

REPORT OF THE MINISTRY COMMITTEE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2012

INTRODUCTION

"Speak, God. I'm your servant, ready to listen." (1 Samuel 3:9: The Message). All Christians are called to engage in ministry using the gifts and abilities that God has given them, but every now and then, some sense God's call to serve in a specific ministry role, as an Ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament, Ministry Assistant or Reader. Recognising and responding to such a call can take time and require guidance. Some people wrestle with the question of whether or not they are being called, while others have a clear sense of calling. Throughout the year a number of people have been met or interviewed in response to enquiries regarding full time and part time ministry opportunities. The committee, as always, is committed to preparing people theologically and practically to fulfil the particular ministry to which they are called and as such has this year endeavoured to complete the Pathways to Ministry structure for Ministry Formation.

STUDENTS

During the year the Committee recognised Mr Gordon Mackenzie and Mr Duncan Whitty as students in training for the Ordained Ministry of Word and Sacrament. The Committee has been greatly encouraged by the number of those who have felt a sense of calling to the Ministry and who are currently at different stages in their training.

Two students have completed their required courses of study this year.

- Mr Nathan Owens (Drumchapel) has completed a B.A. degree at Highland Theological College. It is anticipated that Mr Owens will be engaging in a further year of study.
- Mr Duncan Whitty (Leith Ebenezer) has completed a BD degree at Edinburgh University. Mr Whitty is currently engaged in fulfilling the other denominational requirements that are a part of preparation for Ministry. It is hoped that he will be available for a call in 2014.

Two students are engaged in studies at Highland Theological College

- Mr Martin Paterson (Uddingston: Park) is due to complete the course in 2014.
- Mr Gordon Mackenzie (Lochwinnoch) is due to complete the course in 2015.

The Committee is grateful to all those who offer support and encouragement to the students and to Ministers and Kirk Sessions who encourage people from within their congregation to consider the Ordained Ministry.

ATTACHMENTS

Mr Nathan Owens undertook an attachment at Lossiemouth and has now completed both of his required attachments. Mr Duncan Whitty is undertaking his first attachment at Bannockburn: Murrayfield, and Mr Martin Paterson is undertaking his first attachment at Darnley. Students normally undertake attachments during the last two years of their training. Attachments play an important role in the preparation of students for Ministry and the committee is grateful to the Ministers and Kirk Sessions of these congregations for their help.

APPOINTMENTS

The Committee was pleased to note that the Rev Eric Worton had been appointed to the charge of Duntocher West and Knightswood.

The Committee is indebted to Rev Andrew Begg, whose appointment as Part Time Minister finished in May, and thank him for the faithful service he has given during his time at Tayport.

READERS

'Pathways to Ministry' provides opportunities for Ministry within the United Free Church. The three paths available are that of the Ordained Ministry of Word and Sacrament, Ministry Assistant and Reader. The structures for the preparation of Candidates for the Ordained Ministry and Candidates for Ministry Assistant are already in place and have previously been agreed by General Assembly. This year the Committee presents the final part of Pathways with the structure for the Reader Pathway.

Those who serve as Readers within the United Free Church, continue to make a valuable contribution to the life of the Church through preaching and leading worship and under Pathways the role of the Reader will not change.

Enquirers for the role of Reader will be subject to the same process under Common Point of Entry outlined in the original *Pathways* document, which applies equally to applicants for all three ministry pathways.

Enquirers will be invited to an informal meeting with Ministry committee officials to explore their sense of call and identify the path appropriate to that call. It is hoped that the possibility will exist to arrange a short church placement at this stage (6-8 weeks). Enquirers will then have the opportunity for prayerful reflection before making a formal application to the Ministry Committee to be recognised as a Reader candidate.

Enquirers will be remitted to Presbytery for interview, after which a recommendation will be passed back to the Ministry Committee. Recognition as a Reader candidate is made by the Committee. All successful applicants must normally have one year of membership in the United Free Church of Scotland. References will be taken up and checks made to satisfy current procedures relating to the 'Protecting Vulnerable Groups' Legislation.

Academically, candidates will be required to satisfactorily complete four modules of study drawn either from the access course in Christian Theology at Highland Theological College, the Certificate course in Christian Studies at International Christian College, or an appropriate course offered by another training provider accredited by the Committee. Two of these modules must be in Biblical studies (Old Testament & New Testament) to prepare for the core function of a Reader's ministry. In order to monitor progress of study, an annual training review will be carried out by the Committee, usually by the Adviser of Studies.

Candidates will also be required to fulfil other areas of in-house study covering the basics of church practice & procedure, the theological and historical ethos of the United Free Church of Scotland, and will normally fulfil a three month placement. Following a formal assessment of a candidate's ability to preach & lead worship, final approval as a Reader will be given by the Ministry Committee.

On successful completion of training, a service will be arranged by Presbytery to mark being set apart to serve as a Reader within the denomination. Presbytery will have responsibility for the deployment and oversight of Readers who will be accountable to the Presbytery to which they belong.

In the past Readers have been directly approached by congregations to preach on an occasional basis. This will not change under Pathways, but it is the Committee's vision that Readers would also be deployed in a more structured way. Certain congregations could benefit from a team based ministry. Readers might well, in appropriate circumstances, serve as part of a team alongside an ordained Minister and/or Ministry Assistant.

Presbyteries will report annually to the Ministry Committee on how Readers have been used and the list of Readers will be submitted annually and included in the Ministry Committee's report to General Assembly.

CONVERSATION WITH PRESBYTERIES

The Committee found last year's meeting with representatives of Presbyteries to be most helpful and informative. A further meeting has been arranged by the Committee to meet with representatives of all Presbyteries. Once again the aim of the meeting will be to outline the work of the Committee, survey the current ministry situation throughout the Presbyteries and the impact this has on congregations, and facilitate discussion on ministry needs and possible patterns of ministry.

CONFERENCES

With the closure of Scottish Churches House, the committee was keen to find a suitable venue for the In Service Conference and was delighted with the location and facilities offered at Gartmore House. The conference was held in September 2011 with a good number of Ministers, Pastors and Ministry Assistants able to attend what turned out to be an informative and enriching time together. The main sessions were led by Rev Hector Morrison, Principal of Highland Theological College who spoke on 'The Fatherhood of God in the Old Testament' and Rev Fergus Buchanan who spoke on 'The Lord's Prayer.' Mrs Laura Mackenzie with the aid of others who had hosted events brought encouraging and challenging reflections on the UCCSA/UF Youth Mission and Rev Alexander Ritchie led a session on Pathways to Ministry. The committee is grateful to all who participated in the conference.

Arrangements are underway for the 2012 conference, to be held 25 – 27 September, again at Gartmore House. The committee would again encourage Ministers, Pastors and Ministry Assistants to set this time apart in their diary and make every effort to attend the conference as fully as possible. In addition to the main sessions, the conference offers the opportunity to spend time together, enjoy warm fellowship, and encourage one another.

The development of Pathways to Ministry has led the committee to take a fresh look at what conferences are required and when they should be held. As part of this process plans are underway for Student Conferences to be held in Autumn and Spring. The Spring Conference for Students and Pastors and the Readers Study Day have not been held this year. Pastors and Ministry Assistants have the opportunity to attend the In Service Conference, and it is hoped they will avail themselves of this resource if at all possible. The recruitment and training of Readers also raises the possibility of a new conference format for Readers.

ENQUIRERS EVENT

Throughout the Pathways to Ministry process, the provision of a trained Ministry, equipped for a variety of roles, has been at the forefront of the Committees thinking. It has been a challenging yet encouraging and exciting journey as Pathways has taken shape. Now that Pathways is in place the Committee is planning to hold a day event for those who may be interested in any of the opportunities offered by Pathways to Ministry. There is consultation with other Committees about them also being involved in the day so that the day would also benefit those exploring other possible forms of service. It is hoped to hold the event in the Autumn.

COMMUNION TRAINING COURSE

A new course of instruction is now available for elders serving as interim Moderators, who have been nominated by Presbytery to preside at the Lord's supper. This year there are four people undertaking the course. The course is both theological and practical in nature. Students are introduced to the main Biblical texts and key Reformed doctrines comprising our understanding of the Sacrament of Communion within the United Free Church of Scotland, as a denomination belonging to the Presbyterian tradition. The material guides students to study a number of different Biblical passages, as well as some historical information about the theology of John Calvin (1509-1564) and the Westminster Confession of Faith. There are questions to be answered and submitted with a short essay as part of the final assessment. The practice of celebrating communion will then be explored as a part of the preparation to conduct communion.

CONDUCT OF SACRAMENTS

Following the decision last year on the conduct of the Sacraments, the Committee was asked to give further guidance on how emergency situations were to be handled. In such circumstances contact should be made with the Presbytery Clerk, and failing that the Principal Clerks who would then provide guidance on how best to deal with the situation.

CONDUCT OF MARRIAGE

Representatives of the Committee met with the Church and Society Committee to consider the Scottish Government's consultation on the introduction of Same Sex Marriage. Consideration was given to the position of the Church and of Ministers in the event such legislation is introduced.

In consultation with the Principal Clerks, proposed paragraphs of deliverance were produced in accord with the position of the Church. It was recognised that there was a need to offer not only the guidance the paragraphs contain but the protection they afford to individual Ministers in the event this legislation is introduced.

This is especially true for Ministers not in a charge but exercising their ministry in a context where they could be under pressure to act in a manner which is authorised by the law on marriage but not by the Church. It is therefore proposed that to avoid any issues arising in the future it is clear that any exercise of ministry as a Minister of the United Free Church of Scotland is carried out only with the authority of the Presbytery and the Minister is clearly subject to that Presbytery.

The paragraphs are as follows:

- i. The General Assembly reaffirm that marriage is the union of one man and one woman.
- ii. The General Assembly agree that no minister, or anyone whose ministerial ordination is recognised by a Presbytery of the Church to solemnise a marriage, may solemnise, bless or in any other exercise of ministry participate in any way in marking any other form of marriage other than that of the union of one man and one woman.
- iii. The General Assembly agree that from the rising of the General Assembly each year, those ministers with seats in Presbytery by appointment of the General Assembly, with the exception of those in General Assembly appointments or beyond normal retirement age, shall apply to the Presbytery where they have a seat, to retain their seat.
- iv. The General Assembly agree that in granting such a seat the Presbytery shall satisfy itself on the continued involvement in the life of the United Free Church of Scotland of the applicant. In the event no seat is requested or is refused the minister shall no longer have a seat in Presbytery until such time as an application is made and a seat

granted. No minister may exercise any ministerial functions as a minister of the United Free Church of Scotland without a seat in a Presbytery of the Church.

MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT WORKER

The Committee is indebted to the Rev Alexander Ritchie for the work he has undertaken on behalf of the Committee this year. Mr Ritchie has prepared the course for Communion, produced a paper on the role of Reader, and has prepared Pathways to Ministry leaflets for those enquiring about Ministry opportunities within the United Free Church. There are presently three of four planned leaflets available to enquirers. The first leaflet gives general information on Pathways; the second provides information on the Ordained Ministry of Word and Sacrament; with the third leaflet providing information on the path to becoming a Ministry Assistant. The final leaflet on the Readers' Pathway is ready for publication and it is anticipated that it will be published following General Assembly. The Committee appreciate the work Mr Ritchie has accomplished and would seek to extend this post for a further year.

ADVISER IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Committee is still engaged in its review of professional development and hopes to report back to General Assembly 2013 with firm proposals.

INTERIM MODERATORS

The Committee having considered the matter of remuneration for Interim Moderators recommends that from January 2013 all Interim Moderators be given a payment of £500.

STIPENDS AND SALARIES

Not shown on web site

CONCLUSION

The Committee is engaged in a considerable amount of work that is both demanding and time consuming. It is grateful to all who have contributed in helping the Committee and would express thanks to Rev John Fulton and Mrs Helena Jarvis for all their valuable help and guidance.

In the name of the Committee

GARY J A BARCLAY
IAN F R LLOYD
JOHN O FULTON

Convener
Vice-convener
Secretary