommended that Sunday Schools make use of the Free Church syllabus, or at least its core material, in the year to year curriculum.
- 9 The Kirk Session shall ensure that the Deacons' Court are aware of the practical needs of the Sunday School and that they do all in their power to meet these needs.

(C) CAMPS

Supervisor's Report Our annual Thanksgiving Service held at the end of August was a reminder of all the blessings that we had received during the year. Many young people had been encouraged in their faith and others had professed faith for the first time. We were conscious of the Lord watching over us and providing for our needs. We would encourage congregations to make the first Sunday in September a time for thanksgiving.

Sixteen camps took place, one at Easter and fifteen in the summer. There were five boys' camps, three girls' camps and nine mixed camps. The total number of campers was 392 slightly down on the previous year. There were no Peruvian campers. A total of 125 children attended camp for the first time. The total number of leaders and cooks was 160. All the reports indicate that the young people enjoyed a good holiday and there was much evidence that the Lord was at work. The leaders were impressed by the calibre of many of our young people.

A variety of training was provided and we continue to look at ways to equip and prepare those who staff our camps. One initiative planned is to hold regional training events.

The Big Free Rally was held in September and the young people enjoyed a full and varied programme. We continue to explore ways to make this a day to remember.

The Sponsorship Fund was well supported this year and we would welcome applications from those who would like to encourage young people to attend camp.

One new venture for this year will be a Discipleship camp for the 18 - 30 age range.

We are grateful to all who support the work of the camps in whatever way they can. We look to the Lord for his blessing.

Camps Supervisor The Committee notes with regret the resignation of Mr Ross A. R. Finlay as Camps Supervisor for the past five years. The Committee is nominating to the Assembly the name of Rev. Colin Morison, Elgin, for the position of Supervisor.

(D) *THE INSTRUCTOR*

Mrs Irene Howat continues to edit *The Instructor* to a very high standard. After the celebrations of *The Instructor's* Centenary year, 2007 seemed a little quiet by comparison. However, the work of *The Instructor* goes on month by month, and every single month brings its encouragements.

Once again the middle page spread of magazine has carried materials that contribute to the Church's Award System. In 2007-8 children explored the history of the Bible from its earliest writings to the present day.

In 2007, the Youth Project, which is administered through *The Instructor*, raised £12,196 for the work of Dwelling Places in Kampala, Uganda. Over the last eleven years, Youth Projects have raised the magnificent sum of £106,977 for missionary work in India, Kenya, Peru, Cambodia, Southern Africa, Moscow, Tearfund's relief work and now Uganda.

Membership of Friends of *The Instructor* stands at 58 and the Editor is most grateful to them for their prayerful and financial support. Miss Anna Macdonald, Edinburgh, now administers Friends of *The Instructor*.

The Editor wishes to thank the Youth Committee for its support and wise advice over the year, those who contribute to the magazine and the ladies who help with the Youth Project. Above all she gives thanks to the Lord for his great goodness.

(E) *FREE*

Mrs Nicolson is now coming to the end of her second year in post. She has worked hard to develop the work of *Free* and meets the challenge of making the magazine relevant to young people in the Church and beyond.

Content A great many people have contributed to *Free* in the past year, and the Editor would like to express her thanks to all who have helped in any way - in particular, Mr Matt Ford, whose series of Bible studies will be coming to an end towards the end of the summer, after a loyal run of two years. His input has been greatly appreciated, and it is hoped his association with the magazine will continue. The Editor is also most grateful for Rev. Derek Lamont's contributions to each issue. A good relationship has been built up with the Good Book Company's representative, Emily Robertson, who has been extremely helpful and is an excellent source of material.

Un-commissioned contributions are welcomed and the Editor would like to ask those with connections with the Church's youth to keep *Free* in mind - any news from youth groups around the country will be gratefully received. The Editor is keen to advertise and promote any events that may be of interest to readers of *Free*.

Readership The Editor feels that efforts to reach the younger teens within the Church have been successful. Reader contact has increased through our Bebo page, where we now have 142 'friends'. Comments have been positive, and readers seem to appreciate the fact that they can have access to the magazine and the 'Free team' online. It also gives us a useful way of touching base with readers. Although most readers' features have to be commissioned by the Editor, a number of young readers have written offering to write or review for *Free*, which is encouraging.

Design and production Mrs Catherine Pearson (Design and Layout) and the Editor continue to work well together and are constantly finding new ways to improve and standardise procedure. Mrs Dayspring MacLeod has recently joined 'the team' as a proof reader and contributor. The Editor would like to thank Mrs Macleod, Mrs Donna Matheson, the Youth Committee, and the office staff in Edinburgh for their support.

Despite a few initial teething problems with regard to distribution, the relationship with Woods of Perth is a good one. The current print run is 1450 copies and a typical issue of *Free* is 20 pages, with an increase to 24

pages at certain times of year – e.g. to include summer camps reports. The Editor is pleased to report that subscriptions remain steady; if anything they are up slightly.

Promotion The Editor feels there is still an untapped readership out there, and would be very grateful for input from anyone with the necessary marketing skills and enough time on their hands to promote *Free*, both within and beyond the Church.

Finally, the Editor would like to say how much she enjoys *Free* and how conscious she has been of the Lord's help in the past year. Thank you for your continued prayers. It is a privilege to do this job.

(F) NATIONAL YOUTH WORK COORDINATOR

The Committee notes with regret that Mrs Donna Matheson's three year contract as National Youth Work Coordinator has come to an end and wishes to record its appreciation of the excellent work done by her. The following report informs the General Assembly of work undertaken by Mrs Matheson during the three year post that began on 1st May 2005 and ended on 30th April 2008.

1. *Research/Strategy* The initial stages of the post involved a considerable amount of research and gathering of information about the youth work in the Free Church in order to ensure that the National Youth Work Co-ordinator could make the right provision to meet those needs. Having conducted this research it was recognised that there was little cohesion, vision or framework for youth work throughout the church. In response to this the first task of the National Youth Work Co-ordinator was to develop a youth work strategy for the Free Church – the purpose of the strategy was to provide an overall vision for youth work in the church and also to make other organisations aware of youth work within the Free Church. The strategy highlighted areas of work the church needed to build on and initiate. It was hoped that the strategy would inspire people, help them think of different types of youth work they could provide, encourage them to pray and give some sort of direction for the youth work of the church. This strategy was new to the Free Church and in itself would not achieve anything, but if people were willing to take it on board and use it, then that would be an achievement in moving forward. There was an overall positive response to the strategy and people throughout the church seemed to be happy with it. It has already been used by some people to develop youth work in their congregations.

2. *Youth Workers* In terms of youth workers, the National Youth Work Co-ordinator tried to have an advisory and support role as far as possible. This has been a difficult task due to the way that youth workers are employed – either locally in a congregation or by a presbytery. These youth workers already have their own line managers and committees to whom they report. They are also very busy with the work they are involved in. The National Youth Work Co-ordinator has sought to raise awareness of training events, helped with administrative issues relating to legislation, offered support as required and involved workers as much as possible in central activities provided by the Church.

It is impossible to have any co-ordination role over the youth workers because of the way that the church employs and funds workers at a local level.

Mrs Matheson has kept the central Youth Committee informed about youth workers and their work and provided updates on any changes. The number of employed youth workers has fluctuated over the past three years. As the National Youth Work Co-ordinator has now left post it is hoped that the Youth Committee will have more direct contact with local youth workers.

3. *Networking/Training/Resources* The National Youth Work Co-ordinator has as much as possible tried to represent the Free Church in the Scottish Christian youth work arena. This has been achieved through networking and developing good relationships with many other Christian organisations that work with young people. She was a member of the Scottish Christian Youth Workers Forum – a forum that represents a wide range of Christian youth organisations throughout Scotland. This forum has provided a variety of successful youth training events for Christian youth workers in Scotland. All of these events have been advertised throughout the Free Church and some youth workers in the Free Church have attended. The Free Church membership and representation on this forum will be continued by a newly appointed person.

It has been part of the remit of the National Youth Work Co-ordinator to provide information about youth resources for the Free Church. She has identified a number of recommended youth resources for youth volunteers/ workers and has made this information available on the Free Church website. The National Youth

Work Co-ordinator has responded to numerous requests that have come from congregations regarding resources and has endeavoured to recommend suitable resources as requested.

4. *Support and Supervision/Line Management* The support and supervision provided by a line manager in this post was crucial to its development and effectiveness. The line manager (Rev. Derek Lamont) provided ongoing support for the National Youth Work Co-ordinator on a regular basis. During these meetings there was an opportunity to reflect and evaluate on past work, to look at future work and to discuss any frustrations/problems arising with the post. These meetings were a great source of encouragement to the National Youth Work Co-ordinator and kept her focused and directional.

The National Youth Work Co-ordinator would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr Lamont for all of his support and encouragement in what has been a challenging three years.

5. *Apprenticeship in Christian Living Programme* The National Youth Work Co-ordinator has assisted Mr Matt Ford in setting up the Free Church programme - 'An Apprenticeship in Christian Living'. This is a gap year type programme originally proposed by Mr Ford who himself is involved in a similar programme. Mrs Matheson has brought this programme to the attention of the central church and has helped with all administrative aspects of it. This is currently being piloted successfully in the Stornoway congregation and is in its sixth month. It is hoped that this programme will be rolled out through the wider church and that other congregations will recognise its benefits and seek to adopt it. The Youth Committee will continue overseeing this programme in consultation with Mr Ford.

6. *Free* The National Youth Work Co-ordinator has at different times when required assisted in different aspects of helping the editorial team with *Free* magazine.

7. *General Assembly* The National Youth Work Co-ordinator was able for the first time to plan a programme for part of the Youth Committee night of the General Assembly in May 2007. A DVD was shown as part of the evening and this was an innovative way of bringing the youth work that is happening in the wider church to the attention of the Assembly. Mrs Matheson tried as far as possible to involve the employed youth workers in this event.

8. *The Future* The Committee, after consultation with Mrs Matheson, has decided that her post should be discontinued. The Committee will continue to support and encourage Youth Work at local level.

9. *Conclusion* The post has been somewhat challenging, sometimes very isolated, sometimes very busy, other times not so busy. It has required a lot of energy, determination, commitment and a total dependence on God. It would have been very difficult to undertake this post had Mrs Matheson not had past training and experience. The training and experience gained prior to taking up this post enabled her to initiate, establish and develop work that would have been very difficult to do without it. It was undoubtedly in God's great providence that the current National Youth Work Co-ordinator was able to take up this post in the Free Church and there has been much learning in it, both at a practical and spiritual level. It is the hope of the National Youth Work Co-ordinator that those who read this report will see some benefits and positive outcomes that having such a post has brought about.

(G) YOUTH AND SECRETARIAL ASSISTANT FOR STORNOWAY FREE CHURCH

The Youth Committee has indicated that it is supportive of the Petition from the Presbytery of the Western Isles for the appointment of a Youth and Secretarial Assistant for Stornoway Free Church.

(H) CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

1. *Remit* A Working Party of the Youth Committee was set up following an instruction from the General Assembly of 2006, namely: "They (the Assembly) instruct the Youth Committee to investigate the potential of developing Christian schools, to consult with relevant and interested parties such as the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated), and to report to the 2007 Assembly".

2. *Membership* Members of the Education Sub-Committee – Mr Innes Macleod, Rev. Douglas MacKeddie, Rev. Alex Cowie, Mr John N. Macdonald. Advisers – Dr Alan Fraser, Miss Mary Gillies, Mr Colin Macdonald, Mr Evan Macdonald, Mr Angus Morrison, Mr Peter Morrison.

3. *Meetings* Four Meetings of the Working Party were held – the first two in Edinburgh and the last two in Inverness. The first meeting was an "orienteering" meeting and papers were presented at the second meeting from:

Mr Gordon Ackerman, Head Teacher, Mannafields Christian School, Edinburgh
 Dr Alan Fraser, Depute Head Teacher, the Nicolson Institute, Stornoway
 Mr James Hutcheson, Retired Head teacher, Braes High School, Falkirk
 Rev. David Robertson, St Peter's Free Church, Dundee
 Rev. Kenneth Stewart, Downvale Free Church, Glasgow.

These papers were wide-ranging in scope and thought-provoking in content, and formed the basis for much of the ensuing discussions in the Working Party. The members of the Working Party are most grateful to the input of these contributors to their work.

Mr Ackerman, Head teacher of Mannafields Christian School, Edinburgh, provided much useful information on the present situation in Christian schools in Scotland. Apart from Hamilton College, the one large school run on a clearly-stated Christian philosophy (apart from Roman Catholic schools) and which is a private, fee-paying school of some 800 pupils, from many backgrounds, predominantly but not completely Christian, all the other schools were much smaller. These were as follows: (followed by pupil numbers):

Lewis Independent Christian School, Stornoway (20)
 Springfield Christian School, Dundee (30)
 Mannafields Christian School, Edinburgh (20)
 Regius Christian School, Edinburgh (15)
 River of Life Christian School, Dumfries (20)
 Cedars School of Excellence, Greenock (30)
 Living Waters Christian School, Glasgow (15)

There are seven very small Christian schools – all private and fee-paying, as is Hamilton College – with a total combined pupil intake of just under 1000 pupils. To put this in some kind of perspective, the latest figures from 2005 show that there were 713,240 pupils in state schools in Scotland and 30,321 pupils in independent schools, making a total of 743,561. The 1000 pupils in independent Christian schools represent 0.13 % of young people being educated in Scotland. It is important that we keep this in mind in our deliberations on the subject of Christian schools.

4. *Main Arguments* We set out below the main arguments arising from our research and deliberations regarding the advantages of Christian schools and then the problems with Christian schools. As most of the contributors mentioned these, we list them here to give a flavour of the issues, but these are merely an attempt to encapsulate some of the main issues raised – the list is by no means exhaustive, of course.

4.1 Advantages of Christian Schools

- a Christian school would educate its pupils in a Christian atmosphere which would permeate all aspects of life in the school;
- a Christian school would have a positive influence in enhancing and encouraging young folks' understanding and appreciation of the Christian faith, whether they came from a Christian home or not;
- Christian schools could help young people who were committed Christians to cope better in a largely secular society Christian schools could provide a strong platform for proclaiming Christian truth in our society;
- even one Christian school could have a positive influence in our society;
- Christian schools provide opportunities to develop Christian approaches to educational issues;
- Christian schools could generate material of use to many others inside and outside the educational world.

4.2 Problems of Christian Schools

- these schools would be expensive to run at Primary level, and much more expensive at Secondary level. Currently parents pay for the education of their children through taxation. The payment of fees for an independent Christian school is over and above what is paid in taxes to the state;
- even if teachers could be enticed away from state or independent schools (and this is surely highly debatable) it would be impossible to staff more than a small number of Christian schools;
- it might prove difficult to persuade parents to accept the Christian school;
- lacking a Christian school in every parish would make this type of school available to only a select few;

- isolating children from their contemporaries in the wider society would make it even more difficult for committed young Christians to cope in their community situations;
- staffing Christian schools would mean fewer Christian teachers in other schools ,although the number involved would be small;
- a Christian school seeking to attract pupils from a number of denominations could face difficulties with regard to areas like worship, evolution, literature , music and so on, where disunity could undermine the work of the school;
- many fear that Christian schools would be divisive in the wider community;
- if Christians were to opt out of state schools this may accelerate the spiritual declension in our society.

5. *Meetings* The third meeting of the Working Party discussed the views expressed in the submissions to the Working Party, a flavour of which is explained above. The following were some of the views expressed by members of the Working Party:

- the concept of Christian schools would seem to be a good idea, but the practicalities of setting up even one were extremely difficult;
- the private aspect of them could create elitism, separatism and expense;
- if, for example, Downvale Free Church in Glasgow or St Peter's Free Church in Dundee (the ministers of these churches being the leading advocates of the setting up of Christian schools, it would appear, in the Church) wished to set up a private Christian school, they might well proceed to do so, but the onus for such action should be with the local congregation or congregations, not with the Church at large – in other words the model should be “bottom-up” rather than “top-down” from Edinburgh ;
- rather than creating separate schools, we should rather seek to create closer ties with other Christian organisations, such as CARE, SU, ACTS etc;
- there is a need for the Free Church to give a lead to parents and teachers – but not to enter the financial minefield of Christian schools;
- the Free Church should continue to seek ways of giving more support to Christian teachers as well as parents in all schools;
- it must be remembered that although Scottish schools in general provide a good service to our children, it is most important that Christian teachers and parents utilise opportunities which do exist to put across their viewpoint in their own school.

6. *Observations and Recommendations*

6.1 The task given to the Youth Committee and the Education Sub-Committee proved extremely demanding – perhaps unfairly so, given the wide remits on which these are working at this time.

6.2 The potential for the development of Christian schools in Scotland is extremely limited as the manifold difficulties mentioned frequently in the Report underline.

6.3 It was very difficult for the Working Party to investigate the case for Christian schools except in the context of the educational landscape of present day Scotland and the realities of that situation

6.4 The majority of the committee felt that our investigation was useful inasmuch as it revealed how very small the Christian school sector is in Scotland, with the exception of Hamilton College, which is somewhat different in its aims and its wider appeal to a more affluent clientele

6.5 The Working Party recommends that further consideration of the matter of Christian Schools be remitted to the proposed Home Missions Board, when it is set up, with a view to encouraging discussion of this important issue in the political arena and take further action as appropriate

(I) EDUCATION

The Education Sub-Committee monitors developments in Education. The Committee is grateful to all of the consultants who keep in touch. Particularly they would like to thank Dr Graham Keith, the Church's representative on the Scottish Joint Committee for Religious and Moral Education, who faithfully updates the Youth Committee on developments in this area and in Education generally.

Support For Parents of School Pupils The Working Party set up to take this forward met twice in the course of last year. The main outcome from their discussions was that the best way forward was to seek to direct interested parents to the excellent educational papers produced by CARE (Christian Research and Action in Education) for Scotland and to facilitate easier access to this kind of material.

The Group was particularly impressed by the recently produced CARE for Scotland Briefing Papers, which covered such currently topical issues as:

- Scottish Parent Council Association
- Parent Councils Compared to School Boards
- Religious Observance in Schools
- Sex and Relationship Education
- The Bible and Education.

Discussions have taken place with the Director of CARE for Scotland who is most supportive of our proposal that appropriate materials from CARE be made more readily available to interested parents in the Free Church.

The Working Party commend such materials to the Church and request that the Church ensures that such materials are made readily available to interested parents throughout the Church.

(J) CONFERENCES

The Committee gives financial support to the Youth Conference and also to the Spring Conference. These Conferences, and also the Islands Conference, continue to be of much blessing to those who attend.

1. *Youth Conferences Report on the 2007 Conference* This took place at Lendrick Muir, Kinross, from 20th to 23rd April. Rev. Derek Lamont was the main speaker and there were a number of seminars. The Conference went well with positive feedback from delegates and speakers. The new venue and extra activities were clearly enjoyed and appreciated by all. Despite the centre being more central and heavy advertising from an early period the numbers were disappointing and we were unable to fill the 100 beds booked.

It would seem that there is a gap for the 26 - 40 age range, a gap which the Spring Conference used to fill.

2008 Conference This took place at Lendrick Muir from 21st to 24th March 2008. The theme of the conference was The Grace of God and the main speaker was Rev. Mark Johnston, Grove Chapel, London, and the Conference organisers are grateful to him. Again, like 2007, numbers were disappointing, despite considerable advertising and encouragement.

2. *Spring Conference 2007* This was a successful conference with a full house. The main speaker was Rev. Kenneth Stewart. Unfortunately, bookings for 2008 – 4th to 6th April 2008 – were down on 2007.

3. *Free Church Holiday* The venue for the 2007 holiday was Gartmore House, Aberfoyle. There was an increase in the number attending and it was a very enjoyable week.

The 2008 holiday is planned for 5th to 12th July at Macdonalds Hotels, Aviemore Inn.

INNES MACLEOD, *Convener*
DOUGLAS MACKEDDIE, *Vice-Convener*

PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

1. The General Assembly receive and adopt the Report and the Supplementary Report and thank the Committee, especially the Convener and Vice-Convener.

2. The General Assembly congratulate all the young people who have gained awards and certificates and who have completed Workbooks. They thank teachers and parents for their work in our Sunday Schools and at home. They encourage Sunday Schools to participate in the Awards system.

3. The General Assembly thank those who marked the Explorations for the various grades.

4. The General Assembly thank the office staff, especially Mrs Sharon Fraser who is responsible for the processing and distribution of materials relating to the Syllabus.

5. The General Assembly thank all those who are working on the revision of the Sunday School Syllabus and congratulate them on their work so far. They commend this work to the prayers of the Church. They

especially thank Mrs Howat for coordinating and collating this work. They urge Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions to encourage Sunday Schools to make use of the new materials.

6. The General Assembly thank all those who organised the Sunday School Teachers' Conference in Stornoway. They urge the Youth Committee to continue the provision of such support for Sunday School teachers and urge Kirk Sessions to encourage Sunday School teachers to participate in these events.

7. The General Assembly adopt the following revised regulations for the organisation and supervision of Sunday Schools:

1 All Sunday Schools are under the supervision of the Kirk Session which shall take a particular interest in them and use every possible means to improve their efficiency.

2 The formal appointment of Sunday school teachers shall be made by the Kirk Session and be duly recorded in the minutes of the Session.

3 No person shall be considered for appointment as a Sunday School teacher unless the Kirk Session is satisfied as to his or her qualifications and suitability. Ordinarily, they should be a member of the congregation

4 Every Sunday School teacher shall have Child Protection clearance and be shall be advised of their responsibilities before they commence their teaching duties.

5 The minister shall make every effort, where possible, to visit the Sunday School and take an active interest in its life and work.

6 The Kirk Session shall consider appointing an elder with specific responsibility for oversight of the Sunday School.

7 The Kirk Session shall appoint an overall leader for the work of the Sunday School, and that person shall be responsible to the Kirk Session through the elder where such is appointed in terms of 6 above.

8 It is recommended that Sunday Schools make use of the Free Church syllabus, or at least its core material, in the year to year curriculum.

9 The Kirk Session shall ensure that the Deacons' Court are aware of the practical needs of the Sunday school and that they do all in their power to meet these needs.

8. The General Assembly thank Mr Ross Finlay, for his excellent work as Camps Supervisor over the past five years. The General Assembly also thank the Camps Administrator, Miss Mhairi MacKintosh. They thank the office staff who help with the Camps administration. They also thank all leaders, cooks and other helpers, and those who arranged and took part in the Camps Training days. They urge Presbyteries to encourage congregations to be active in promoting the Youth Camps and they commend the 2008 Camps programme to the prayers of the Church. They thank Deacons' Courts and individuals who contributed to sponsorship for campers and leaders and invite others who have not already done so to consider this.

9. The General Assembly appoint Rev. Colin Morison, Elgin, to the position of Camps Supervisor and commend him to the prayers of the Church.

10. The General Assembly thank the Editor of *The Instructor*, Mrs Irene Howat, and the Editor of *Free*, Mrs Christine Nicolson and her team, and commend them to the prayers of the Church. They urge Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions to encourage the distribution of the magazines and to support the editors in their work.

11. The General Assembly thank Mrs Donna Matheson for three years of unstinting work as National Youth Work Co-ordinator and urge the Youth Committee to take forward and monitor initiatives which she has put in place. They thank Rev. Derek Lamont for all his work in his role as Line Manager to the National Youth Work Coordinator.

12. The General Assembly thank all members of the Working Party on Christian Schools and note that the group considers the potential for setting up further Christian schools in Scotland to be very limited. The Assembly remit the matter of Christian schools to the Youth Committee with a view to encouraging further discussion of this important issue in the political arena. The Assembly instruct the Youth Committee to continue to work with groups such as CARE (Christian Action and Research in Education), ACTS (Association of Christian Teachers), SU (Scripture Union) etc., to ensure that a Christian voice is heard in educational matters in Scotland.

13. The General Assembly thank all who act as consultants on Education. They thank Dr Graham Keith, in particular, for representing the Free Church on the Scottish Joint Committee for Religious and Moral Education

and for keeping the Youth Committee up to date with developments. They commend him to the prayers of the Church. The General Assembly call on the Church to support in prayer all teachers of Religious and Moral Education, Chaplains, Christian teachers and Head Teachers, in schools throughout the country.

14. The General Assembly urge ministers and others to take advantage of the opportunity to be involved as school chaplains. They urge Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions to encourage Christian parents to become involved with the new Parent Councils.

15. The General Assembly authorise the Youth Committee to make arrangements to ensure interested parents throughout the Church have clear information about and ready access to appropriate educational materials and guidelines, such as those produced by CARE for Scotland. The General Assembly commend to the prayers of the Church the working group set up to access materials of support to parents.

16. The General Assembly thank the Youth Conference Committee, especially the Convener, Mr Martin MacLean. They urge Presbyteries to encourage young people within their congregations to attend the Conference. They thank the organisers of the Spring Conference, the Islands Conference and the Free Church Holiday and commend all these events to the prayers of the Church.

17. The General Assembly thank Miss Sandra Bain for her outstanding service over the last eight years as Clerk to the Youth Committee and indeed for her sterling service to the youth of the church over these years.