

REPORT OF THE YOUTH COMMITTEE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2014

“It is a masterpiece of the devil to make us believe that children cannot understand religion. Would Christ have made a child the standard of faith if He had known that it was not capable of understanding His words?” D L Moody

Teaching children and young people the Word of God, in participation with the Holy Spirit is an important task. Young people understand far more than we sometimes realise and have the ability to grasp big concepts and ideas. It is vitally important that we offer them a full and honest teaching of the Bible and real examples of Christians living their faith, that they may have a foundation built on truth that will prepare them for life. As Charles Spurgeon once said:

“You may speak but a word to a child, and in that child there may be slumbering a noble heart which shall stir the Christian Church in years to come.”

The Youth Committee strive to offer the Word of God to the children and young people of this denomination and also to assist and support our congregations in this vital role. In the last year we have sought to do this in the following ways, to the glory of God.

ONGOING INITIATIVES

Camps 2014

The Committee decided again this year to send out a colour brochure detailing all the events available to children and young people in 2014. This was distributed with the Christmas cards sent out to all young people who have attended an event in the past few years as well as to Sunday School Superintendents and Youth Contacts in each congregation.

The S1-4 Camp was held at the Bible Centre, Inchinnan in February, with 12 young people attending. We looked at Paul's Missionary journeys, focusing on Paul's conversion, his time in jail with Silas in Philippi and his time in Athens. We looked at some of Paul's letters and wrote our own, thinking about what we would include about Jesus that we would want others to know. On Saturday afternoon we visited Glasgow Science Centre completing various challenges. In the evening we enjoyed a 'countries of the world' party night which involved costumes, games and foods from various countries. The young people came from Darnley, Sauchie & Fishcross, St Ninians and Torry UF congregations and were excellent in actively taking part in all aspects of the Camp.

The P5-7 Camp was held at Lendrick Muir in May. The teaching focused on Paul's Dangerous Journey to share the Gospel, helping the young people to learn about Paul's conversion and his passion to share the Good News of Jesus no matter what he experienced. On the Saturday afternoon the young people enjoyed taking part in outdoor activities and then the party night. The children came from Bo'ness, St Ninians, Darnley, Lochwinnoch and Sauchie and Fishcross. The young people entered in to the theme of the weekend and the team had a great time with the children and leaders who came with them. The Committee would like to thank Gordon Mackenzie and Elizabeth McNaughton for cooking for us at this event.

We would ask that closing dates for Camps and Youth Assemblies would be recognised as late bookings for events cause extra unnecessary work for the office staff, the team and the cooks. The Youth Committee would like to thank the teaching team who give up so much of their time with the work of Camps; Jennifer Paterson, Ruth Fulton, Alison

Scott, Rachel Keane, Ross McNaughton and Andrew Brown for teaching at these events and also Gordon Mackenzie and Julie Hubbert for cooking. 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 vitally important. Laura is willing to visit congregations to share about the work of Camps and also to offer help with youth work. If you feel this would be helpful please contact Laura Mackenzie or the Church Office.

Youth Assembly 2013

The Youth Assembly met in Brae, Shetland in September looking at God's covenant with His people and studying the book of Jonah together. The young people worked in groups and Rev Robert Owens led teaching sessions. On the Saturday afternoon there was time set aside for sightseeing and a games night took place on the Saturday evening. On Sunday morning we shared in worship at Cunningsburgh UF Church and then enjoyed lunch together in the hall. The Committee would like to thank the session and members for making us so welcome and providing lunch for us. We then had some more time for sightseeing before the ferry journey home. The young people really enjoyed their time on Shetland and were delighted to visit. The Committee would like to express their thanks to Mr Liam Adamson and Mrs Sarah Adamson for cooking for us and to Mr Jamie Halcrow for driving for us.

Due to having to cancel the March Youth Assembly of 2013 we organised an alternative weekend in November. Unfortunately this proved to be a busy time of year for the young people with part time jobs and other engagements and so we had to cancel that event due to lack of numbers.

Youth Assembly 2014

Our first Youth Assembly of 2014 was held at the Bible Centre, Inchinnan from the 21st-23rd March. Our theme for this event was; 'You Can't Download Spirituality' and we were delighted to have Rev Iain Waddell as our speaker. This event was down in number from our last event with 9 young people attending; however it was worthwhile and enjoyed by those who came along. There is always a lovely atmosphere and great fellowship enjoyed by all who attend Youth Assembly. It is such an encouragement to see young people growing in their faith and asking questions. On the Saturday afternoon we had some free time and enjoyed a medieval banquet on the Saturday evening complete with costumes and games. It was a good weekend and we would like to thank Rev I Waddell for teaching. The Committee is indebted to Mrs Julie Hubbert, Mr Gordon Mackenzie and Mrs Diane Ledingham for cooking for us at this and other events. The second Youth Assembly is planned from the 10th-12th of October at the Bible Centre, Inchinnan where we will continue with our theme for the year.

Summer Mission 2013

The Summer Mission team were at Erskine UF Church: Burntisland last August with 'Space Academy', a week long mission programme focusing on the story of Daniel. The team from the UF Church was working alongside a drama and mime team from America. Together they took the children through the story of Daniel and his friends being taken from their homes to Babylon and looked at some of the events of the life of Daniel and his friends. The mission was a joint initiative between the United Free Church and two local parish churches. It was a great opportunity to share together in teaching the children who came along each day. On the Friday evening the parents were invited to share in a BBQ. This was an excellent evening with a great opportunity to share with the families of the children what we had been looking at through the week. The Committee would like to thank Rev

Alexander Ritchie and the session at Erskine Church for having the team and Gordon Mackenzie, Andrew Brown and Cat McKenzie for all their hard work throughout the week.

Summer Mission 2014

This year in August the team will be going to Bannockburn to host 'Champion's Challenge', a sport based mission programme that shares the Gospel message with children. This will be run in partnership with the Allan Church of Scotland. The team will work through the programme for each day showing the children that Jesus is our coach and it is wise to listen to Him, He is our substitute who took our place, that we can know forgiveness and that He is the champion, the one who rose from the grave. This programme is appropriate with the Commonwealth Games being in Glasgow this year. There is a great opportunity for outreach relating to the games. We also hope to run events in the evenings for teenagers.

Mining God's Word Course

This course, written and delivered by Rev Robert Owens ran successfully over 6 sessions and looked at both Philemon and Philippians. Ten people took up the course and enjoyed learning more and having the opportunity to discuss the word of God together. The sessions focused on looking at the context of the passage, recognising key words, looking at the genre of the book and characters included etc. It was good to have the opportunity to sit together with people of different ages and study the Word of God.

The Saturday Fellowship

The Committee would like to thank the planning group of the Saturday Fellowship; Jennifer Paterson, Martin Paterson, Carol Owen and Alison Strawbridge, for their work in organising the meetings last year. They would also like to thank the speakers and those who supported the young people in this venture. The planning group have decided to end the Saturday Fellowship for the time being to make way for other ventures. Again the Committee would like to thank all who helped at these events by speaking, leading worship and helping with the tea and coffee. We are currently exploring other ideas for the future.

Prayer Letter

Each month Laura compiles the Youth Work Prayer Letter that is sent out with prayer points about the Youth Work of the denomination as well as reviews of events or material. There is space each month for congregations to get in touch with points for prayer. This allows us as a denomination to pray for each other and support the work being carried out among the young people. The Committee would like to thank you for your prayer support. If you do not already receive a copy of the prayer letter either by post or by e mail, please get in touch with the Church Office and they will be happy to send it to you. Also if you have anything we can be praying for, please get in touch with Laura and she will include your event or request in the prayer letter. The young people are made aware that they are being prayed for and are very appreciative.

Easter Scheme 2013 & 2014

This year the Committee decided to support the work of Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) and especially their Fuel for Life campaign. Thank you to everyone who donated to this worthwhile cause. Part of the fundraising for MAF's appeal is taking place on Saturday 7th June as they attempt to break a world record for people on a zip wire. This sponsored event is being held in the grounds of Hamilton College. Some of our members and young people are taking part in this event and hope to raise a great amount for the work of MAF. The money raised will make a real difference in the lives of many people.

The Committee would also like to congratulate all who gave towards the work of Stand by Me for the Easter Scheme in 2013. The fantastic amount of £10,580 was raised last year and has gone towards their work with children in Burma.

NEW INITIATIVES FOR 2014-15

Training Events

The Committee, in conjunction with Urban Saints, organised training events last year. The first was held at the Dunblane event as a workshop entitled 'Help we have no Kids'. This was followed up by an evening in the Church Office where Paula Morton explored various areas of training and the Energise material available through Urban Saints. We also sent out information to congregations about the Live Life 123 campaign. The information evening about this was held at St Ninians UF Church.

After these events a questionnaire was circulated to congregations asking for more information regarding training and how the Committee could help. Various topics were available for people to circle to help us understand the areas where help is needed. As a response to that, a training day is planned for 13th September at Uddingston: Park UF where we will cover topics such as working with children and young people, led by Paula Morton and Charlie Morris of Urban Saints, praying with children and young people led by Elizabeth McDowall, Scripture Union Prayer Coordinator, a question and answer session led by Laura Mackenzie and working with young leaders. We also hope to have a book stall and resources available to help with the youth work of our congregations. Information has been sent to the churches.

Spark! Youth Event

The Committee is excited to introduce plans for their new initiative, Spark! a youth event which will meet four times a year aimed at reaching young people in school years S1-4 and then S5-25 years old. We hope that young people in our congregations in Sunday Schools, youth groups and mid-week organisations would be encouraged to come along and also to bring their non-churched friends. These evenings will include worship, games, a speaker or some form of Bible study and food. The idea is that the younger age would meet together for the first half of the evening and then the older age would join for food so that all the young people would share that time together. The older age group would then stay on for their programme. This event would be open to all young people in the age bracket and it is hoped that leaders from congregations would accompany the young people and make use of the space for leaders to share resources, pray together etc. It is hoped that by coming along to these events the young people would grow in their faith, meet with young people they may not yet know and that Camps and Youth Assemblies would be made more accessible to them. These evenings will be led by our youth worker and a group of volunteer leaders as well as invited speakers. Information on these events has been circulated. The Committee would appreciate your prayers for these events.

Ethiopia Mission Trip 2015

The Committee met with David Stirling of Stand by Me and are excited to be planning a mission trip to their school and children's home in Bekoji, Ethiopia. This trip will take place over two weeks in July 2015 and will involve holiday club style work; teaching Bible stories, singing songs and playing games with the children; alongside that the team will help to build simple water filtration systems to be given to local families so that they have access to cleaner water. In view of the initial level of interest already shown in this visit, it has been agreed that initially this opportunity will be open to anyone who is aged 18 – 30 or will be by July 2015, with consideration given to those older than 30 if places are available.

To be part of the team going out from the United Free Church of Scotland would involve a commitment to training weekends and each person raising the cost of travel which at the moment is estimated to be in the region of £1100-£1200. The application process is as follows: anyone interested is asked to complete an application form and then come for an interview. Once the interviews have taken place, the team will be selected and the training process will begin. The team going out to Ethiopia will be led by David Stirling (of SBM) and Laura and Gordon Mackenzie. There are places for around 20 people on the team. This mission trip will give those involved the opportunity to grow in faith, to see what God is doing in Ethiopia and to serve where needed showing the love of God to children. The Committee would ask for your prayerful support for this exciting venture. More information will be available in Stedfast and will be sent to congregations as we go further in the process.

CONCLUSION

We have much to thank God for and still much work to do to reach young people who are not yet involved within the Youth Work of the denomination. We would thank you for the financial and prayerful support shown over the years. Please continue to pray for the young people that they would grow in their faith and walk with the Lord Jesus Christ and that they would be an example to those around them. As a Committee we give glory to God for the young people of faith that we have the blessing of working with and are especially delighted to see some coming through 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 of Scotland.

In the name of the Committee

ROBERT O. OWENS
ELIZABETH MCDOWALL
JOHN O. FULTON

Convener
Vice Convener
Secretary