

REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2010

In these challenging times it is easy to see the task as being too great and our resources too small. In assessing the progress of a year our focus is on problems more than blessings. When looking ahead it is possible that the darkness of uncertainty grows into despondency.

What an encouragement it is to us that the Word of God is ever there to point us to God. The beginning of Psalm 27 refreshes the soul "The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear?" Its end strengthens and emboldens "I am confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord."

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2010

The outline Order of Business in Appendix 1 details the arrangements for the 2010 General Assembly. The General Assembly will meet in the Salutation Hotel, Perth from Wednesday 9th to Friday 11th June. The annual meetings of the Women's Home and Overseas Committee and all Business Sessions and the Opening and Closing Services of the General Assembly will take place in the Salutation Hotel. The culmination of the General Assembly will be the Closing Service during which the Moderator will give his address.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2011

In accordance with the decision of the 2008 General Assembly that future meetings of the General Assembly be held in a central location, the committee recommends that the General Assembly 2011 be held in the Salutation Hotel, Perth from Wednesday 1st to Friday 3rd June. It is to be noted that this is a week earlier than would be normal as the Salutation Hotel had a previous booking for the usual week. The committee considered the matter fully and found the change of date to be the best alternative.

STEDFAST

The Stedfast Editorial Team has continued its work of producing a denominational magazine that seeks to aid the work and witness of the United Free Church of Scotland. The group has been encouraged by the quality of articles submitted by contributors from within the denomination and beyond. It is the desire of the group to provide material from home and overseas that informs and challenges the reader. There is space available in every issue for local reports and information and it is hoped that congregations will submit more articles.

The committee advertised the position of Stedfast Secretary and was pleased to receive a number of applications. It is hoped that a suitable candidate will be in position in the near future. Once again the committee is indebted to the General Secretary for his considerable contribution to the production of the magazine.

The committee is equally thankful to the Stone Agency for its work and expertise in the design of Stedfast.

PRAYER UNION

The Prayer Union continues to support the Church and its work and witness through the Prayer and Study Guide. It is used by many people within the United Free Church and beyond as an aid to meditation and prayer. The Prayer Union Committee led ably by its convenor Mrs Wemyss Billows are to be commended on the considerable work involved in the production of the Guide. The committee recognises that this prayerful work has been carried out in what has been a very difficult year for Mrs Billows.

CHILD PROTECTION

As reported to the General Assembly 2009 a review of Child Protection procedures was carried out and new Pocket Cards for leaders produced. Presbyteries were requested to hold Child Protection Seminars to update Congregational Child Protection Coordinators on recent developments, promote regular training of youth leaders and the use of the new Pocket Cards. The committee has been informed that such seminars have now been held in the Presbyteries of the East and West. A report from the North is awaited. The committee would like to thank the Child Protection Team for their work in leading the seminars.

CHURCH HYMNARY TRUST

The United Free Church of Scotland has been a member of the Church Hymnary Trust for many years and during that time has shared with other Churches in the preparation of several editions of the Church Hymnary. The number of Churches involved in the Trust has gradually declined and for Church Hymnary 4 only the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church of Scotland were involved. It is now considered unlikely there will be another edition of the Church Hymnary. This matter has been considered by the Administration and Finance Committee and it is their recommendation that the United Free Church of Scotland should withdraw from the Church Hymnary Trust. The committee is very grateful to Mrs. Rita Jackson who has served faithfully as our representative on the Church Hymnary Trust. The report of the Church Hymnary Trust for 2009 can be found as appendix 2 to this report.

QUINQUENNIAL VISITATION

During the year the following quinquennial visitations have been carried out:

East: Alloa: Moncrieff, Bo'ness: Craigmalen, Leith: Ebenezer, Menstrie, Sauchie & Fishcross

West: Bellshill: St Andrew's, Chryston, Cumnock: St Andrew's; Glasgow: Candlish: Wynd, Croftfoot; Kilmaurs: Maxwell & Kilmarnock, Lochwinnoch: Calder

North: Aberdeen: Northfield, Lossiemouth

MODERATORIAL VISITATION

Thanks are expressed to the Moderator, Rev M C Keane and Mrs Keane for their visits to congregations during the past year and for the encouragement they have brought.

East: Burntisland: Erskine, Dysart, Corstorphine, St Ninians

West: Bellshil: St Andrews, Glasgow: Darnley, Knightswood, Langside & Shawlands, Millerston, Shieldhall & Drumoyne, Kilmaurs: Maxwell and Kilmarnock, Milngavie, Uddingston: Park

North: .Aberdeen: Northfield, Arbroath, Carnoustie, Lossiemouth, Newport: Trinity, Tayport, Cunningsbirgh, Sandwick, Dounby, Westray

Congregations are reminded that, any requests for visits by the Moderator should be made through the Church Office.

CHURCH OFFICE

The committee continues the regular monitoring and maintenance of the Church Office. A major burst to the main water pipe into the offices necessitated replacement of the pipe through the office car park. It was considered appropriate to re-surface the whole area of the car park at this time.

APPEAL COMMISSION

The committee recommend that the following members be elected to serve on the Appeal Commission for the coming year. Rev A M Ford (Chairman), Rev I F R Lloyd (Vice Chairman), Rev M C Keane, Rev G G Brown, Rev I A Boa, Mr W Cairns, Dr I Smith, Miss J Doran, Rev A D Scrimgeour, Rev C C Brown, Rev D Lyon, Mr A Scott, Miss L Mathieson, Rev G B Bruce, Rev A Ritchie, Miss J Ramsay, Mr G H McRobb, Mr I Shering,

PANEL ON DOCTRINE

The committee recommend that the following members be elected to serve on the Panel on Doctrine for the coming year: Revs: I.F.R Lloyd (Convenor), D. Cartledge, J.O. Fulton, A.D. Scrimgeour, Messers: J.F.Henderson, A.Scott, and the Principal Clerks.

CHURCH OFFICE ARRANGEMENTS

The committee was given legal advice which recommended that members of the office staff should have signed contracts of employment. Contracts were prepared and meetings were held individually with the General Secretary, Secretary and Accountant to discuss their contracts and job descriptions. These have been agreed and signed. An Office Handbook was also prepared and is now in use.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

A draft Health and Safety policy for congregations has been prepared and has been issued to congregations with additional material to help in addressing the matter. These include risk assessments for health and safety, fire and environmental health. Over the years congregations have addressed various aspects of health and safety issues and it is hoped that the document will enable each congregation to establish a policy which is comprehensive. The committee would like to thank Mr Bill Smith for his assistance.

MANUAL OF PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE

The Manual of Practice and Procedure is now available on the United Free Church website.

THANKS

The committee would like to record its grateful thanks to all members and adherents of the United Free Church who assist the work and witness of the Church. Many people give sacrificially of their time and this is appreciated. The committee would record its thanks to the General Secretary, Rev John Fulton, Mrs. Helena Jarvis and Rev. Peter Dick for their faithful work and support.

Charity Legislation and 'OSCR' (Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator)

There has been no change in Charity Legislation but accounting regulations which underpin detailed application of the law are constantly under review and amendment.

Following submission to OSCR of Monitoring Returns and Reports for 2008 a number of congregations had their returns and accounts returned as unacceptable with a request to revise, redo, and be re-examined by the independent examiner. It was not clear as to the reasons for rejection! Submission by other congregations was accepted with the proviso a similar submission in 2009 may not be accepted.

A revised 'Model' of the Report and Financial Statements was issued, after consultation with OSCR, in December 2009 to all treasurers and other office bearers and Presbyteries with the exhortation to prepare their submission for 2009 on the format as now recommended! Without any reflection on the commitment and faithfulness of treasurers to 'do what is legally required' it was agreed by the A&F sub-committee on finance (now having a representative appointed by the committee from each presbytery) **that congregations should NOT submit their Monitoring returns and accounts for 2009 until they had been 'overseen' by the Presbytery's finance committee with the guidance and advice of their representative on the sub-committee finance.**

Congregational Treasurers

We acknowledge the additional work and commitment which has been required from all congregational treasurers in recent years to fulfil and satisfy the requirements of Charity Law and of OSCR who oversee it. As OSCR set their 'own house in order' they have become more intrusive and demanding and we recognise this causes frustration and disappointment particularly to treasurers.

It is essential we fulfil the law and we commend and thank treasurers and responsible committees for their patience. The decision of the Administration & Finance sub-committee Finance (see above paragraph) to get alongside treasurers to assist in their task in the submission of reports and returns for 2009 is to assure them they are 'not alone' and presbyteries and sub-committee finance desire to support them and to tackle OSCR on any issues raised by them.

Audit of Church Accounts

Alexander Sloan, Chartered Accountants, who are the Auditors appointed by General Assembly have carried out their audit which has involved a detailed review of our systems and the format of the Denominational Report and Accounts. It is recommended that this firm be reappointed for the 2010 audit.

Assessment of the Denomination and Congregations' Financial Position

If 'finance' was the only or main issue for our denomination one could feel 2009 was a 'good' year with a significant increase in liquid unrestricted funds, increase in target income and a narrowing in the shortfall between income and core costs. The fact is, this increase has come, mainly, by the closure of congregations and the distribution of their funds and disposal of their property. Looking to 2010, a generous legacy has further increased cash resources. Dysart Congregation has made a decision to close and decided in principle how funds, on disposal of property, will be distributed. In accordance with Charity law these must substantially be applied within the Denomination.

From a Congregational point of view there is a very mixed picture! Many, with no 'regular' ministry and pastoral care have very limited resources and are dependent on funds from sale of manses, with Presbytery approval. Others are better resourced and seek part time ministry, often supported by manse funds and/or income from let property. A few have substantial resources and can afford full time ministry. A number (reducing) have full time ministry but are constantly challenged to maintain that ministry and also properly maintain property.

Overall it is increasingly difficult for all Congregations to support and fund the 'cost' of the Denomination and yet without its collective resources of experience, talent, commitment and even finance drawn from the whole membership, most individual congregations could not continue!

In view of these facts we cannot be comforted or be complacent in our apparent wealth. Quite the reverse!

'Our Lord writes to the Laodicean Church in 'blunt terms' – 'I know your deeds that you are neither hot nor cold – You say, "I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing." But you do not realise that you are....naked!'" Rev 3:14ff

Can we accept it may be true of 'us'? May we prefer to believe 'we' are the Philadelphian Church?

"I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word, you have not denied my name." Rev 3:7ff

**In the first church Jesus stands at the door and knocks, waiting to be invited in!
In the second He is the head and cornerstone and the door of opportunity is wide open!**

Which is it? Surely, "the Joy of the Lord is our Strength and our Song!"

In the name of the Committee,
ARCHIBALD M FORD
JAMES G MARSHALL
JOHN O. FULTON

Convener
Vice-Convener
Secretary

Appendix 1

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2010
OUTLINE PROGRAMME
SALUTATION HOTEL, PERTH**

WEDNESDAY 9th June

11.00 & 2.15 Committee on Women's Home and Overseas.

7.00 Opening of General Assembly

THURSDAY 10th

09.45 Opening Devotions
Memorial Tributes
Reception of Delegates from other Churches
Report of Assembly Business Committee
Presentation by Ecumenical Relations Committee
Report of Panel on Doctrine
Presentation by Ministry Committee
Presentation by Overseas Committee

Breaks will be: Lunch 12.30 – 1.45, Tea 4.30 – 6.00 (Meal at 5 p.m.) 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.

FRIDAY 11th

09.45 Opening Devotions
Representative of Scottish Bible Society
Report by Committee on Women's Home and Overseas
Presentation by Church & Society Committee
Presentation by Youth Committee
Presentation by Christian Education & Evangelism Committee
Presentation by Administration & Finance Committee

Report by General Trustees
Committee on Records and Minute Books
Any business left over from previous diets/ closing items

Breaks will be: Lunch 12.30 – 1.45, Tea 4.30 – 7.00 (Meal at 5 p.m.) and tea/ coffee from 11 – 11.15 and 3.00 – 3.15

7.00 **Closing Service**
Including Moderator's Address