

## REPORT OF THE MINISTRY COMMITTEE

### GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2014

#### INTRODUCTION

As we seek God's will and guidance for the Church and its mission in our day, there are many challenges. We can dwell easily upon the weaknesses we have and the dangers we face. Yet we remember Jesus reassuring words "*...and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.*" Matt 16:18

In the days ahead, the Church and its leadership will continue to change, as will the provision of ministry. Those called to minister will work as full-time, part-time and in a non-stipendiary capacity as Ministers of Word and Sacrament, Ministry Assistants, Pastors and Readers. Congregations may exist as single charges, in team ministry situations, linked congregations or, in effect, as mission stations. Yet all are called to worship, teach, communicate the Gospel and work in building the Kingdom.

We will be required to provide trained ministry in existing situations but acknowledge that some congregations will disappear. However, we also recognise the constant need to begin new work in old patterns and new.

The work of the Ministry Committee is never dull!

#### PATHWAYS

"Pathways to Ministry" can truly be said to be in operation. In the past year enquiries and applications have been received for the positions of Reader, Ministry Assistant and Ministry of Word and Sacrament. The Committee is encouraged that men and women continue to feel called to this responsible work.

In the case of Readers in particular, this is new territory and the Committee continues to liaise with Presbyteries to establish a helpful process of interview, oversight and support.

The Committee continues to assess existing and new courses of study for students, Ministry Assistants and Readers. This is an area that has seen significant change in recent years and is likely to change in the years to come. It is also clear that the ministry challenges facing the Church today are very different from those of twenty years ago. The need to engage in a relevant way with society is great. It requires new understanding and skills of those who will minister and lead congregations in the years to come.

#### STUDENTS

Mr Martin Paterson (Uddingston: Park) is in his third year of theological study at Highland Theological College. Mr Paterson has completed an attachment at Stirling: St. Ninians. Mr Paterson is expected to complete his course of studies during 2014 and has met all the other requirements of the Church. It is anticipated that Mr Paterson will be licensed in the near future. From July 2014 Martin and his wife plan to spend six months in South East Asia with the Overseas Missionary Fellowship to gain wider experience and the Committee wishes them well in this work. Mr Paterson will be available to take up a charge on his return.

Mr Gordon Mackenzie (Lochwinnoch: Calder) is in his third year of theological study at Highland Theological College. He has completed his attachment at Glasgow: Croftfoot and will begin a second attachment at Glasgow: Darnley. Mr Mackenzie is expected to complete his course of studies in 2015.

Mrs Elizabeth Mackay (Candlish Wynd) was accepted as a candidate for the ministry and has completed all the requirements of the Church. It is anticipated that Mrs Mackay will be licensed in the near future.

## **PROBATIONER**

Mr Duncan Whitty (Leith: Ebenezer) completed the denominational requirements as part of his preparation for ministry. Mr Whitty completed an attachment at Bannockburn: Murrayfield and also at Leith: Ebenezer. He was licensed as a Probationer in March.

## **MANUAL OF PRACTICE & PROCEDURE**

As part of the Church's requirements, the students sat an examination on the content of the Manual of Practice and procedure. Over the past two years the Committee has been indebted to the Principal Clerks who have led a number of sessions on the purpose and content of the manual. All four students attained the required level set by the Committee.

## **VOICE TRAINING COURSE**

A voice training event was held at Candlish Wynd on 16<sup>th</sup> January and was a very worthwhile day. Mr Richard Ellis, who is a consultant in this field, led the day which was appreciated by the students and probationer who attended. It is hoped that Mr Ellis will be able to assist in future events for students, Readers and at in-service conferences.

## **SUPPORT OF STUDENTS**

Student support is a priority for the Committee. It was felt that support for the students from an experienced minister, who is not a member of the Committee, could be helpful. The Committee is grateful to Rev. Jim Neil for his willingness to assist in this way.

## **CONFERENCES**

Two Student Conferences were organised in the past year. A residential conference was held at Carronvale in August 2013 and a two-day event in the Church Office in April 2014. The Committee is indebted to the Ministry Development Worker for his organisation of the programme of the conferences. There is a three year programme set which covers a wide range of subjects from preaching and pastoral care to voice training and the Manual of Practice and Procedure. Thanks are also due to the various speakers who lead these sessions. The response from the students and probationer has been very positive.

## **Dr. D MILLER**

Dr. David Miller was accepted by the Committee as a Ministry Assistant. In consultation with the Presbytery of the West it was agreed to appoint Dr. Miller to the Glasgow: Millerston congregation. Dr. Miller's appointment at Millerston began on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

## **PASTORAL SUPPORT**

Some years ago the Committee asked Presbyteries to identify a person within their bounds to be a "pastor of pastors". Presbyteries were able at that time to appoint a minister in each Presbytery to undertake this role. In reviewing the situation, it has become apparent that such pastoral support for ministers is no longer in place. It is unlikely, at present, that ministers will be found to fulfil these positions. The Committee will consult with Presbyteries to explore ways of providing pastoral support for Ministers, Pastors and Ministry Assistants within their bounds.

## **PASTORS, MINISTRY ASSISTANTS AND PART-TIME MINISTERS**

The United Free Church continues to be very well served by its part-time Pastors, Ministry Assistants and Part-time Ministers. The Committee continues to receive regular reports and is encouraged by the faithful work carried out by these men and women. Most have ministered in their present congregations for many years and have provided leadership, preaching and pastoral care of great quality.

**Rev Alastair C Keddie:** The Committee was saddened by the death of Rev Alastair Keddie who was serving as Ministry Assistant at Carnoustie and prior to that served for a short period at Arbroath. Alastair was a Minister of the Congregational Federation who following his retirement served in these two UF congregations where his ministry was greatly appreciated.

## **IN-SERVICE CONFERENCE**

The annual conference for Ministers, Ministry Assistants and Pastors was held at Gartmore House in September 2013 and was greatly appreciated by those who attended. Rev Fergus Buchanan led four stimulating and challenging sessions on Preaching. The Hillpark Secondary School Chaplaincy Team shared a number interesting insights into the changing face of school chaplaincy today.

The 2014 In-Service Conference is booked for 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> October at Gartmore House. The main theme is planned to be on 'Engaging with our Communities'.

## **INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN COLLEGE**

The Committee was saddened to learn of the forthcoming closure of the International Christian College. The United Free Church of Scotland has had a long association with the college as the Bible Training Institute, Glasgow Bible College and ICC. Over the years many ministers, pastors, ministry assistants, youth workers, missionaries and members have benefitted from its spiritual atmosphere, education and training. United Free Church members and ministers have taught in the college which has been held in great affection by many.

The College has contributed significantly to the life and witness of the Church in Scotland and far beyond and its contribution will be sadly missed. This is particularly true for those who are currently studying at ICC and those who would have wished to study courses in preparation for serving as Readers. The Committee is also mindful of those members of staff who have lost their jobs.

## **PENSION AND OTHER SCHEMES**

The Committee has taken advice from our financial advisers, regarding possible changes to the pension and other schemes as a result of the changes to the State Pension Age (SPA).

### **Pension Scheme**

At present, the scheme is based on a retirement age of 65 with employees able to continue contributions beyond that age if they wish. Contributions from the Church cease at age 65. It is proposed to continue the current arrangement for individual contributions but that the Church will continue its contribution until a person reaches their SPA.

### **Group Life Scheme**

The Group Life Scheme is a scheme established to give life assurance cover to those employees who may die in service prior to retirement age. At present, this scheme is set up with a retirement age of 65 but cover will now continue until a person reaches their SPA. It may be possible for employees to continue beyond their SPA but the individual would be responsible for the cost of any additional premium. Further information will be given when we receive this from our Adviser.

### **Group Income Protection Scheme**

The Group Income Protection Scheme enables the Committee to provide for employees who may cease work due to ill-health. This scheme does not have the SPA as standard and only continues to age 65. It is not proposed to make any changes to this scheme at present as, if someone is unfit for work in the long term when they are over 65 years of age, the practice is that they should retire.

### **MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT WORKER**

The Committee continues to be indebted to the Rev Alexander Ritchie for the work he has undertaken as Ministry Development Worker and would seek to extend this post for a further year.

### **THANKS**

Thanks are expressed to the many people who have contributed to the extensive work carried out by the Committee. Thanks especially to Rev. John Fulton and Mrs Helena Jarvis for their considerable and valued work.

ARCHIBALD M FORD  
IAN F R LLOYD  
JOHN O FULTON

Convener  
Vice-convener  
Secretary