

REPORT OF THE MINISTRY COMMITTEE GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2019

INTRODUCTION

“On this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16.18). Samuel Rutherford had this text in mind when he wrote: ‘The church hath been since the world began ever hanging by a small thread, and all the hands of hell and of the wicked have been drawing at the thread. But God be thanked they only break their arms by pulling, but the thread is not broken; for the sweet fingers of Christ our Lord have spun and twisted it. Lord, hold the thread whole.’

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. During the past year there have been appointments to part-time ordained ministry and ministry assistant appointments which will be referred to in this report.

At the General Assembly of 2107 we reported there were no students in training for the ordained ministry. At last year’s General Assembly we were able to report that two students had been recognised. In this report we are happy to state that at the time of going to press there are five students in training for the ordained ministry. The prayers of many are being answered. However those ancient words from Samuel Rutherford still hold true. The church is a fragile being although her future and ultimate triumph is assured.

STUDENTS

Mr Andrew Ellison, Glasgow: Crofffoot was recognized as a student in training for the Ministry of Word and Sacrament last year. Mr Ellison was asked to complete a four-year course at Highland Theological College where he is currently in his third year. Mr Ellison has undertaken his first attachment at Glasgow/Darnley and begun his second attachment at Milngavie.

Mr. Stephen Marr, Chryston is about to complete a two-year course at the Highland Theological College. He will shortly have completed the normal denominational requirements which should enable him to proceed to licensing and ordination.

Dr Sara Rettie: Dumbarton: Dalreoch. Dr Rettie was appointed to the post of Ministry Assistant at Dumbarton: Dalreoch in 2018. She has a few requirements still to be completed in her journey towards licensing and ordination.

Mr Andrew Brown: Glasgow: Darnley. Mr Brown is in the second year of a three year degree course at Highland Theological College. He has completed an attachment at Glasgow: Millerston and commenced his second attachment at Stirling: St Ninians.

Mr Jared Michelson: Cornerstone St Andrews. Mr Michelson was recognized as a student in training this year. He is completing a doctorate in theology at St Andrews University. The committee have set a number of requirements for him to complete in his journey to licensing and ordination.

STUDENTS AND PROBATIONER CONFERENCES

The Autumn conference took place at Carronvale in August. The Spring Conference was held in the Church Office in April. These conferences follow the three-year syllabus approved by the Board of Studies.

MINISTRY ASSISTANTS

As detailed in the paragraph on Students above Dr Sara Rettie was appointed to the congregation of Dumbarton: Dalreoch on a three day contract. Rev Brian Rogers was appointed to a two-day contract at Glasgow: Shieldhall and Drumoyne with additional pastoral responsibilities at Stonehouse: Paterson UF Church.

READERSHIP

The Committee did not provide a day conference for readers in this session. The Board of Studies has begun a review of the preparation for readership which should involve more in-house training. The committee will not be processing any fresh applications for the readership while this review is taking place.

READERS

Mrs Moira Frew (Lochwinnoch: Calder) continues with her studies at The Highland Theological College.

Mr James Sandanasamy (Dundee: Caird Avenue) was accepted for readership training some time ago. He hopes shortly to complete the necessary modules at Highland Theological College.

PASTORAL CARE

Rev Andrew McMillan and Rev James Neil continue their pastoral care of Ministers with great energy and enthusiasm. They are in contact with a significant number of retired Ministers, wives and widows. The lunches organized, in different parts of the country, were well attended and were greatly appreciated by those who attended. In January they gave a full and encouraging update to the committee on their work. They noted that there are now as many retired people as those in active service. More information about their work can be found in Appendix 3 to this report.

BOARD OF STUDIES

As agreed at last year's General Assembly the Board of Studies was set up with a wide-ranging remit covering all aspects of ministerial formation. This has included preparation and planning of the In-Service Conference for ministers and ministry assistants; the Autumn and Spring conferences for students in training for the ministry; and the systematic consultation with ministers on continuing professional development. Other matters on which the Board is working include the revision of guidelines for ministers and enquirers who are asked to undertake a short initial placement; and the revision of guidelines for student attachments.

The Board has begun work on an overhaul of the training of would-be readers. Part of the review involves a study of the Accredited Preachers Course run by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Following the visit of Rev Alexander Ritchie and Rev David Millar to Presbyterian Church in Ireland in March a warm invitation to observe the course was given by Presbyterian Church in Ireland. It is intended that a member of the Ministry Committee will sit in on part of the course in July of this year.

In addition to the Spring and Autumn student conferences and the various student attachments the Adviser of Studies keeps in regular contact with students in training who undertake the Bible Exams, the Practice and Procedure Exam, and the Essays.

Details concerning the various conferences are included elsewhere in the report.

CHURCH RE-VITALISATION

The Committee is encouraged by various Church Re-vitalisation situations. In particular the committee was glad to be involved in the appointment of Paul Harkess as ministry assistant at Kilmaurs linked with Ardeer and having special responsibility to develop a new work in north Kilmarnock. The committee was also pleased to be involved in the appointment of Rev Nathan Owens to Ardeer in addition to his work at Kilmaurs. We were also pleased to be involved in the part-time appointment of Rev Jerome O'Brien to the congregation of Auchterarder. 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 the Winnock Hotel Drymen from 25th to 27th September 2018. The conference was a stimulating time of learning and helpful opportunity for worship and fellowship. The main subject was Justification, with Dr. Derek Newton being the main speaker. Other topics were homelessness and ministry today. The 2019 Conference will again be held at the Winnock Hotel, Drymen from 24th to 26th September. The main topic will look at what it means to be a Presbyterian church in Scotland today. The keynote speaker will be Rev Angus Macrae from the Free Church of Scotland.

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.

STUDY LEAVE

The committee was very pleased to learn after a period of no applications that three applications for study leave have recently been received and approved by the relevant Presbytery. An interim increase from £50 to £75 per week expenses was agreed by the committee with the intention of a review of the financial arrangements for next year. The three applications have come from ministers, and the committee would emphasise that Ministry Assistants are also eligible for study leave.

MANSES

The committee felt it would be helpful to update and reissue guidelines for the use of manses for the benefit of ministers and temporal courts. A copy of the revised guidelines appears as appendix 2 to this report.

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. The Committee has been greatly indebted to Rev John Fulton for all his assistance over many years of advice, encouragement and secretarial expertise. We wish him well in his retirement from the Committee's work.

In the Name of the Committee

ANDREW SCOTT	Convener
DEIRDRE LYON	Vice-convener
MARTIN C KEANE	Clerk

