

**REPORT OF THE MINISTRY COMMITTEE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2018**

INTRODUCTION

"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'"
Matt 9:36-38

Very little has changed across the centuries. As we look at society today we encounter so many people facing difficulties, carrying burdens beyond their capabilities and others who feel lost. We see people who are harassed and need the Good Shepherd. As Christians we are moved by Jesus' compassion and pray that God will draw them to him. There is a need for workers, and our prayer is that God will continue to provide those who will work in his harvest field, here in Scotland and beyond.

The Committee continues to be encouraged by those who have heard the call of God to service and have applied to become Ministers and Church workers. As has been highlighted in previous reports, there is a need for folk to serve in existing congregations and new areas in the years to come. The number of Ministers, Pastors and Ministry Assistants who will retire in the next 10 years is significant.

"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" Ephesians 4:11-12

One of the exciting developments in recent years has been God's provision of workers for Church Re-vitalisation projects, a Church Plant and vacant congregations. In the future those called to service may be pastors and teachers. However, they may well serve as evangelists and outreach workers, youth and family workers. The Committee has been wrestling with the issues of training, ordination and support. This report will include some initial thoughts on these subjects with the hope that firm proposals will come before the General Assembly of 2019.

PROBATIONERS

The Committee was pleased to hear that Rev Jason Lingiah was ordained and appointed to the Pastoral Charge of Alloa: Moncrieff and Menstrie in August 2017.

STUDENTS

Mr Andrew Ellison, Glasgow: Croftfoot, has been recognized as a student in training for the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. Andrew has been asked to complete a four-year course at Highland Theological College where he is currently in his second year. Andrew will also be required to satisfactorily complete the normal Denominational requirements of 2 twelve-month placements, 2 Trials for License, 3 Bible Exams 1 examination on practice and procedure and 1 essay. Andrew will undertake his first placement at Darnley.

Mr. Stephen Marr, Chryston, has been recognized as a Student in training for the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. Stephen has been asked to complete a two-year course at the Highland Theological College and is in the first year of his course, Stephen will also be required to complete the normal denominational requirements.

STUDENTS AND PROBATIONER CONFERENCE

It is anticipated a conference will be held in the Church Office in May. The two-day conference will follow the three-year syllabus approved by the Committee.

MINISTRY ASSISTANTS

Dr. Sara Jane Rettie, a member of the Dumbarton: Dalreoch congregation, applied to serve as a Ministry Assistant. Dr. Rettie undertook a 3 month placement at Lochwinnoch:Calder. Dr. Rettie was accepted by the Committee and it is hoped that a suitable placement will be found in the near future.

READERSHIP

A training day for Readers was held in Stirling in November and again followed the outline course prepared by the Ministry Development Worker. The focus was on the "Experience of the reader" led by Mr Graeme Gardner and Mr Andrew Scott, "Prayer in Worship" was led by Rev Alexander Ritchie and UF Ethos by Rev Martin Keane. Thanks again to those who attended and especially to the speakers and those at St Ninians who provided accommodation, food and thanks to everyone for their contributions to a worthwhile day. One prospective reader and eight existing readers attended. The Committee continue to offer an annual training day for Readers to provide training and ongoing support to those involved in this important ministry.

READERS

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

Mr James Sandanasamy (Dundee: Caird Avenue) has been accepted as someone training to become a reader. He has already undertaken some studies and has been asked to complete two further modules at Highland Theological College.

PASTORAL CARE

Rev Andrew McMillan and Rev James Neil have embarked on their pastoral care of Ministers with great energy and enthusiasm. They have already been in contact with a significant number of retired Ministers, wives and widows. The two lunches organized, in different parts of the country, were well attended and were greatly appreciated by those who attended. The Pastors have also been a support to others in pastoral need.

MINISTER OF WORD AND SACRAMENT AND CHURCH WORKER

The Committee recognises that those serving the Church are being called to different tasks and service within the United Free Church. As well as Ministry of Word and Sacrament, Ministry Assistant and Reader, the denomination has appointed a Church Planter and Youth Workers in recent times. It is recognised that other roles may be identified as the Church seeks to confront new challenges and opportunities as they arise. It is being considered that in future the categories within the Church might be Minister of Word and Sacrament, Church Worker and Reader with 'Church Worker' including those serving as Ministry Assistants, Church Planters, Youth Workers etc with all of them employed on similar terms.

ORDINATION

Conduct of the Sacraments has continued to be an area of conversation and on occasion dispute. In the future there may be a further diversification of ministry roles and there is need for a clarification of Ordination.

The General Assembly previously agreed that the United Free Church desires an educated ministry and confirmed in 2011 that those conducting the Sacraments should normally be Ordained Ministers. The Ministry Committee recognises that there may be benefit for Church Planters and others to be authorised to conduct the Sacraments. The Committee is giving thought to the requirements and training that would be necessary for ordination to take place.

The Committee is of the opinion that there should be one Ordination for those who would be Minister of Word and Sacrament or Ordained Church Worker. It is recognised that those training for different roles within the Church may undertake different courses of study. It is expected that such

courses would contain necessary core subjects. It is expected that such studies will have similar levels of theological content, practical rigour and academic standing.

It is recognised that candidates for Ministry and those applying for positions within the Church come with varying academic qualifications, experiences of life and service within the Church. It is important that there is a fairness in assessing candidates and in determining the theological studies required as well as the practical training that a candidate will need. The current regulations were agreed in the early 1970's. Much has changed in the intervening period and the Committee has begun a review of existing training to ensure that it is appropriate for the coming years. The Committee will consult with other Presbyterian churches to make itself aware of their current regulations.

BOARD OF STUDIES

Some years ago, the Committee established a Pathways Group to give in-depth thinking to broader issues of ministry. The Pathways to Ministry document was prepared by the Group and presented to the General Assembly and approved. The document outlined possible pathways to be followed by those called to ministry within the Church. The group has continued to give consideration to issues facing the Committee and to the preparation and planning of courses and events. It is proposed that a new Board of Studies will take on this work. The Board will report to and be under the authority of the Ministry Committee. The Board will comprise the Convenor and Vice-Convenor of the Ministry Committee, the Adviser of Studies, Adviser in Professional Development and Ministry Development Worker. The overall aim is to ensure a well-educated people equipped for different aspects of ministry within the United Free Church of Scotland and beyond.

Adviser of Studies

The Adviser of Studies will confer with the Ministry Development Worker to keep informed of courses of study available at various universities, colleges and institutions recognised by the United Free Church and with the Ministry Development Worker will identify suitable courses available elsewhere.

The Adviser of Studies will be available to meet with enquirers to give an indication of what will be required of them in preparing for ministry or as a Church Worker. When students have been recognised by the Ministry Committee, they should confer with the Adviser regarding a suitable course and should only take a course which has been agreed with the Adviser.

During their courses of study, students should keep the Adviser informed of their progress and confer with the Adviser in selecting suitable courses for subsequent years.

The Adviser will also be available to advise those undertaking study with a view to becoming a Ministry Assistant or Reader and these courses should be agreed with the Adviser before they are undertaken.

Ministry Development Worker

The Ministry Development worker will, with the Adviser of Studies, identify suitable courses of study for all those seeking training through the Ministry Committee as candidates for ordained ministry or Church Workers. These may include Pioneer Ministers, Ministry Assistants, Readers or those interested in continuing ministry education.

The Ministry Development Worker will assist the Committee in planning various courses organised by the committee including:

- In Service Conferences
- Conferences/ courses for students & pastors
- Courses for Readers
- Enquirers courses for those thinking about ministry

Adviser in Professional Development

The APD will seek to assist Ministers and Church Workers to continue the development of their ministry. This will involve the elements of appraisal and continued study. The Adviser will endeavour to be aware of suitable courses of study.

The APD will send appraisal forms to all Ministers in charge. These will seek to highlight needs, possibilities for further development and problems which require assistance. The appraisals will take place on a 3 yearly rotational basis.

Ministerial development is seen as an ongoing process. Such development can be enhanced in various ways:

- Short or longer-term courses of study
- Conferences or seminars
- Sabbaticals

It would be expected that ministers would give reports of the studies undertaken with comments on the benefits or otherwise of the courses undertaken.

It would be hoped that the Adviser will be able to produce a list or database of courses available, undertaken, and the responses to them.

CHURCH RE-VITALISATION

The Committee is encouraged by the churches that have become Church Re-vitalisation Congregations. The Committee is encouraged by the worship, ministry, service and outreach being carried out in Tullos, Dundee, Kilmaurs and Drumchapel. The Committee has been pleased to learn of the appointment of Rev. Dr. Rob Barlow to Carnoustie. The Committee commends all vacant congregations to the prayers of the Church. It is our prayer that God will provide Ministers or Ministry Assistants for each and every situation.

IN-SERVICE CONFERENCE

The In-Service Conference for Pastors, Ministry Assistants and Ministers, Youth Workers and Church Planter took place at Gartmore House from the 19th-21st September 2017. Mr. Phil Wray of Scripture Union led several challenging sessions looking at the difficult area of Transgender Issues. Dr. S. Aisthorpe talked about "Why people stop coming?" Dr. I. Shaw spoke on the Reformation and Luther 500. The conference was a stimulating time of learning and helpful opportunity for worship and fellowship.

The 2018 In-Service Conference will be held at the Winnock Hotel, Drymen from from 25-27th September and will consider such subjects as Justification, Homelessness and Ministry Today. Dr. Derek Newton will be one of the main speakers.

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.

JOHN 17:18 GROUP

These friends of the students continue to pray, provide and encourage those training for ministry within the Church. Many of those studying for ministry within the Church continue to be blessed by the faithfulness of those involved in the John 17:18 Group (formerly 'Friends of the Students'). The Committee would convey its ongoing thanks to the Group and its members for all the support it has provided over the years.

THANKS

The Committee would 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