

REPORT OF THE MINISTRY COMMITTEE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2005

INTRODUCTION

These are critical and challenging days for the church in Scotland. It is an exciting, challenging and scary time as we struggle to live and develop our mission, not least because we are trying to preach and live a dynamic gospel in a continually changing context. On the one hand present day society is showing an increasing interest in spirituality, but, on the other hand, it appears to be increasingly indifferent to organised religion and more specifically to the Christian faith.

At the heart of the Committee there is a real desire to ensure that the people who are set aside for ministerial and pastoral roles in the context in which we now live are trained, supported and have the opportunity to develop their skills. The following report will highlight some of the work your committee is involved in.

DISCUSSION PAPER

The Ministry Committee, through the discussion document sent to all Kirk Sessions and Presbyteries, has alerted our people to the fact that we as a denomination are no longer in the position of being able to provide each congregation with its own ordained minister. The paper has also underlined quite powerfully the increasing strains and stresses of those involved in ministry.

These are problems which are not unique to the United Free Church of Scotland and are challenging denominations in Scotland to share information and experiences and to co-operate with one another where possible. This Committee's response to the information received back from congregations can be seen along with relevant deliverance in the joint Supplementary Report with Administration and Finance.

In view of the changing situation the Committee recommends to the Assembly that the Panel on Doctrine be asked to give theological reflection to Ministry and report back to the Assembly of 2006. This would help to affirm or challenge our present practices.

MINISTRY REMIT OF COMMITTEE

There are many forms of ministry in the church, each with its own valuable and distinctive contribution to the well-being of the church. The three main roles for which this committee has responsibility are:

- Ordained Ministers of Word and Sacrament.
- Pastors, who are employees of the committee. The pastor's role is to give a continuity in leading of worship and pastoral care to a congregation under the long-term oversight of an interim moderator. All work in a part-time capacity except for one.
- Readers, who are trained and available for pulpit supply in congregations.

STUDENTS FOR THE ORDAINED MINISTRY

Rev. Amanda Reid has now completed her academic studies and the various requirements of the church. She was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of the West at Millerston U.F. Church on 8 February 2005 and preached as sole nominee in Dalreoch U.F. Church.

Rev. Deidre Lyon, who completed all her requirements last year, but for personal reasons was unable to commit to a call, has informed the committee that she is now in a position to proceed. All vacant congregations have been informed of her availability.

Responses to the discussion paper suggest that members believe that preparation for the Ministry should continue to include both academic and practical elements. The Committee expresses its indebtedness to the Ministers, Kirk Sessions and Congregations who have willingly assisted it in ensuring that Assembly requirements for students have been fulfilled.

There are now no Students for the Ministry. This is a critical situation but one which reflects a trend in various Christian denominations in Scotland. The Committee highlights this as an area which requires prayer throughout the denomination. The Committee also needs to grapple with issues such as those highlighted in its response to the discussion paper in the Supplementary Report

PROPOSALS FOR PROCESSING APPLICATIONS FOR THE MINISTRY

In the past most applicants for the Ministry came to the Committee before any degree courses had been undertaken. They then, under the guidance of our Adviser of Studies, chose courses relevant to Ministry. This allowed, in general, a six-year period of supervised training. Increasingly in recent years more people present themselves to the Committee having already undertaken a degree course in Divinity.

The Committee believes that the selection of Students for Ministry would be significantly enhanced if there was a process in place which allowed both the applicant and the Committee the opportunity to explore the applicant's sense of call and suitability for Ministry.

In the light of these factors, the Committee brings to the Assembly its proposals to bring together previous decisions of the Assembly and to revise selection procedures. These can be seen in the paragraphs of Deliverance.

MINISTERS FROM UCCSA

Since the last Assembly the wheels have been set in motion to implement an exciting and imaginative initiative to bring Ministers from southern Africa to serve in Scotland through the Overseas Partnership Scheme with UCCSA. Together with the Overseas Committee the Ministry Committee has been involved in the practical arrangements for initial visits to take place. However, the Committee's main functions are to issue certificates of eligibility to Ministers applying to come to serve within the United Free Church and to take an interest with respect to implications for 'Ministry' on folk coming from elsewhere.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Rev David Cartledge, the Adviser in Professional Development, is now ready to implement this new scheme to encourage Ministers and Pastors to engage in a process which may give personal time and space for reflection and/or the honing of skills to strengthen Ministry. The programme will begin in September 2005. Each year, on a three yearly cycle, about 8 - 10 Ministers/Pastors will be contacted by the Adviser who will lead them carefully, sensitively and confidentially through the process. At the heart of this scheme is a positive desire to strengthen and enhance ministry.

LONG TERM ILLNESS

The Committee has in the past brought regulations to the General Assembly for dealing with the financial needs of congregations where a Minister has been on sick leave for a period in excess of four weeks (Sick Leave Benefit). The scheme was intended to assist congregations for the period until the Minister became eligible for Statutory Sick Pay.

With the introduction of the Church insurance cover for long-term sick leave the Committee has looked again at the regulations in order to bring the existing practice of the Church into line with the provisions of the cover given by this insurance. This removes any ambiguity for the Congregations and Presbyteries.

PASTORAL SUPPORT FOR MINISTERS AND PASTORS

This scheme is now set up for use by Ministers, Pastors and retired Ministers and Pastors. Three people have been set aside to be approached by Ministers and Pastors if and when there is a particular pastoral need. These three people are Rev Donald McKenzie, Rev Patricia Johnston and Rev Jim Neil. They are available to give support and advice, to assist and be able to seek help from within the Church and beyond where acceptable and appropriate. All this will be done in a confidential manner.

PASTORS

During the year one Pastor has been added to the List of Pastors. Mr Frank Hartley was appointed by the Committee on a one year contract to Bo'ness: Craigmilan U. F. Church. Dr Stewart McIntosh, who has served as Pastor to the Tayport congregation for 1 year, will not be renewing his contract as of May 2005. The Committee takes this opportunity to express its sincere thanks to Dr McIntosh for his much appreciated contribution to the congregation in Tayport.

The Committee has, at the time of writing, eleven Pastors on its list giving invaluable, part-time service to twelve congregations who otherwise would have found themselves in the long term situation of being served by an Interim Moderator alone. They now find themselves with an Interim Moderator and someone in situ on a part-time basis.

CONFERENCES

The Committee has organised and run various conferences over the year. The **September 2004 In Service Conference for Ministers and Pastors** took as its theme: 'The Church in Scotland - Where Next?'. Revs Peter Gardner and Gordon Reid shared honestly the journey they are undertaking with their own congregations in Glasgow and Dunfermline as they seek to be the church in their communities. As always this conference gives an opportunity for supportive and caring fellowship among colleagues.

The plans for the **2005 conference** are beginning with the working title, "Mission-Shaped Church".

A **Study Day for Readers** took place in October 2004 at Scottish Churches House in Dunblane. Topics and speakers included, 'Prayers, Language and Liturgy' by Rev Jim Neil; 'Gospel Preaching' by Rev John Fulton; 'Christian Theology for Today' by Rev Alexander Ritchie and 'The Children's Address Clinic' by Rev Jan Cross.

Also at a planning stage is a further day for the Readers in October. Recent study days with the Readers have proved to be worthwhile in terms of teaching and sharing sessions and providing opportunity for the Committee to be in touch with these lay people who lead worship on Sundays in our congregations. The Committee is indebted to Rev Margery Collin who has been co-opted into both the planning meetings for these days and the leading of the days themselves.

The Committee is communicating with Kirk Sessions to ascertain the need to run another course of training for new Readers as it is now some time since the previous course.

The **Spring 2005 Conference for Students for the Ministry and Pastors** explored the theme of 'Prayer' through a theological look at John chapter 17 and some practical thoughts on preparing and leading prayer in different contexts. The speaker was Rev David Cartledge.

CHURCH RE-EXTENSION CHARGE: AUCHTERARDER

The congregation of Auchterarder was taken on by the Church as a Church Re-extension Charge in 2000. Under the regulations all such projects should be reviewed at the end of the fourth year by the appropriate Presbytery and the Ministry Committee (see part 2 Procedures in the Regulations for Church Re-Extension in General Assembly Report of 1995 pages 38/39).

Due to unforeseen and difficult circumstances this process did not take place. The Committee asks the Assembly for an extension of one year to allow the proper procedures to be undertaken.

On a general note, with regard to the Church Re-extension Projects, the Committee expresses its sadness that, at the moment, with resources of just over £15,000, it is unable to consider any new projects.

CO-OPERATION WITH OTHER CHURCHES

The Committee is represented on the **ACTS group on Core Ministerial Formation**. This gives an opportunity to share together as denominations how we do our training for the Ordained Ministry, looking at ways in which we may co-operate in training issues and in the sharing of relevant information. Another indirect benefit is the identification of those responsible for these roles within each denomination and the opening up of opportunities for informal communication.

As a result of the **Joint Working Group** with the Church of Scotland (More information on this found in the Report by the Ecumenical Relations Committee) where the whole area of Ministry had been discussed it was agreed that it would be helpful if representatives from the Committee met with representatives from the Church of Scotland. The progress of this has been interrupted temporarily due to massive administrative changes within the Church of Scotland. However, interesting discussions have taken place regarding selection and training of candidates for the Ordained Ministry and the issue of Mutual Eligibility.

CONCLUSION

Finally, the Committee expresses its sincere thanks to all those who assist it in fulfilling its remit and carrying out its work on behalf of the General Assembly. A special thanks is conveyed to the office staff who do a huge amount of work on our behalf.

In the name of the Committee

JAN CROSS	Convener
IAN BOA	Vice Convener
JOHN O FULTON	Secretary