

REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2005

Following the changes to the committee structure and the remit given to this committee at the last General Assembly, the work of the committee throughout the year has been to deal with the routine matters of administration. The exception to this has been the committee's consideration of the way forward for the United Free Church with regard to the current situation concerning Ministry and our future viability as a denomination. This situation reflects the complex and far ranging issues presently facing the Church within the denomination and society and therefore any action taken needs to be realistic and appropriate to the life and work of the Church in spreading the gospel today.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2005

Following the deliverance of General Assembly 2004 to carry out an evaluation of the effects of the changes on the court, the committee are pleased to report that the venue and format of General Assembly were generally considered to be have been most suitable. Attendance by commissioners at business sessions had been good, the breaks had been appreciated and commissioners had enjoyed the opportunity to eat together. Attendance at both the opening and closing sessions of Assembly had also been good considering the change of venue for these sessions.

The Committee agreed that a similar venue would be sought and that the format of the General Assembly would require only minor changes. Some of the officials visited various venues and the Committee decided that Glasgow Caledonian University would be the most suitable venue available for the business sessions of General Assembly.

Once again the opening sessions of General Assembly are to be held within a church setting. The committee is most grateful to the Minister and Kirk Session of Sandyford Henderson Parish Church for agreeing to make their sanctuary and halls available to the church for the opening and closing sessions of the General Assembly, and for the annual meeting of the Women's Home and Overseas Committee on Thursday, 9th June.

Details of the arrangements for the 2005 General Assembly are contained in the Outline Order of Business in Appendix 1 of the report. The General Assembly will open on Thursday evening in Sandyford: Henderson Church of Scotland with a Communion Service and the appointment of the new Moderator.

The new committee structure means that there are now eight committees to present reports to General Assembly. These Committees being Administration and Finance, Ministry, Youth, Evangelism, Ecumenical Relations, Christian Education, Church and Society, and Overseas. It was agreed that the previous practice of having committees give full reports, presentations, and interim reports on alternate years was unsatisfactory and confusing. This year it is envisaged that the more concise remits of each committee will enable reports to be both brief and focused and so it was agreed that approximately forty five minutes be allocated for the Assembly to deal with each report. Included within this time will be the verbal report which should last no more than ten minutes, questions, discussion, and the paragraphs of Deliverance. Conveners will therefore be asked to keep to their time when presenting their verbal report. As with last year, these arrangements will be evaluated by the Committee to assess their impact upon General Assembly, allowing the Committee to make any necessary changes required for the effective running of General Assembly.

The closing Praise Rally will be held at Sandyford Henderson, during which the Moderator will give his Address. It is expected that commissioners would be present at this Rally.

The committee are presently looking at similar conference style venues in Perth for the 2006 General Assembly.

COORDINATING FORUM

The coordinating forum met in October 2004 and March 2005. The forum consists of all Conveners, Vice-Conveners, Presbytery Clerks, and the National and Presbytery Development Coordinators. These meetings were held to enable committees to share information on the work they are involved in and any plans they have for the future as well as discussing budgets for the following year. The inclusion of presbytery clerks and coordinators provide an additional insight into what presbyteries have been doing with regard to presbytery development.

STEDFAST

The Committee has been concerned about the viability of Stedfast. The current circulation of Stedfast is 1,433 with the cost of printing each issue amounting to £1,996. It has been five years since the new look magazine was introduced and this seemed an appropriate time to conduct a review. It was agreed to increase the price of the magazine to £1.25 per copy from the February / March issue and to write to Kirk Sessions asking for their views on Stedfast. From these responses it is clear that the general view is that the magazine should continue.

However the committee find it necessary to inform the Assembly that the future viability of the magazine is in doubt. The committee is concerned to be good stewards of our funds and unless there is an increase in the circulation over the coming year the committee may have no alternative but to come to the Assembly of 2006 with a recommendation that the magazine be discontinued. The magazine will continue until the June/ July issue of 2006 but beyond that it will depend on the circulation and proposals will be brought to the 2006 Assembly regarding plans for the future UF publications.

The Committee would like to express its thanks to the editor Rev J. A. M. McFie for his work in producing Stedfast and to all who have contributed articles for publication.

DISCUSSION PAPER

Consideration of the replies to the Discussion Paper regarding the current situation facing the United Free Church has been a major part of the committees work this year. The committee would wish to express its thanks to all the members of Kirk Sessions and Presbyteries who took part in these discussions. A joint meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee and the Ministry Committee met to review the replies and both committees have worked to respond to the various issues raised in the replies. A joint supplementary report from the Administration and Finance and Ministry committees will be given at the General Assembly.

APPEALS COMMISSION

Details are given below of proposed changes in the manner in which particular appeals to the General Assembly concerning Ministers and employees are handled. These proposals have been drawn up by the Principal Clerks and the Church Solicitor. This has come about as a result of ongoing concerns about the ability of the current procedures to handle such appeals efficiently and expeditiously.

The proposed change to Practice and Procedure is such that the Barrier Act would require to be used to implement the change. The proposals contained in the paragraph are such that if approved or as amended would then be transmitted to Presbyteries as an overture under the Barrier Act.

The regulations for the establishment and function of the Commission are as follows:-

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.
- 2 (a) The Appeal Commission shall consist of twelve 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 four 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.

QUINQUENNIAL VISITATION

Visitations were made during this year to the following congregations:

East: Alloa: Moncrieff, Blairlogie, Bo'ness Craigmalen, Sauchie & Fishcross

West: Cumnock: St Andrew's, Dumbarton: Dalreoch, Candlish Wynd, Crofffoot, Milngavie, Stonehouse: Paterson, Wishaw

North: Aberdeen: Torry, Auchterarder, Balbeggie, Dounby, Ferryden, Montrose, Perth

MODERATORIAL VISITATION

The Committee record their appreciation to Rev S J W Matthews and Mrs Matthews for the visits to congregations during the past year and for the encouragement they have brought.

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

West: Dumbarton: Dalreoch, Glasgow: Candlish Wynd, Cathcart, Crofffoot, Darnley, Drumchapel, Knightswood, North Woodside, Partick, Greenock: St Andrew Square, Largs, Lochwinnoch: Calder

North: Aberdeen: Torry, Auchterarder, Balintore, Boddam, Cunningsburgh, Dounby, Ferryden, Montrose, Sandwick, Westray

In the name of the Committee,
GARY J A BARCLAY
GRAHAM G BROWN
JOHN O. FULTON

Convener
Vice-Convener
Secretary

Appendix 1
GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2005
OUTLINE PROGRAMME

THURSDAY 9th June Sandyford Henderson Parish Church

- 11.00 & 2.15 Committee on Women's Home and Overseas.
Meeting of the Prayer Union at close
- 7.00 General Assembly Constituted
Roll of Assembly submitted
Appointment of Moderator of Assembly
Communion Service - Preacher: Retiring Moderator: Rev S J W Matthews
- Communion conducted by Moderator: Rev J G Marshall
- 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 10th Glasgow Caledonian University

- 09.45 Opening Devotions
Open Prayer
Memorial Tributes
Reception of Delegates from other Churches
Report of Assembly Business Committee
Presentation by Administration & Finance Committee
Presentation by Ministry Committee
Responses to Discussion Paper
Presentation by Panel on Doctrine
Presentation by Youth Committee
Presentation by Evangelism Committee
(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 will be at 4.30 p.m.

SATURDAY 11th Glasgow Caledonian University

- 09.45 Opening Devotions
Open Prayer
Representative of Scottish Bible Society
Report by Committee on Women's Home and Overseas
Presentation by Ecumenical Relations Committee
Presentation by Christian Education Committee
Presentation by Church and Society Committee
Presentation by Overseas Committee
Report by General Trustees
Committee on Records and Minute Books
Any business left over from previous diets/ closing items
Opportunity to share what is happening in congregations (?)
Breaks will be: Lunch 12.30 – 1.45, and tea/ coffee from 11 – 11.15 and 3.00 – 3.15

Sandyford Henderson Parish Church

- 6.30 **Praise Service**
Moderator's Address
Closing Items
(Close approx 8.00)