

REPORT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE & MISSION COMMITTEE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2023

INTRODUCTION (CLAM)

"The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." - Acts 17:31-32 (ESV).

The remit of the Christian Life & Mission Committee is broad, but at its core its purpose is clear - to resource our people, churches, presbyteries and denomination and equip them to live as Christians who have a God-given mission, namely to "proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." - 1 Peter 2:9. Why? So that as many people as possible in our circles of influence may come to know of the risen Lord Jesus Christ, and come to know Him as Saviour, Lord, King and God. This, in a nutshell, is what the main committee and its working groups sees as its fundamental task. Whether that be through resourcing children, young people and families work, or planting and revitalising churches, or partnering with global partners, or engaging with cultural and moral issues and presenting timeless truth applied in a timely way, or through encouraging our people and churches by organising the annual Dunblane Conference, CLAM exists to "paint the target on the wall" and to remind the denomination that a fundamental attribute of the Church is to make disciples and to teach them the truth.

CLAM also attempts to realise this goal through equipping and training local leaders, particularly Kirk Sessions, Deacons Courts, Congregational Boards and Boards of Management. If your local church leadership would value further training please get in touch with CLAM via the Church Office.

CHRISTIAN LIFE ISSUES (CLI)

The worth, purpose and identity of human life and relationships have formed the prevailing narrative in the last year across Scottish public life. The cost of living crisis has meant huge pressures on family life as have the ramifications of the Coronavirus lockdown. Older and more vulnerable people are feeling the effects of this, especially so at this time of high costs and with ongoing discussions around end of life decision making. The conflicts across the globe have brought many refugees and asylum seekers to the United Kingdom. In addition, the wider narrative of sexuality, transgender and assisted dying continues to come into a sharper focus. As was said last year, humankind is fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14). To those whom He has called, He has created for His glory (Isaiah 43:7). Sadly, there are many confusing and conflicting voices. We would do well to listen to the voice of the Lord as His servants (1 Samuel 3:10).

The Working Group continues to appreciate the work of the Christian Institute, CARE (Christian Action, Research and Education) and that of the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office. The two former organisations have largely represented the United Free Church's views, particularly on human gender and sexuality and further information can be found at www.christian.org.uk and www.care.org.uk. Both organisations have well informed speakers

in Nigel Kenny and Dr Stuart Weir who welcome the opportunity to speak in churches or lead worship. The Committee is represented on the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office (SCPO) by the Working Group Convener. The SCPO has a wide range of Christian Churches and Christian organisations in Scotland in its membership and is a very useful means of the Church being kept aware of Bills coming before the Scottish Parliament, as does the RADAR Committee, in respect of the United Kingdom Parliament. The largely Christian based 'Faith in Older People' charity' is an organisation with which the Group has engaged and would commend their online resources which can be found at: www.faithinolderpeople.org.uk. The freedom to articulate opinions, especially Christian worldviews, has also been a key issue. In all situations, as Christians we should follow Christ's example and be full of grace and truth (John 1:17). The erosion and 'no platforming' of Christians who 'put their head above the parapet' is of concern in the Scotland of the Enlightenment where all worldviews are tolerated, except, it appears, Christian perspectives.

The United Free Church of Scotland acknowledges that discussions relating to gender are very sensitive in nature and require pastoral sensitivity. As Christians, we believe that all people are made in the image of God with inherent dignity and worth as the Scriptures clearly teach. Therefore, we believe that sex cannot be reduced to a mere social construct but is a core part of our humanity. Accordingly, it is the Committee's belief that proposals to allow changes to sex or gender have a major impact on what it means to be human. A change to these definitions will have huge and irreversible implications across society but opposition to these changes does not equate to a lack of concern for those who are experiencing gender dysphoria. Christ commands us that we should love our neighbour as ourselves - and everyone is our neighbour. We love and care for those impacted by these issues, however, the Committee is not convinced that always affirming someone's understanding of themselves (which is often temporary or based on current circumstances or pressure) is always the right way to care for them. A move away from requiring a medical diagnosis and supporting medical evidence will result in less support being given to those who are wrestling with their identity. To undergo a change of gender has potentially life changing consequences in a range of areas. Various medical interventions are employed in treating gender dysphoria including puberty suppression drugs and artificial cross-sex hormones. It has been well documented that those experiencing gender dysphoria often also suffer from a variety of mental health issues, indicating that medical help may be necessary. Medical staff will seek to treat the person in a holistic manner and so their involvement is essential. There are now a number of cases emerging where people have regretted a change in gender and some have begun the process of de-transitioning. This is often irreversible medically and has psychological and social impacts too. The work done by the Panel on Doctrine in its report to the 2018 Assembly has been prophetic in pre-empting this issue.

The Moderator supported an Evangelical Alliance campaign against the sexual exploitation of women and girls. The issue of commercial sexual exploitation of women and girls and its interlinked issues of human trafficking and prostitution have been major concerns for all major political parties in Scotland and across the UK for many years and a number of proposals have been discussed. Reducing men's demand for prostitution has also been a 'Programme for Government' commitment made by the Scottish Government. Despite this and recent encouraging developments such as the removal of licences for strip clubs in Edinburgh, substantive action has not been taken by the Scottish Government on this issue to date. In the Scottish Parliament, a cross-party group of MSP's along with a campaign group led by

survivors of commercial sexual exploitation called, 'A Model For Scotland', have been advocating a change in the law - the most substantive of which would be to criminalise the purchase of sex in Scotland, and therefore reduce demand for human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. One point of note is the very concerning development that since the invasion of Ukraine, Ukrainian women and girls are being exploited in Scotland and women across Scotland are also being exploited by online pimping, which incredibly is not illegal in Scotland. This policy is often termed the 'Nordic Model' as the first of its kind was introduced in Sweden. Since then, the following nations have introduced equivalent legislation: Sweden (1999), Norway (2009), Iceland (2009), Canada (2014), Northern Ireland (2015), France (2016), Ireland (2017), Israel (2018), and, most recently, Spain has moved on these issues (2022).

As evangelical Christians, our mission to make Jesus known is partly achieved by seeking justice and promoting the welfare of the most vulnerable in our society. This is an issue that is often not talked about in public despite the level of suffering women and girls experience through commercial sexual exploitation. The Working Group also supported representations on the Nationality and Borders Bill and the Joint Public Issues Team invitation to endorse a cost of living report and also a letter arranged by Christian Aid on climate change.

The Working Group has allocated financial contributions towards the following organisations: Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office - £2,000; Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees - £1,000; Christian Action, Research and Education (CARE) - £1,000; The Christian Institute - £1,000.

The Working Group Convenor produced an article on 'A new Heaven and new earth' for Stedfast and other articles, such as 'Championing life at the beginning and the end' from CARE have also featured in the magazine. Other articles which have also been included on Christian life themes concern mental health and warm spaces.

The Group continues to consider how a meaningful response can be made to the many consultations that are received and also to communicate these, often complex, issues with clarity to our people. We hope to continue to highlight these issues via Stedfast and the 'Dunblane Day'.

Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees (SFAR) seeks to co-ordinate and promote action by faith communities in Scotland to support asylum seekers and refugees. There are currently four broad areas of work covered by SFAR: Integration - supporting New Scots and communities across Scotland in learning to live; work and grow together. Asylum - urging reform of the UK's asylum and immigration system to ensure more respect for human rights and human dignity. Resettlement - encouraging faith communities to participate in refugee resettlement programmes and to explore becoming community sponsors. International - recognising the greatest humanitarian need remains overseas, promoting how we in Scotland can raise awareness and help to respond.

GLOBAL FOCUS (GF)

Photo Competition/Calendar - Once again the Photo Competition and Calendar has proved a very successful piece of work. There was an increase in the number of photos submitted this year although the same number of calendars were sold. This is a fun way to raise vital funds for a partner project, the 2022 beneficiary being the Nanjing Rainbow Palliative Care Charity.

We look forward to launching the 2023 competition and announcing which partner project will receive the support.

Global Focus Working Group Prayer Weeks - The theme for the 2022 Prayer Weeks was '7 Continents, 5 Oceans, 1 Planet'; a massive topic requiring two weeks of guided prayer. The Global Focus Working Group are hugely indebted to Dr Tim Stojanovic, an Elder in Cornerstone United Free Church, who, so willingly, brought his knowledge, expertise and faith to the writing of all of the materials.

Flying Mission Zambia Instrument Replacement Appeal Easter Scheme - The Global Focus Working Group is very grateful to the Children, Young People and Families Working Group for selecting the Instrument Replacement Appeal as the focus of the 2022 Easter Scheme. As a result of the Easter Scheme, a donation from Duntocher United Free Church, the Women's Home and Overseas Special Gift and £1,500 left over from the Storm Scope Appeal a total of £12,699.61 has now been sent to Flying Mission Zambia. We know that this has been gratefully received by them and has enabled a considerable amount of work to be done on the planes. The Global Focus Working Group would like to thank everyone who contributed to this magnificent total.

Members of the Global Focus Working Group were delighted to be able to meet up with Matthias and Salome Bauert, Managing Director and Finance Manager (respectively) of Flying Mission Zambia. As part of a 3 month Furlough, in Switzerland, they travelled to the UK to meet with a number of friends and supporters. Following a meal together in Glasgow, Matthias and Salome presented an overview of the history and aims of Flying Mission Zambia. They outlined how they run subsidised flights to support mission, churches, Bible distribution and health care, and how they provide hospitality for missionaries, medics and youth groups in their guesthouse. In addition to this they are seeking to be more involved in outreach with the Gospel to children in the local community. They expressed their sincere thanks to everyone in the United Free Church of Scotland for such generous donations towards replacing the instruments on 3 of their planes. They are equally grateful for continued prayer for their work and witness and for safety in all their flying.

Flying Mission Care, Botswana: Rerotlhe Day Care Centre - There are some concerns that this project is almost entirely dependent upon funding from the Global Focus Working Group to enable it to continue to provide day care and a feeding programme to rural pre-school children in the Seherelela area. To help clarify the situation a Zoom call was arranged with Lillian Moyo, Flying Mission Care Manager, to update the Group on any progress that has been made in terms of linking the Rerotlhe Day Care with the local Primary School. This would ensure government funding, reducing dependency upon ourselves.

Lebogang - The general economic situation in Botswana is not good and is having an adverse effect on the food truck businesses set up by the ladies from the 2021 cohort who were somewhat discouraged. As no funding was, as yet, in place for 2023 it was agreed, in principle, to contribute some funding to this project.

Bible Distribution - The Global Focus Working Group were pleased to be able to offer some funding to this very worthwhile project. Many of the Bibles are distributed to young, male prisoners in Moshupa Juvenile centre who find them not only transformational but also a source of comfort and peace. Bibles are also given to the ladies who participate in the

Lebogang Project, the students who complete the Flying Mission AMETS Training and are distributed on any visits to cattle stations. We are pleased to be playing a small part in sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ in Botswana.

E-Update - The monthly E-Update has, again, proved to be a very useful tool in sharing information, insights and prayer points, from Global Focus Working Group partners and Mission Partners associated with the Denomination. The regularity of the E-Update has enabled the wider Denomination to keep abreast of ongoing situations that impact on the work and witness of organisational partners and mission partners.

Conclusion - The Global Focus Working Group would like to thank partner organisations and Mission Partners associated with the United Free Church for taking the time to keep us updated on their work and witness in such a wide variety of settings. Our Christian mission, here in Scotland, can receive and learn so much from the world-wide family of God. The Global Focus Working Group would like to thank Mrs Helena Jarvis and Mr Adrian Rootes for their unstinting support and guidance over the past year. They have attended every one of our meetings, offering encouragement, practical support and their vast experience; together we work for the glory of God.

RESOURCING MISSION (RM)

The remit of Resourcing Mission [RM] continues with special attention paid to part time appointments, schedules, church planting and the resourcing of missional projects. RM is mindful that it has a unique responsibility within the denomination to advocate for and persistently pursue the practical call of 'The Great Commission,' as being one of the fundamental priorities of the church. The making of new disciples and the nurturing of existing disciples concisely summarises this biblical priority for the Church of Jesus Christ, and Resourcing Mission exists to help our local congregations in this most important of missions.

Part Time Appointments

A notice of motion was accepted by the 2022 General Assembly: -

"The General Assembly instruct Christian Life and Mission Committee to review the arrangements for Part-Time Ministry and to report back to General Assembly 2023."

CLAM passed this to Resourcing Mission as they are the working group with responsibility for part-time appointments and due consideration was given to the notice of motion as part of the group's ongoing and rolling review of its procedures surrounding the employment of part time appointments.

When RM came into existence one of the tasks it was given was the review of part time appointments, and as such a review of the inherited procedure was undertaken in 2021. The result was to continue with the same review process but with a slightly modified review form sent to Kirk Sessions, Interim moderators and all part time appointments. Every year these forms are sent to the relevant parties, and after being filled out and returned an in-person interview takes place between two officials of the committee and the relevant part time appointment. This interview process was also reviewed in 2021, with several changes taking place, including adding questions relating to how the employee felt regarding their time management and work-life balance.

In short, RM has been grateful for the chance to continue reviewing its procedures regarding the employment, review and care of part time appointments and will continue to review its procedures on an ongoing, annual basis. RM recognises the need to enquire about work-life balance and the importance of pastoral care for all employees.

In light of the notice of motion, and conscious of the wider ramifications any discussion over the future shape of ministry may have, RM has widened the discussion to include representatives from both Ministry and Governance Committees. This will take the form of a "Future Ministry Subgroup" whose remit will include but not be limited to, exploring matters of part time appointments, tenure, stipend, employment law, manse regulations and tax implications. A report will be brought to the General Assembly in 2024.

A Vision for 2030

As has already been mentioned, RM is keenly aware of its unique role within the denomination. Its remit involves calling the church to continually (re)orientate itself around The Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Word of God, and the mission given to the church by Jesus to "...go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you..." Matt. 28:19-20. In essence, it is to embrace one of the key tenets of the Reformed faith - *Ecclesia Reformata, Semper Reformanda* (the church reformed, always reforming) - Lodenstein 1674. In an ever-changing world, the Gospel of Jesus and the Mission of the Church remains the same now as it was for the disciples then. With that said an important question The United Free Church must wrestle with is this: Where do we see our denomination in 2030? This is a question RM has grappled with this past year, and one we feel the General Assembly should consider. To that end RM proposes the General Assembly adopts "A Vision for 2030".

The Working Group recognises that much of the work of RM has been reactionary, but that it is also imperative that leaders of the church have a Biblical Vision of what could be. Would it not be a blessing if God in His mercy revived and renewed 10% of our congregations? Would it not be a rich blessing if by 2030 10% of our churches were church plants? And would it not be for the good of our denomination if 10% of our congregations flourished to the point of being able to act as regional, resourcing hubs?

This is the Vision for 2030: RM proposes - a 5 x 5 x 5 model - where we prayerfully plan towards and pursue a 10% growth (roughly 5) of our denomination. By 2030 could we not plant 5 churches, revitalise 5 churches, and identify 5 regional resource hubs?

This is no small vision, and RM knows it will involve much cooperation with presbyteries and local congregations. It is also not an ironclad and immovable goal. Regional resource hubs could be a single church or could be a cluster of churches, but the point of it would be to positively impact the geographical region roundabout and offer support either to church plants or revitalisation initiatives. It is the view of RM that Scotland is in desperate need of more healthy local churches, not fewer. This is a call to proactively pray, plan, plant, revitalise and partner together so that our churches, our presbyteries, our denomination and our country may flourish through the preaching of His Word and the praising of His name.

RM encourages our churches to pray and speak to presbyteries, and our presbyteries to pray and speak to RM, that together we might identify key opportunities for new church plants, current churches to revitalise, and other churches or clusters of churches which could act as

regional resource hubs. This is the vision into which RM is committed to channelling its resources.

Projects

RM is encouraged, along with the rest of the denomination by the encouraging developments at Darnley. In 2021 it was agreed that RM would contribute approx. £5,000 per year for 5 years towards stipendiary payments, thus enabling Darnley to call Rev. David Steele and Darnley being formally recognised as a revitalisation project. RM continues to support Darnley as a revitalisation project.

RM is also encouraged by the ongoing ministry of Ian Hepburn at Aberdeen: Torry. Earlier in the year Mr Hepburn became a member of the congregation which enabled RM to partner with Torry and contribute 1 day per week in salary contribution, meaning Torry continues to be a revitalisation project in partnership with RM.

A major project RM has been involved with since its inception is the church plant in Onthank, Kilmarnock. Up until November 2022 there existed a unique arrangement where Rev. Nathan Owens was minister at Kilmaurs 5 days per week and also minister at Ardeer 1 day per week; Paul Harkess was also employed as ministry assistant at Kilmaurs 5 days per week and 1 day per week at Ardeer. However, it became apparent over the 4 years of this arrangement that, as the revitalisation at Kilmaurs continued and the church grew, and as Mr Harkess's time began to be taken up increasingly with his commitments to the church plant in Onthank, the time had come for the linkage to be broken. This change, overseen by the West Presbytery, came into effect in November 2022, meaning that at this time Mr Owens is now fully employed at Kilmaurs and Mr Harkess's time is devoted to the burgeoning work in Onthank. Due to this change, and in light of the growth in Kilmaurs, RM's focus is now entirely on the church planting project in Onthank, with a grant of up to £25,000 per year for 3 years agreed to support Kilmaurs in their employment of Mr Harkess. In 2022 Kilmaurs partnered with 20Schemes, a partnership they hope will enable more support for the church plant in years to come.

Elsewhere RM has been involved in financially supporting Cumnock, although this support ended in 2022 with Rev. Tom McWhirter accepting a call to Sauchie and Fishcross. Discussions also took place with West Calder, and although a promising start was made, no part-time ministry assistant has yet been found for the role there. RM was pleased to be able to assist Sauchie and Fishcross with a grant of £3,000 towards vital roof repairs to enable them to continue being effective. Discussions and advice has also taken place in a variety of smaller ways with Cunningsburgh, Knightswood and Croftfoot. RM also continues to explore possible ministries with some Hong Kong Churches that have established relationships with some of our local churches.

The Committee has been trying to assist Chryston as they seek to utilise the church hall and expand the church's ministry and missional outreach, and the committee is pleased to note that Rev. John Fulton has been appointed by the West Presbytery to assist them further.

Leadership Network

The Leadership Network met in December of 2022 in Milngavie and enjoyed a profitable time together hearing from Rev. Douglas Campbell and Rev. Nathan Owens about lessons learned from their respective ministries. The purpose of Leadership Network has always been to

facilitate genuine relationships of mutual encouragement and stimulation, to foster a missional mindset, and to provide a place for honest reflection, challenge and vision for healthy local churches. To that end RM has taken a deliberately flexible approach as to how it is run, with Rev. Jared Michelson and Rev. Nathan Owens taking organisational responsibility. A survey was sent out to all those in ministry or leadership positions in the denomination and, at time of writing, five responses have been received. It may be that Leadership Network takes on a more informal, relaxed approach in the future. More details will be made known in due course.

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & FAMILIES (CYPAF)

There have been two Big Weekends at Lendrick Muir this past year. This was due to moving the event from the Autumn to the Spring which seems to be a better time of year for P5 - S6 pupils. This is our annual camp encouraging our UF Family to come together and have lots of fun and get some great Bible Teaching at the same time.

Easter Scheme 2023 - was focussed on the work of "Care for the Family" (you can check out their website (<https://www.careforthefamily.org.uk>)). The monies raised will help provide finances towards the costs for "one parent families" to have a holiday and a relax from the pressures of everyday life.

The Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ufcos.cyp/>) is being worked on at the moment and it is hoped that soon it will be a place where more can be shared about the events that are happening and being planned by the committee to keep all of our churches in the loop. The SPARK events have continued through the year and numbers attending have continued to match pre-COVID days. It has been particularly encouraging to see friendships forming of young people from different churches as they get to know each other. Some have been meeting up outside the events too! One of the ways the Working Group has tried to develop the Childrens and Young People's work has been to run the sessions for children and young people at the Dunblane Event as a SPARK event. This, we hope, helps develop stronger relationships between the young people across the denomination and encourage the younger ones who will soon become eligible to attend SPARK to come along. For those who are wondering if their children would like to attend SPARK then maybe the Dunblane Event could be a way of introducing them to the idea! It will also be an opportunity to meet some of the SPARK team.

In the past two years we have held two Zoom events called "Open House" for anyone leading any kind of children's or young people's meetings, whether it's on a Sunday or mid-week - from toddlers to young adults. Those who don't have such a meeting happening just now but have a heart for this work are also more than welcome to join in. This is an opportunity to find out more about what is happening in our churches and to find out what resources there are available and also pray and encourage each other. The Group is looking at the possibility of making this year's meeting a hybrid event with one venue arranged for each Presbytery but also with the option for those not able to get to one of the three venues to tune in via Zoom from home. The date for this year's Open House: Tuesday August 8th There is also a WhatsApp Group set up and running for those involved in organising children's and young people's meetings in our churches. This is open to anyone to join and those who do so can request prayer or ask for information about materials etc and share what is happening in their church. It's a great way to be informed about what is going on in the wider work of the denomination and it is always good to know others are praying for us when we need it! For

those who want to be added to the group they simply need to email; philsteed@hotmail.co.uk and it can be arranged. The Group also has a new logo which will appear on materials which are sent out and on the FaceBook page and WhatsApp group.

The Group was also pleased to be able to give a grant of £75 each to two students from the congregation at Darnley to attend the SU Training "LeadUP" course. This helps train leaders for Children and Young Peoples ministries and we hope that this investment in the young people of our denomination will bring benefit and blessing to the local church and the wider work of our denomination over time. If other churches have young people who could benefit from such courses please make an application to the committee for consideration.

To conclude, attention is also drawn to the fact there is like to remind you that we have an Annual subscription to Energize which is a great resource for materials all free to download, copy and use in our churches for work with children and young people. Just email the church office and you will be given all the information you need to access the website free of charge to make use of this great opportunity.

NATIONAL CHURCH EVENTS (NCE)

The annual 'Dunblane' event took place on August 27th 2022 in Dunblane High School, being the first physical gathering since August 2019. Over 200 participants attended and 10 workshops were made available looking at Christian priorities in a shaken world. Particularly encouraging was the wide age demographic and some new faces. Feedback forms were returned by a good proportion of attendees with very positive feedback being given.

This year's event will be on Saturday August 26th at Dunblane High school with the usual format of worship, teaching and sharing for all generations. The theme will be 'Come Follow Me' and will be considering key elements of discipleship and the Christian Life. In this way the committee is hoping to encourage us to take a collective fresh look at our Christian lives. The intention being to continue, as a denomination, to journey with renewal and revitalisation in mind and as priority. The keynote speaker will be Rev. Andy Robertson from Charleston Community Church in Dundee and a selection of seminars on the general theme are being planned. The intention is to make wider use of technology this year, both in promoting the event, managing the event and feedback following. This will be done in two ways; first by using a new website at www.dunblaneday.org.uk and secondly by streaming the main event online to make it accessible to those unable to attend the event on the day. We are hoping that the online software being used will help streamline the administration of the event and thereby reduce the pressure on the denominational office. The Committee commend the event to all members and friends.

In the name of the Committee,

NATHAN R OWENS	Convener
JASON LINGIAH	Vice-convener
PHILIP STEED	Vice-convener
JEROME O'BRIEN	Secretary