

REPORT OF YOUTH COMMITTEE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2005.

“Since we have so great a high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

For we have not a high priest, who is unable to sympathise with our weakness, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and grace to help in the time of need.”

Hebrews 4: 14 - 16

The youth of today carry with them a confidence which would have been hard to find in previous generations. Unfortunately this confidence is largely based upon their own abilities to cope in a conflicting world. As the Church of Jesus Christ we must seek to meet their confidence with the conviction of our faith and endeavour in all our activities to send the clear undiluted message regarding the claims that Christ has upon them and every other individual regardless of age. We must do this fully reliant upon the Mercy, Grace and Help from the one who called us to follow Him, Christ our Saviour and Lord. Your Committee has in this past year sought to do this by its work with the youth in the denomination. We wish to thank you for all your prayer support that has accompanied us as we endeavour to serve God in this manner.

The new Committee structure has allowed us the time to venture into the wider work appertaining to the youth of today both within and out with the Church. This new avenue will we feel allow us to flag up areas of encouragement and areas of concern both to our young people and to the Church in general.

SUPPORT FROM THE COAL FACE

As a Committee we are indebted to those who week by week undertake the work of presenting in our local fellowships the Christian message to the young people whom God has placed in the care of this Denomination. There is a tendency to undervalue the work done by those who in our churches have risen to this calling. This is both folly and a mistake. The Committee would urge that every assistance and encouragement is given by the Kirk Session to those who work tirelessly for the Kingdom in the area of teaching our young people.

The Committee for its part seeks for a closer relationship with the staff of the organisations so that we may work together for the sole purpose of bringing the Gospel to the younger generation of today. If we can assist either leaders or Kirk Sessions in any way please contact us and we will seek to help as we can.

EASTER SCHEME

Last year's Easter Scheme “Amazon Hope” was to help provide Motorised Rickshaws for Peru. The Rev Jim Marshall attended the Big Day Event in May 2004 and received a cheque for £7,183.78. The final figure of the “Easter scheme” was a magnificent £7,971.97 allowing the people from Vine Trust to purchase 6 new rickshaws for the “Amazon Hope” project. Our thanks are due to all who helped in any way with the appeal.

This year the Easter Scheme is going towards the work of Children's Hospice Association in Scotland (CHAS) who seek to help the estimated 12,000 families in Scotland who have a child that will die prematurely. The Association is planning the opening of a new

hospice called "Robyn House" by Balloch in March of 2005. Our appeal will be going to provide equipment for this new home.

CAMPS

The use of dates of birth as setting the borders for attendance at camps has always been a contentious area. The Committee has always allowed some discretion on this matter to allow people to attend the camp that was most suited to them and will continue to do so in the future. If there is any doubt regarding which camp would be best suited to any child in your congregation then please let us know.

8 - 13 Camps

In 2004 the total number attending the four camps run for this group was 101 from 16 Churches. In 2003 there were 112 and 18 Churches attended the same camps. It is disappointing that we have recorded a fall in the number of children attending this year. However when the situation was examined by the Committee it was discovered that part of the reason given was a failure by some congregations to find leaders to accompany the children, lack of financial support by the fellowship and the old problem of clash of dates.

To date in 2005 we have held two 8 -13 camps both for the North Presbytery, one at Badenoch the other in Arbroath. This year we are amalgamating the East and West camps for this age group. The reason for this change is due to a poor response from the fellowships of the West Presbytery for camps. It is the Committee's prayer that in the coming years we will be able to reverse this decision because of the demand for places from the West.

The team this year consists of: - Laura Hubbert, Gordon MacKenzie, Morag Stevens, David Shering, Sarah Meredith, Nathan Owens and Lindsay-Ann Purdie. The theme for this year is " The One Way Ranch ".

The practice of involving the young people in the role of leadership is still an important part of the camps. The Committee feel very strongly regarding this aspect of allowing the mature young people within our own denomination the opportunity to come through a process which we pray will bring them into leadership roles. We are pleased to note that most of the young people in the teams are a product of this process. As a Church we are indebted to these young people who give of their time and talents to serve God in this way.

14 - 16 Camp

Twenty-two young people attended the camp this year. We are grateful for the leadership of Laura Hubbert, Shelagh Coulter, Sarah Meredith and Richard Bisset, who led this programme during the weekend of 12th – 14th November 2004 in Carronvale. This year the camp is being held in the Atholl Centre, Pitlochry, from 11th – 13th November. It will be led by Laura Hubbert, Carla Fleming, Gordon McKenzie and Gavin McKenzie. This is a new team which would greatly value your prayer support.

YOUTH ASSEMBLY

In accordance with the decision of the 2004 General Assembly there were two Assemblies held in 2004. The first was in Carronvale House, Larbet in February 2004 which was mentioned in last year's report.

Youth Assembly 2 took place in Badenoch, Aviemore in September. Twenty young people attended from 10 churches. This was a good response which was pleasing to the Committee. The young people were addressed by the Rev. Colin Brown who took them through the discussion paper that had been presented to the General Assembly in June regarding the future for the United Free Church. This proved very enlightening to Mr Brown who was pleased at the responses that he was given regarding the matters put forward for discussion. The rest of the time was spent exploring the various aspects of Bible Study. Our thanks are due to the Rev. C C Brown for his time and for the way he presented the topic. We were also indebted to the Mrs Alison Thain and Mrs Judy Campbell (Lossiemouth Catering Company) for their excellent provision of bodily sustenance.

In March 2005 the Youth Assembly decided to look at the events in scripture where God chose to break through to mankind with a special emphasis being placed upon "Communion" and its relevance for Christians. There will be a presentation given by Mr M Fieldman on the Passover meal. Rev. A D Scrimgeour will seek to answer the question of "What is Presbyterianism and why do we celebrate Communion in the manner that we do". The rest of the time will be spent looking at 1st Corinthians chapters 10 & 11 and asking the questions: 'What is the background to this scripture?' 'What did it mean for those in Corinth when they first read it?' and 'What does it mean for us today?' Acts 2:42 will also be studied and discussed.

The second Youth Assembly will be held in the Laggonlia Centre, Kincaig. This Assembly will look at matters that have arisen from the deliberations of General Assembly 2005. Holding two Youth Assemblies per year allows us to run the Spring Assembly as a teaching event with the Autumn Assembly concentrating upon the deliberations of the General Assembly.

SUMMER MISSION

In 2004 two Missions were undertaken. The Leaders at the Burntisland Mission were Laura Hubbert, Sarah Meredith, Gordon MacKenzie, Mark Nelson, Nathan Owens (our own Banana Man) and Ian Robertson. The congregation made us feel very welcome. We were especially grateful to Mr. & Mrs. Blanchard (Ron and Marabel) who gave up their house so that the team could have not only beds to sleep in but a base from which to work. The outcome of the mission was that several new children started Sunday School in its new session. We give God the praise and the glory for this fact. The second mission took place in the Sauchie & Fishcross Congregation in October. The leaders were Laura Hubbert, Carla Fleming, Fiona Keane and Sarah Meredith. This Mission was well received by the fellowship at Sauchie & Fishcross and our thanks are due to the Rev G G Brown and his wife, Christine, for all the help and feeding that the team enjoyed.

This year the plan is to hold a Summer Mission in Lochwinnoch with a larger team of our own young people as well as returning to Sauchie & Fishcross in the Autumn. Again we are encouraged that we have young people within the denomination who have a desire to share the gospel. We are also indebted to them for giving the time for this important task

YOUTH LEADERS TRAINING

Following on from the successful event of last year a training day was held for the North Presbytery on Saturday 4th September 2004. Nine leaders attended. Mr. J Skinner gave an update regarding The Child Protection laws and regulations Laura Hubbert spoke regarding teenage work. Ian Robertson, Sarah Meredith and Gordon MacKenzie looked at Sunday School years. The East and West Presbyteries will be holding a training event in the late spring. In the interest of keeping cost to a minimum the Committee felt that they would like to explore the possibility of holding the training days in our own Church buildings. We are glad to report that this will now be the case with St. Ninians and Lossiemouth being the preferred venues.

YOUTH WORKER

A great debt is owed by this denomination to Miss Laura Hubbert for the manner in which she has dedicated herself to the work with the young people both of our denomination and outwith. Laura brings her own talents and enthusiasm to this task which has allowed some of the oldies to move on to other areas of concern. She is involved in the running of all camps, Youth Assemblies and Summer Mission work. She is also working in the "Living Room" project along with the Rev R O Owens in Drumchapel four afternoons per week and one day at our Lochwinnoch Fellowship with the young people of the area. At present due to financial restraints Laura is employed by the Committee three days per week. The remainder of her salary is covered by the contributions from Drumchapel and Lochwinnoch for her work in these fellowships. Laura has also spoken at a number of Women's Associations and taken pulpit supply when asked. We commend her to the church in general for prayer support as she seeks to serve this church and her Lord in the work that she does.

YOUTH WORKER'S COMMENTS

Laura writes:

"Do not let anyone look down on you because you are young, but be an example for the believers, in your speech, your conduct, your love, faith and purity".

1 Timothy 4:12.

The above reading, taken from Paul's first letter to Timothy has been the umbrella for the youth work carried out in the past year. It is so important that our young people learn to live their lives in accordance with God's will and teaching. Through the various camps and Youth Assemblies, we have sought to teach the young people the importance of the Bible, of living completely for God and sharing their faith with those they come into contact with.

Our Youth Assembly in the north in September focused on the importance of Bible study, prayer and worship. The young people were challenged to spend a fitting proportion of their time in Bible study and prayer, seeking to know God in a deeper way, in preparation then to share Him with others. The second Youth Assembly, in March focused again on in-depth Bible study, looking specifically at the topic of Communion and what the sacrament would mean to the young people. We looked at the idea of God breaking through into our lives at various stages of our development and at biblical examples of this in the lives of others throughout history. Teaching weekends like these are very important to the young people as it allows them to come together from their various churches, realising that they are not alone.

In light of this, we have started the Connect, on-line Bible study. This provides an opportunity for the young people wherever they are to log on to their computers and work on the same Bible study as the rest of the teenagers of the United Free Church of Scotland. It is a safe private site, which the young people are invited on to. We are currently looking at the book of James. It is good to be able to share with the young people and hear their

experiences and thoughts of the biblical passages we are studying together. It allows me to make a connection with them without having to be in the same part of the country.

The younger age camps and the 14-16 camp also fell under the umbrella of the teaching topic from 1 Timothy. We looked at standing up for God and facing ridicule and persecution for being a Christian at the 8-13 camp. The children were encouraged to take a stand for God, knowing that he is aware of when things are difficult for them. The 14-16 camp looked at the topic of eternity and heaven. They were challenged through a novel entitled, *The Shock of Your Life*, by Adrian Holloway, to look at this topic and decide where they stand at the moment in their walk of faith.

The various aspects of the youth work currently being carried out are part of a bigger vision. A vision that produces young people whom will undeniably stand for God; Children and teenagers who belong to their home churches and communities but will go wherever they are led; young people who live with holiness and integrity as the norm; teenagers who, *"advertisers cannot mould and Hollywood cannot hold"*. We pray for young people who boast that *"To live is Christ and to die is gain"*. God is doing a great work within the young people of the United Free Church. The times spent with them at camps and Youth Assemblies have been very special. Our young people have a lot to say, and must be encouraged. They are so important. God is moving among them. There are so many pressures on young people in society today they need guidance, teaching and encouragement. They need people to get alongside them, to walk with them on their journeys of faith. It is such a privilege to be allowed to get to know the children and young people and to be able to share God's love with them. I am very blessed in my position as youth worker. It is wonderful to be able to work knowing that God is sovereign, that He is in control of the work with the young people. Our vision for the youth work is God's vision. The work is His; the young people are His. We must seek His will for the coming years. We must pray for our young people and those who work with them in their various guises. God knows what our young people need; our tomorrow is His today. This past year has been a challenging, exciting year. I pray that God will continue to bless and to guide the work we carry out, as we seek to fulfil His vision for the young people of the United Free Church of Scotland.

PRAYER SUPPORT

Again we are delighted with the response of those fellowships who have asked to be prayer partners with us in this work. If the work does not have the covering of prayer then it is left wide open to attack from Satan. Thank you all for your faithful prayer support in this past year. As a Committee we are indebted to Laura for the compiling of the monthly prayer letter.

FINANCE

Again this year we have had to increase the cost of the camps in an attempt to keep abreast of the rising cost of accommodation. We are grateful for the support that the local fellowships give their children which makes it possible for them to attend. The Committee would urge that Kirk Sessions make every effort to make sure that every child or young person who wishes to attend a camp is given as much support as possible to do so. This could be financial support or transport.

The response to all the congregations of the denomination to become partners with us in the youth work has been of great encouragement to the Youth Committee. Fourteen of our congregations responded positively to the Committee's letter seeking financial support for the youth work. The amount promised to date is £3,900 per annum over the next three years and "one off" donations amounting to £1,200. Several other congregations have

indicated that they still had to consider the matter. We look forward to hearing from them. We are also grateful for the generous contribution to our budget from the Target Allocation.

The Committee is well aware of the financial constraints that all our fellowships are under and do regularly undertake a review of its running costs. However, if the structure of the youth work in all its aspects is going to continue to grow then we do need help from the local fellowships.

NEW VENTURES

Web Links

The on-line Bible Study is now up and running with an interest being shown by many of our young people to become involved in this project. This is exciting new development which requires the prayer support of every fellowship in the denomination.

Youth Link Page

Now available from the main Web Site of the U. F. Church is a link for youth work which seeks to keep everybody up-to-date with what is going on for our young people. There is also material that can be downloaded for use in our Sunday Schools and Youth Groups

Religious Observance Review

The Rev A Ritchie has undertaken to keep the Committee abreast of the developments within the group of the Scottish Executive. There is a copy of the review group's comments with a summary from Rev A Ritchie to be found in appendix 1 of this report.

Working Together

Mr R Bingham agreed to review a report from the Scottish Executive entitled "Respect and Responsibility Strategy and Action Planning for Improved Sexual Health". This was done in consultation with the Church and Society Committee.

These new ventures are not designed just to keep the Committee busy. It is our intention as a Committee that we will bring to the attention of the Church at large any areas of concern regarding our youth that require the voice of the Church to be heard.

CONCLUSION

This has been a year of transition as we moved from one Committee structure to another. It has also been a year of encouragement and seeing more of our own young people involved in a leadership capacity within the work of God is not just a ray of hope for the future, it is a blessing from God to this Denomination and an inspiration to continue to press forward for the Glory of God and the salvation of our young people. Let us all give God the praise for His goodness to us and seek by our prayers to support every effort of those who seek to serve God by telling our children about the greatness of our God.

We are extremely grateful to the General Secretary, General Treasurer and Mrs. H. Jarvis for all their help, advice and encouragement throughout the year.

In the name of the Committee

IAN N ROBERTSON

ELIZABETH McNAUGHTON

JOHN O FULTON

Convener

Vice-Convener

Secretary