

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH REPORT

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2009

“As part of the Church of Jesus Christ we must seek to meet the confidence of youth 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.”

As a Committee we have sought to embrace the above statement which we believe is integral to the work for which we have been given oversight. We do this fully aware of the fact that the work done with the young people of the denomination is only able to be undertaken because of the solid foundation of the faithful prayers from the fellowships of the Denomination.

THE LOCAL CHURCH

As a committee we recognise the fact that we would be unable to do anything without the dedication of the teaching staff who week by week engage the young people of their fellowship and surrounding area with the good news of Jesus Christ. The committee is indebted to congregations throughout the denomination for their diligence in this sometimes difficult work.

The Committee recognises the fact that youth work of any description is by nature subject to fluctuations and Church youth work is not immune from this. We acknowledge the fact highlighted by the annual returns that in the local Church there is a decline in the youth work across the denomination and this is something we share with all other denominations. While we are forced to recognise this point, the committee is determined to provide a structure of activities that should be helpful to the local church if they care to avail themselves of this opportunity.

The committee is gladdened by the fact that all three Presbyteries have taken up the invitation to look at the youth work within their boundaries and we look forward to working more closely together in the years to come.

The committee is there to help in any way we can in local situations and will endeavour to respond to any invitation it receives for advice or help in these difficult times. The problem regarding dissemination of information at local level is still a reality despite our best efforts to eradicate it over the years; therefore once again we ask, that every church does its utmost to ensure that the names and addresses of Youth Contacts etc. are correct and that the information is reaching relevant people in the congregation.

CAMPS

Laura Mackenzie and the team have been encouraged by the way in which the young people have responded to the camps' programme over the past year. As already noted in this report, numbers at camps reflect the state of the youth work in local congregations. Never-the-less those who attended the camps enjoyed the experience of mixing with other young people from across the denomination.

Numbers at the 8 - 13 camps have shown a slight increase of 3 over the previous year. Unfortunately the 14 -16 camp received a very poor response in applications for the

planned event which regrettably led to it having to be cancelled. However, the Youth Assembly numbers are showing a rise of 15 over last year's attendance.

These developments place a new set of challenges before us. We have been given the privilege of working with young people of all ages who have to live in a world that is far removed from the world of our early years. The committee invites the Denomination to continue to take these young people to their hearts and hedge them about with prayer, love and friendship.

Numbers for camps in 2008: -

1. (2) 8 - 13 camps 42 attended (an increase of 3 from 2007) from 12 Churches
2. (2) Youth Assembly 53 attended (an increase of 15 from 2007) from 16 Churches
3. (0) 14 - 16 camp there was no camp this year.

The overall cost to the committee was £911.77

A new guide is being produced regarding the camps and Youth Assemblies and we hope that it will be widely read by the denomination leaders and young people.

As stated in last years report the cost of camps was reviewed. The result is that for 2009 we have set the cost of camps at £55. We would ask that the local congregation continue to help by subsidising the cost for their young people who are attending camps. All camps are self-catered and we are very grateful to the small band of workers who provide such great sustenance both for the leaders and the young people.

The committee does realise that travel to camps which are at a distance from the local church can be an issue, but there are many different factors that have to be taken into account prior to a venue being chosen. The committee does all that it can to keep travel down to a minimum and we respectfully ask for your co-operation in this matter.

A wide searching review is being undertaken regarding the manner of and work undertaken at camps. It may be that what has undoubtedly worked in past years needs to be changed to meet the present day reality of low attendance at the local level. Please be assured that the committee is committed to continue to meet the needs of the local fellowship and the needs of the young people within the denomination.

We are indebted to Laura and her teams of leaders for their dedication, energy and sacrifice to undertake this work for God and us. The work of the camps we believe is being blessed by God and is proving to be a fertile ground of growth for our young people. We would urge every fellowship to make the utmost effort to encourage any young people in their care to come along and join in the fun and fellowship that is camp.

YOUTH WORKER

The continuing commitment of Laura Mackenzie as our Youth Worker is a crucial part of the work of the denomination. Our Drumchapel congregation still employs Laura for two days of the week in the "Living Room". The congregation reimburses the Youth Committee for the hours that Laura is employed on this project. We commend her to the church in general for prayer support as she seeks to serve the church and the Lord in all that she does.

Over the past year Laura has spoken at various events at local, Presbytery & Denominational level. She has also written widely in the Stedfast which has been helpful in keeping the denomination informed. The leadership of both Gordon and Laura was much appreciated by all concerned on the southern Africa team and those who watched and

prayed at home. We are indebted to both of them for the manner in which they prepared and led the team in what can only be called a very successful mission.

PRAYER SUPPORT

We are delighted with the response of those fellowships who have asked to be prayer partners with us in the work. The Team leaders at camp are greatly heartened to know the work which they undertake for God is supported by the covering of prayer provided by the denomination. Thank you all for your faithful prayer support in this past year. We are, as a committee, indebted to Laura for compiling the monthly prayer letter. You can be put on the mailing list for the Prayer letter if you contact the office.

PRAYER & BIBLE STUDY

After conversation between our young people, a request was made to ask if it would be possible for the young folk to organise and run a Prayer & Bible Study event for the denomination. We embraced the idea and the result is that two presbyteries have met for Prayer & Bible Study under this initiative and a similar event is being planned in the North Presbytery. Further meetings are at planning stages. This initiative from the young people has resulted in over 120 people meeting for a time of Bible Study and of Prayer. We are very grateful for those who have led these events and the fellowships who have hosted them. (Venues were Church Office, Gorebridge with plans for a meeting in Auchterarder) and to those who undertook the Bible Studies, Rev David Cartledge and Rev Martin Keane. If you missed the event in your Presbytery then please be assured that there will be others for you to attend.

EASTER SCHEME

Last year the Easter Scheme was for the work that the young people undertook on their visit to two areas in Southern Africa. The tremendous amount of £22,433 was raised by the young people and the denomination for this appeal. We want to express our sincere gratitude to all who contributed in any way.

This year we have chosen “Bibles & Bandages for Brazil”, a Scottish Bible Society project to mark their 200th Anniversary. Their aim is to adapt a bus to bring much needed medical aid and information to some of the poorest people in Brazil. In tandem with the medical aid the spiritual needs of these people is also being addressed by the distribution of free Bibles.

THE SOUTHERN AFRICA VENTURE

The house is finished and the furnishings are in place-along with the children at the orphanage in Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa. The “Lephoi Centre” in Botswana has received the ‘Sensory Play Park,’ plus other items that had been requested to help with their work. These are the facts that hide a great event both in lives in Africa but also in the lives of the team who left these shores in God’s name and in the name of the denomination.

All of the denomination has been given the opportunity to meet the team and to hear their story. This was done in conjunction with the Presbyteries and each of them have received a visit when the team shared their experiences and expressed their thanks for the financial support of the denomination and the prayer support that was so evident to them when they were in Africa. The team has also sought to tell their stories by articles in the Steadfast and by visits to local congregations.

The change in the lives of the people who went out is very noticeable. Four of the young men have enrolled in the Highland Theological College with a view of seeking God's guidance in their lives regarding how they can best serve God and His people.

A comment from one of the team, which stood out amongst the many the team shared with us, came in response to the question "why did you want to go to Africa." His reply was "to meet a woman," and after a short but effective pause he added, "who lived her life in complete faith and daily trust in God". Certainly the team was greatly affected by the faith and prayer life of those they worked alongside; oh that it was the same here in Scotland!

The second phase of the venture is in the early planning stages and that is to bring a group from southern Africa to Scotland to be involved with projects here with local congregations. This is going to take a considerable amount of planning and it is hoped that by 2011 it may be achieved. And so "*another exciting journey filled with uncertainty and opportunity*" is being undertaken. The planning group would be grateful for your prayer support at this time.

SUPPORTING COMMITMENT

The Committee has over the years sought to support where possible commitment shown by the young people of the denomination in deepening their faith and their obedience to God's claim on their lives. We have done this by supplying prayer, material, time and financial support.

Over and above the normal prayer request and help required by individuals this year we have supported the three individuals Lewis Campbell (Lossiemouth), Gordon Mackenzie (Lochwinnoch) and Allan Brown (Drumchapel) who are involved in study with the Highland Theological College but also Mark Nelson also from Drumchapel who is studying at the faith Mission College. Each received £200 from the Committee upon the registration and acceptance by the college of their chose course to help with the purchase of books. The Committee is committed to continue supporting the young people of the Denomination in practical ways as they continue to seek God's ways in their life. We ask also for your prayer support.

CONCLUSION

This year, a major part of the work with which the committee has been involved has been the trip to southern Africa. The Prayer & Bible Study has also been a very thrilling and exciting venture to watch develop. The work undertaken at camps and Youth Assemblies has been challenging but very rewarding for the Kingdom, we believe, as have the other events undertaken under the umbrella of this committee. Yes, the work has changed, and must constantly change if, as a committee and denomination, we are going to meet the spiritual needs of all our young people and be true to the guidance of God. The message is the constant, but the presentation has to change over the years.

However, we must rejoice in the fact that we have people who are aware of the needs of our young people both at local and denominational levels and are more than competent in undertaking this challenge on our behalf. We pray God's guidance and blessing upon them. It is exciting and very rewarding to see the hand of God working in so many young lives. Our prayer is that we will always be ready to meet the challenges of our young people as they seek to grow in their faith and to be faithful to the tasks that God has given us for them. We invite you to join in this prayer.

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
ROBERT O. OWENS
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Convener
Vice-Convener
Secretary