

THE MONTHLY RECORD

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2009

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ICHABOD – THE GLORY HAS DEPARTED

The history of the Church in Scotland is full of ups and downs. The Romans, the Celtic Church, the darkness of the Pre-Reformation period, the Scottish Reformation, the Covenanters, and the Disruption are all indicative of that. Most of us have been proud of the effect that the Gospel has had in this small country on the northwest tip of Europe, and the impact that Scots have thus had upon the wider world. There was something glorious about what God did in making this small nation 'the People of the Book'. But no longer. Ichabod – the Glory has departed. More than a century of theological liberalism being taught in and through our churches has finally come home to roost. If anyone doubted how sick the Church in Scotland has become, the recent events in the Church of Scotland General Assembly have provided more than enough proof.

WHAT HAPPENED?

On Saturday May 23rd the General Assembly voted to approve the induction of the Rev. Scott Rennie to Queens Cross Church in Aberdeen – even though Mr Rennie is living with his male partner. In terms of logic, reason and Scripture, the debate was overwhelmingly won by those who sought to be faithful to the Scriptures. But logic, reason and Scripture were trounced by emotion, illogic, church politics, political correctness and sheer cowardice (there were over 250 abstentions).

IF ANYONE DOUBTED HOW SICK THE CHURCH IN SCOTLAND HAS BECOME, THE RECENT EVENTS IN THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY HAVE PROVIDED MORE THAN ENOUGH PROOF

It got worse. On Monday, the Assembly dealt with a petition from the Presbytery of Skye and Lochcarron which called for those who are ordained as ministers to be faithful in biblical marriage and to abstain from sexual conduct outwith. It beggars belief that such a motion would even have to be voted on, but through the machinations of the liberal establishment, aided and abetted by those who claim to be 'evangelical', the motion had to be withdrawn. The Acting Principal Clerk behaved in an appalling manner – allowing a motion which was opposed to the Skye petition to be treated separately and then, when it was passed, insisting that the Skye petition could not mention homosexuality. Rev. Ivor MacDonald was hung out to dry and compelled to withdraw. Dr John McPake's and Rev. Angus Morrison's motion set up a two year commission and ordered all office bearers to be silent in public about the issue. An amendment from Rev. Jim Stewart means that no further 'gay' ordinations should take place during this period. The whole thing was a shambles. To hear a postmodern post-Free Presbyterian tell the assembly that there 'is great diversity of opinion on issues of human sexuality ... but greater is our unity in Christ' was breathtakingly depressing. Mr Morrison went on to say, 'The commission is to uncover and discover this unity we



Queueing to witness an historic occasion at the Church of Scotland assembly

have in Christ.' How do you have unity in Christ if you ignore the Word of Christ? The proposal from Dr McPake and Rev. Angus Morrison is not, of course, about 'finding the truth' or 'discerning what the Scriptures have to say'. It is simply about damage limitation and trying to ensure that the evangelicals stay in and do not stop providing money for the rest of the Church. No one seriously believes that the 2011 Assembly is going to undo the 2009 Assembly.

The seriousness of what occurred on Monday is underlined by the reason the Aberdeen Presbytery gave for supporting an active homosexual ministry. The Presbytery stated in their reasons, 'The "Word of God" is not synonymous with the Scriptures, but it can, in part, be discerned from the Scriptures through prayer and through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.' The Assembly accepted this. It is now the official doctrine of the Church of Scotland that the Bible is not the Word of God but only contains the Word of God. How then do we know which parts of the Bible are the 'Word of God'? Through inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Does this mean that the Church of Scotland has gone all charismatic? No. This is a return to the pre-Reformation Catholic church in which the church determines what God is saying. The commission of nine is nothing less than a new magisterium. Presbyteries are only to be 'consulted' because they cannot be trusted. After all, did Presbyteries not vote 36-9 against the idea of civil partnerships in 2007? Meanwhile, the courts of the Church are ordered to be silent and not to discuss the matter. We have moved from the liberty of the Word of God (which is the Bible) to the tyranny of the magisterium.

And if you thought that Monday was the lowest – think again. On Tuesday the Assembly plumbed new depths. Rev. Peter McDonald, the new leader of the Iona community, regaled the Assembly with accounts of his pre-marital sexual activities. This would have been bad enough, but not only

was there not a word from the Moderator (who at the very least should have pointed out how inappropriate such language was), but there was lots of laughter and joking. At least one commissioner had to remove himself from the Assembly to be physically sick. A good friend walked out in disgust. Another commented, 'I can hardly believe that fornication is being celebrated in the Assembly'. As one minister bravely pointed out to the Assembly, he would have been ashamed if any of his four daughters had been present. Was this really the same Assembly of which Dr McPake boasted, 'we have redeemed ourselves by our dignity'?

SO WHERE ARE WE?

The Church of Scotland has declared that the Bible is not the Word of God, that active homosexuality is no bar to the ministry, that a magisterium is to be set up to determine what the Word of God is, and crowns it all by an unchecked stomach-churning display of mockery and faux repentance. A Rubicon has been crossed and there is no turning back. In an irony beyond ironies, First Minister Alex Salmond addressed the Assembly and spoke about how the political institutions of the country were lacking in moral leadership. Was he really suggesting that such moral guidance would come from this Assembly?

I heard a Church of Scotland minister citing 2 Peter 2 as relevant to the situation. He was right. *'But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them – bringing swift destruction upon themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute'* (2 Peter 2:1-2).

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

There was much speculation in the press about another split in the Church, and there have been murmurings from some quarters. But anyone with any real knowledge of the Church in Scotland knows that that is not going to happen. Why? For the following reasons:

- 1) Evangelicals are far too divided (as one evangelical minister put it – you get ten evangelicals in one room and you will get twenty opinions).
- 2) It is written deep within the DNA of most C of S evangelicals that one just does not leave 'Mother Kirk'. The strategy for years has been to 'reform' the national church, and no-one will want to admit that that has at one level failed (although at another level the establishment of good congregations and the preaching of the Word to tens of thousands has been wonderfully successful).
- 3) Whilst there are many evangelical ministries, there are far fewer evangelical congregations. Many evangelical ministers exercise faithful ministries in congregations which are 'mixed' and which can take decades to turn around.
- 4) The centralised control of the Church of Scotland means that many men would lose their wages, their manses and their buildings. This is a high price to pay and one which most are not prepared to pay. It is all very well for people to cite the Disruption – but the Disruption men

were well organised, well financed and had ten years to prepare. They also operated in a very different culture.

- 5) There appears to be no suitable alternative. Even if a minister could take his whole congregation and hold onto, or obtain, new property (and don't expect the tolerant 'liberals' to share or allow property to go - they need to be able to sell it to maintain their own stipends and properties, and why should they care about the proclamation of a Gospel they do not believe in?), where do they go? Independence may seem attractive, but surely it is not suitable for a Presbyterian. The Free Church is not open currently to congregations which use musical instruments and sing hymns, and there is no one else. Scotland needs yet another new denomination like a hole in the head – unless it is to be one which involves the whole Free Church, APC and most C of S evangelicals (and then of course we would be two denominations less!).

WE MUST OFFER AS MUCH SUPPORT WE CAN TO OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS WHO ARE REALLY HURT AND SUFFERING WITHIN THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

So most evangelicals will bite the bullet and stay. Some will act as virtual Independents as far as the Presbyterian system will allow (and this will be a lot harder than in the Anglican church); others are happy just to wear the badge of evangelicalism, but in reality only consider it to be one shade in a multi-coloured Church. Still others will form organisations in the hope of both retaining their own people and ultimately reforming the Church. In this latter respect, it is good to see men like Willie Philip, Peter Dickson, and others putting their money where their mouth is, forming the Fellowship of Confessing Churches and seeking to actually do something. And there are those who will drift away. Some ministers will go to other churches, some will get out of the country, and many members will look for alternatives. It is the *real politik* of this latter fact that means that the energy of many evangelicals will be taken up in trying to persuade Christians to remain within the Church. Whatever happens, barring an extraordinary outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Church of Scotland is crippled and dying and will find itself increasingly unable to bring the Living Water of Jesus Christ to a thirsty nation.

WHAT ABOUT THE FREE CHURCH? WHAT SHOULD OUR RESPONSE BE?

We have to respond. This is the most significant event in the history of the Church in Scotland since the union of 1929. It affects us all. Again, we simply list some suggestions.

- 1) We need to repent as well. There must not be even a hint of *schadenfreude*, delighting in another's misery in order to indulge in an 'I told you so' kind of self-justification. How effective are we in reaching Scotland's millions? Any form of pride or thankfulness that we are 'not as others' is utterly reprehensible and totally unjustified.
- 2) We must offer as much support we can to our brothers and sisters who are really hurt and suffering within the



Church of Scotland. Not because we want to entice them to join us, but simply because they are our brothers and sisters. Many of them are faithful, hardworking and fine Christians who have served Christ for many years within and through the Church of Scotland. They are pained beyond belief. Now is not the time to stick the boot in. Now is the time to offer a helping hand, including to those who will stay.

- 3) We need to provide a home for those who cannot stay. If this means for the sake of Christian unity that we have to allow them to worship God in the way they are used to – then so be it. It is surely not a coincidence that the year before the Special Commission is due to report, the Free Church will be debating and deciding on whether to amend what forms of worship will be allowed within our bounds. We should not do what is unbiblical or sinful in order to facilitate Christian unity, but neither should we allow disagreement on secondary issues (disagreements which we have amongst ourselves already) to prevent us from uniting with likeminded brothers and sisters. A renewed Free Church is the best hope for Scotland just now. We also need to gently challenge the pre-suppositions and paradigms that many evangelicals within the C of S and many within the Free Church have. It is time for us all to recognize that we are no longer in the 19th century, or even in the 20th. We are no longer a Christian society with a national church which just needs to be reformed. We are in a postmodern secular society where the vast majority of people are ignorant of the Gospel, ignorant of the Bible, and have

little or no meaningful concept of the Church. For us this is a new beginning. We need new wine, and for that we need new wineskins.

- 4) We need to inform the Church of Scotland that the stumbling block in our negotiations with them has just become a mountain. We always knew that the issue of scripture was the major one, but now that the Assembly has decided that Scripture is not synonymous with the Word of God, it is difficult to see on what basis we can have any meaningful official discussions. One leading evangelical informed us at one point, 'You work with all of us, or you work with none of us'. One hopes he was speaking on his own behalf and not on behalf of others, because our position is crystal clear. We will work with any Christians who acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the final authority of His Word. We cannot work or proclaim the Gospel with people who do not share that same Gospel. The choice for evangelicals within the Kirk is simply: who are you loyal to? Your brothers and sisters in Christ (whatever the denomination), or your denomination (whether or not they are your brothers and sisters in Christ)? I have heard men say that they need to stay in order to pastor their congregations. This is an admirable and worthy reason. But such men also need to ask whether it is good pastoring to ask people to remain in a denomination which rejects the Bible as the Word of God?

WHERE IS THE PASSION OF KNOX WHO DECLARED, 'GIVE ME SCOTLAND OR I DIE'?

- 5) We need to seek realistic co-operation and build bridges to overcome years of prejudice and misinformation on all sides. At an official level, Free Church presbyteries could offer associate status to Church of Scotland ministers, elders and congregations. We should seek to form Gospel partnerships in areas where we share the same theology and understanding of the Gospel. We would support rather than compete with one another and perhaps plant churches and worship together. Local congregations could have more joint services, as has happened in some areas with the APC.

These are dark days and the worst is yet to come. But these are also days of great opportunity for the light of the Gospel to shine all the more brightly. Evangelicals must not back down from the stance bravely taken by the Fellowship of Confessing Churches. People are not stupid, and they will smell a meaningless compromise a mile off. Neither is there any time, space or reason for self-indulgent, self-seeking disunity. We may all have to pay a price. And we should expect to. Where is the passion of Knox who declared, 'give me Scotland or I die'? Where is the vision of Chalmers when he stated, 'Who cares for the Free Church compared with the Christian good of Scotland'? Those who share that passion and vision must unite – across denominations – and make a stand to uphold and proclaim the wonderful full gospel of Jesus Christ. Who knows – it may be that these past days have been the shake-up that a complacent church in Scotland has needed. May the latter days of the Gospel in Scotland be greater than the former.

EVANGELISATION & MINISTRY WITH AND FOR THE ELDERLY

ADDRESS BY THE MODERATOR, **REV. DOUGLAS MACKEDDIE**. THIS IS AN EDITED VERSION OF THE MODERATOR'S ADDRESS – THE FULL ADDRESS CAN BE ACCESSED ON THE FREE CHURCH WEBSITE (www.freechurch.org). IT IS WELL WORTH HAVING A LOOK AT AND ACTING UPON....



Rev. Douglas MacKeddie

INTRODUCTION

Members of the Assembly often express feelings of disappointment that the General Assembly comes very far short of expectations, and as a result go away frustrated that their particular concern or concerns for the church and the way forward has produced little or nothing. Some may think that the changes which they believe are necessary to fulfil the Great Commission are moving too slowly and that there is a great need to be more proactive in our way forward. For myself, I have wondered why there has been little or no reference to the ministering to the elderly throughout a whole week of debate. I stand to be corrected if my recollection is wrong, but I do not remember having specific reference to ministering to the elderly since the closure of Maxwell House.

In the midst of all of the week's debates, which I hope and pray will be accompanied with the blessing of our Lord, I would like to reflect on the evangelisation and supportive ministry to and for the elderly.

At the graduation ceremony of students of the Highland Theological College, Dingwall, last year, Professor Gordon Wenham, believing that Scottish Presbyterianism had the same blind spots as English Anglicans, made the following observation:

I cannot in the last 65 years remember a sermon that really addressed the issues presented by old age. Perhaps that is because I did not think the message applied to me. But having asked around some older friends, they too find it hard to remember any sermons directed at the old. Why this neglect? Perhaps it is partly ministerial tact; most clergy know they cannot speak from experience about what it is like to be old. But I think there is another reason. Lively churches pride themselves on having lots of young people and families. The old will come to church anyway, so we do not have to worry about them. The modern glorification of youth has crept into Christian thinking too.

But I think this attitude, often unconscious I suspect, is short-sighted, spiritually insensitive, and unbiblical. It is short-sighted in that there are now more people over 65 in our population than under 16's. So the elderly are a very important segment of your flock.

Is Professor Wenham right in his reference to these things as pertaining to Highland Presbyterianism (or Lowland Presbyterians for that matter) as well as English Anglicans? Have we got a 'blind spot' with regard to ministering to the elderly? Or are we satisfied that the spiritual needs of the elderly are discussed and debated (in General Assembly) sufficiently, and that they are acted upon sufficiently by our church as a whole?

Jeffrey A Watson, Professor of gerontology at Washington Bible College, Maryland, entitles his book on helping the ageing, grieving, and dying, *The Courage to Care*, suggesting the idea that we don't demonstrate a courageous biblical ministry to the elderly as we should.

During my nearly 27 years of ministry, I have become more and more convinced that our ministry has, to a greater or lesser extent, neglected the elderly. It is the belief of many who are involved in ministry to the elderly that,

For centuries religious communities have struggled to bring value to those who are devalued. Yet we still have poverty, we still have racism, we still have fractured families, we still have hunger and we still have injustice. We have not found peace and we have not learned how to love our brother and sisters in the household of God. Perhaps we should not be so presumptuous as to think that the outcome is any different with regard to the value accorded older persons.

Contemporary images of aging and oldness are dangerous, for they cause us to lower our expectations when we encounter older people. If we see little value in the persons to whom we relate, the quality of our exchange with them has no chance to be anything more than disappointing. (Darrel Watkins, *Religion & Aging*)

I do not wish to suggest that there is no evangelisation of the elderly within our congregations or communities, especially when we consider that many congregations have over 60% elderly folks sitting under the 'sound of the Gospel'. I am also aware of the many activities some congregations run to give support to those who are classified as aged. But when you consider the high percentage of elderly people within and outwith the church who are in a state of unbelief, 'without God and without hope in this world', is there not a great need to reach out to them? Should we be appointing workers with a specific remit to evangelise such an ever-increasing constituency? It is they, from a human perspective, that are closer to eternity than any other age group.

IF WE SEE LITTLE VALUE IN THE PERSONS TO WHOM WE RELATE, THE QUALITY OF OUR EXCHANGE WITH THEM HAS NO CHANCE TO BE ANYTHING MORE THAN DISAPPOINTING

What about the elderly saints in Christ! Is there a cry from them that we might not be listening to them? Is it that some might feel like Job when he said, *'My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me'* (Job 19:14)? Or like David in his old age, under many burdens as he prayed to God, *'O God, Thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared Thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and grey headed, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed Thy strength unto this generation, and Thy power to every one that is to come'* (Psalm 71:17-18).

Could there be in David here a sense of forsakenness by his family, his friends, etc., as he comes near to the end of his life? Does he, because of neglect of those who were his 'familiar friends', feel worthless?

The subject that I am seeking to embark upon here is vast and complex. What I hope to do is to set before us the subject that to a large extent has been neglected; namely, ministering the Gospel to those who are senior in our society, within and outwith what may be classified as the visible church.

WHO ARE THE ELDERLY OR HOW OLD IS OLD?

In a recent series of television adverts we have been encouraged when looking at the elderly not to focus on the age of a person but on the person as a person; *'See the person, not the age'*.

To some people (according to Robert Carlson, talking descriptively about the American view of the elderly), the elderly are a 'bunch of rich old people living it up at the

expense of the general economy. For others, they are a pitiful collection of depressed souls who have outlived their usefulness and are waiting to "pass on" in nursing home beds. For a few others, they represent a rich source of knowledge and experience waiting to be tapped. For others they are a nuisance on the highways and a bother for their slowness in supermarket lines. For still others, they are the preservers of valued traditions and family stories.'

We have perceptions of the elderly that are so often based upon some prejudice or another, maybe as a result of impatience in our drive to reach goals that might be hindered by too much attention to their needs. From a theological point of view we might believe ourselves to have a good biblical grasp of an 'All Round Ministry'; but our performance is weak.

Society in general uses a word (**ageism**) to describe those at the top end of the age bracket, and it is, as one has said, 'a word used to describe a blatantly discriminatory attitude towards older people. It can be seen in the way that older people are stereotyped in the media; older men are often portrayed as cantankerous, or useless and role-less. Older women are more often than not shown as silly, or wicked, with connotations of witchcraft...'

It was Robert Butler who first coined the term 'ageism' in the 1960s. He defined it as a process of stereotyping and discrimination against people just because they were old, just as racism and sexism accomplished this for skin colour and gender.

Ageism has a dramatic, detrimental effect on older people, but this is often not acknowledged. Age Concern is highlighting this as a major issue that needs to be addressed in order to ensure the fair treatment of older people. There are a number of theories about what is old in terms of people. As children I am sure that we thought of our aunts and uncles who were in their thirties or forties to be ancient. I remember on one occasion one of our son's friends coming for him, to the back door of the manse, to go out with 'the boys.' Our son wasn't too sure whether he would be allowed to go out, but the friend responded, 'ask the old man'; that was me in my very early forties. How old is old!

Age is often defined chronologically, being determined by the number of years people have lived. This is usually linked to the statutory retirement age, 60 for women and 65 for men. So if you have your pension book or a bus pass, you have moved into a new experience of life. Moreover, it is amazing what that experience triggers, especially on the effect it has not just in society in general, but also in the church. This is for many, as they perceive it, the beginning of life's 'devaluation'. Or put another way, old age or ageism is 'past the sell-by date'.

Well do we know that this has no place in the biblical chronology of a person's life from cradle to the grave.

The Psalmist in Psalm 31 demonstrates the experience felt under the weight of rejection by those whose negative thoughts of old age encapsulate an attitude that ageists believe they have a right to expound. Although sin has marred the image of God in man, yet nowhere is it suggested in Scripture that at a certain point in the life of a person they

lose the image of God, certainly not as a result of growing older. Taking the words of Psalm 139, what we have is the human life-cycle.

THE ELDERLY AND CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

In his book, Creber draws attention to one major factor which 'feeds ageist attitudes': society's fear of death. Many believe that ageism is part of a collective and personal defence against our own demise. Creber draws from Piner (1979), who portrays this view in the following way: 'It is death that haunts and fears us. The old have appeared to be its visible symbol and so have become our enemies. We have shrouded age in myths and stereotypes so as to hide our own deep fear and prejudice.'

'If this is the case,' says Creber, 'and I think it is, then the implications for Christian ministry both for older people but also for anyone at any point in their life cycle are extremely significant. Surely the Christian Gospel has at its very centre the message of victory over fear and death and is concerned to bring release to those bound by the chains it brings?'

WHAT OF THOSE 'LIVING NEAR THE EDGE'?

In terms of the Great Commission, what is our interest in the elderly who are drawing near the end of life's journey? Professor W J Maclennan (Edinburgh) says: 'I tell my students that any doctor or nurse who is **not** interested in old people is in the wrong profession.' He adds: 'The stricture could apply equally to candidates for the ministry or eldership.'

Each of us ought to spend a large proportion of our time bringing the message of hope and love, through Christ, to that section of our society that is living ever nearer the edge. If we take the message of the gospel, realising that it is God's demonstrative care to all who are nearing death, we might, as Jeffrey A Watson points out, picture death as a cliff and sense the tenderness of God towards those near the edge.

IN THE EVANGELISATION OF THE ELDERLY, HAVE WE LOST EVERY OUNCE OF MOTIVATION?

Watson reminds us of Proverbs 24:10-12, teaching us how God constantly monitors how we respond to people 'near the edge'. 'If we don't try, God sees our strength as small. If we rationalise not doing what we are capable of doing, He reveals our selfish motives. If we choose not to be His agent of grace, we bear the consequences of not being in His will. After all, since God had courage to care for us in our sin, He would have us duplicate His compassion to those who are lost in their sin or who are suffering the painful consequences of original sin.'

The gospel imperative for every preacher of the Word of Truth, and to all who are witnesses to His manifold grace, is to reach out to those that are unsaved. It is incumbent upon every recipient of the Grace of God to witness to those who are without Christ, and especially to those who are elderly in our communities.

The opportunities abound if we are sensitive to the greatest need of all for all people. To use an old cliché from

another context, we have the 'MMO': **Means, Motive and Opportunity.**

The means: We have the Word of redemption in our hands and in our hearts. We believe in and have firsthand experience of that Word and its power. Christ gave the promise of the Spirit to the Church so that it might fulfil the Great Commission. It is that spiritual equipment for a worldwide campaign that the Lord promised the Church immediately before He ascended into Glory (Acts 1:8).

If we are in Christ, we believe that He has provided the means to evangelise the whole world, young and old, rich and poor. Paul's fear of coming short in this was expressed in those very familiar and heart-searching words: 'For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; Yes, woe is me if I preach not the gospel!' (1 Cor. 9:16, NKJV). If we, who own the Truth, don't proclaim the wonder of Christ's redemptive love to those who are right on the edge, without hope and without God, then we have failed them. Every soul that the Lord has put in our pathway ought to be so precious to us that we would use every means open to us to seek the salvation of the elderly.

Motive: In the evangelisation of the elderly, have we lost every ounce of motivation? Surely not; after all there is no one on God's earth who should be more motivated for the salvation of the elderly than those who have been brought back from the brink of a lost eternity. When we consider, as His Word teaches us, concerning the fire from which we have been plucked, the eternal damnation from which we have escaped, and the condemnation that has been lifted, are we not motivated to cry out to those who are nearing the end of life's journey, 'Do yourself no harm'? The Apostle Paul, seeing what life in a world without Christ had done to the Philippian jailer and many others, was so concerned for this man and the eternity into which he was thrusting himself that he appealed to him not to kill himself. Oh yes! There's more. The love of Christ so demonstrated in the giving of Himself for sinners is motive enough to urge us on to reach out to those on the edge of eternity, no matter their age. Peter was motivated by his Lord, as he said in his epistle: 'The Lord is not slack concerning His promises, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance' (2 Peter 3:9ff, KJV).

The greatest motive of all is the command of Christ. Jesus said, 'If you love Me, keep my commandments.' And: 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned' (Mark 16:15-16, KJV).

OPPORTUNITY: Jesus said, 'I came that they may have life and have it more abundantly.' The church, therefore, needs to work towards breaking down the barriers of ageism if we are to have abundant life. Older people have a great contribution to make both within the church and within our communities. We should no longer be satisfied with presenting a gospel which encourages people, when they reach a certain age, to opt out and to think they have reached the position where they no longer need to practice a ministry and be ministered to. Jesus talks of 'abundant life', and that means a life which is satisfying and fulfilling right to the very end.



Rev. Douglas MacKeddie with his wife Katie, their son Paul and daughter-in-law Kelly

The church must take a positive approach to providing spiritual care for older people. Ageism should become a word of the past. It needs to be abolished within the church so that we, as Christians, can learn from the experiences that our older people bring to us, and enjoy with them that abundant life, both here and beyond death, which our Lord Himself promised for all those who follow Him.

As I have said before, we all live in communities where a large percentage of the population are un-churched, but they are not unreachable. Let us pray that the Lord would open doors within our communities. How many elderly do we know of that live in our back yard, so to speak, whom we have never approached with the gospel? Would there be criticism of the local church by many elderly people who believe that the church is not interested in them? Visiting the elderly in their homes, hospitals and nursing homes gives opportunities to develop a ministry with them.

What of those who have suffered great loss? Many old people are crying out for someone to help them in their grief. They are not part of a church which would normally give support to those of their number. In a situation like this, most of us would respond to such losses by reaching out for someone to show love and compassion. We reach out to family, other friends, ministers – anyone who might share the burden of sorrow and sadness of life's increasing pain. Do we identify with such situations? Has the Lord ever given us the opportunity to tell the good news to a very frightened, lost individual?

'What about', as one writer has put it, 'the unloveables? How do we relate to those who are paralyzed, incontinent, stroke victims, or those whose appearance is dirty and unkempt?' Remember that we were unloveable, but Christ loved us even when the stench of this world of sin was upon us. The greatest fear of many older people is the possibility of

becoming unloveable, and as a result, being abandoned by family, friends and society as a whole. But surely, never by the church!

THE GREATEST FEAR OF MANY OLDER PEOPLE IS THE POSSIBILITY OF BECOMING UNLOVEABLE, AND AS A RESULT, BEING ABANDONED. BUT SURELY, NEVER BY THE CHURCH!

Why do we spend so little time with the old folks? Why does the church as a whole continue to produce volume after volume and ream after ream of papers on children and youth when over half the membership, in most congregations, is aged sixty or over? Why do we, as ministers, tend to talk about ministry to or for, rather than with, older people? Why are older adults rarely thought of as persons in great need of evangelism – especially at a time in their lives when personal losses can occur in rapid succession?

We should be the first to 'reach out, latch on', and make room for the un-churched elderly in our in our zeal to advance the Kingdom of Christ. The opportunities for growth in the Kingdom are there because the elderly surround us.

SPIRITUAL CARE OF THE ELDERLY SAINTS IN CHRIST

Throughout the Bible we learn that God has a deep concern for older people. He even says that they should continue to be guided in the church, so that they too learn more and more about God as they get older. In old age we are, or will be, still part of His people – part of His church. Although older people may have weaknesses and at times feel like outcasts from society, God never forgets them. He values them and regards them as a vital part of his church.

As believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, we must never treat people in different ways according to their outward appearance. You will be doing the right thing if you obey the Law of the Kingdom, which is found in the Scriptures: 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself.' But if we treat people according to their outward appearance, we are guilty of sin (James 2).

How can we make older people more aware of God's love and concern for them?

Let me present a case in point, which is repeated over and over again throughout the denominations:

Helen says: *'I have one thing I should like your people to reflect on. I am sorry to sound like an oldie, but I am now on my eleventh minister, and so you might say that I have seen some change in and around the church! My complaints (if that's what they are) follow:*

'I regret the lack of depth and intelligence in church life. I wish we could work harder at making sense of our experience and struggle more creatively with what faith is for us.

'As an older person in my church I feel sometimes overlooked – and misunderstood. I don't feel that people make any effort to understand my pastoral and religious needs. I love the children and would like to help with Sunday School, but there are other people in the congregation besides young families. From time to time I wonder whether the church is only interested in me when they want some money...!

'I wish my church could be more positive about us old ones.'
(James Woodward, *Valuing Age*)

Do we as a church continue to support and encourage the saints in Christ with that same testimony? As many grow older with failing health, loss of memory and various progressive illnesses, they need assurance.



OLD AGE AND MINISTRY

Old age is a blessing from God. The numerous references to the ministry of the elderly in church abound. 'A hoary head (a synonym for old age in scripture) is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness' (Prov. 16:31).

It was Augustine who wrote: 'Innocence will be your infancy; reverence, your children; patience, your adolescence; courage, your youth; merit, your manhood; and nothing other than venerable wise discernment, your old age.'

We all need to take and apply the teaching of the Apostle Paul to heart when considering the benefits of the ministering of the elderly: '...but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day' (2 Cor. 4.16); or, as the Psalmist has assured us with respect to the elderly saints in Christ and the benefit of their age and experience:

*And in old age, when others fade,
They fruit still forth shall bring;
They shall be fat and full of sap,
And aye be flourishing.*

We have a huge resource of witnesses to the grace of God. Let us use them to the full. They are the most qualified to teach others about God and to pass on the inheritance of faith. The elderly saints in Christ certainly provide the potential for an active witness to the word and redemptive works of God, and the older saints have the wisdom to teach and to encourage at both the personal and community level. Those in later life, who embrace the 'unsearchable riches of Christ', have an all-pervasive and important contribution to make to our development as a Christian community.

Are there not, within the church of Christ, older men and women who have the same zeal for the advancing of God's eternal purpose as those of Caleb in the Old Testament, who, although advanced in years, had the same enthusiasm for God and His purpose for Israel as he had when he was 45? There was Simeon, whose witness and testimony is a huge encouragement to many, and others who fought the good fight of faith till the very end.

The modern church has tended to 'pension off' our elderly saints at a time when the Lord could see the great potential of their ministry. The early church had an order of widows, one of whose tasks was to pray.

'The experience of Anna and Simeon (says Prof. Wenham) is surely recorded to show us how the elderly can see God's salvation despite their age and infirmity. Perhaps we should establish prayer groups or times of prayer that the elderly can participate in.'

CARE HOME MINISTRY

Although there has been a massive increase in the number of residential and nursing homes in the last 20 years, only about 4% of elderly people live in care homes. When the Lord's people have to give up their home and move into residential or nursing homes, it is a huge wrench. For some it means having to move a long distance from their

comfortable environs, where the church and Christian fellowship was of a primary necessity. Although there are some care homes that provide many of the things to which they were accustomed (and for this we are extremely thankful to God), especially in relation to spiritual care, these are too few. It has always been a desire of mine that our church would provide such a facility. It is sad to see many of the Lord's people losing a degree of their spiritual dignity because the church believes it can't afford such a venture. It was the Lord who told John to take care of His mother. The Apostle Paul wanted to make sure that those who laboured with him in the gospel would be cared for in their old age.

**'INNOCENCE WILL BE YOUR INFANCY;
REVERENCE, YOUR CHILDREN;
PATIENCE, YOUR ADOLESCENCE;
COURAGE, YOUR YOUTH: MERIT,
YOUR MANHOOD; AND NOTHING
OTHER THAN VENERABLE WISE
DISCERNMENT, YOUR OLD AGE.'**

I have on many occasions gone into a nursing home or residential care home where a death has occurred. Looking at the folks there going through their loss, I have often had a sense that what is going through their minds is, 'who will it be next – will it be me?' What a need there is to bring the comfort of Christ into that heightened, highly charged emotional situation. Have we the courage to care from 'the cradle to the grave'? Have we the vision that would use old as well as young to fulfill the Great Commission?

IN CONCLUSION

So how should we minister with, to, and for the elderly? 'How can you make the last years of their earthly life happier and more fulfilled? I am no expert, but here are some of the ideas that have occurred to me. I think older members of the congregation should be used to the full. By retiring from their secular job, people lose their place and status in society and many social contacts.... Indeed, in an age when many younger women work, there is a need to exploit the talents of the retired to the full to keep the church running. Using the elderly wherever you can will not simply provide vital church workers, but it will help them, providing them with friendship and social contacts' (Professor Gordon Wenham).

Brethren and friends, governments are receiving a wake-up call as a result of the, at times, abysmal lack of care for the elderly. What of the church and our denomination in particular? Will we review and implement our spiritual and social care of the elderly within and outwith the church? The challenge is in the Great Commission.

'Show us ways in which we can encourage and help older people to discover their ministry within the church, showing them that they still have a vocation to serve you. And Lord, please give your whole church the courage and generosity needed to allow older people to practice their ministry amongst us and those whom they meet outside the church through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen' (from *Mission Shaped Church*).

THE **LYLE ORR AWARDS** ARE GIVEN FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN BIBLE CLASS AND SUNDAY SCHOOL WORK OVER THE YEAR. AT THE YOUTH NIGHT OF THIS YEAR'S ASSEMBLY, THE THREE WINNERS WERE INTRODUCED TO THE MODERATOR AND PRESENTED WITH THEIR AWARDS.

SENIOR LYLE ORR WINNER - GEMMA MACDONALD, STORNOWAY

Gemma is 12 years old. She has a sister, Kathleen, aged 14, who won the Junior Lyle Orr in 2005, and a brother, Calum Iain, aged 13. Gemma is half a Scalpach* (mum says that's where she gets all her good qualities from!) and half a Leodhasach**. She is on 1st year in the Nicolson Institute, where her favourite subjects are art and science. She attends Stornoway Free Church Sabbath School, and Campaigners and Scripture Union in the school. She enjoys badminton but is not a sporty person. She dislikes big spiders but loves all other animals. She is an avid reader and loves nothing better than to curl up with a book. She loves going to the cinema and shopping in town with her friends. Her ambition is to be a teacher.

* A native of Scalpay

** A native of Lewis



JUNIOR LYLE ORR WINNER - RACHEL KATE MACLEOD, BARVAS

Rachel Kate Macleod is from Barvas on the west side of Lewis. She is 11 years of age and is on P6 (Gaelic Medium) in Barvas Primary School. She has two sisters, Anne-Marie and Eilidh, and a dog called Toby. Her hobbies are shopping, reading,

swimming and playing on the Nintendo Wii. She also likes listening to music.

INFANT LYLE ORR WINNER - MEGAN MACSWEEN, STORNOWAY

Megan is seven and on Primary 3 in Stornoway Primary School. She is the youngest of four children, having two brothers and one sister. She is a bit of an 'all action girl' and is a member of the local Swimming club and Running club. She is learning to play the violin. Megan enjoys trampolining, cycling and playing with her new kitten, Misty.



GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2009

THE FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY REPORT OF THE MAIN DEBATES AND DISCUSSIONS OF THE 2009 GENERAL ASSEMBLY. IT IS NOT A VERBATIM REPORT AND NOT EVERY SPEAKER IS MENTIONED. THE FREE CHURCH WEBSITE CONTAINS FULLER NOTES AS WELL AS THE MAIN REPORTS TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY. WE HOPE, HOWEVER, THAT THE FOLLOWING COVERS THE SALIENT POINTS AND GIVES A TRUE AND ACCURATE REFLECTION OF THE ASSEMBLY.

MONDAY 18 MAY

The Assembly was opened by the retiring Moderator, **Rev. Kenneth M Ferguson (Cross, Isle of Lewis)**, who delivered his closing address on Psalm 85:5 (This will appear in a later *Monthly Record*).

After a further singing and prayer, papers were distributed. Mr Ferguson was thanked for his year as Moderator. **Rev. Douglas MacKeddie (Maryburgh & Killearnan, Ross-shire)** was elected as Moderator. Elaine Duncan of the National Bible Society of Scotland presented the new Moderator with a Bible.

Following this, committees were appointed. Dr Donald MacDonald from the United Free Church was welcomed, and then the report of the Assembly Arrangements Committee was taken.



Retiring Moderator, Rev. Kenneth Ferguson

TUESDAY 19 MAY

• MODERATOR'S ADDRESS *(see pages 6 - 11)*

• REPORT OF BILLS AND OVERTURES COMMITTEE

This was presented by the convenor, **Rev. Malcolm Macleod (Shawbost, Isle of Lewis)** and seconded by **Colonel Donald Matheson (Falkirk)**. A request for a change of status in Dumfries was not accepted. The Presbytery of Skye and Wester Ross' petition re youth work was not admitted, although it was stressed that this did not imply lack of support for the work itself.

• LETTERS

Letters were read from the Presbyterian church of eastern Australia, the Orthodox Presbyterian church and the Canadian reformed churches. It was regretted that the OPC had not sent a delegate.

• REPORT OF ECUMENICAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Report presented by the convener, **Rev. Iver Martin (Stornoway, Isle of Lewis)**. He had been challenged by the Moderator's address. Spoke of the argument amongst the disciples about who would be the greatest; pride works in opposition to God Himself. Exclusivism was the pride of the disciples. God's work extends beyond our circle. We should reach out the right hand of fellowship to other believers.

Church of Scotland - Discussions had borne agreement,

co-operation and disagreement. Each convenor spoke at each other's Assembly. There was hope of closer relations in the future. The meetings have been cordial as well as frank. The idea of an associate presbytery was dropped from the agenda as unworkable. There is no move towards unity with the Church of Scotland. The fundamental problem is still the authority of scripture. Thanks to Rev. Alex MacDonald (Buccleuch & Greyfriars, Edinburgh) for his response to a paper that was given at the discussion. The C of S has a crucial issue to deal with (*This was referring to the Scott Rennie case, which had not been heard at this point*). In the event of an unscriptural outcome, the matter will be put on an ecumenical agenda for the next meeting. We support the C of S evangelicals in their support for biblical truth.

Affinity – Rev. David Meredith had been nominated as chairman but was turned down because of his being a Free Church minister. We were outraged by this. The initial reaction was to withdraw the Free Church from Affinity. They pleaded that we not withdraw. They said the Free Church was essential to Affinity.

Rev. Kenneth Ferguson (Cross): Recalled the words of Principal Graham. He said that the Free Church has never been isolationist. He spoke of the involvement with C of S ministers in Lewis. They have a cordial relationship: for that he was grateful. This may take us outside our comfort zone. The gospel requires us to go outside that comfort zone. We would hope that the work of this committee would continue with the view of oneness expressed by Christ in John 17.

Secunder: Rev. Alex MacDonald.

Amendment: Dr Iain D. Campbell (Back, Isle of Lewis)

moved an amendment to the effect that official talks with the Church of Scotland should be suspended whilst local co-operation should be encouraged. He wanted to encourage good relations between the denominations. The big problem is the different view on scriptures.

Secunder: Rev. Marcos Florit (Lochcarron, Wester Ross).

He had learned nothing from the report that he did not know already two years ago. We have a responsibility to say that we want to uphold our understanding of scripture. He wanted cooperation with evangelical brethren but he supported the amendment.

Mr Angus Morrison (Dowanvale, Glasgow): He understood the position of those planning on supporting this amendment. He disagreed with Dr Campbell on this occasion. It's good to talk. There is wisdom in talking to people about this. He agreed with his stance in regard to scripture. If we invite people of like minds to preach in our pulpits, we are still talking to ourselves.

Rev. Alex MacDonald: Our meetings with the Church of Scotland have done a great deal of good. They have encouraged evangelicals in the Church of Scotland. Talking does not imply agreement. We are in the business of persuading people. Surely we can persuade people in this talk.

Rev. Kenneth Stewart (Dowanvale, Glasgow): He supported the amendment for three reasons. Firstly, the difficulty being encountered in these talks. Secondly, the danger in these talks, and thirdly, the distractions. Want to hold true to good relations between the churches. The C of S does hold a different view of scripture.

Dr Donald MacDonald (Free Church College): We should not run away from this discussion. The time may come when



Dr Donald MacDonald

we have to pull the plug. We should be helping the largest protestant church in Scotland.

Rev. Finlay MacKenzie (St Vincent St, Glasgow): The importance of knowing. How do we know anything about God? We believe we have a word from God. We have in our church a position that can academically defend the Bible. We owe it as a church to our brethren in the Church of Scotland to do all we can to persuade them of the truth of Scripture.

Rev. Calum Iain MacLeod (Barvas, Isle of Lewis): spoke in support of the amendment. What is being unearthed is the differences. These differences are fundamental. Various avenues have been exhausted. We are wasting our resources, time and energy. He had a very good relationship with the C o S minister in his area.

Rev. James Beaton (Oban, Argyll): We seek to work together across the denominations. Many people do not have a Free Church near them. He believed it would be sending the wrong signal if we suspended discussions.

Rev. Kenneth MacLeod (Carlway, Isle of Lewis): Feared if the amendment went through that it would harm his close relationship with his Church of Scotland colleague. 'We meet together, worship together, and pray together. If we say that we stop speaking at a national level, then this is going to filter down to a local level. Many C o S congregations do support our cause and I feel we can work together.'

Dr Iain D Campbell: Spoke concerning Affinity. He realised that it hurt a lot of people. He was discouraged by the prolonged personal coverage in *The Monthly Record*. He wanted to encourage our cooperation amongst all denominations. Our role as an evangelical church can have benefits outside of Scotland. So he hoped that our role with Affinity will continue.

Others spoke of good relations with the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church, and the need to make a stand over the issue of Scripture in our relations with the Church of Scotland.

Reply – Rev. Iver Martin: He was thankful for the level of interest and speeches. He apologised for the lack of clarity in the appendix on local arrangements. He had difficulty with Mr Stewart's critique of the joint statement. It was a JOINT statement. By both sides. As regards the danger - we have to take risks sometime. The Church of Scotland is the same as it was in 2007. This Assembly agreed the statement. Why are we taking cold feet now? The committee should say whether they feel it's run its course. Are we unconsciously taking the sexuality debate into this? The timing is all wrong. If this was happening next week and the Church of Scotland came to an unbiblical conclusion, the message that will be given from this Assembly is that we're pulling out too early. If Saturday's event goes against the biblical view, then that will be discussed at the next committee meeting. The existence of these talks has strengthened our voice in this matter. This may well be a reversal of the trend of corruption that has taken place, rooted by a wrong view on scripture.

On a vote being taken, the deliverance carried against the amendment.

• **PETITION OF THE PRESBYTERY OF GLASGOW & ARGYLL**

Rev. Kenneth Stewart (Dowanvale) presented a petition to unite Dowanvale and Paisley under one Kirk Session and Deacons' Court, the name still being Dowanvale Free Church.

Rev. Alex MacDonald (Buccleuch & Greyfriars), representing the Home Missions Board, moved a motion which asked that the General Assembly grant the petition but do so under the name Dowanvale and Paisley. Paisley is not an outreach station. Mr Stewart's attitude to the Home Missions Board is disquieting. So what about a name? Paisley is a redevelopment charge. The ultimate goal is to disjoin Paisley again as a thriving congregation. That congregation should not lose its identity. Smithton and Nairn was a good example.

On a vote being taken between the petition and the motion, the petition carried.

• **REPORT OF THE HOME MISSIONS BOARD**

This was presented by the convenor, **Rev. Alex MacDonald (Buccleuch & Greyfriars).**

The Free Church is in a daunting situation. There is heavy decline. The Free Church is not alone in facing this decline. Do we throw our hands up and shut up shop? No, we are called to build, to pray, to work, and to witness till Christ releases us from that service. Is God being glorified today by

a declining church? The church is being marginalised. The church has always had an enemy, who is no stronger today than he ever was. It is the Church that is weak. Why is the Free Church so weak? Could it be that we have the form of godliness but not its power? Have we become lukewarm? God is not going to bless us just because we are the Free Church of Scotland. He requires that we return to our first love - the love of the gospel. If we are bold to reach out with the gospel, God will bless.

What did we do at first? It was in renewed spiritual life and fervent prayer. It was a vision that captured the public imagination. It may seem a long way from those days, but Jesus is the same, the Holy Spirit is the same, the gospel is the same. All the essential resources are the same. The question is, what are we doing with them? We have the same old people using these resources. We are reluctant to change our attitudes, to admit where we have gone wrong. We can get renewed people. We need revival and reformation. That means we need prayer. One worrying thing is the decline in the number of people gathering to prayer. There is a spiritual recession facing us. We pray so little because we are so unaware of that.

Pastoral assistant for Dundee. The board has interest in the church planting of St Peter's and is also aware of the pastoral needs in St Peter's, as the amazing apologetic opportunities that Rev. David Robertson currently has mean that he is often taken away from the congregation. There are many outreach events in Dundee. They have financial pressures as they are under redevelopment. The board's proposal for a pastoral assistant is the best way forward. The cost would be shared between the board and congregation.

Elgin and Forres. The Board doesn't want to stop the work there now. There is a need for a definite positive, practical package of support.

Development Officer. Rev. Neil MacMillan has been in the post. The Board recommend the post of Development Officer become a permanent post and a full-time appointment. This post is crucial to the recovery of the church.

The Centre for Public Christianity. From St Peter's Free Church. This was originally the brain-child of Gordon Wilson, the ex-SNP leader who now attends St Peter's. The idea of this is to train for apologetics and evangelism and to invite others to attend. It would also be a contact point with the media and others. It's in an embryonic stage. The Board are supportive but await a detailed proposal.

He thanked the members of the Home Missions Board, the office staff and all the contributors.

Rev. Marcos Florit (Lochcarron): Why is the pastoral assistant not an ordained minister?

Response: It would be more expensive to have an ordained minister. The person concerned would be someone who agrees to the doctrinal basis of the church.

Rev. Chris Smart (Resolis & Urquhart, Black Isle): Is there a more detailed package as regards the Dowanvale/Paisley support?



Rev. Chris Smart and Rev. Alex MacDonald

Response: Needs to be discussed with the Board.

Addendum: Rev. Gordon Matheson (Sleat & Strath, Isle of Skye) proposed an Addendum to section A of the deliverance. Is there any joined-up thinking between the Ecumenical Committee and the Home Missions Board? He argued for entering into gospel partnerships with other evangelical churches and developing the idea of local gospel partnerships.

- **AT THIS POINT THERE WAS A RECEPTION OF DELEGATES:** Rev. Dr Robert Beckett of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland, Rev. Donald Macaskill, APC, Rev. Reinder van Wijnen, Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, and Rev. David Cross, PCA (MTW), all brought suitable greetings from their respective denominations.

Rev. Colin Macleod (Asian Outreach, Glasgow): Talked about the work of Asian Outreach.

Mr Iain Gill (Buccleuch & Greyfriars, Edinburgh): Spoke of a new project that the board was trying to get off the ground: a new department of the church formed along the lines of Highways and Byways – not of evangelism, but of church maintenance and development. The objective would be to encourage small congregations.

Rev. Chris Smart: Talked about his ministry on the Black Isle and the work of Neil MacMillan on the board.

Rev. John Wagner (Free North, Inverness): Found the report very encouraging. He spoke about his work in Madras Street, with people that just show up, not even knowing it's Free Church. It is the fifth most deprived district in Scotland. It is not a church; it is a preaching station. He learnt how to preach there. There is a great mix of people. People are generally scared of coming to church and don't know what to do. Madras Street seeks to combat this problem and to serve its community. He talked about Road to Recovery, and the joys and the fruitfulness of this ministry. Said that if they can be any help to anyone, they are willing to offer their services. It's not the minister, it's the gospel.

Rev. Kenneth MacLeod (Thurso, Caithness): Drew attention to the Board's disappointment that Clyne and Helmsdale are not to be united. The congregation at Helmsdale were now worshipping in the police centre.

Mr Calum Ferguson (St Columba's, Edinburgh): Challenged to be aware of the real need there is for the gospel here in Scotland. Are there people ready to move to some of these smaller congregations that need help? We need a vision for mission to our own people.

Mr David Lipp (Rosskeen, Ross-shire): Spoke on strategy and development and the need to work closely together. He emphasised the need for prayer.

- **AT THIS POINT THE THE LYLE ORR PRIZES WERE PRESENTED.** (See page 11 for more information).



Rev. John Wagner

Dr Donald MacDonald (Free Church College): Talking about the post of development officer – would be helpful to see the conditions and what type of person you are looking for. He was concerned about pastoral assistants with little training. He congratulated the board on their fresh thinking regarding other struggling congregations. He challenged ministers in successful charges to go to a congregation which needs a minister like them. Church planting should not be at the expense of neglecting the struggling congregations.

Rev. Finlay MacKenzie (St Vincent St): Spoke about the Glasgow SOS outreach to overseas students and the encouragements he had seen through that.

Major Iain Alasdair MacDonald (Greyfriars, Inverness): Talked about his work with SASRA - reaching out to the servicemen and women and telling them about the gospel.

Mr Evan MacDonald (St Vincent St): Underlined the work of SOS in Glasgow and the diversity of the students from different nations that attend their church.

Rev. Dr Colin Dow (St Vincent St): Reported on the Kenyan fellowship in St Vincent Street. Their opening fellowship was filled with Africans. Great highs but also lows. One mother and her girl got deported. The Kenyans love the Free Church teaching. They combine their worship with the church's teaching. There is a challenge to the Free Church that it does not consist of one particular ethnic group. We have things to offer to people not just from Scotland, but also from outside Scotland.

Mr David Lipp: Was encouraged by the Road to Recovery work started in Rosskeen.

Reply: Rev. Alex MacDonald. Thanks to all those who contributed to the debate. Encouraged by all the reports of outreach events. Finlay Mackenzie's appointment has been renewed for another five years. Gordon Matheson's Addendum was accepted.

• **SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT OF THE HOME MISSIONS BOARD - YOUTH**

Presented by the Convenor – **Mr Evan MacDonald (St Vincent St).**

We live in a day full of reports of drug addiction, violence, and teenage pregnancy. But there is a Christian response to all of these, and we rejoice in those young people whom we have in the church that can speak out against these.

Sunday School and Bible Class – We must pay tribute to those who work hard teaching in Sunday School. We are grateful for those in the creation and production of the Sunday School Syllabus. Teachers' notes were very helpful. Infant worksheets are to be produced now in Gaelic. A Sunday School teachers' training day has been set. Publicity will be available soon.

Mrs Sharon Fraser in the Free Church office must be thanked for her work in the publications.

Special thanks to the editor of *The Instructor*, Mrs Irene Howat. The youth project has raised £8,162 this year alone and a staggering total of £150,000 over the past years.

The work done by Youth Workers is strategic. As well as proclaiming the gospel to the youth, they are great role models for them. The Home Missions Board wants to see more Youth Workers.

Youth Camps – It has become one of the most significant and fruitful ministries our church has provided. We are thankful to God that young people can enjoy a fantastic holiday whilst hearing the glorious gospel. 391 youngsters applied for camp last year, with around 150 leaders and cooks.

Child Protection Laws loom large these days.

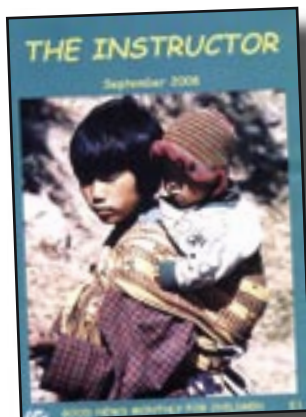
Conferences - This year's Youth Conference was fully booked with 110 places filled.

Education - All our children are directly affected by what happens in our schools. We are grateful for the presence of Christian teachers over recent years. The Committee commends two initiatives:

- Care for Scotland DVDs showing how churches are making a difference in schools;
- The Pray for Schools project organised by SU, which has a group praying for every one of the 2,700 schools in Scotland.

It was also necessary to strengthen links with UCCF. The work of Mark Ellis, the team leader, was praised.

Our young people are alone and confused. What a privilege and responsibility we have as a church to take this good news to a generation.



Rev. Kenneth Stewart (Downavale): Spoke at the youth conference. There are some outstanding young men and women in the Free Church. Christian education and government funding - can the committee be a little more proactive?

Rev. Calum Iain Macleod (Barvas) spoke appreciatively about the Lyle Orr award.

Rev. Malcolm Macleod (Shawbost): Let the youth committee stand on its own, apart from the Home Missions Board. The Lord is blessing young children in the Western Isles. The model of Jesus. Channel the youthful energy of our young people so that they may spend their lives to the glory of God. Again underlined the importance of Youth Workers.

Rev. Duncan MacLeod (Perth): Spoke about the youth conference, Sunday School, and especially praised Campaigners. The Perth mother and toddlers group has been tremendously encouraging as well as providing a great service. Youth workers should help with children's talks.

Rev. John MacLean (Trotternish, Isle of Skye): Praised Susan MacLean, the youth worker in Skye and Wester Ross. Great developments in youth work have been made.

Reply: Mr Evan MacDonald. Thanked all the contributors.

• **REPORT ON PASTORAL ADVICE**

Rev. Alasdair MacDonald (Dunblane) – He mentioned the work of Rev. Billy Graham. He asked for a pastor for pastors. It was the general impression that there is much anxiety among many ministers. It's important that we remember that and deal with it at a local level. All of us, especially at the local level, need to look out for one another and encourage one another. Are we at the root of the problems of ministry? There are resources here to help ministers should people need it.

Seconded by Rev. James Beaton (Oban): Talked about the spiritual element in stress.

Rev. Calum Iain Macleod (Barvas): He had experienced burn-out. Wished to reinforce the point that a day of rest is imperative. The paper prepared by Dr Walker is one that we would do well to read - *A Day of Rest for Ministers*.



• **THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE POTENTIAL ROLE OF DEACONS**

Rev. James Maciver (Knock, Isle of Lewis): The work of this committee hasn't really got off the ground. He resigned from the committee so as to appoint someone who has more time to do it.

Rev. Chris Smart (Resolis & Uruqhart): Praised the work of Neil MacMillan, who had done a lot of the material in the report.

WEDNESDAY 20 MAY

• REPORT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Presented by the Convenor, **Mr James Fraser (Kiltarlity, Inverness-shire)**.

This was the second report of the Board of Trustees, mainly about the financial situation and worship. Church is part of the economic environment and is therefore not immune to the effects of that environment. Our congregational remittances are flat in comparison with what they were. Legacies and property sales are welcome relief income. The Board's ambition is to see the outpouring of prayer for the work and for giving. We want more people to give more. The Board continues to monitor the progress at Colegio San Andres (the Peruvian school supported by the Free Church). Appreciation was expressed for the work of Mr Clive Bailey at that school. We want to hand it over to Peruvian nationals rather than run it with Scottish people.

The Board is committed to the new remittance system passed at the last Assembly. Thanks to Mr Jonathan Innes and the work he has done on the Board. The Board wishes to thank the Strategy Committee. The Board welcomes Mrs Muriel Macleod as compliance officer and thanks Mr Colin MacDonald for his work in the area of Child Protection. The Board has changed two of its major sources of external advice and support. They also bade farewell to Mr John Miller of Simpson & Marwick.

The issue of worship is one that should be approached with great care. There is potential to divide the church. That's the last thing the Scottish Presbyterian church needs. The Board is committed to further study. It is in no way anticipating what the outcome would be. The outcome could be reaffirming the status quo, or supplement of the status quo with theologically sound materials but no instruments, or supplement of the status quo with musical instruments but only psalms, or supplement of the status quo whereby instruments and theologically sound songs are allowed. The result of these studies would be debated at a plenary Assembly. The Board hopes, whatever the outcome is, there will not be division. The Board welcomes the report in the *Record* calling for prayer. He did not want to end on a down beat. We mustn't dwell in this slough of despond. We must recollect that we have been given a great commission by a great God.

The report was moved by **Rev. John MacLean (Trotternish)** and seconded by **Dr Allan MacPherson (Ayr)**, who gave an update on legal proceedings.

Amendment. Rev. Dr Iain D Campbell (Back): He had no wish to undermine the work of the committee for worship. It does have a lot of merit. However, we have the proposal in front of us and this is not what he understood as a full frank and free discussion. We have taken serious vows regarding a particular position on worship. We're now being asked to approve a process in this report that begs serious questions. We seem to be asked to reinvent the wheel. It seems to be predetermining the outcome. He did not think he could approve a report that would allow songs of human compositions and instruments. He was concerned by the expression of free expression. Are we really saying



Time to vote

to the men coming out of our college that they must take serious vows and also that they may express any view about the matter of worship? This report affirms the primacy of Scripture. Primacy is something you start from. Scripture is a finality, not a primacy. He thought we took our vows because they were scriptural. There has been disquiet and disunity, especially amongst our elderly members. He loved his church and Assembly and simply wanted the Assembly to pause for a moment and ask whether we can pass this report through.

Rev. Alex MacDonald (Buccleuch & Greyfriars): What does he envisage happening if his motion carries with regards to people who disagree with him?

Response: If a person has difficulties with a vow, they should bring it to their presbytery.

Rev. Alex Macdonald: There is no doubt with the vows.

Response: The problem is that there is a predetermination here.

Rev. Alex Macdonald: What's being predetermined?

Response: It's saying that we should take a view against our vow.

Seconded: Rev. Kenny D MacLeod (Livonia, Michigan):

Where is this desire for change coming from? He was not aware of a grass roots movement for change. Some are just imposing and trying to persuade us that they are the grass roots of the church. We can't reach Scotland because we are not a praying church, not because of our worship. Why do we have to do different things in this current age to tell people the gospel? Why not what worked before? There is no substitute for the Holy Spirit. He was tired of people blaming the church.

2nd Amendment. Dr Donald MacDonald (Free Church College): He believed that since we embarked on this process, we should see it through to completion. He had added something to the first paragraph. 'Songs of human composition' ... the Psalms are human composition. Yes, they are under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, yet it is still under

human composition. It's inspiration, not composition, that makes the difference. This phrase has been substituted with 'theologically sound materials'. There is a disagreement in our ranks as to what constitutes inspired forms of praise. We should consider the legitimacy of using New Testament scripture in our worship. He would see instruments as an accompaniment, not as a performance. Precentors use a tuning fork. It is an aid to worship. He had framed the amendment to specify more narrowly what the songs of human composition should be. He was sorry that the worship committee was dropped last year. He hoped this amendment would lead to greater clarity in the discussion.

Mr James Fraser: Clarity on theologically sound materials – what does that mean?

Response: It is open to interpretation. He would say that it applies to a wide range of materials.

Addendum: Rev. Alasdair MacDonald (Dunblane): The need for a day of humiliation and prayer throughout the church, to be held in October 2009.

Rev. Kenneth Stewart (Dowanvale): Is it a day for the church as a whole, or individual churches?

Response: It's a day for the whole church.

Rev. Kenneth Stewart: Who appoints the day?

Response: It would be agreed in principle, then the Assembly would appoint the date.

Addendum. Rev. Angus J Howat (Campbeltown, Tarbert & Islay): Presbyteries are not to meet in the weeks of March and October when the Commission of Assembly is appointed to meet.

Rev. Dr Iain D Campbell: Are you elevating the committees above the presbyteries?

Response: Assembly is the supreme court. This prevents difficulties of clashing with committees and presbyteries.

Addendum. Rev. Angus J Howat: Mr Howat was concerned with the proper use of technology in the business of the church as according to the Assembly.

Rev. David MacPherson (Bon Accord, Aberdeen): Disagreed with Mr Campbell's amendment. 1) It's not a coherent amendment. Let the board finish this rather than ditching it. 2) It lacks courage. It suggests that we are afraid of discussing these matters. 3) It lacks foresight. Do we believe that bombing this out will lead to quiet and unity?

Dr Donald MacDonald: There needs to be a large amount of theological input in the board. Leadership in the church should be primarily theological. We seem to be given more financial independence in our congregations. This could lead to fragmentation in the church. The smaller congregations tend to give more than the larger ones. He spoke against Dr Campbell's amendment. When we take our vows, we are vowing to uphold the present practises of this church. The Church used to use hymns and they changed it. There is a lot of scaremongering going on with Mr Campbell's amendment.

Rev. Murdo Macleod (Retired - Dundee): Fully supported Dr Campbell's amendment. The aspect of taking vows is part of our constitution. There is a way that the Free Church of Scotland has been worshipping since 1843. God evangelises Scotland, not men, though God does use men. We've heard about things that WE can do. All the things WE can do. From Rev. 22 verses 18 and 19, nothing is to be added and nothing is to be taken away from the Word of God.

Mr Donald Cumming (Fortrose): There is a grass roots movement for change. We decided to sing hymns and were brought to the Ross presbyteries. He could not see that there will be anything but division brought by this. He was not sure what to vote for here. He did not want there to be division.

Mr Norman Smith (Ayr): Thanks for the report, especially the section talking about suspending synods. The church benefits greatly from legacies.

Rev. Iain Beaton (Lennoxton, Glasgow): The source of worship in the church. Jesus followed the temple and synagogue worship. Why do we not have instruments? Because the synagogue didn't have musical instruments. Why? Because it was in a time of mourning in the temple. We are carrying on this mourning today in the Free Church. We have Joy. We have a saviour and a redeemer.

Rev. Dr Colin Dow (St Vincent St): Spoke against the amendment. It drifts away from the principle of *sola scriptura*. We are allowing ecclesiastical law to overthrow the law of scripture. Are we afraid of where the scripture will take us? I feel we are drifting away from our ecclesiastical process. It was agreed we would remit this matter to the trustees. David Robertson had asked the Assembly for scriptural proof. This is the right thing. Do we discipline this man or not discipline him? We must have recourse to scripture. I believe we are drifting from good leadership. We are drifting away from our history as a church. Let us be done with this issue by the process we have set up for it to be done. Let's not muzzle the sacred Word.

Rev. Marcos Florit: Talked about his work in Colegio San Andres with a church that did not maintain our position of worship. Questioned how much we believe in this principle as a body. Why is it wrong here but right there? It should be wrong no matter where. Think these things through and complete the study. Let's get a final decision from God's Word.

Rev. Gordon Matheson (Sleat & Strath): The point of law and advice. Talked about his appointment in Sleat and Strath.

Rev. Ewen Matheson (North Uist): Was in one of the congregations that had benefited from the loan policy of the trustees. Thanks to the trustees.

Rev. Calum Iain Macleod (Barvas): Wished to support the deliverance with respect to worship. The issue of the ordination vows is still a fundamental matter, however. Mr Fraser had commended the comment in *The Monthly Record* with regard to the need for prayer. This raises one observation. Expression of views are significant in this debate. The report published in *The Monthly Record* stated, 'surely it should be possible to have difference of worship without a split'. There was a contradiction in the *Record*.



Rev. Alex MacDonald, Rev. Iain D Campbell & Rev. Marcos Florit

This was an unhelpful and inappropriate observation in the *Record*. Surely there should be proper channels in which a debate should proceed. Not helpful to have personal views like those expressed in the *Record*.

Rev. Finlay MacKenzie (St Vincent St): Felt like a fence sitter in this debate. He had sympathy with the status quo and the work of the committee. Would like the committee to explore the flexibility of what the status quo would allow us. We should preserve the Psalms. Public worship is the main diet of worship for the congregation. But it does not include YF and congregational fellowships, which can use biblical hymns.

Major Iain Alasdair MacDonald (Greyfriars): Wholeheartedly agreed with Mr Campbell's amendment. We've been debating this a long time and getting nowhere. Believes we need to get this out of the way because it hinders our other needs. It makes us unique as a church. Believes our evangelism has come first, before our personal holiness.

Rev. Andrew Fraser (Assynt & Eddrachillis, Sutherland): The process must go ahead. To abandon it now would be disastrous, no matter what our different views of it are. The only way to resolve it is to take it back to scripture. There must be free discussion.

Mr Angus Morrison (Dowanvale): I don't know why we're having this debate at all. It's all to do with this horse and cart. We seem to be dealing with the cart before dealing with the horse, which died long ago. That horse is long dead but we have to address the issues somehow or another. The laws say we can't change anything, yet there are people who want to change these vows. You've got to make sure no one else takes these vows.

Rev. Kenneth Stewart: Felt pulled in different directions by this. His heart goes with Dr Campbell, but his head goes

with the report, however badly worded it is. There are several reasons why we have to go with the report. This was a mandate assigned to the Board of Trustees. Let them finish their work. It would be dishonest to abort the proceedings at the moment and not let them see it to completion. Some think that you can change the worship without changing the vows. We need to clarify what will happen with the vows. It is good that we show the biblical evidence for our current stance on worship. It's hard to see how this will be resolved without separation. It's difficult to see a compromise. If the amendment was accepted just now, it would not end here. People will bring it up again next year.

Rev. Alex MacDonald: We need to continue the process. It does not deal with the problem raised by last Assembly. 'I am a constitutionalist and have defended that constitution. In 1900 – 1904 there was no focus whatsoever on the presence of worship; the practise at the time was to use psalms, hymns and instruments. It was not viewed as a fundamental principle of the Free Church. The present practise of the church is governed by the Acts of Assembly, not the vows. The legislation that we have calls all other forms of worship 'evil'. That is our present legislation. I do not believe that any minister holds to that view. I have defended the regulative principle. I do have serious doubts about our present position. The regulative principle does not restrict our prayers to prayers in the Bible. Why is it so with our songs? We have no command to avoid the use of instruments. Our constitution does not include our present legislation. This change is not going to make the Free Church the most attractive church. The great question is, what do the scriptures say? Is this an issue over which to separate ourselves from other Christians? Because that is what this means. Support the deliverance.'

Reply: Mr James Fraser. The Board is well aware that people are worried about the new financial framework. We will keep it under review. The amendment from Dr MacDonald has nothing really substantial. We don't hugely disagree about it. We were conscious of the fact that, looking at the range of outcomes, we could be accused of predetermining the debate. The way we tackled it was to keep the deliverance fairly short and simplistic. We want closure. We are not trying to decide the outcome. Regarding Dr Campbell's amendment, we intended not to have a debate about the worship issue today. We intend just to look at the process of bringing closure. People simply could not resist diving into the debate. I hesitate to say anything about the actual debate itself. People on both sides seriously misunderstand each other. People need to understand where each other are coming from. I am not the only one who feels a sense of anger that this would cause a division. Dr Campbell's amendment was put forward very graciously. However, it is premature. It could be very divisive indeed and very dangerous. Early closure will prevent the type of dialogue I wish to happen. The issue of vows has been talked about quite a lot. You've got to be able to have some freedom at some time in the church's life to have doubts about vows. Let's seek an answer from the scriptures. We would like to fulfil our remit. For these reasons, I would ask my colleagues to uphold the Board's deliverance.

All addendums were accepted. Dr MacDonald's amendment was defeated and Dr Iain D Campbell withdrew his amendment due to the discussion in the debate.

• REPORT OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Presented by the Convener, **Mr Norman Cumming (Dumfries)**.

First report of the Personnel Committee. We are aware that presbyteries have the main authority in this area. We will look at the areas where we can be supportive to ministers. We believe that the issue of the stipend should be at the forefront of our role as a committee. Our accountability as a church to the Lord on the level of the stipend is emphasised in the report. Pension arrangements are a complicated area. Although the contribution of 10% of the stipend is high, you have to remember our stipend is low in comparison. Pension benefits have been downgraded significantly. Churches can be bad and poor at looking after their ministers. We hope to counter this. We are concerned with the number of resignations, both for the individual and the increasing workload given to others as a result of this. Our ministers and our staff must be our prime concern. We are aware of the increasing burden on our ministers.

Seconded: Rev. Duncan MacLeod (Perth): He was appreciative of the help he received from his own presbytery during his ill health. The minister's starter pack is a great document, not just for ministers. He talked about the Manse and long-term accommodation needs, and the general concern we must have for one another. Who pastors the pastor?



'I hope what I do say will communicate.' It is appropriate to highlight the tremendous contribution from Prof Donald MacDonald. Communication is an important factor of modern life. We know that's the case in preaching. We need to make interesting presentations in communicating. What are we doing in terms of communication? Our aim is to convey biblical truth in modern language through contemporary means to present-day people. A person should not have to read through a dictionary each time we present something to them. It should be clear and attractive. We live in a visual age. Products must engage the eye. The message of words is enhanced and not veiled by appropriate visual aides.

The church is privileged in its magazine editors. One edition of a magazine requires a great deal of time. *Free* is a magazine that is biblically based and culturally relevant. It would be useful to encourage Mrs Chris Nicolson, the

editor of *Free*, and to pray for her. What can be said about *The Monthly Record*? We all have our own ideas about how the magazine should be produced. The editor is willing to let the magazine speak to and for all the people in the church and all the different views in the church. The magazine is not only to the Free Church but for the Free Church. There has been great appreciation for the *Record* outside the Free Church.

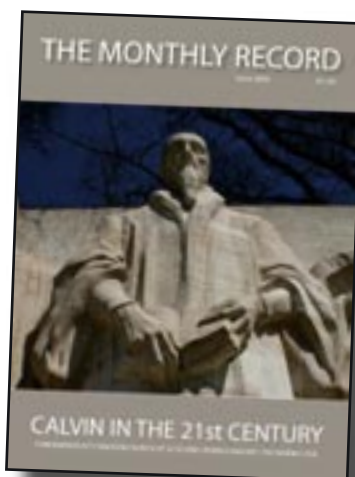
The website is under development but should open new opportunities. Rev. Iver Martin (Media Officer) and Mrs Catherine Pearson (Communications Officer) have been working on the website.

The Free Church bookshop continues to cater for the needs of sensible people. A sensible person is someone who buys and reads books. Both are important. Many bookshops have gone under because of the recession.

We are all aware of the many social and moral problems of our society. We have had interactions over government issues. We will let our voice be heard. God's truth will have its good effects eventually. There are doors of opportunities to tell people about the joys of knowing Jesus Christ.

Mr Evan MacDonald (St Vincent St): Was concerned about American spellings that appear in *The Monthly Record*.

Response: American spellings appear in all publications due to Microsoft Word.



Seconded by Rev. Dr Colin Dow (St Vincent St): Spoke of the Free Church bookshop and suggested that commissioners purchase a copy of Dr MacLean's wonderful book *The Lord's Supper*.

• RECEPTION OF DELEGATES: Miss Elaine Duncan, Scottish Bible Society; Mr John G Roberts, Day One Christian Ministries; Rev. Maarten J. Kater, Christian Reformed Church in the Netherlands; and Rev. Dr Bill Schweitzer, Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales, all brought greetings.

• REPORTS OF THE DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES COMMITTEE

Rev. James MacIver (Knock): The committee last year looked at a scheme in which a judicial commission may be used for the benefit of the church. The changes proposed are changes which this committee believes are necessary. The committee does not want to curtail the power of the church's court. The Free Church is now significantly smaller than what it once was. This creates many difficulties in procedure and discipline.

The judicial commission: this is not a new court of the church. We hold the General Assembly as the supreme court of the church. The commission is accountable to the Assembly. The judicial committee should have power of sentencing. In the case of accusations against elders, we recommend that it is first of all dealt by the presbytery.

Questions were asked and the report was sent down under the Barrier Act to Presbyteries.

THURSDAY 21 MAY

• REPORT OF THE BOARD OF MINISTRY

Report presented by **Rev. Marcos Florit (Lochcarron)**.

Something has gone wrong when those who shepherd the flock of God fail to acknowledge that all the scriptures are breathed by God. This reminds us of our responsibility that ministers are trained according to the Word. We must continue with the training to those who are already trained in the Word also. Gratitude expressed to the Board and to Rev. Alasdair I MacLeod (St Andrews) and Dr Ian MacIver (Black Isle). Thanks to Mr Donald Macdonald for his hospitality. From now on the in-service training will take a more 'how to?' character.

Various questions were asked, following which an amendment concerning the College flats was moved by Mr Iain D Gill (Edinburgh & Perth), suggesting removing paragraph 5 of the proposed delivery because it conflicted with Acts of Assembly and with what the Board of Trustees is saying. There was considerable discussion and confusion at this point about the Free Church flats in Edinburgh, the result of which was that the amendment carried.

• REPORT OF THE COLLEGE BOARD

Presented by the chairman, **Rev. Dr Iain D Campbell (Back)**.

They are looking after the college as an academic institution. Thanked Prof Donald Macleod for the work he does in the College. The main item of discussion was the stated retirement of Prof Donald MacDonald. The Assembly is grateful for the work of Prof MacDonald (This resulted in a standing ovation). Delighted to have Prof MacDonald return to the College to help with various classes. Mentioned the hard task of replacing Prof MacDonald, as described in the deliverance. Talked about the Acts of Assembly currently governing the employment of staff at the College, and mentioned that the provision of the training ought to take precedence over the filling of the chair. Expressed thanks to Anne MacLeod, the College Secretary, and delight that she is back at work; thanks also to Christina MacIver for filling Anne's role in her absence. Congratulations to the Rev. Hector Morrison on his appointment as the new principal of Highland Theological College. Mentioned the challenge of training men in the ministry. It's up to us to publicise the College well. It is a great asset, and the tragedy is that it is not used much by the church.

Rev. Dr Colin Dow (St Vincent St) seconded the report and spoke warmly of the Saturday course in the College. He also spoke of the importance of theological education – including amongst young people – who needed a good theological structure. He spoke about the development of the MTh course and the value of further study for ministers.

Dr Donald MacDonald thanked the Assembly for its support over 36 years. He spoke of medical education and medical missionaries. He spoke of his multiple sclerosis over the past 25 years, and thanked his wife Joan and the staff of the College for all the help and support they had given – especially Principal Macleod. He spoke about the usefulness of the preaching feedback forms for the students.



Who's sleeping?!

Dr Donald MacDonald (Free Church College): Spoke on the subject of euthanasia and mentioned the bill on End of Life Choices written by Margo MacDonald. More individuals should put in their responses to subjects like this and write to their MSPs about it.

Dr Allan MacPherson (Ayr): Thanks to Dr MacDonald for his work in the report with regards to euthanasia. Reinforced Dr MacDonald's point to personally write to our MSPs.

Mr Donald Crichton (Point, Isle of Lewis): Supported contacting MSPs as individuals, but also encouraged our people to stand for public office.

Dr Allan MacPherson: *The Monthly Record* speaks for the Free Church as far away as his missionary friends in Japan. The website is very useful for finding the churches. Only half the churches have websites though.

Rev. Calum Iain Macleod (Barvas): Regarding *Free* magazine, wished to give credit where credit is due. It enjoys a very wide readership amongst young people. An excellent evangelistic tool that communicates the gospel effectively.

Dr MacLean replied and thanked the various speakers.

• PETITION OF THE PRESBYTERY OF THE WESTERN ISLES: UNION OF UIG, BERNERA, WITH CALLANISH

Rev. Malcolm MacLeod (Shawbost) presented this petition, which was accepted.

He would prefer to have a full-time appointment eventually for a teacher of practical theology and apologetics. (This contribution was warmly received by the Assembly.)

Rev. Ewen Matheson (North Uist): Spoke about the advantages of the part-time course which he had done for a number of years. He greatly enjoyed the study and the fellowship.

Rev. Gordon Matheson (Sleat & Strath): Paid tribute to Dr Donald MacDonald. Spoke in connection with the ICRC conference and the need for the College to work with other Reformed colleges such as Kampen. He asked the College Board to take note of this (as he was too late to put in an addendum). We have a European theology, and our college should consider an international partnership throughout Europe. Asked the Board to bring proposals.

Rev. David MacPherson (Bon Accord): Also spoke of the Saturday course. He asked for better publicity to promote the Saturday course.

Rev. Dr Iain D Campbell: Responded and mentioned the college publicity. The Board would consider the other comments.

• **VISIT OF THE LORD HIGH COMMISSIONER** - George Reid addressed the Assembly (see pages 27 and 28). The Moderator expressed appreciation of George Reid – as an individual as well as Lord High Commissioner. Gave two gifts: a painting of crofting in the Black Isle (of Avoch, painted by Jane Cameron). Mr Reid stated that his grandfather came from Avoch. He was also given *The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire*. A bouquet of flowers was given to Mrs Reid by Martha Cuniffe of Leith Free Church.

• **REPORT OF THE STUDY PANEL ON MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE**

Dr Donald MacDonald (Free Church College): Many of our ministers officiate at very few weddings. The panel felt that much of the course material on marriage preparation was not suitable, being too prescriptive and too negative, majoring on difficulties. The panel would continue until they produced a full report.

Rev. Finlay Mackenzie (St Vincent St) asked if they would consider having women on the panel.

Response: It would be a matter for the Assembly. Could certainly ask for advice.

The deliverance was seconded by **Rev. Kenneth Stewart (Downvale):** Issues are very complicated theologically and pastorally. He referred to the work of David Instone-Brewer. He found Mr Instone-Brewer's work so far very valuable and needed more time to examine what he is saying. Should the study panel be made permanent? He thanked Dr MacDonald for his convenership of the panel.

Rev. Marcos Florit (Lochcarron): Spoke about the changes in society regarding co-habitation and asked the panel to consider these things.

• **REPORT OF THE PSALMODY COMMITTEE**

Convener, **Mr Evan MacDonald (St Vincent St).**

Stressed the need to be joyful in our praise. The sale of psalm books was continuing well. The combined *Sing Psalms/1650* version had sold 9,500 and was on its third reprint. He mentioned those who had asked permission to use *Sing Psalms*, from churches in New Zealand to individuals. Dr Malcolm MacLean was again to visit the PCA Assembly. He mentioned the 'Let us Worship God' leaflet. He also spoke of the DVD's, CD's and the *Sing Psalms* tutor CD. There was a registry of precentors being built up by the Clerk, Mr Colin Rogerson. There were also several psalm-singing events, such as an Easter event in Bishopbriggs. Greenock were doing 'Psalms and the Credit Crunch'. Highland Harmony and Caithness psalm singers were mentioned. The committee were also involved in Gaelic psalm singing. A double CD had been produced of Gaelic psalm singing by Lewis Recordings. There is also a booklet on Gaelic precenting written by Rev. Kenneth Stewart. It contains a CD.

The committee had also looked at how to encourage interest amongst children and young people. There are three distinct groups: young children, older children and student age. We do not make singing enjoyable for children – the committee are exploring the possibility of having a children's psalm book. With regard to teenagers, the youth committee had been contacted and asked to revise the youth syllabus. The committee were also looking at how to make the psalms contemporary for student-aged young people.

Rev. Finlay Mackenzie (St Vincent St) seconded. He spoke about the precentors' conference in Smithton and thanked those who participated. 115 people attended, mostly from the Free Church.



Mr Evan MacDonald



The Principal Clerk, Rev. James Maciver, with the Lord High Commissioner and his wife

Rev. Alexander Sutherland (Fortrose): Thanked the Moderator for his conduct. He suggested that when a new edition of the *Sing Psalms* is done, it be made easier to find the psalms.

Rev. Calum Iain MacLeod (Barvas): Spoke about the numerical formulas and the fact that the theme tune for *Dallas* was a common metre tune.

Dr Donald MacDonald (Free Church College): Paid tribute to Evan MacDonald for his work over two decades. Spoke of training students to sing in the college. It is the most difficult thing in the world to teach a precentor anything.

Rev. John MacLean (Trotternish): They tried to encourage young people and psalm singing in their own presbytery, but it had not worked. Wondered why the Gaelic precenting CD was in Lewis Gaelic rather than Skye. Every winter on a Monday evening they have a joint psalmody class with the Church of Scotland. Mostly psalms but one or two hymns. At the end of March they have an evangelistic weekend with a recital. A lot of people came. The singing in Skye is tremendous.

Mr Angus Morrison (Dowanvale): Spoke of the Homecoming Precentors worship in Staffin in June. He told various anecdotes of experiences of singing and being part of a musical family – his father used to say ‘if you can’t sing, shout’. Sometimes there is no tune, just all grace notes. Children should sing in family worship. Good singing is about praising God, not men, so we should be enthusiastic. Stop your congregation from mumbling.

Rev. Alex MacDonald (Buccleuch & Greyfriars): Spoke of his CD and how children liked the tunes.

Rev. Eric Paterson (Golspie): Spoke of pre-school nursery rhymes and gospel choruses in the North. Would appreciate

other materials. They have a joint ‘songs of praise’ service with the Church of Scotland, where they sing hymns and psalms.

- **CALVIN COMMEMORATION** - At this point there was an Order of the Day, when Principal Donald Macleod spoke about Calvin.

Principal Macleod gave a 30-minute address which looked at Calvin and preaching, politics, economics and apologetics. He also referred to Calvin’s principle of accommodation and asked about its relevance today. Calvin’s attitude to worship was that it must be decent, orderly and edifying. *Semper reformanda*. The Reformed Church must always be reforming, not to reform ourselves out of being reformed. Calvin’s own personal motto was ‘I offer my heart to you, promptly and sincerely, O Lord’.

This address was warmly received.

- *The report of the INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS BOARD (which took place on Thursday evening) is on pages 24 - 26.*

FRIDAY 22 MAY

The Assembly dealt with a number of further administrative matters, including the report of the Nominations Committee – these included discussions on the composition of the International Missions Board and the College Board.

The Assembly appointed Wednesday October 28th or nearest available date as a day of Humiliation and Prayer. The Commission of Assembly, and the next General Assembly, were appointed. The Assembly closed with the singing of Psalm 72:17-19 at 11:30 am.

• **INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS BOARD (IMB) REPORT**

Mr Colin MacPherson (Ferintosh, Black Isle), Chairman, presented the report under the heading 'Time of Transition'.

OUR MISSION PORTFOLIO IS A GOOD PACKAGE - We are blessed with meaningful projects which have a real vision and make a noticeable impact. Most importantly, we can see God at work in these projects. The IMB is closely considering each mission field and each project and we are convinced that we have strong and worthwhile ministries.

Clive and Ruth Bailey have made significant forward progress in their short time in Lima at Colegio San Andres. The Dumisani Theological Institute is making a significant contribution to theological education in the Eastern Cape in South Africa. Soon to be published is a history of Free Church Mission in South Africa entitled *The Ochre and the Blue*, written by Rev. Bill Graham. The IMB supports seminaries in Lima and Medellin which are considered two of the top three in Latin America in providing quality theological education. Christian schools in India impact more than 1,300 children each day with the Gospel and Bible teaching.

One key objective for the works is indigenisation. The desired trajectory is for the national church to own and run its works. Other issues dealt with by the board are recognising Free Church members working with other mission organisations and working directly with national workers in their own country.

THERE IS AN IMPORTANT ROLE FOR DENOMINATIONAL MISSIONARY WORK - Our church places a high priority on its denominational mission work. Compared to parachurch and non-denominational missions, a denomination has several advantages:

- There is freedom to be true to our doctrinal position
- Long-term foundational projects can be pursued which may be less glamorous and therefore harder to fund through project-led financing
- It should require less of our limited resources to be spent in expensive publicity and professional fundraising
- It enables us to support important works which by their nature have security issues and cannot therefore be publicised openly
- It enables us to free our missionaries from the pressures of having to raise their own personal support

THERE ARE CHALLENGES AHEAD - The new financial arrangements of the church mean less central control and more input from the congregational and individual level. There is a delicate balance of providing information without pestering people. We have to accept that we can't compete with high budget glossy publications from large mission organisations. There is a challenge to set priorities on the part of the board and a challenge for our people and congregations to respond to need and opportunity with increased giving.

The individualism inherent in our age undermines Presbyterianism and teamwork. Can I ask you that we put our workers first? Please give us feedback – tell us what we are doing well and tell us where we can improve.

We, as a mission board and as a church, must be counter-cultural and counter-secular. We need to consider the needs of the wider church before our own individual or local needs.

This is an appeal to see the good work that is being done, to see the opportunities for service and to recognise our challenges.

I want to thank the members and advisors of the International Missions board and give a special thank you to our Secretary, Calum Ferguson, who does so much work behind the scenes.

Mission is not an optional extra – our budget should be maximised, not minimised, because the work of mission gives us as a church the great focus to look upward and outward.

Rev. Marcos Florit (Lochcarron): Questioned some of the wording of the report. Does the Board plan to withdraw its input to the Latin American seminaries once Donnie Smith, Manuel Reano and David Ford complete their time of service?

Response: No. The Board guarantees its input so long as these men are serving and will consider future staffing as and when opportunities arise.

Rev. James Beaton (Oban): What is our policy for disaster relief? Why is over £10,000 left in our account at the end of the year? Shouldn't this money have been paid out?

Response: This represents a contingency for unforeseen events. Money tends to come into the fund throughout the year and is released when need arises which can't be predicted.

Mr Iain D Gill (Buccleuch & Greyfriars): Can you give us a scale in terms of figures to compare the budgets of the fields? How much, for example, is expended in India or in Christian Witness to Israel, where we have no missionaries, and in Latin America, where we do?

Response: There is a need to put the work in context. CWI receives a grant of £20,000. The funds of the board are disbursed in the following percentages:

- Latin America: 36%
- South Africa: 27%
- Muslim work: 17%
- CWI: 5%
- India: 4.4%

Rev. Gordon Matheson (Sleat & Strath): Has the board considered its response if its phased reduction in its input to Dumisani is not working?

Response: These are aspirational targets. There is no desire to create suffering but rather to encourage autonomy. This is a process of dialogue and not fixed in stone.

Major Iain Alasdair Macdonald (Greyfriars): Is indigenisation a priority of the IMB?

Response: This is a key plank in our strategy and a healthy principle. This is a way forward to encourage national churches to be independent, serving their own people and reaching out to other peoples.

Since Colin MacPherson was not a member of General Assembly, the deliverance was formally moved by Dr Donald MacDonald (Free Church College).

Mr Calum Ferguson (St Columba's), Secretary to the IMB, seconded the deliverance.

This is both an exciting and challenging time for mission in the church. There are opportunities in the traditional fields as well as new fields to consider and respond to.

There were two visits to India in the last year. India remains among the countries with the greatest missionary need in the world. Its rapidly growing population is second only to China, while its Christian population is less than 2.5%. The Free Church has had no resident missionary in the country for over 20 years. All work in the country is run by Indian believers. In Madhya Pradesh – the state where our work is concentrated – there is an anti-conversion law. The church is small and weak and faces significant opposition, but as a community it seeks to remain faithful to the Lord and to reach out with great vision and boldness. What they are achieving could put us to shame. To give you a basis for comparison, the size of our 4 congregations in central India is smaller than the three Edinburgh congregations plus Livingston.

I want to focus on two congregations, Chhapara and Lakhnadon. In Chhapara, Vinay Das is undertaking outreach work to surrounding villages and many are coming to faith in Christ. The Mission school in Chhapara reaches over 850 pupils – most from a Hindu background. Their parents are delighted because their children are receiving a quality education.

In Lakhnadon, 450 pupils attend a Christian school founded by local Christians. There they receive regular Bible instruction. The Lakhnadon congregation is also active in Gospel outreach to the villages. The Hospital in Lakhnadon, where Dr Donald MacDonald was resident surgeon, was handed over to Emmanuel Hospital Association many years ago and currently treats over 24,000 outpatients and 2,500 in-patients every year. Community Health care projects are organised for the surrounding 150 villages with a population in excess of 100,000 people. Many thanks to the WFM, which has contributed sufficient funds to purchase a new Jeep to facilitate this community work, and a steriliser for the hospital.

For the Indian church it is a time of change: retirements of long serving ministers and commencement of new ministries. We are witnessing the fruit of labours over many years. The prayers of God's people, past and present, are being answered. The church is far from perfect – there are real problems. We should not be surprised that at a time of blessing the evil one will be active in trying to thwart good work which is being done.

To report on our partnership in North India: through Rahmat, the Free Church is helping to reach one of the most unreached people groups in the world. There is real opportunity for Gospel work there, but also real opposition. In the midst of their daily challenges, Rahmat and his three children are mourning the sudden tragic death of his wife, Irshadi, from a household accident. Please pray for this brave man and his children and the courageous believers in North India.

Thank you to Colin MacPherson for his chairmanship of the Board and to Daphne Douglas for her work in collecting and publishing the monthly missionary prayer notes. Also thanks to Charlie and Daphne for their work in *From the Frontiers*. There is a lot of information in *From the Frontiers*, both the monthly updates in *The Monthly Record* and the Annual Issue dedicated to Mission. Thank you also to Catherine Pearson for her skills in design and layout of *From the Frontiers* and our other magazines. Many have said that our publications rank among the best designed Christian magazines.

RECEPTION OF MISSION BOARD DELEGATES

The following Delegates were presented to Rev Kenny Ferguson (Cross), who presided in the absence of the Moderator.

DAVID & MARTHA MACPHERSON (FORMERLY PERU). Rev. David MacPherson:

I have a new friend, Collins from Nigeria. He enjoys Bon Accord because it is not a noisy church. I like noisy churches – the church in Moyobamba was noisy and I hope that the church in Scotland becomes noisier.

Why? Noisy praise: People praise God with joyful hearts and engaged minds. *Noisy evangelism:* It is a derogatory term about Christians in Peru that they are 'noisy evangelicals'. This is actually a compliment because they are obeying the word of God given to Paul (Acts 18:9), 'Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent.' *Noisy prophetic voice:* Through the church, the Annie Soper School and the University project. We can learn a lot from a noisy church in the jungle of Peru, and I pray that our church in Aberdeen can become noisier.



DONNIE & JULIA SMITH (LIMA EVANGELICAL SEMINARY). Rev. Donnie Smith:

I want to thank the Free Church for its support of the Seminary and for its support of me. As a founding member of the Lima Evangelical Seminary, the Free Church of Scotland remains the single greatest donor of the Seminary. Having been made

independent in 1946, the Seminary now receives 32% of income from donations and generates 68% of its income directly. In the seminary even a small donation can go a long way.

We are currently in the sixth year of a ten-year plan. We had a goal to have over 100 people on our Bachelor's Degree course, and this goal has been achieved with 104 students registered. We have initiated training courses for pastors and church workers. In 2008, 900 pastors and 700 workers received training at the Seminary. We have introduced four diploma courses this year in counselling, youth work, preaching and basic theology. Our strategy is based on interdenominational and international cooperation. A recent change in legislation may open the door for the Seminary to become a University, which would fulfil a long-held aspiration and answer the prayers of many.

RONNIE & MORAG CHRISTIE (FORMERLY SOUTH AFRICA). Rev. Ronnie Christie:

Having retired ten months ago, I feel like an athlete who thought he had finished the race only to find out that he had one more lap to run. Leaving the mission field is like bereavement.

You mourn and you move on. There is no point in reliving the past, but I would encourage you to pray for the church in South Africa. We no longer send missionaries into the districts and we must realise that Dumisani is a means to an end and not an end in itself. The end is the benefit and blessing of the local church.



41 years ago, I was farewelled at the General Assembly to take up work in Peru. I would like to thank the Free Church of Scotland. The Board sends its missionaries and funds its missionaries and always supports its missionaries, but it does not try to control its missionaries.



MIKE & JENNY MOORE (CHRISTIAN WITNESS TO ISRAEL). Mr Mike Moore: I want to thank the Free Church of Scotland for its prayerful and financial support of CWI. I want to tell you about the encouragements of publishing Christian literature including *The Heidelberg Catechism* and *Yeshua*, the Jewish way to say

Jesus. Opposition to Christianity is certainly on the increase in Israel, but so too is the growth of the Church in Israel. We agree with the principle of indigenisation. All of our workers in Israel are Jewish. I would also like to highlight the extra challenge of reaching elderly Jewish people, and yet they too are coming to faith in Messiah. I would also like to pay tribute to Ray & Nel McCabe, who are here tonight, and to thank Ray for his ongoing championing of the cause of CWI in Scotland.

SEORAS & SARAH (CENTRAL ASIA). Seoras: I want to thank the General Assembly and the Free Church of Scotland for your prayers, e-mails and letters. We have seen real and immediate answers to prayer. The time for language acquisition is coming to an end but we continue to study the poetry and proverbs of the country where we live to give insight into their culture and find bridges for the Gospel. Sometimes being a foreigner brings disadvantages, but we see many advantages. There is a proverb that something which gets your attention is like a 'white uddered cow.' We are white uddered cows and everyone wants to grab hold of us. [Laughter] That was not intentional [Prolonged laughter]. People ask us questions: 'What is the West like?' 'Are you Christians?' 'What do you believe?'

Please pray for Mr 'T' whom I see twice a week. Please pray for people to be attracted to the sinlessness of Jesus, to the beauty of Jesus and to find acceptance and relief in Jesus. Our next step is a new city and we need new visas. Please continue to pray for us and for the people of the country in which we serve.

DVD Presentations were also made from Dumisani Theological Institute and Colegio San Andres.

Rev. Colin Macleod (Asian Outreach): To give you the scale of the Christian church in Turkey, Free Church people represent .25% of the Scottish population. In Turkey, there is only one Christian (of any denomination, Protestant or Catholic) per 10,000 of population. This would be comparable to 3 Christians in the Western Isles and 6 Christians in Inverness. Our national workers, G and E, have moved to Austria because of family, financial and security issues. Please pray for their new daughter, who is facing a heart operation. In Turkey there is a need for theological training for emerging leaders and for training in diaconal ministries.

Mr Evan MacDonald (St Vincent St): I commend the work of Women for Mission (WFM), who raised £32,000 for the 2008 project in Lakhnadon. Over the period of 1995 – 2008, sales of *Favourite Recipes: Volumes 1 & 2* have raised in excess of £83,000 for disaster relief. This is a staggering achievement and gives a good example of the potential for fundraising in the church.

Dr Donald MacDonald (Free Church College): I appeal to members of the church, especially young people, to attend the evening meetings at the Assembly to learn of the work in which the church is engaged. Use the information in *From the Frontiers* to pray for our mission work.

Rev. Dr Iain D Campbell (Back): I thank the Chairman and the Delegates for an inspiring report of good work being done by good workers. I encourage people to consider the call to mission work – both for short-term and long-term work. I am concerned that we ought to send missionaries to the field, and not fundraisers. I am also concerned about reducing our input into Dumisani at the very time in which it is seeking to expand its work and ministry.

Colonel Donald Matheson (Falkirk): I want to speak about the good work of Eastern Europe for Christ, of which I am the Chairman. EEFC was started in 1980 with literature distribution and now runs between seven and eight camps each summer for young people. There is always a need for young volunteers like myself. This is a very worthwhile ministry and many lives have been reached and changed by the Gospel.

Rev. Kenneth Stewart (Dowanvale, Glasgow): I bring you greetings from the North American Synod and want to assure you of their interest in the international mission work of the Free Church of Scotland and their desire to be partners in this mission. I wonder if, as we are able to support Christian schools in Latin America and India, we would be able to support one in Scotland?

Rev. Marcos Florit (Lochcarron): I too would like to support the principle of Christian education in Scotland based on the model of Colegio San Andres. I would also echo Iain D Campbell's concern that we are not sending out fundraisers but missionaries to the field.

Mr Norman Smith (Ayr): I want to commend the work of Colegio San Andres and especially the work of Clive Bailey, the Headmaster of the school. Please remember Clive and Ruth and their wider family in your prayers.

Mr Colin MacPherson thanked all of the delegates and all who spoke to the report. He emphasised the Board's commitment to champion the work of each of its fields.

THE TRUE TOKEN

I thank you for your warm words of welcome. I am honoured by your invitation to address the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland.

Standing here, I feel a little like the Biblical stranger who came to sojourn among you. I am most grateful that you so gladly took me in.

A TOKEN OF APPRECIATION

I speak of sojourns since this is my third formal address to this Assembly in recent years. As Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, I spoke to you about *The State We're In*. Last year, as Lord High Commissioner, about *Everyone a Missionary*. And this year, I shall shortly share some thoughts with you on what I term *The True Token*.

Sojourns are much more than speeches. They go beyond the walls of St Columba's and into the human fabric of your Kirk. In my case, this has involved:

- inviting six of your Ministers, so far, to bring the word of a Bible Church, a Gospel Church, into the Chamber of Parliament to address MSPs;
- Ensuring, as Psalm XXII puts it, that *God inhabits the praise of the people* by asking the Lewis Psalm Singers to be the first voices at the state opening of Holyrood;
- Seeing for myself how your sister churches preach the Good News in the great plains of Canada and the open spaces of Africa;
- Meeting your Young Campaigners, and finding them anything but 'the frozen chosen';
- And paying a memorable visit with my wife to your theological College on the Mound.

When we left the College, the staff and students gave us a small token of appreciation. Here it is.

A TOKEN OF REMEMBRANCE

It is a Communion token from 1843. Base metal, and all the more valuable for that. On one side, the date and the words 'Free Church of Scotland', on the other the inscription from I Corinthians 11:28: *Let a man examine himself*.

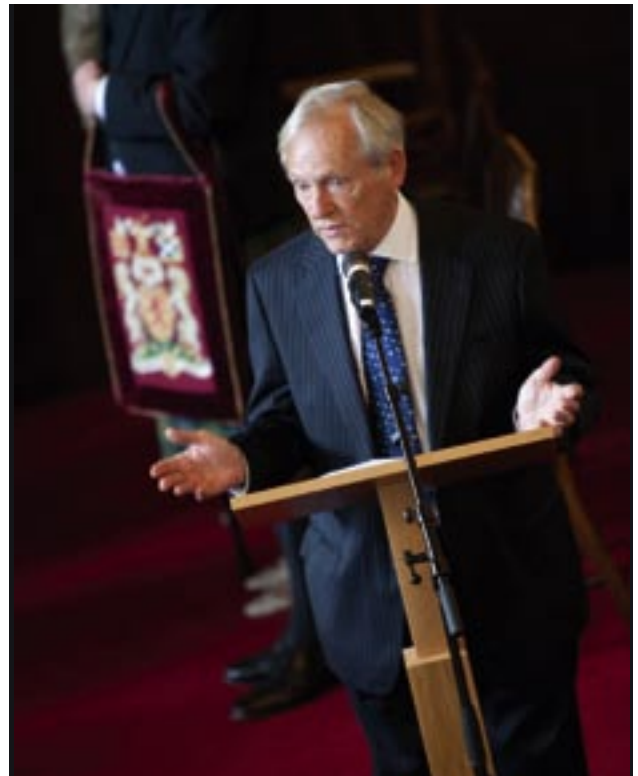
That token now sits on my desk. When I travel, it goes with me on conflict-resolution programmes. So far it has been to Northern Ireland, the Caucasus and Transdnistria.

It is, I suppose, a constant reminder of home and heritage; of Scots who put Principle before Power and Position.

There are no reformed churches in Yerevan or Tblisi or Chisinau. So, when I am there, I go to the Armenian, Georgian and Moldovan Cathedrals. I rejoice in the music. I marvel at the mystery of God unfolding before me.

And then my Calvinist connections kick in.

We are all shaped by the faith of our fathers, and by the institutions of the land in which we are born.



The Lord High Commissioner addresses the Assembly

Let every man examine himself. In places torn by conflict, I try to. I know I need guidance, particularly as I am rarely dealing with black and white issues, only infinite shades of grey. I understand the yearning for scriptural authority. But, dimly, I also begin to understand that, while prayer is talking to God, meditation is listening to God.

In such divided societies, I find myself thinking less of Positions ('We are right') than of Needs ('Give us Peace'). I become more concerned about the spirituality of society as a whole than the spirituality of individual churches.

A TOKEN OF HOPE

Let every man examine himself. Each and every single one of us.

Communion tokens were issued at a time when Scotland was openly and demonstrably Christian. An age when it was the bounden duty of each and every member of the Kirk to address their sins and to seek forgiveness before partaking of the bread and the wine.

For the founding fathers of the Free Church, such self-examination, three or four times a year, was not nearly enough. For both Thomas Chalmers and Thomas Guthrie it became a daily duty. Both regularly studied the 'Personal Examinations' of Robert Murray McCheyne, the young evangelical minister of Dundee who tragically died two months before the Disruption.

McCheyne knew Sin when he saw it, both in personal and in public life. But he also practised what John Calvin called the

'piety of devotion' — reflecting on the need for reformation both in the individual and, collectively, in society; the two mutually self-reinforcing.

Yes, said McCheyne, there were times when the Christian must sit in the Judgement Seat. More often, though, he should stand in the Witness Box.

I have been reading, in recent weeks, some of the sermons of Thomas Guthrie, Free Church minister of this parish, philanthropist and remarkable social reformer.

'What aileth the people that they weep?' he demanded from the pulpit. 'Why does the sojourner not tremble, as Abraham did in Gerar?' The answer, he said, was because 'the fear of God is not in this country'.

There is a lesson here for our time when Sin has largely become secularised; when morality, for many, is a matter of man-made rules and regulations. A system in which self-examination, if it happens at all, poses the question: 'can I get away with this?' not, 'Is this wrong?' A society which sadly believes in little, finds purpose in little, and keeps going because there is little alternative.

Guthrie faced similar challenges. Not within the bastion of his Kirk, but in the streets outside.

His Castle Hill congregation dare not draw comfort, he preached, from their own holiness. They must draw deep on 'the Christian power to move a sluggish world on'. It was the start of a remarkable outreach programme — the establishment of the first Ragged School on Castle Hill, providing food and education to abandoned children; the improvement of slum housing up and down the Royal Mile; the redemption of prostitutes; the raising of vast sums to plant new churches; the founding of a bank to make small loans to those who could not get credit.



Martha Cuniffe, who presented flowers to Mrs Reid

Guthrie's aim was not the reform of the Kirk, but the reform of society, a society to be infused with the love of God. 'We should not,' he preached, 'inhabit some solitary outpost. We must march forward, shoulder to shoulder, in a great regiment of Christian soldiers under the banner of Hope.'

There's a lesson there for our times too. I recently went into a pharmacy in the Old Town of Edinburgh. In front of me a woman of 40 or so was getting her methadone. The child beside her said: 'Are ye goanna gie us some o yer juice, grannie?'

What hope for him?

Some weeks ago I met a businessman made bankrupt in the financial crisis. 'I might as well be in my grave,' he said.

What hope for him?

The Hope, of course, that was born in a grave.

The knowledge that there is Someone up there who cares for us down here, and that Life is not a random free-for-all where it is every man and woman for themselves.

The token of the Covenant of Resurrection, Redemption and Salvation.

A token to be redeemed, as best expressed in the words of your much-loved elder, Harry Keith of Tarbert. When he went into hospital at the age of 84 last year, he said: 'If I'm coming home, I'm coming home. If I'm not coming home, I'm going home.'

THE TOKEN OF THE COVENANT

And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations.

This is a time of unique opportunity for the church. We are awash with crises, economic and political. 'Morality' has made a welcome return to the headlines. There is much personal and public self-examination. There is a yearning for meaning, a new readiness to take the token and sign the covenant.

A cold world needs warm-hearted Christians, men and women committed to individual and collective reformation. People who, in the words of Thomas Guthrie, 'ponder the paths of their feet'.

They will listen to my voice, said Jesus, and there will be only one flock and one shepherd.

That will mean the study of Scripture — 'the key', in the words of Calvin, 'to the kingdom of God'. It will mean prayer. And it will mean a search for silence, in which we listen.

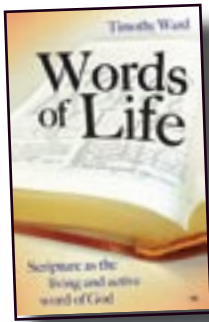
Let every man examine himself.

Moderator, Commissioners:

Gu robh beannachd Dhé oirbh.

The blessings of God be upon you all in the year ahead.

New Arrivals at the Free Church Bookshop



Words of Life: Scripture as the Living and Active Word of God
IVP, £9.99

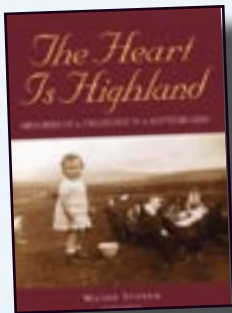
Timothy Ward offers an understanding of the nature of Scripture under three main headings: a biblical outline, a theological outline and a doctrinal outline. A final chapter explores some significant areas in which the doctrine of Scripture should be applied.

The Disciplines of the Christian Life.
SPCK, £8.99

Eric Liddell's practical guide to discipleship is as relevant today as it was for those who first read it: his fellow prisoners in the Japanese war camp where he died in 1945.



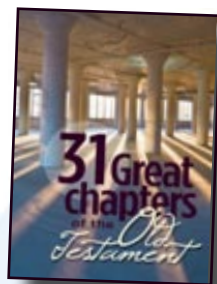
The Heart is Highland: Memories of a Childhood in a Scottish Glen
Breedon, £9.99



This book is a moving account of a child's life growing up in Glen Urquhart in the 1930s and 1940s. With affection and humour, and an eye for detail, Maisie Steven gently reminds us of some of the joys of her childhood.

A Christian Guide to 31 Great Chapters of the Old Testament.
EP, £7.95

We know that reading the Bible is vital in developing our faith and our relationship with God, but where do we start? You could read the Bible end to end, or read through a particular book, but another excellent method is delving into the Bible's best-known and best-loved chapters. So you will find this book helpful for devotional study.



Free Church Bookshop

15 North Bank Street, The Mound, Edinburgh, EH1 2LS
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www.freechurch.org/bookshop

'He who testifieth these things saith, Surely, I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.' Revelation 22:20

- Wed 1** Remember the congregation of Back in Lewis as they will soon be vacant, and ask the Lord to bless Dr Iain D Campbell when he begins his new ministry in Point.
- Thu 2** One of the things we will pray specially for this month is the Free Church Camps – remembering each of them individually. They begin today with Oswestry Jr (led by Michael & Fiona Mackenzie) & Sr (with Derek & Catriona Lamont). Pray for a blessing on them.
- Fri 3** Tomorrow the United States celebrates its national day. Pray for that nation, that the Lord would lead its rulers in wisdom and godliness, and would bring about justice in its ways.
- Sat 4** Please pray for Nigel Anderson and his family as he begins his new ministry in Livingston, and remember also the congregation of Ayr as they embark on a period of vacancy.
- Sun 5** Today is the first full day of the Whithaugh Multi Activity/Pony Trekking Camp, led by Susan MacLean. Ask for the children to be spiritually awakened through this experience.
- Mon 6** North Uist Extreme Sports Camp, led by Bob Akroyd & Lachie Macdonald, started on the 4th. Pray for the safety of both children and leaders during this week.
- Tue 7** It is so interesting to hear of the decisions of the whole Free Church after the Assembly. Pray for the church to remain in unity, and remember the Moderator, Rev. Douglas MacKeddie.
- Wed 8** Edinburgh City Mission is holding a cultural outreach centre at St Columba's throughout the summer. There they offer the gospel and a Christian view of Scotland's history. Please pray for them to bear fruit.
- Thu 9** Remember the new Members of the European Parliament that were elected about a month ago, that the Lord would bless the nations through them and that they would desire to serve Him.
- Fri 10** Johnshaven Jr. Football camp, led by Matthew Hunt, and Oswestry Jr., led by Howard Stone & Izzy MacLeod, both start today. Ask for wisdom for all the leaders, including junior ones and staff, that they would counsel the children wisely.
- Sat 11** Arbroath Mixed Camp, led by Donnie G & Debbie MacDonald, is starting. Ask that the children will really enjoy the camp and will take with them a positive view of Christ and His church through this good experience.
- Sun 12** As well as remembering Camps, we will also be praying for the College students. Donnie MacKinnon has just finished his first year and is now on placement. Pray that he may be brought nearer to the Lord through this.
- Mon 13** Livingston Free Church are holding a holiday mission for primary age children this week. A team from Alabama, USA, is coming over to help.
- Tue 14** Remember the staff of the Free Church Offices as they continue to work during the summer months, that they would be diligent and creative as they work as unto God.
- Wed 15** Neil MacMillan's work is highlighted in this issue of the *Record*. We are grateful for his work and his report, and pray that God will continue to use him to help lead the Free Church.

Thu 16 William Paterson has just finished his second year and is finishing his second placement. Ask that the Lord would use the coming year to prepare him for formal ministry.

Fri 17 Johnshaven Sr. Football Camp starts today, led by Scott Maciver. Pray that these older children would be growing in their faith, and in favour with God and man.

If you have any requests for prayer or praise for the September Prayer Diary, please send them now to Dayspring MacLeod: 0131 226 5286 or dayspring.macleod@btinternet.com

Sat 18 Pitlochry Multi Activity Camp, led by Susan Maclean, starts today. This is Susan's second camp in a row – pray for her continued patience and for her to find some rest.

Sun 19 Calum Smith has finished his first placement and is about to go into second year at the College. Ask that he would constantly rely on the Lord and His faithfulness.

Mon 20 Today pray for your local councillors. We sometimes forget government at the lower levels, but these are the ones we can more easily influence for the Kingdom. Ask that they would bring Christ into all their leadership.

Tue 21 Blaithwaite Multi Activity Camp, with Alan & Christine Fraser, started on the 18th. Ask that the children would bond with the leaders and be happy where they are.

Wed 22 The College Secretary, Anne MacLeod, was off sick for much of this year. We return thanks to God for bringing her back to work now, and rejoice in her improved health.

Thu 23 Remember John Johnstone & Calum MacMillan, who have recently graduated from the College and are candidates for the ministry. Ask that they would know God's will both in accepting a call and in serving Him in years to come.

Fri 24 Dunbar Multi Activity Camp, led by Fiona Walker, begins today. Pray for both children and leaders to stay well, with no sickness and no injuries.

Sat 25 Netherurd Mixed Junior Camp has begun, led by Carolyn Ross & Ruairidh MacLean. May it be a time of refreshment for all who are there, and may their spiritual growth be a testimony to those around them when they return home.

Sun 26 Pray for South Uist as they are now vacant, asking that Iain MacAskill's good work will continue in his absence. We rejoice with his new congregation, Rosskeen, that their long vacancy will be ending shortly.

Mon 27 Poolewe & Aultbea are running a children's club from today to the 31st at Poolewe Primary School. Pray that the children would come along and learn about Jesus, and have a good time as well.

Tue 28 Ask the Lord's blessing on George Reid, who has been Lord High Commissioner several times. We ask that the Lord will be ever more evident in his own and his family's lives.

Wed 29 Pray for Christians who are working with charities and aid agencies overseas, that they would be encouraged in their work and have many opportunities to promote Christ's kingdom as well as health and wellbeing.

Thur 30 Remember the College professors during the quieter summer months, and ask that they would be refreshed for the year ahead, especially in Dr. MacDonald's absence.

Fri 31 Continue to remember the work of committees. May their members be encouraged and motivated by the Lord they serve.

A STUDENT'S VIEW OF THE

As a first timer to the Free Church's General Assembly and to the workings of a denomination as a whole, I feel that some of what I say here may be shrouded in ignorance. However, I also hope it may in some way be enlightening as a student outsider's view to the workings of the General Assembly.

I WAS EXPECTING TO HEAR OF HOW CHURCHES ARE SPREADING THE GOSPEL IN THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

While finding so much encouraging in my first experience of an Assembly, there was also a lot that I found quite disappointing. I know that the Assembly is seen as sort of the High Court of the Free Church and that it has to deal with the all the 'legal proceedings'. I just wonder how much of that stuff can be sorted outside of the Assembly. I was expecting when I went there to hear of how the churches are spreading the gospel in their local communities, how they are working with other gospel-believing churches, and what practical steps they are taking in proclaiming the gospel to the culture round about them. Now, this did happen. Neil MacMillan gave a great presentation on the work he was doing, and it was really encouraging to hear of the work of ministers like Chris Smart, Douglas Campbell, Colin MacLeod, John Wagner and so forth. In fact, it was a breath of fresh air amidst the dull discussions and debates before it. You could feel the delight and the excitement as these guys and others went up to talk about how the gospel was affecting various people groups in their area. However, that was only half a day out of the five spent at the Assembly.

Yes, you could feel the joy at the gospel from those moments. But the rest of the time I was struggling to see it in some people. These guys have been entrusted with proclaiming a life-saving truth, and a lot of the time was spent in petty debate or mind-numbing discussion. The youth report,

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Women's Conference

at St Columba's Free Church,
Edinburgh

on Saturday November 7th 2009

Speaker: Ruth Morrison

More details to follow

FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND'S GENERAL ASSEMBLY

for example, just talked about how good our camps and magazines were. It would have been great to also look at the youth work of churches, to see how they're thinking of creative and innovative ways of getting the gospel of Christ out to the younger generation, and to offer some constructive criticism as well as encouragement.

THEY HAVE BEEN ENTRUSTED WITH A MESSAGE THAT CAN SAVE THE LIFE OF THOSE HEADING TO ETERNAL TORMENT. SHOULD THERE NOT BE MORE PASSION AND ENTHUSIASM ABOUT THAT?

I get the feeling that people may look at the Assembly and groan. They may be thinking, 'Argh, I can't believe I have another day to spend at the Assembly'. That shouldn't be the case. This is a gathering of Christ's church leaders in the Free Church. They have been entrusted with a message that causes us to soar on wings like eagles, a message that can save the life of those heading to eternal torment. Should there not be more passion and enthusiasm about that? Should we not be bouncing ideas off each other and helping each other in ministry? I have a funny feeling that if it were a gathering of doctors who had discovered a cure for cancer and they knew of people in their area or friends and family who were ridden with the disease, there would be a sense of urgency and excitement to get out there and tell them of it.

LET'S DESTROY THOSE MISCONCEPTIONS OF SOUR-FACED, DREARY PRESBYTERIANS

Why was there a four-hour debate on whether we should have exclusive psalmody or not? There was no clear biblical defence at the Assembly for why we should not change our worship. It seems mad to me that this was even an issue for debate, especially in light of what was happening in the Assembly across the road. We have to become more culturally engaging whilst holding absolutely true to the fact that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God and at the centre of everything. That's what I love about the Free Church; it's holding true to the truth of God's Word and its great biblical preachers. Let's destroy those misconceptions of Free Church folk as sour-faced, dreary Presbyterians. May we be known for how we passionately seek to get across the truth of the Bible and the gospel to those round about us and beyond. Perhaps we may want to free up the current constrictions we have on worship to accommodate our evangelical brethren in the Church of Scotland, who want to be part of Bible-believing denomination without changing their worship. Just a thought. Are we willing to change for the sake of spreading the gospel? Or are we too steeped in tradition? What opportunities we have here.



College students on Door Duty during Assembly

GAELIC SERVICE VIDEOS

Videos of the monthly Gaelic Service held in Greyfriars Free Church, Inverness, are now available on the Vimeo website.

The latest one can be accessed at:

www.vimeo.com/4965793

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES ACKNOWLEDGE WITH GRATEFUL THANKS THE FOLLOWING LEGACY:

£3,000 Mrs Mabel Fraser – For Foreign Missions

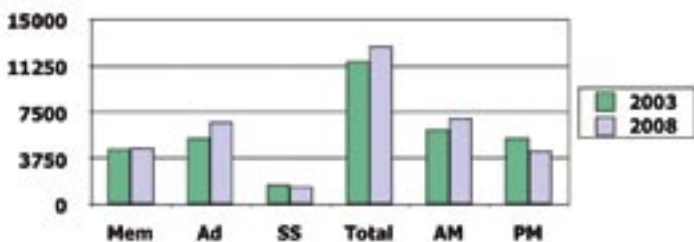
WE'RE NOT DEAD YET ... BUT WE BARELY HAVE A PULSE

THE HIGHLIGHT OF THE FREE CHURCH ASSEMBLY WAS, FOR MANY PEOPLE, THE PRESENTATION MADE BY **NEIL MACMILLAN**. HE CAPTIVATED AND ENLIVENED THE ASSEMBLY BY SHOWING US THE REALITY OF WHERE THE FREE CHURCH IS, BUT ALSO SHOWING US WHERE WE COULD BE. THE HEADLINE ABOVE IS HIS.



270,000 YEARS TO EVANGELISE SCOTLAND!

Scotland has a population of some 5,200,000 people. The Free Church has 12,682 members and adherents – 0.25% of the population; one in every 400 people goes to the Free Church. The good news is, however, that the Free Church has stopped declining and has even shown a small growth (see the chart below). The bad news is that at the current rate, it would take 270,000 years to bring the Gospel to all the people of Scotland – if it were solely dependent on the Free Church, which, thankfully, it is not.



What is most encouraging about the above chart is not that the membership rose slightly, but that the adherent base increased considerably, as did the number of people attending morning services. The continued decline in Sunday School numbers and also in the evening service are issues that need to be addressed. But there is a general sense that the Free Church is undergoing a real and positive change. Some congregations have even moved beyond the maintenance model and are managing to reach out and bring new people in.

THE AIM OF HUB CONGREGATIONS

We are also beginning to see the implementation of a national strategy which is more than talk or the drawing up of plans. Thanks to the work of Neil MacMillan as development officer for the Home Missions Board (what an inspired choice that has been!), the following have already been implemented in three pilot congregations – Thurso, Cumbernauld and Ferintosh.

Targeting Training at the Local Level
Focus on Leadership & Every Member Ministry
Adaptable According to Local Circumstances
Passing Benefits on to Neighbour Congregations

LOCAL LEADERSHIP

This is the key area for the future of the Church, and Neil used the following headings to teach us about how

to develop a leadership which is biblical, Christ-centred and contextual for Scotland in the 21st century, whether in the rural villages, suburban towns or the city conurbations.

Creating & Developing a Leadership Team
Vision & Planning
Small Group Leadership
Equipping the Saints
Diaconal Ministry

EVERY MEMBER MINISTRY

Leadership is of course pointless if there is no one to lead. And just as importantly, Neil pointed out that the job of leaders is not to do all the jobs, but rather to encourage, train and inspire people to play their part in building one another up. He mentioned the following headings.

Motives for Ministry
Biblical Personal Ministry
Discovering your Spiritual Gifts
Putting your Gifts to Work

It is clear that Neil MacMillan has done a great deal of work, reading, thinking, and visiting conferences and other churches. His insights were valuable because they were Christ-centred and biblically based and because the impression given was not 'here is the ideal, I am the expert, now go and feel guilty that you cannot do this', but rather, 'here is a way forward for us all, as we work, dream and serve together'.

Neil left us with some great questions that we should all be asking now – whether we are 'hub' congregations or not. Perhaps Kirk Sessions and congregational meetings could reflect prayerfully upon the following:

- Describe the outlook and beliefs of the people in your community.
- What aspects of the gospel speak most powerfully to people with this kind of worldview?
- What do you need to do to reach such people with the gospel?