

IX.

REPORT

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON HOME & FOREIGN MISSIONS

1. Introduction

As a small denomination, we face the dangers of insularity and parochialism as we seek to hold fast to that which remains. In the light of these temptations, it is a cause of thankfulness to the Lord that he has given us opportunities to be involved in missionary work both at home and overseas. There may be a deadly malaise in our own land with respect to the Gospel and its proclamation, but we can rejoice that there are places in the world where there is a deep hunger for Biblical truth. What a privilege therefore, to be able to report the ongoing works which our denomination is able to be involved in. May the Most High be pleased to use these opportunities he has provided for us for the glory of his Name, the extension of his Kingdom, and for the growth of his people who we are enabled to reach through them.

2. Home Mission

Hudson Taylor once said that *the Great Commission is not an option to be considered, but a command to be obeyed*. In seeking to obey God's command, our Home Mission Worker continues to reach out, from his Inverness base, with the gospel in the 'highways and byways' across Scotland. Over the past 12 months he has been actively engaged in extensive mission outreach campaigns in many of the geographical areas where our Church has a presence. Speaking as he does to innumerable multitudes, from all walks of life, backgrounds and nationalities, his constraining, unchanging, forthright plea – wherever he goes – to the unsaved, the unreached and the unchurched is, *believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.....repent ye, and believe the gospel*. (Acts 16:31; Mark 1:15)

Evangelising in cities, towns and rural communities, some of the places he visited over the past year included; Edinburgh (Leith); Glasgow (Shettleston & Partick); Ayr; Stornoway; Inverness (Holm & Lochardil); Strathnairn (villages of Moy, Daviot, Dalroy, Inverarnie, Farr); Dores; Loch Ness; and Beauly. He has also been engaged in evangelism at the Black Isle Show, and reached out with the gospel at Invergordon to the passengers who disembark from the many cruise liners that visit the seaport, and in Inverness where he witnesses on the High Street, when not away from home. He also played a leading rôle in petitioning against the 'Proud Ness' gay march in October, and thereafter organising a table ministry in Inverness, after this decadent event was given planning permission by Highland Council.

Mr Morrison continues to distribute good quality evangelistic and reformed literature wherever providence leads him. Along with the large quantity of foreign language literature, given out in 2018, a combined total of 10,528 *Good News* magazines and gospel booklets were also distributed, along with 6,000 TBS Calendars, twenty-two Bibles and a mountain of gospel tracts. Mr Morrison is grateful for the generous gifts he receives from supporters, near and far, to advance his extensive evangelistic literature distribution programme. In light of all the work undertaken by Mr Morrison, the Committee's hope and prayer is that blessing will follow his labours, as he reaches out to large swathes of our country, with a gospel message that the masses have sadly, and tragically, never heard of. *It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law*. (Psalm 119:126)

3. UK/European Mission

a. Ballyclare & Doagh

Looking back over the past year it is remarkable how things have turned out. After a number of disappointments, there were encouragements.

The congregation was in a position to appoint two elders for the first time and to increase the number of Deacons. A number of new members were also added to the congregation.

Equally encouraging, the finances of the Congregation remained steady, assisted by the grant from the General Assembly. Provision has been made in the proposed Deliverance for this to continue, but this will no longer be applicable if the Congregation's application to be placed on the Equal Dividend Platform is accepted by the 2019 General Assembly.

Spiritually the Congregation continues to be sustained, for which thanks are due to the Lord. The mission station continues, though it has been relocated to Kircubbin, which is a couple of miles nearer than Portavogie. This was the result of the centre in Portavogie becoming unavailable through refurbishment.

Becoming part of the Southern Presbytery has been a great encouragement to both minister and Congregation and is being increasingly influential in the life of the Congregation.

Overall, there is no reason for discouragement and every reason to be thankful.

b. Spain

The Congregation in Spain/France (Bilbao, Rubí and Pau) continues to move forward, despite the difficulties of being dispersed into three groups and the lack of a pastor in each group. Each group numbers about fifteen people and holds public meetings. Rubí and Pau continue under the leadership of the Elders (Mr Wilson Calle and Mr Hugues Pierre). The government of the Congregation continues in unity by Session meetings, in which brothers from Scotland (Rev. William Scott and Rev. James MacInnes) participate.

Last October, the Church was legally recognised by the Government of Spain. This will be of great help in the future, especially in the legal aspect. For example, the Church will be able to have its pastors recognised and economically supported.

The goal of the Congregation is to be able to call an assistant pastor for the group at Rubí. Also, Mr Hugues Pierre is at present in the last phase of his theological training at the Academia de Teologia Reformada (it is due to finish in October) and he has a desire to enter the Ministry assisting the Congregation in Pau. Recognising that Mission situations are unusual, and with a desire to assist the desires of both the Congregation and Mr Pierre, there is an urgent need for the Home & Foreign Missions Committee and the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee to consult as to what steps will be required to forward this situation.

In Bilbao and Rubí there have been no major events this year. The core group follows faithfully and visitors attend the services. In the group at Pau there has been a very important event; it has been possible to inaugurate public services, after an adaptation of the ground floor of the house of Mr Pierre. This took place last January, when the baptism of the daughter of one of our families the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was observed.

4. International Mission

a. Zambia

Covenant College

Due to non-correspondence from the Covenant College Zambia Trust (CCZT), certain difficulties explained in previous reports have still to be resolved. At the time of preparing this report, the Clerk of CCZT has contacted the Committee, so it is hoped that outstanding issues will shortly be dealt with and satisfactorily concluded. As the Committee has, at the present time, no-one working on the ground, it was felt that funding should be withdrawn, and new monies for foreign missionary work directed to work and projects that the Committee are associated with in other fields.

Christian Community Schools Association

The Committee acknowledges, with enormous gratitude, the extraordinary work which Marjanne Hendriksen undertakes amongst the children in Zambian schools. She continues to be supported by the

Committee up until February 2021, after which funding will be reviewed again. Our annual contribution of £960, paid monthly, is channelled through the *Zambian Mission Support*, a fund-raising charity which supports various Christian projects in Zambia, with whom the Committee has a close relationship. She is then directly supported by the *Christian Education Ministry (CEM)*, a group that promotes Christian education in the *Petauke* region in Eastern Province, Zambia. *Marjanne Hendriksen* works full-time for the CEM at *Petauke*.

In one report she spoke about the work she is involved in:

‘Since May 2007 I have had the privilege of working for the *Christian Education Ministry*. Before that, I was a pre-school teacher in *The Netherlands*. At this moment we support 20 community schools in the *Petauke* area. Together with our travelling secretary *Solomon Lungu* and with *Dorica Banda*, a local trained teacher, we want to encourage the teachers in giving Christian education and help them in getting more teaching skills. During school terms, we visit the teachers to observe their lessons and give them feedback. We also provide basic materials for the schools, such as blackboards, chalk, exercise books, pencils, etc. During school holidays we provide training days for the teachers in *Covenant College*. We pray that the Lord will bless our work in spreading His kingdom amongst teachers and children in Zambia! I deeply appreciate your very kind and generous support from Scotland. While there is no-one on the ground from Scotland, you can be assured that you are engaged in full-time missionary work through the practical Christian education work amongst the children in *Zambian* schools. Thanks for your faithful labouring support!’

b. Sri Lanka — Reformed Protestant Mission

Vavuniya

The Congregation has been worshipping in a temporary shelter erected more than 5 years ago in the garden of a house rented by *Ceylon Christian Care*. The owner gave notice of his intention to sell this ground and as a consequence building work has commenced nearby on the ground that had previously been gifted to the Congregation. Phase one is the construction of a building in which the Congregation can worship until such time as a permanent building can be constructed. Thereafter this first building will become the church hall. In addition to the main hall space, there are classrooms for the *Sabbath School*, a kitchen, and two rooms for accommodation.

The Committee are thankful for a grant of £20,000 (the result of a legacy left for missions’ work) for the completion of the temporary place of worship which is being constructed. It is estimated that the cost of the structure will be about £25,000 - £30,000. As well as the grant, a considerable amount has been raised thanks to the generosity of the Church at large. The cost of the building has been reduced considerably, thanks to the fact that *Rev. S.N.V. Partheepan* has been acting as project manager on the building and has been responsible for organising the trades and materials at very competitive rates.

Presently, 3 men who have no home of their own live at the Church building. This has the advantage of improving the security of the building, as well as providing practical help for the individuals concerned. The Congregation regularly eat together, which has strengthened the bond between the various members and is a practical solution to the difficulty of transport over a scattered district.

A regular pattern has been established of delivering theological lectures for local pastors, many from charismatic backgrounds. *Rev. S.N.V. Partheepan* shares these lectures with visiting preachers and these have been greatly appreciated.

Mullaitheevu

The church building, opened in 2017, is being put to great use, including *Knox Christian Pre-school* that commenced in 2018. *Evangelist Piratheepan’s* wife *Rebecca* is employed here, and a qualified teacher will begin in March. This pre-school is possible because of a generous sponsor. The *Evangelist* continues to visit and contact homes in the community and is responsible for preaching most *Lord’s Days* – though the *Minister* regularly travels through the jungle to *Mullaitheevu* and is ultimately responsible for all pulpit supply.

Diaconal Work:

Much of the cost for the practical care in Vavuniya and Mullaitheevu is through funds provided by Ceylon Christian Care. The Committee expresses its deep gratitude for the continuing support received from Ceylon Christian Care.

Other Matters:

No candidate has yet been identified to begin training for the ministry, though there is a great need for another preacher to share the burden with Rev. S.N.V. Partheepan, who has a heavy preaching and pastoral responsibility, together with considerable administrative work. Some assistance with administration has been provided through recruiting a part-time bookkeeper based in Vavuniya.

There was no visitor from the United Kingdom to the mission between Mr MacInnes' visits in March 2018 and February 2019. The Congregation have asked that there be a minimum of two visits each year. The Committee have contingency funds, as well as a sum allocated, which would make this possible.

The car fund appeal continues, though this has not been so actively promoted recently because of the more pressing need to complete the first stage of building work in Vavuniya.

Since the last General Assembly, there have been new members added, 5 by certificate, 4 by profession, and one child baptised.

5. Presbytery of the United States of America

As reported in previous years, the Presbytery receives virtually no regular support from the Committee. The Committee remains available for advice if requested by the Presbytery, but other than this there is nothing to report regarding the Committee's involvement.

The Presbytery of the United States remain grateful for the unity, fellowship and oversight provided by the larger denomination and it is a cause of thanksgiving to the Committee that links have been strengthened through members of the Presbytery being able to take part in Committee Meetings via the Internet. Though separated by many miles, the Presbytery rejoice to hold to the same doctrine, worship, practice, government, and principles of our Church; these are precious and worthy of promoting in America. Currently, there are four Congregations within the bounds of the Presbytery: Atlanta, Georgia; Greenville, South Carolina; Mebane, North Carolina; and St. Louis, Missouri. Each of these Congregations maintains two services of worship on the Lord's Day with a midweek study or prayer meeting; their sermons are made available through Sermon Audio and other outlets. The Presbytery are considering strategic and practical ways of providing for the full-time ministerial support of all of their ministers. There is currently one student for the ministry under their care, Mr. Tyler Ray.

The Presbytery are looking forward to hosting their annual Family Conference in Lexington, Kentucky, running from August 5th until 9th. In addition to ministers within the Presbytery, the Conference will host both Rev. Graeme Craig and Rev. Andrew Allan. The labour of our ministers from Scotland has provided edifying addresses, and it has strengthened the sense of unity among the people in the United States with the brethren in Scotland. This has been a great blessing to the people of our American Congregations as well as a means of extending the witness of our denomination to others.

Since 2006, the Presbytery has held a Colloquium each spring and autumn for its office-bearers and students. The local congregations take turns hosting the event. The Presbytery also extend invitations to some like-minded ministers and elders from other Reformed denominations in the US. The Colloquia have proved invaluable for perpetuating our Church's testimony and deepening the bonds of fellowship among the brethren.

Recently the Presbytery's Publications Committee launched Grange Press Trust, named after the burial ground in Edinburgh where many Free Church worthies await the resurrection. It publishes a quarterly

magazine, *The Master's Trumpet*, available for subscription, and is in the process of producing a number of books and booklets. The Grange Press website can be found at: www.grangepress.com.

As in other places, the Presbytery's ministry is in need of prayerful remembrance. While America has many encouragements due to its larger Evangelical witness, the degree of theological and practical declension is readily apparent. There is a tendency to compromise many claims of Christ in order to appeal to the current age. Prayer is sought for the Lord to strengthen the witness of the Presbytery, raise up and call gifted men to the ministry, and add his blessing such that many would be converted to the glory of our Redeemer.

6. Smiths Falls

The Committee has continued to provide pastoral oversight to the Congregation and are grateful to those who have given periods of supply. The Congregation require continued pastoral care and a regular ministry.

7. China and Hudson Taylor Ministries

The Committee continues to support the work of Hudson Taylor Ministries in China with the supply of ministers from among us who are able to assist in the work there. Despite growing tensions and difficulties experienced by Christians in China, a number of our ministers have been able to visit the country. The Committee recommend this work to the prayers and practical generosity of our people.

8. The Jews

One of the sad effects of our increasingly secularised and godless society has been an increasing incidence of anti-Semitism in various spheres of public life – from the concerns expressed regarding one major political party in the UK to the collective amnesia of some societies in Europe as to the horrors of allowing such anti-Semitism to go unchecked and unopposed. To this must be added the fanatical intolerance of radical Islam, which is seen not only towards the Jews but toward Christians also.

Christians, of all people, ought to pray for the Jews and that those elected in Christ may be gathered into the Christian Church. We are reminded by Paul that we owe a great debt to the Jews, as being the people from whom our Lord came and who carefully preserved the oracles of God which were entrusted to their care, which became the Old Testament Scriptures for the Christian Church.

Over the past few years, the question of how best our obligation to the Jews could be fulfilled has been considered by the Committee, and attempts have also been made to get training from one organisation which is dedicated to working among the Jews. None of our plans have borne fruit, but the Committee is fully persuaded that this does not mean that we can do nothing. It may seem trite to some to say 'We can pray,' but this is to denigrate the power of prayer and of the Most High. Many people are simply unable to do anything by way of ministry or mission to the Jews, but all of God's people can pray; after all, this was the main thrust of Paul's words, *my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.* (Romans 10:1)

Some years ago the Christian Witness to Israel organisation produced a bookmark which was a concise Biblical Study of why we should pray for Israel. The Committee suggests that permission be sought from CWI to reproduce this and circulate it to congregations, via an insert in the *Free Church Witness* magazine, so that our people may have it in their Bibles as a daily reminder of their obligation to intercede for the Jews.

HENRY J.T.WOODS, *Convener*
JAMES S. HARAM, *Vice-convener*

PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

1. The General Assembly receive and adopt the Report of the Committee on Home & Foreign Missions, and thank the Committee, especially the Convener and the Clerk;
2. The General Assembly thank the Home Mission Worker, Mr Donald John Morrison, for his continued faithful service and assistance. They commend Mr Morrison, his wife and family to the prayers of our people;
3. The General Assembly note with thankfulness the Lord's blessing upon the Congregation of Ballyclare & Doagh and their outreach work which has now been moved from Portavogie to Kircubbin;
4. The General Assembly approve continuance of the grant payment of £500 per month to the Ballyclare & Doagh Congregation, effective from the cessation of the current arrangements and up to and inclusive of May 2020;
5. The General Assembly note the ongoing work in Spain and commend the work to the prayers and financial support of our people. They thank the Rev. Jorge Ruiz Ortiz for his diligent and tireless service to the Reformed cause in Spain and further afield. They rejoice in the progress of the work and the recognition of it by the Spanish authorities;
6. The General Assembly note the goal of the group at Rubí to call an assistant, and commend them to the prayers of the Church;
7. The General Assembly note that Mr Hugues Pierre, Elder in Pau, is in the last phase of his theological training at the Academia de Teologia Reformada and his desire to enter the Ministry assisting the Congregation in Pau; they direct the Committee in consultation with the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee, to consider what steps are required to be taken in this mission situation to expedite this matter, and commend Mr Pierre and the Congregation at Pau to the prayers of our people;
8. The General Assembly note the efforts of the Committee to deal with the problems caused by the delays of the Zambian Mission Trustees. They recommend that no further financial assistance be given to the work and encourage our people to give to the Sri Lankan and Spanish work instead;
9. The General Assembly commend the work of Miss Marjanne Hendriksen. The General Assembly assure her of their full support for her dedicated work amongst the children in the Christian schools;
10. The General Assembly note with thankfulness the ongoing developments in the work in Sri Lanka under the care of Rev. S.N.V. Partheepan. They commend Mr Partheepan for his tireless service and commit both him and his wife Dinogee to the prayers of our people. They especially thank Mr Partheepan for his efforts in keeping costs down by acting as project manager of the building work in Vavuniya;
11. The General Assembly note with thankfulness the generous grant of £20,000 made possible by a legacy for the construction of a temporary building in Vavuniya. They also thank those who have responded so well to the various appeals for funds for the work in Sri Lanka;
12. The General Assembly acknowledge the debt of gratitude they owe to Ceylon Christian Care for their generosity in support of the diaconal work of our mission in Sri Lanka;
13. The General Assembly note the ongoing work in the Presbytery of the United States of America and encourage our brethren in their labours in the Lord's work. They are pleased to note the Presbytery's involvement in the wider affairs of the denomination by their input into various Standing Committees of Assembly;

14. The General Assembly express their thankfulness for the congregation in Smiths Falls and commends its ongoing needs, especially of a settled pastor, to the prayers of the Church;
15. The General Assembly note with interest the ongoing work in China carried on by Hudson Taylor Ministries. They are gratified to learn of the assistance rendered by a number of our ministers to this work, despite growing tensions and difficulties experienced by Christians in China, and they commit our fellow believers there to the protection of Almighty God;
16. The General Assembly repudiate and condemn the growing anti-Semitism in our society and acknowledge their great indebtedness under God to the Jews. They encourage all their people to pray for their salvation, and for the ingathering into the Christian Church of those chosen in Christ. To the end that our people may remember their obligations to pray for Israel, the General Assembly authorise the Committee to seek permission from Christian Witness to Israel to reproduce the bookmark Bible study entitled *Why Pray For Israel* and circulate it to our people via an insert in the *Free Church Witness* magazine, so that they may have it in their Bibles as a daily reminder of their obligation to intercede for Israel.