

**REPORT OF THE MINISTRY COMMITTEE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2021**

INTRODUCTION

“Who is fit for opening up the mysteries of salvation? Who is fit for declaring our sweet Lord Jesus Christ, prophet, priest, and king in Zion, without any competitor, and for opening up the same? Who is fit for dispensing those glorious benefits of the covenant of redemption? Who is sufficient for these things? And why is He calling poor unworthy nothing me to such a great and glorious work?”

(From a letter of James Renwick, the last Scottish covenanter to die at the scaffold to his mentor Sir Robert Hamilton written from the Dutch city of Groningen while undergoing theological training there in 1683)

STUDENTS

Mr Andrew Brown, Mr Andrew Ellison, and Dr Sara Rettie completed all the requirements of the committee. All three were licensed as preachers of the Gospel at a service organized by the Presbytery of the West in Darnley UF Church on 15th October 2020.

Subsequently the committee was delighted to hear that Rev Andrew Brown had been called to Bo’ness Craigmalen, and Rev Andrew Ellison had been called to Aberdeen: Northfield. Rev Dr Sara Rettie continues her part-time ministry at Dumbarton: Dalreoch.

The denomination was able to take advantage of the Government’s Job Support scheme that both Rev Andrew Ellison and Rev Andrew Brown benefitted from. The committee was appreciative of the hard work of Rev M Keane and particularly Lawrence Renn, the Church accountant for dealing with the intricacies of the Job Support scheme.

Both Rev Andrew Brown and Rev Andrew Ellison have commenced work in their new charges although it has not been possible to date for services of appointment and ordination to take place.

STUDENTS AND PROBATIONER CONFERENCE

The normal cycle of conferences has been disrupted by the pandemic but it is hoped that the Autumn conference for the probationers will go ahead. In what format we cannot say at the present time.

REVIEW OF THE REGULATIONS FOR STUDENTS FOR THE MINISTRY

The existing regulations were drawn up at a time when applications to be recognised as a student for the Ministry came mainly from young people. These regulations have been amended over the years. The committee believes that a comprehensive review and consolidation of the existing regulations is required. A working group has been set up to produce revised regulations.

PASTORAL CARE

Rev Andrew McMillan and Rev James Neil have not been able to carry out pastoral care as they would have liked owing to the restrictions flowing from the Covid pandemic. Mr McMillan

has felt unable to continue in the role and the committee thanked him for all his work. Filling this post is currently with the committee.

BOARD OF STUDIES AND REDEVELOPMENT OF READERS COURSE

The Board spent much of the year working on the redevelopment of the Readers Course. Part of the review involved a study of the Accredited Preachers Course run by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The committee is indebted to Rev Tom McWhirter who attended a concentrated running of the course at Union College in Belfast.

The Board considered a number of issues: What should be the course content; what teaching methods; how should the course be delivered; entry qualifications (if any); assessment; when, where, and how long; replacement title for readers; costing; and many others. It is proposed that the course will be delivered over two years and consist of four modules:

Module One – Handling the Bible

Module Two – Christian beliefs

Module Three – Preaching

Module Four – Leading Worship

It is envisaged that modules one and two could be offered more widely and not just to those interested in preaching/leading worship. It was hoped that Elders in particular would find modules one and two helpful.

Appendix 1 to this report sets out in much fuller detail the course content.

Much of this work has fallen on the Adviser of Studies who has prepared the course outline that the Board has worked on. The committee would commend this new course to the General Assembly. Much work remains to be done in identifying those who will lead the various units; in promoting the value of the course to would-be students; in identifying suitable venues; in preparing material for use throughout the course; and in identifying a suitable person to act as course co-ordinator.

IN-SERVICE CONFERENCE

It was intended that the 2021 Conference will be held at the Winnock Hotel, Drymen from 21st to 23rd September. The overall theme will be: “Equipping the saints for works of service”. After much deliberation it was decided not to hold the conference at the hotel, but to organize the event virtually. The committee appreciated the willingness of the Winnock to be as helpful as possible.

ENQUIRIES

The Committee continues to receive enquiries regarding various forms of ministry. An application to be recognized as a student in training for the ministry of word and sacrament has recently been processed by the committee. We are pleased to report that Mr Samuel Parkinson, a member of Knightswood UF Church is now a student in training for the ministry. He is studying for a MTh in Reformed Theology at Union Theological College in Belfast.

FRIENDS OF THE STUDENTS

These friends of the students continue to pray, provide and encourage those training for ministry within the Church. 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

There have, not surprisingly, been no recent applications for study leave. The committee is of the view that the financial assistance for study leave is inadequate and is recommending that the existing grant be increased up to £250 per week of costs actually incurred during the study leave.

MINISTRY CHANGES

The retirement of Rev Colin Brown, Rev Archie Ford, and Rev Ray Smart during the year together with the impending retirement of two other ministers in full-time charges has underlined the need to consider how to address this shortfall.

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. The committee is grateful for all the assistance given by the office staff, Adrian Rootes, Helena Jarvis, and Lawrence Renn; and also to the Principal Clerks for all their input and guidance.

In the Name of the Committee

ANDREW SCOTT	Convener
DEIRDRE LYON	Vice-convener
GORDON MACKENZIE	Vice-convener
ADRIAN ROOTES	Secretary

