

REPORT OF THE YOUTH COMMITTEE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2013

“Youth ministries must constantly and continually bring teenagers back to Jesus. As Thomas Chalmers once stated, “The best way to overcome the world is not with morality or self-discipline. Christians overcome the world by seeing the beauty and excellence of Christ. They overcome the world by seeing something more attractive than the world: Christ.”¹

INTRODUCTION

Youth Ministry carries with it a huge responsibility to teach children and young people the truth of God’s word. Young people demand and deserve the truth contained within the Word and as such we have to seek God’s help in teaching them faithfully. This is both a challenge and a joy for those working with the youth of our denomination. As a committee we are committed to making sure that the teaching offered points our young people to Christ, for the glory of God. We must ask ourselves when this present generation of young people grow up will they be able to say of us, that we did not shrink from declaring the whole counsel of God? (Acts 20:26)

What a blessing it is to see young people coming to faith and growing in their relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. There are however, many more to reach and we seek to do so in the name and leading of our Lord. The committee would like to thank all those who work in both our congregations and at denominational level with our young people. The work done is vital and we are aware not always easy. It is so important that we continue to strive to be real examples of men and women of God living their lives for Christ as an example to our young people. In our strident secular society today, so much mitigates against our young people living for Christ. The spiritual battle is real and we must arm ourselves and teach our young people to arm themselves with the armour of God. We have much to thank the Lord for in our young people and the committee would again ask you to partner with them and with our congregations in continuing to pray for the young people and those who work with them. Over the last year, our work as a committee with our young people has been worked out in the following ways:

CAMPS 2012

In 2012 we held two camps, one aimed at those in school years S1-4 and one for those in primary 5-7, both took place at the Bible Centre, Inchinnan. The young people responded well to the teaching and activities on offer at both camps and we give God the glory for these events and thank Him for His provision and faithfulness to us throughout. Twelve young people attended the S1-4 Camp and 21 young people attended the P5-7 Camp. Thanks are also due to those who pray for these events, it is vital and very much appreciated.

The Youth Committee would like to thank the teaching team who give up so much of their time with the work of camps. The camps would not be possible without their excellent input and dedication. The commitment shown by the team and also the individuals working with the children and young people in our congregations is very much appreciated and so important. Without the youth work of the individual congregations, camps would not be possible. Camps and Youth Assemblies continue to be advertised on the UF:YC Face Book page.

¹ Josh Griffin, Five Questions, <http://www.morethandodgeball.com/2013/01/30/5-questions-matt-chandler-eric-geiger-josh-patterson/>

CAMPS 2013:

A full colour brochure advertising the Camps and Youth Assemblies was made available to the young people. The brochure was circulated throughout the denomination and also sent to all of the young people who had attended events throughout the year enclosed in their Christmas cards. The committee are indebted to the office staff Rev John Fulton and Mrs Helena Jarvis for all their help with camps and the youth work of the denomination.

This year, the committee organised two camps, one for those in school years S1-4 in February at the Bible Centre, Inchinnan and another one for those in primary 5-7 in May held at Lendrick Muir. The S1-4 Camp, ***“You Can Take God at His Word”*** was attended by 22 young people and the teaching focused on the Promises of God. The young people responded very well to the teaching sessions which looked at what promises are, God’s promise to Abraham, God’s promise to Joshua and the people and finally God’s promise of the coming Messiah through Isaiah. The young people who attended were excellent and we enjoyed a great weekend with them. It is such an encouragement to have new young people coming along to camp and to see friendships being formed between young people in different congregations

On Sunday after morning worship and a teaching session, a question box was there to allow the young people to ask anonymous questions they have relating to their faith, the Bible or Christianity in general. It is amazing what pertinent questions these young people have! We were pleased that the young people requested that we return to the Bible Centre for next year’s camp.

God is very faithful and we thank Him for these events. Some of the young people were new to the camp and we give thanks for that. The team worked very well and the committee would like to thank Jennifer Paterson, Morag Steven, Ross McNaughton, Rachel Keane and Andrew Brown for teaching and Cat McKenzie and Gordon Mackenzie for cooking for us. These weekends continue to excite and inspire us as the young people grapple with God’s word and how they can apply it to their own lives. It is also a real encouragement to see the leaders coming through the camps themselves and seeing them share their faith with the younger generation.

The camp available for those in primary school years P5-7 was attended by 14 young people and focused on the Promises of God and His faithfulness in keeping His promises looking especially at Noah and Abraham. This camp was held at Lendrick Muir from the 19th-21st April. Thank you again to Andrew Brown, Rachel Keane, Jennifer Paterson and Ross McNaughton who lead the teaching sessions and also to Elizabeth McNaughton and Gordon Mackenzie who cooked for us. It is always great to have the leaders accompany the children from the congregations and the team enjoyed sharing in the weekend together with the leaders. The programme for the camp consisted of teaching sessions, worship, crafts and outdoor activities.

YOUTH ASSEMBLY 2012

Our first Youth Assembly of 2012 took place at the Cairngorms Christian Centre, Aviemore and focused on who is God, what is His plan for His world and where do I fit in? We also spent time looking at biblical interpretation to help the young people learn tools to assist them in reading God’s word, putting it in context and sharing it with others. Twenty young people attended. At the request of the young people at a previous Youth Assembly, this weekend was extended until the Monday

The second Youth Assembly took place at the Bible Centre, Inchinnan and the teaching for the weekend looked at the Redeemed Life, ***“Putting off the Old Self and Putting on the New.”*** The young people looked at how God changes lives and in groups worked

through bible passages which helped them to see characteristics of the new life and the old. These were written on two large cardboard suitcases which highlighted that sometimes we carry with us traits from our old selves and what new traits we need God to help us to work on. There were times of group discussion worship, teaching and free time. We were again indebted to Diane Ledingham and Gordon Mackenzie for cooking for us. On the Saturday evening we went Ten Pin Bowling and then came back to the centre for games. On the Sunday, the young people joined with the congregation at Drumchapel United Free Church for their Harvest celebrations. There were 14 young people at this Youth Assembly. These weekends are always a joy for those involved in leading as we see just what God is doing with these young people we have much to praise and thank Him for.

YOUTH ASSEMBLY 2013

Again this year the committee decided to organise two Youth Assemblies for those within the denomination aged 16-25. These weekends allow the young people to come together for teaching, worship and time to spend in one another's company making new friends and meeting with other young Christians of their own age. It is so important that they have these opportunities to learn and share together and they continue to be both an encouragement and real joy for those who lead them.

Our first Youth Assembly was booked to take place at The Cairngorms Christian Centre, Aviemore from the 22nd-24th March, and we were delighted to have Rev Iain Murray from the Banner of Truth Trust as our speaker for the weekend. 14 young people had booked to come along. The theme was the promises of God and the work of Christ yesterday, today and in the future. Unfortunately due to adverse weather and the closing of the A9 road to Aviemore, the Youth Assembly had to be cancelled. We are currently in the process of organising an alternative weekend for the young people and Rev Murray has agreed to come along once again as our speaker.

The decision was made this year to take our second Youth Assembly to the Voxter Centre, Shetland in September. For many years now the young people from our Shetland congregations have made the journey to the mainland to join us for the Youth Assembly. We as a committee have been greatly encouraged by their commitment to the Youth Assembly and also by the assistance they have received from their congregations and Presbytery to enable them to attend. This year we decided that we would extend the Youth Assembly to a longer weekend and we would take a group up to Brae, Shetland for the first official Youth Assembly to be held there. Our theme will be a continuation of the theme of God's Covenant with His people and what that means for us. The weekend will begin on the Thursday evening and the young people will leave on the Sunday evening ferry after attending morning worship at Cunningsburgh UF Church and sharing in lunch together. This is an excellent opportunity for the young people from the mainland to be able to travel to Shetland and enjoy a weekend together of bible teaching, worship and fellowship.

SUPPORT

The committee would like to thank the Congregations and Presbyteries who gave financial assistance to allow young people to attend the camps and youth assemblies on offer. Thanks also to those who offered transport to enable the young people to attend these events and for those who invite and encourage our young people to attend. It is very much appreciated.

SUMMER MISSION 2012

A letter was circulated throughout the congregations offering the help and assistance of the Youth Worker and the team for Summer Missions and Holiday Clubs. There was no request from a congregation for help with a summer mission this year although a few of our congregations held outreach events either in the morning or evening or over a week or few days throughout the summer for children which was very encouraging.

SUMMER MISSION 2013

This year the Summer Mission Team will be going to Erskine UF Church, Burntisland from the 5th-9th of August working in partnership with a mime and drama team from America. The mission will run from Monday-Friday for children in primary school years.

THE SATURDAY FELLOWSHIP

Last year there were four meetings of the Saturday Fellowship and we were delighted to have Rev John Fulton, Mr Gordon Leiper of France Mission, Graham Steven from Glasgow City Mission and Mr Duncan Whitty as speakers. These meetings were held in the Church Office and were very much enjoyed by all who attended.

The planning group, made up of some of the young people from the Youth Assembly, have organised four meetings for 2013. The theme for this year is "Rooted in the Word of God, Rooted in faith" and the speakers are Mrs Jeanette Millar looking at Personal Devotions, (13th April), Rev Ian McQuarrie on 1 Peter 1:13-25 (18th May), Dr Graham Skinner on living as a Christian in the world of science, (21st September) and Mr Gordon Mackenzie on 1 Peter 2:1-12 (26th October). These meetings are a great opportunity to come together for prayer worship and teaching. It is a delight to see people of varying ages praying and worshipping God together. The committee is encouraged that the young people want to organise these events. Each meeting takes place in the Church Office beginning at 10.30am, (10.00am for tea/coffee) and finishes by 12.30. The committee would like to thank Mrs Jennifer Paterson, Mr Martin Paterson, Miss Carol Owen and Miss Alison Strawbridge for their work in organising these events.

EASTER SCHEME

The Youth Committee would like to sincerely thank everyone who contributed towards the Easter Scheme last year in aid of the work of The R.N.L.I and congratulate all involved for the magnificent sum raised of £8,625. Well done to all who helped to raise that excellent amount which will be very useful indeed to the organisation.

We are delighted to commend to you for the Easter Scheme of 2013 the work of Stand By Me, and specifically the '**Snug as a Bug**' project. Thirty pounds per child allows Stand By Me to provide a mattress, duvet, pillow and mosquito net for a child in one of their homes in Burma. To be able to help a child to have a warm and safe night's sleep is a joy and the committee were delighted to hear of the project and offer it to you as the chosen Easter Scheme charity. Thank you to all who have helped in many different ways to raise an excellent sum of money for such a worthwhile cause.

MINING GOD'S WORD COURSE

"When you put the knowledge of the Word, perspective, conviction and the corresponding skills together, the resulting product is character! First you know it; then you understand it; then you believe it with your whole heart; then you do it. The result of these four is character...Colossians 1:28."

Teaching young people the Word of God is not only vital but of the utmost importance. Our young people are living in a society where the Word of God seems to hold little regard to most and so it is important that our youth not only know how to read and understand God's Word but also how to handle it properly and share it with others. To this end the '*Mining God's Word*' course is being offered to anyone interested in learning tools that help those taking part to come to a deeper understanding of God's Word and also how to share that Word confidently with others. Too often verses of scripture are taken out of context and handled wrongly. Sometimes we read and miss important points in the text and sometimes we struggle to understand what the text is actually saying to us. This course offers tools that include looking at grammar, reading verses within the context of both the surrounding passages and also the historical and also basic reading skills to assist with reading the text for all its worth. The course focuses mainly on the book of Philippians but the skills learned are transferable and should help with reading the whole of God's Word either for personal development in our Bible reading or for those who teach in Sunday school, youth groups and other church settings.

This six week course is open to anyone and will take place on Monday evenings in the Church Office at 7.30pm, beginning on Monday 2nd September. For those who wish to take part but cannot travel, we have set up a conference style approach where people can access the course through their computer with a web cam and fully participate in the class. They can be seen and can see the others in the room and can hear and speak to the room. This technology allows for distance learning and for people to take part from a wide variety of locations without having to travel. The committee feel this is an important aspect of the youth work being carried out and is an excellent opportunity to help people engage with the Word of God in perhaps a way they have never before. We thank God for this course and opportunity to look afresh at the Word of God.

PRAYER LETTER

The Youth Work Prayer Letter has changed in appearance this year to allow for space for prayer requests from specific congregations as well as prayer points for events happening at denominational level. There is also space for reviews of events and teaching material. The aim of the prayer letter is to keep the members of the congregations up to date with what is happening within the youth work of the denomination. It is vital that our events such as camps and youth assemblies are remembered in prayer and the committee would like to thank you for your prayers for the youth work and the young people. The young people are made aware that they are being prayed for and this is an encouragement to them. It is also good to be able to share with one another about events happening in specific congregations. Please make use of the youth work prayer letter which can be sent to you by post or e mail. If you have any requests for prayer please do not hesitate to get in touch with the Youth Worker, Mrs Laura Mackenzie, who will be glad to include your points for prayer. There is space also in the monthly prayer letter for reviews of events and also of teaching material. If you or your congregation do not already receive the prayer letter please contact the Church Office to be added to the list.

YOUTH WORKER

The committee would like to express its thanks to Mrs Laura Mackenzie for the considerable amount of work that she does for our denomination. Much of that work is reflected in the other parts of this report as much of her time has to go in to the planning and preparation of the Camps and Youth Assemblies. Alongside this Laura continues to do a valuable work with our Drumchapel congregation in the Living Room and it was agreed some years ago that around 1/3 of her time should be used in this way with that proportion of the salary cost met by the congregation. As noted above, Laura compiles the monthly Youth Work Prayer Letter which keeps us informed of some of her current work. The committee is

very grateful to all who remember Laura in prayer and to those who make a financial contribution towards this valuable work.

YOUTH VISIT RETURN TRIP - AFRICA 2015

As you will be aware, the Youth Visit of 2011 was a great opportunity for the youth both of the United Free Church of Scotland and the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa to come together, learn from each other and share in evangelism in various parts of Scotland. The three weeks in August were excellent and much was gained from the experience both for the youth themselves and also the members and friends of the congregations involved. It was planned that a return trip with young people from the UF going out to Southern Africa would take place in 2014. Unfortunately due to various planning aspects this will not be the case but we are working towards a return visit in the summer of 2015. The committee will circulate more information when we can to keep you up to date with what is planned. We would appreciate your continued prayer support for this worthy venture.

URBAN SAINTS AFFILIATION AND TRAINING

As a committee we were made aware of the 'Energize' Bible teaching material available through the Urban Saints organisation (formerly Crusaders). This material is available along with many other aspects including training opportunities, prayer support etc. through becoming affiliated with the work of Urban Saints. The teaching material is excellent and ranges in ages from pre-school to young adults. It can be sourced from the website in a variety of way; you can search for material by theme, Bible passage or character. Once you type what you are looking for into the search box a great amount of material is then available for you to download and use for each age group. We have used some of the teaching material at camps and youth assemblies and have found it to be excellent. The committee is also organising some Youth Work training events with Urban Saints and will send out information soon to those working with children and young people within our congregations.

The committee felt it would be helpful to offer some practical training to those working with children and young people within our congregations and as such ran two courses last year, one on Paediatric First Aid and the other on Food Hygiene. Both courses were run at full capacity. We hope to run these courses again in the future as those who took part found them to be very helpful.

CONCLUSION

God continues to be very faithful to us as we serve Him among the youth of our denomination. We give thanks for all who work so tirelessly within our churches to reach children, young people and their families with the Good News of Jesus Christ in Sunday schools, youth groups, mid-week clubs and uniformed organisations. As a committee we give glory to God for the young people of faith that we have the honour of working with and are especially delighted to see so many coming through the camps and youth assemblies to positions of responsibility both in their congregations and at denominational level. We pray that God will continue to lead and guide us for the future of the youth ministry of the United Free Church and that He will continue to grow young men and women of faith who will live as examples to those around them.

In the name of the Committee

ROBERT O. OWENS
ELIZABETH MCDOWALL
JOHN O. FULTON

Convener
Vice Convener
Secretary