

REPORT OF THE MINISTRY COMMITTEE GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2017

INTRODUCTION

“I don’t know whether I am coming or going?” was a favourite saying I recall from my childhood. It seemed that for the adult population life was always busy and things never stayed the same. There were always “comings and goings” to be encountered. I suspect that in the experience of Christians and the Church that is also true. It is the reality of the Ministry Committee and it keeps us on our toes.

This report is set within the context of a changing world and for the Christian a society that has journeyed far from God and his Way. Those involved in ministry are constantly faced with new situations and confused understandings of life. Many people have little knowledge of the God of the Bible or Jesus Christ. The preparation, training and on-going development for ministry have to keep close to God’s Word and adept at communicating the Gospel in the language of today.

The Church desires to have a faithful, trained, teaching ministry in every congregation and in new mission situations. Re-shaping for mission through Church Re-vitalisation and Church Planting encourages the Church to look beyond and step out in faith.

In practical terms this presents a challenge of faith for the Committee and the Church. This report indicates that the last student in training for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments has now completed his training. There will be a steady stream of retirements in the coming years which will require to be filled. There may well be challenging visions in new situations where the Lord will lead and there are still a number of congregations who have been prayerfully seeking someone to come and minister in their fellowships.

Yet God continues to encourage the Church as gifted people are called to serve within the United Free Church as Minister or Ministry Assistant. There continue to be enquiries for various ministry roles as people seek the Lord’s leading for them in this day. The Church requires to be faithful in praying that God will move the hearts of many to faith. Pray also, that young and old within the United Free Church may recognise and respond to His call to the service of His Kingdom and the ministry of His Church.

“Comings and Goings”, as ever, are in the Lord’s hands.

PROBATIONERS

Rev Dr David Miller (Glasgow: Millerston): Dr Miller was ordained in September 2016 and is now serving as a Part-time Minister at Glasgow: Millerston.

STUDENTS

Mr Jason Lingiah (Edinburgh: Corstorphine): Mr Lingiah completed the denominational requirements as part of his preparation for ministry. He is expected to be licensed in the coming months and is due to preach in a number of vacant congregations in April/ May with a view to receiving a call.

STUDENT AND PROBATIONERS CONFERENCE

The Autumn Conference was held in October at Carronvale. The conference followed the three-year syllabus approved by the Committee. The Conference included topics on personal development, youth ministry, worship and the Kirk Session. The students and probationers again expressed positive thoughts on the conduct and content of the conference. Thanks are due to Rev Wilma Pearson, Mr Richard Knott, Rev Mike Marsden and Rev Andrew McMillan for so capably leading the various sessions.

Mr Lingiah being the only remaining student, it has been decided not to hold a Spring Conference this year and instead to provide tailored support to his particular needs.

READERSHIP

A training day for Readers was held in Stirling in November and followed the outline course prepared by the Ministry Development Worker. The focus was on worship, preparation to lead worship services and worship within the context of the United Free Church. The Committee is grateful to Rev J.O. and Mrs M. Fulton, Rev D. Whitty and Rev C.C. Brown for their contributions to a worthwhile day. Four prospective readers and four existing readers attended. The Committee propose to offer an annual training day for Readers to provide training and ongoing support to those involved in this important ministry.

READER

Mrs Moira Frew (Lochwinnoch: Calder) continues with her studies at The Highland Theological College and has also attended three courses towards meeting the requirements of the Church.

MR LEWIS CAMPBELL

Mr Lewis Campbell was appointed as a Church Planter in the Tullos area of Aberdeen in September 2016. The Committee was pleased to take part in the service of Appointment and has been encouraged to hear of the good work that has been begun. The Committee continues to commend Mr and Mrs Campbell to the prayers and ongoing support of the Church as they undertake this challenging and pioneering ministry.

PATHWAYS TO MINISTRY

Pathways to Ministry was devised to assist those wishing to serve the United Free Church in different aspects of ministry. Pathways provides three areas of ministry as Reader, Ministry Assistant or Minister of Word and Sacrament. Leaflets were produced which set out the normal requirements of study and training required for each role. This has proved of great help to enquirers, applicants and to the Church. Pathways also allows guidance to those who would wish to move from one area of ministry to another.

With the advent of the role of Church Planter the Committee is endeavouring to set the study and training requirements for a Church Planter within the Pathways scheme. It is possible that further ministry roles may be identified in the future which may be incorporated into a general framework of study and training. The Committee in conjunction with the re-shaping for Mission Group is endeavouring to develop a framework of study and training suitable for the challenges of today and the days ahead.

COURSES AND TRAINING

The Church in every generation requires to assess the available study courses as it seeks to provide the best courses of study and training for those preparing for ministry. In the past, candidates studied at the Joint College or in the Theology or Divinity faculties of traditional Scottish Universities. In more recent times the Highland Theological College and Edinburgh Theological Seminary have provided good opportunities for study and preparation.

Over the years, the nature and scope of courses available has continued to change. In some institutions, the range and content of subjects is no longer appropriate. There are a number of institutions which offer training for Church Planters and those who may wish to develop aspects of ministry relating to evangelism and re-vitalisation. In the coming year, the Committee hopes to review the content and range of courses available and to incorporate these into the framework of the Pathways scheme.

ADVISER OF STUDIES

Having served the Church faithfully as Adviser of Studies for over 30 years, the Rev A. D. Scrimgeour indicated his desire to retire from the role. Mr Scrimgeour has provided guidance and support to generations of candidates for the ministry within the United Free Church. The Committee is indebted to Mr Scrimgeour for his faithful work over the years and would record its grateful thanks for all he has done as Adviser of Studies.

The Committee has begun a review of the role of the Adviser taking account of the various forms of ministry which we now have and to ensure appropriate advice and support is available to people following the different pathways. The Committee hopes to be in a position to bring a further report and a proposed appointment to the General Assembly in 2018.

CHURCH RE-VITALISATION

The Committee is encouraged by the churches that have become Church re-vitalisation Congregations. The Committee has been pleased to learn of the settlement of ministers at Dundee: Caird Avenue, Kilmaurs: Maxwell and Kilmarnock and Glasgow: Drumchapel.

The Committee is aware of those congregations which continue to face vacancy. The Committee commends the congregations to the prayers of the Church. It is our prayer that God will provide Ministers or Ministry assistants in each and every situation.

IN-SERVICE CONFERENCE

The In-Service Conference for Pastors, Ministry Assistants and Ministers took place at Gartmore House from the 20-22 September 2016. Dr Marion Carson led four challenging sessions on Pastoral Care. In a very personal presentation Dr Carson helped participants grapple with the difficult pastoral needs they do and may encounter.

The 2017 In-Service Conference will be held at Gartmore House from 19 - 21 September and will consider such subjects as Transgender issues, the Reformation and Luther 500 and "Understanding our society".

PRE-RETIREMENT CONFERENCE

A Pre-Retirement Conference was held at Gartmore House from 1-2 November 2016. The conference was attended by 9 ministers and spouses. The conference considered the challenge of retirement, health issues and financial matters. The Committee would express its thanks to Rev and Mrs Jim Neil, Rev and Mrs Ian McQuarrie, Dr Fiona Ritchie and Mr Richard Farquhar of Campbell Thomson for their thoughtful and helpful contributions to the conference. Reports from participants indicated that the conference had been found to be very helpful.

ENQUIRIES

The Committee continues to receive enquiries from those wishing to know more about being a Reader, Ministry Assistant or Minister of Word and Sacrament.

PASTORAL CARE

It has been the desire of the Committee to provide pastoral support to those employed in the ministry of the church and those retired as well as their spouses. The Committee proposes that two Pastoral Support workers be employed to assist in such pastoral care. The Committee is delighted that the Rev J.D. Neil and Rev A. McMillan have agreed to undertake this work. Thanks are due to the Rev A. McMillan for preparing the outline and understanding of such pastoral support found in Appendix 3.

RETIREMENTS

Rev I. N. Robertson retired in February as minister of our Ayr and Ardeer congregations. Mr Robertson faithfully served these congregations for over 20 years and through the challenge of serious illness.

Mr R. Ralston retired as Pastor of Glasgow: Shieldhall and Drumoyne at the end of April 2017. Mr Ralston served in a number of congregations over the years and gave faithful and fruitful service.

STIPENDS AND SALARIES

The Committee has to consider proposed figures for stipends and salaries early in the year in order to bring these to the Assembly. For many years it has made use of the figures given for the underlying rate of inflation or Consumer Price Index (CPI) but the situation can change between the figures being agreed and them taking effect. In January 2017 the agreed increase was 1% but the CPI was 1.8% so that their value was effectively reduced. At the time of preparing the figures below, the CPI is 2.3% and the proposed increase is 3%. The proposed stipends and salaries as from 1 January 2018 are therefore as follows:

Minister (Minimum)	Single Charge	£25,620	and a manse.
	Linked Charge	£27,192	and a manse.
Part-time Minister	2 days	£10,344	
	3 days	£15,516	
	4 days	£20,688	
Ministry Assistant and Pastor	2 days	£ 9,324	
	3 days	£13,986	
	4 days	£18,648	
	5 days	£23,304	
	Full-time	£22,416	and a manse
Other allowances	Retiral Grant	£5,500	
	Island Allowance	£2,000	
	Pulpit Supply	£50 plus expenses of 30p per mile where a car is used	
Interim Moderator:		£500	

FRIENDS OF THE STUDENTS

The Friends of the Students Association continues to pray, provide and encourage those training for ministry within the Church. The Committee would convey its ongoing thanks to the association and its members for the support it has provided over the years.

THANKS

The Committee wish to thank all who support and contribute to the training and ministry of the Church. The work of the Committee is enabled and enhanced by the willing service of so many within the United Free Church and by many in the wider Church who so readily contribute in many ways. Thanks as always to the Rev John Fulton and Mrs Helena Jarvis for their faithful service to the Committee.

In the Name of the Committee

ARCHIBALD M FORD	Convener
ANDREW SCOTT	Vice-convener
JOHN O FULTON	Secretary

