

REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2008

The Committee continues to deal with the practical aspects of Administration and Finance, which enables the work of the denomination to continue as it seeks to follow and serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2008

Details of the arrangements for the 2008 General Assembly are contained in the Outline Order of Business in Appendix 1 of the report.

General Assembly will meet within Glasgow Caledonian University from Thursday 5th to Saturday 7th June. The annual meetings of the Women's Home and Overseas Committee, and the opening and closing services of General Assembly will be held in the Carnegie Lecture Theatre. The Business Sessions of Assembly which take place on Friday and Saturday will be held in the Govan Mbeki Building.

The practice of holding a Leaders' Forum was for many years a welcome opportunity for leaders to meet prior to General Assembly. The Christian Education Committee has agreed to be responsible for the Forum which will be held on Thursday 5th June at 11am in the Govan Mbeki Building. The Forum will be addressed by Rev Fred Drummond, General Secretary of the Evangelical Alliance.

During the closing service on Saturday evening the Moderator will give his Address and conduct a commissioning for the young people going to southern Africa during the summer.

FUTURE GENERAL ASSEMBLIES

Background

Until 2003, the pattern for many years was that the Assembly met in various locations with all of the sessions taking place there. However, facilities were limited, meals were only provided for invited guests and it was not found to be the most conducive atmosphere for discussion.

Since 2004, the business sessions have taken place in a conference venue, meals have been provided for all and there has been significantly more discussion. In Edinburgh and Glasgow it has been necessary to make use of a second venue for the opening and closing sessions and, apart from one year, the Women's Annual Meetings have also taken place there. In Perth, we met in the Salutation Hotel where the room was large enough to accommodate all sessions. However to have a similar arrangement in Glasgow and Edinburgh has proved to be difficult and would be expensive.

As part of an ongoing review, the Committee sent a questionnaire to commissioners requesting their views on the current arrangements and the proposal of meeting in the same venue every year. The response revealed that most were in favour of using one venue for all sessions and of meeting in the same location each year if suitable accommodation could be found. Perth was the most popular location and the majority were in favour of meeting during the week rather than on Thursday to Saturday, which is the current practice.

Recommendations

1. The Committee recommends that the General Assembly of 2009 should meet in the Salutation Hotel, Perth.
2. The Committee recommends that the General Assembly of 2009 should meet on Wednesday 10th – Friday 12th June.
3. The Committee recommends that from 2009 General Assembly be held in a central location where suitable accommodation can be found.

RETURNS TO OVERTURE

The proposal for an Appeal Commission was passed down to Presbyteries under the Barrier Act and the response from Presbyteries is shown in appendix 2. Therefore, with the consent of a majority of presbyteries the proposals are presented by the committee.

The proposals are:

- 1) The Appeal Commission is established, appointed and authorised by the General Assembly to act for and on behalf of the General Assembly in the hearing of appeals, and adjudicating finally thereon, against the decisions of Inferior Courts in cases of Trial by Libel affecting the character or conduct of ministers or probationers, in the case of congregations in an unsatisfactory state and in matters arising from the employment of individuals by General Assembly Committees, and for this purpose the General Assembly delegate to the said Appeal Commission all powers necessary to act in such cases as if the General Assembly themselves were acting, including, inter alia power, where necessary, to require the attendance of witnesses, to examine witnesses on oath, and to call for the production of all documents and matters of any nature connected with or relevant to the appeal. Any decision arrived at shall be on the basis of the balance of probabilities having given due consideration to all the evidence produced.
 - (a) The Appeal Commission shall consist of eighteen ministers and elders, appointed by the General Assembly.
 - (b) The General Assembly shall appoint one of the members to be Chairman, and another to be Vice-Chairman of the Appeal Commission,
 - (c) The Clerks of Assembly act as its Clerks and may also be members.
 - (d) Any six members shall form a quorum and the Chairman shall have a casting vote only.
 - (e) In the event of the Chairman or Vice-Chairman being unable to preside at any Sederunt of the Appeal Commission, the members present shall elect one of their number to act as Chairman, who shall continue to act until the close of that Appeal.
 - (f) In the event of the any of the Clerks not being present at any Sederunt of the Appeal Commission, the members present shall elect one of their number to act as Clerk.
 - (g) No member of any Court whose decision is under review, nor anyone who has taken part in the cause at any stage as Adviser or Assessor, shall act as a member of the Appeal Commission when an Appeal in such a cause is being heard.

(h) No member of the Commission who has not been present during the whole proceedings in the Appeal shall vote or take any part in the finding or findings of the Commission.

(i) An Appellant shall have the right on special cause shown to object to any member of the Commission acting when his Appeal is being heard, and such objection, if sustained, shall disqualify the member or members objected to from acting in that Appeal; provided that such objection shall be stated and disposed of at the commencement of the hearing of the Appeal, and the members of the Commission then present, other than the member or members objected to, shall be the sole judges as to whether the objection is to be sustained or repelled, and their decision on this matter shall not be subject to review.

3. The findings and final judgement of the Appeal Commission in appeals shall be incorporated in a written Report to the General Assembly, but shall not be subject to review by the General Assembly.
4. Where for any reason the Commission is not able to reach a decision on an appeal or take up an appeal it shall report to the General Assembly which shall take up the appeal.

STEDFAST

It was with great sadness that the Committee learned of the passing of Rev J A M McFie. Iain willingly served as editor of Stedfast from January 2000 at a time when changes to Stedfast were being introduced and the Committee is most grateful for his faithful work and devoted service during this time.

The Committee is seeking to identify and appoint a new editor and in the interim are greatly indebted to the General Secretary for carrying out much of the ongoing editorial work.

The Stedfast Team continually seek to develop ways in which the magazine can widen its appeal to members of the United Free Church and beyond and would encourage all congregations to appoint a Stedfast Coordinator, who can forward items of interest, news from the congregation etc, to the Editor for inclusion in the magazine.

The Committee also appreciates the valuable assistance and contributions of Mr Bill Imrie and his staff at Stone Agency in the production of the magazine.

CHURCH OFFICE

This year, the main hall and offices were redecorated. In the year ahead, repairs to the staircase will be carried out to satisfy health and safety standards, and redecoration of the main entrance and staircase will require to be carried out.

As always, the Committee, greatly appreciative of all the work the Office Staff carries out throughout the year wishes to record its thanks.

COORDINATING FORUM

The Coordinating Forum, consisting of General Assembly Conveners or Vice-Conveners and Presbytery Clerks met in October 2007 and March 2008. These meetings enable the various committees and presbyteries to share information regarding their ongoing work, plans for the future, and to discuss budgets for the following year.

PRAYER UNION

Mrs Wemyss Billows and her colleagues have again produced a devotional Prayer and Study Guide to encourage members of the United Free Church to be faithful and thoughtful in their prayers. Used on a regular basis, readers will find much to stimulate prayer and the Committee again commend the Mrs Billows and her colleagues for the quality and content of the production.

CHILD PROTECTION

It is a number of years since material for the Care And Supervision of those working with Young People was issued and training for those involved with young people implemented. The current materials are being reviewed and following this process presbyteries will be encouraged to arrange training events that both enable good practice to be followed and raise awareness of the issues involved regarding Child Protection.

The Committee is grateful to Mr John Skinner the National Child Protection Coordinator and to Mrs Sheena MacKenzie, Miss Jackie Ramsey, and Mr Nicky Kyle, Presbytery Coordinators for their ongoing work regarding Child Protection.

MANUAL OF PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE

The current manual of Practice and Procedure was published in 1952, with a supplement covering alterations due to General Assembly decisions from 1952 to 1988 being published in 1989. A revision of the manual has been carried out incorporating previous decisions of General Assembly and updating the language of the Manual. The Committee are indebted to the Assembly Clerks for their work in this revision and recommend the approval of the publication. It is hoped the Manual will be available by the end of this year.

QUINQUENNIAL VISITATION

East: Canonbie, Corstorphine, Dunfermline, Dysart, St Ninians

West: Ardeer, Ayr, Bargeddie, Glasgow: Cathcart, Drumchapel, Millerston; Whifflet

North: Auchterarder, Balbeggie, Boddam

MODERATORIAL VISITATION

Thanks are expressed to the Moderator, Rev D Cartledge and Mrs Cartledge for their visits to congregations during the past year and for the encouragement they have brought.

East: Dunfermline, Gorebridge, Leith: Ebenezer, Sauchie & Fishcross

West: Dalreoch, Glasgow: Candlish Wynd, Cathcart, Croftfoot, Darnley, Drumchapel, Knightswood, Partick; Largs, Lochwinnoch, Milngavie

North: Aberdeen: Northfield, Auchterarder, Cunningsburgh, Dounby, Ferryden, Lossiemouth, Montrose, Sandwick, Westray

Congregations are reminded that, any requests for visits by the Moderator should be made through the Church Office.

In the name of the Committee,
GARY J. A. BARCLAY Convener
WILLIAM R. MacMILLAN Vice Convener
JOHN O. FULTON Secretary

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2008
OUTLINE PROGRAMME**

THURSDAY 5th June Glasgow: Caledonian University – Carnegie Lecture Theatre

11.00 & 2.15 Committee on Women's Home and Overseas.
Meeting of the Prayer Union at close

11 a.m. Leaders' Forum – in Govan Mbeki Building

7.00 General Assembly Constituted
Roll of Assembly submitted
Appointment of Moderator of Assembly
Reflections from Retiring Moderator
Communion Service - Preacher: Retiring Moderator: Rev D Cartledge
- Communion conducted by Moderator: Dr D Macdonald
- Roll of Departed
Loyal Address to the Queen
Appointment of Business Committee
Appointment of Committee to Examine Records and Minute Books
(Close approx 8.30)

FRIDAY 6th Glasgow: Caledonian University: Govan Mbeki Building

09.45 Opening Devotions
Open Prayer
Memorial Tributes
Reception of Delegates from other Churches
Report of Assembly Business Committee
Presentation by Overseas Committee
Presentation by Administration & Finance Committee
Presentation by Christian Education Committee
Presentation by Evangelism Committee
Presentation by Christian Education & Evangelism Committees
(Close approx 8.00)
*Breaks will be: Lunch 12.30 – 1.45, Buffet tea 4.30 – 6.00 with tea/ coffee
from 11 – 11.15 and 3.00 – 3.15 p.m.
The Annual meeting of the Friends of the Students Association at 4.30 p.m.*

SATURDAY 7th Glasgow: Caledonian University: Govan Mbeki Building

09.45 Opening Devotions
Open Prayer
Representative of Scottish Bible Society
Report by Committee on Women's Home and Overseas
Presentation by Ministry Committee
Presentation by Church & Society Committee
Presentation by Ecumenical Relations Committee
Presentation by Youth Committee
Report by General Trustees
Committee on Records and Minute Books

Any business left over from previous diets/ closing items

*Breaks will be: Lunch 12.30 – 1.45, and tea/ coffee from 11 – 11.15 and
3.00 – 3.15*

Glasgow: Caledonian University – Carnegie Lecture Theatre

6.30

Closing Service

Moderator's Address

Closing Items

(Close approx 8.00)