IX

REPORT

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON HOME & FOREIGN MISSIONS

1. Introduction

The thought of mission can enthuse and motivate, and yet also be overwhelming. The need is so great, both in Scotland and throughout the nations. Given our own smallness, it is tempting to conclude that our Church should pray that the Lord will increase our very limited resources and multiply our already overstretched workers – and until that happens, not venture out far. However, it is important to recognise that the command to take the Gospel out to all nations is not given to people who have the necessary resources. Rather, this command is given by the One who has all resources at His disposal, "… all things were created by him, and for him" (Colossians 1:16), and "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore …" (Matthew 28:18,19).

It is upon this basis and with this confidence that we venture out – praying that as we go, the Lord will provide for His cause in our own society, and wherever else we may be able to serve Him.

2. European Mission

Navarre & Aragon

Presently ministers in the Presbytery of Navarre & Aragon serve in a tent-making capacity which places an obligation upon each to raise his own income through other employment. Understandably, this has placed a burden upon men which can distract from the ordinary demands of the ministry.

The Congregations of the Presbytery are not yet at a level of financial stability to provide men with a stipend. Therefore, the Presbytery have initiated a Ministry Support Fund, through which it has been possible to provide a payment to ministers whose income would otherwise fall below the level of the UK stipend. The Ministry Support Fund is provided with an income from the Congregations of the Presbytery, as well as individuals outwith the Presbytery who wish to encourage this work. Promotion of the Ministry Support Fund in the *Free Church Witness* magazine has resulted in occasional gifts from individuals and congregations. Encouragingly, there are also several regular monthly contributions. Funds from the UK are received by the General Treasurer's Department and transferred to the Presbytery in a single monthly payment.

To ensure that the total personal income is accounted for, the Ministry Support Fund pays one month in arrears. The fund has been operational since September 2023.

Should the number of ministers serving within the Presbytery increase, the demand upon this fund is expected to increase. To raise awareness within the wider Church about the work of the Presbytery, articles have and will continue to appear in the *Free Church Witness*. A series of articles will introduce the ministers and divinity students.

Presently, there are two French-speaking individuals studying for the Ministry, Mr Paul Pontacq and Mr Fabien Garat, together with Mr Joel Suarez, who is Spanish-speaking. Two of them have been granted recognition as Candidates for the Ministry of the FC(C). The other will hopefully have his application for recognition completed shortly after the Assembly. Encouragingly, there are other men with an interest in applying for recognition.

The Committee have been conscious of the importance of encouraging cohesion between the Presbytery and

other parts of the Church. Over the past few years, the Committee have provided resources to encourage the three Congregations of the Presbytery to arrange conferences with visiting preachers from the Scottish Church. The Committee have also sought to support the Presbytery by paying for Divinity Students to attend the School in Theology. Both ventures have proved successful. The School in Theology has provided an excellent opportunity for learning, as well as interaction with colleagues throughout the Church.

Rather than continuing to pay for the cost of local conferences, the Committee have agreed to widen the invitation to the School in Theology in 2024 to include the ministers of the Presbytery. It is hoped, however, that the annual conferences will continue and that the local Congregations will begin to provide the costs for them.

The Committee draw the attention of the wider Church to the need for prayer that the Lord would raise up those within the Church with the linguistic ability to work with brethren from other nations. Presently the need is for French, Spanish and Portuguese.

To encourage the learning of the Shorter Catechism in European languages, the Committee have communicated with the Welfare of Youth & Education Committee with the hope of developing a Catechism & Scripture memory award, similar to the scheme presently operated by them, except the answers must be given in either French, Spanish or Portuguese. It is hoped that this will be ready by 2025.

Rubí, Barcelona, Spain
The Congregation in Rubí is served by Rev. Jorge Ruiz and two elders, Mr Wilson Calle and Mr Ernest González. There is an outreach under the guidance of the Kirk Session in Valencia. Between both parts of the Congregation there are 38 communicant members, with an average morning attendance of 50.

Rev. William Macleod addressed a conference in Rubí in February, during which time Mr Pierre from Pau was a second speaker.

Pau, France
The Pau Congregation is served by Rev. Hugues Pierre and two elders, Mr Fabien Garat and Mr Paul Pontacq. On average 20 attend each service. Rev. William Macleod also addressed a conference in Pau in February. The Lord's Supper is held every third month, with preparatory services in the days preceding. The Congregation expect to invite a visiting preacher to assist at one of their communion seasons per year.

A monthly outreach has commenced in Anglet, where there is a small but encouraging attendance of around seven. Anglet is located on the Atlantic coast more than one hour from Pau.

Braga, Portugal
The Congregation of Braga has been strengthened by the ordination of a local elder, Mr Heraldo Almeida. Other elders are assessors appointed by the Presbytery. Around 24 people gather each Lord's Day to worship.

Rev. Kenneth Macdonald spoke at a conference in Braga in October 2023, and Rev. Graeme Craig is expected to attend in October 2024.

The Congregation of Braga have been encouraged through having Pulpit Supply provided by Rev. Camon Tomé, who is currently a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Brazil (IPB). Mr Tomé has made an Application for Admission through the Presbytery of Navarre & Aragon and it is anticipated that his Application will come before the General Assembly. The Congregation have also brought a Petition to be established as a fully-sanctioned charge with permission to call a minister.

3. International Mission

a. Zambia

The Committee are pleased to continue making a financial contribution to the work of Marjanne Hendriksen who promotes and develops Christian Education in Zambia, primarily though supporting local schools and teachers.

b. Sri Lanka — Reformed Protestant Mission

Following the disruption caused by the economic crisis and civil unrest reported to the General Assembly in 2023, Sri Lanka has returned to a measure of stability. Costs have not returned to previous levels, but at least the excessive inflationary increases have stopped. Sufficient fuel, at a price, is available to enable transportation, industry, and power generation.

Rev. S.N.V. Partheepan continues his tireless labours in advancing the Gospel in his native land. He is supported by Mr Beniel Jaylosanigtan, a local Deacon, and assessor elders from Scotland. The Reformed Protestant Mission, Sri Lanka, employs an evangelist, Piratheepan, and an administrator, Jayram.

Rev. Partheepan attended the General Assembly in 2023, when he was also able to make 12 deputation visits to various Congregations across the country. It is anticipated that Rev. Partheepan will visit the General Assembly in 2025, this being a significant anniversary in the history of the Church. Consideration is being given to arranging for Rev. Partheepan to visit Australia in 2026, there being a number of Congregations there, particularly within the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, who could be interested in the development of the work in Sri Lanka, and perhaps willing to support the mission financially.

There have been some changes in workers, with an administrator / evangelist who had been part of the mission team deciding to seek alternative employment. This was a positive decision, and the young man remains within the Congregation. A new worker has been appointed, Jayram, who with his wife and children have moved into available property next to the church in Vavuniya. This allows Jayram to also serve as Church Officer, which role also became vacant after the previous Church Officer relocated to seek employment.

In the adjustments relating to the new administrator, it was discovered that no General Assembly Finding can be identified that relates to the appointment of the original administrator, who had been in post since 2016. The present Committee can give no explanation for this omission, but ask that the General Assembly regularise this situation by approving the post.

The Congregations in Mullaitheevu and Vavuniya remain reasonably stable in terms of weekly attendance.

Karis Care is a project that has been developed by providing practical support for low income families with disabled children. Presently, ten families are assisted with personal sanitary products (something which is very expensive in Sri Lanka) and occasional food aid. There is no welfare provision in Sri Lanka and families often struggle with the ongoing costs of caring for a disabled relative. Families receiving support are in the community around the Church in Mullaitheevu and have been selected according to need; most of these are Hindu. Delivering the monthly aid parcels, which costs the mission £150 each month, allows an opportunity to speak with the family about the Gospel.

Ra-annan Farm is a 5-acre coconut plantation approximately 10 miles from the mission station in Mullaitheevu. A generous supporter of the mission has provided the necessary funds to purchase the farm. This is a new development which was not anticipated at the time of the last year's Assembly. The impetus for this development came from the donor, and the potential benefits were immediately apparent to the Deacons' Court, who approved the project.

The name Ra-annan relates to the Hebrew word for flourishing, as in Psalm 92:12, "The righteous shall

flourish like the palm tree..." It is hoped that under God's blessing, the 320 coconut palms on Ra-annan Farm will flourish with a harvest that will provide the mission with a source of income. There is a weekly offering gathered by the local Congregations, but given the relative poverty of the community, it is not a significant amount in terms of the mission budget. Therefore, the mission is almost entirely dependent upon financial support sent from abroad. Generating an income through Ra-annan Farm offers a first step toward financial sustainability, but perhaps more importantly, it will allow the people of Mullaitheevu the dignity of providing for mission work in their own community.

The coconut palms, upon maturity, will produce a regular monthly harvest. It is anticipated that this will begin in 24 months and then continue for up to 20 years. Thereafter, palms that are too high to harvest conveniently can be sold for timber and to make space for a new plantation. Meanwhile, other low-level crops are anticipated, with peanuts and bananas having been planted in recent months.

Necessary renovation of a partially-constructed house upon the farm has been undertaken with the generous provision made by two Congregations, one within our own Church and the other from Singapore. This property will provide accommodation for a farm supervisor who will be given an allotment space within the farm for personal produce. Income from other crops is expected to cover operating costs, and income from the coconuts will be used for the development of the mission.

The mission operates two preschools. These facilities provide preparatory learning for young children. One preschool, Knox Christian Preschool, located in Mullaitheevu, is funded by supporters from Singapore. The other, Selvanagar Preschool, located in a small village outside Vavuniya, and referred to as Miss Jansie's Preschool in *The Explorer* magazine, is funded through the Committee's budget. An appeal through *The Explorer* has provided funds to build a toilet, and with sufficient money left over for some other small developments at the school. It is hoped that involvement in this appeal will serve to interest readers of *The Explorer* in the work of mission.

Encouraging new opportunities have arisen in Hatton, hill country south of the present areas of operation. Having an ideal climate with regular rain, Hatton is renowned for the production of tea. This is a labour-intensive industry in which workers are not highly paid. Additional funds were requested from the Finance & Sustentation Committee to allow for an initial six-month period during which Rev. Partheepan will visit monthly to provide theological lectures and develop contacts.

The Kirk Session of the Reformed Protestant Mission will assess the effectiveness and suitability of continuing these lectures toward the end of this trial period, and make a recommendation to the Committee. In the event that a positive recommendation from the Kirk Session is supported by the Committee, funding for the remaining five months of 2024, at a cost of £125 each month, together with the provision of £1,620 for a further 12 months in 2025 as set out in the budget for 2025, is being requested of the General Assembly as per the deliverance.

The initial response has been encouraging, with local believers enthusiastic to gain a theological education.

Having outgrown the terms of the original trust registration, it has been resolved to renew the registration for the Mission. In this process there must be a distinction between the religious activity of the Mission, the educational provision made through the preschools, and the income generation of Ra-annan Farm. The Deacons' Court have agreed to register the Church in the name of Rev. Partheepan, Mr Beniel Jayolasingtan (Deacon), and Rev. James MacInnes. The preschools and the farm are to be registered in the names of Rev. Partheepan and Mr Jayolasingtan. It is expected that this process, which necessitates the assistance of a suitable lawyer, will be concluded during 2025.

The executive of the Committee met with representatives of the Finance & Sustentation Committee to discuss caring for the future personal needs of mission personnel. However, planned progress did not

develop due to the volume of work before the Committee.

Initial steps have been taken to redesign a suitable website, in Tamil and English, for the Mission, and it is hoped that this will be completed later in 2024.

The Committee are very thankful for the generous provision made by the Church for this work. The final accounts for 2023 show that overall expenditure for Sri Lanka was £23,103. However, because there was an income of £17,234 specifically for the work in Sri Lanka, the cost to the denomination was only £5,869.

Rev. James MacInnes visited the mission in November 2023, and it is anticipated that he will give a report to the Assembly.

4. North America

Smiths Falls, Canada

A Report on the future work in Smiths Falls is presently being developed by the Kirk Session for future presentation to the Committee, after which a Report shall be presented to the General Assembly.

Presbytery of the United States of America

The Committee's oversight of the Presbytery of the United States is more by way of giving support as required, and in recent years no assistance has been given. They are also a conduit for the Church to be provided with a report from the Presbytery and this is presented below

The Presbytery are thankful to God for its continuing connection with the wider denomination and continue to labour and pray that God would bless the testimony and heritage of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) throughout the United States. It was a particular privilege to have one of our own ministers elected to serve as Moderator of the General Assembly in 2023.

The last year in the Presbytery has been one of encouragement and growth. The preaching stations in Auburn-Opelika and Hunt County (Greenville), Texas were raised to fully-sanctioned Charges, and with the admission of Rev. Craig Scott and the ordination of Rev. Logan Shelton, these two Congregations were settled with their own ministers.

In addition, the Presbytery raised two new preaching stations, in Fredericksburg, Virginia and Nobleford, Alberta, Canada. Services have continued weekly in both locations, with Rev. Paul Backhurst serving as permanent pulpit supply in Nobleford. This group began with around thirty people and has grown to a regular attendance nearing one hundred. They have the use of a suitable building and are in negotiations with a Strict and Particular Baptist Church that no longer meets, to purchase the property.

The pulpit in Fredericksburg has been supplied by various ministers and students. Rev. Romesh Prakashpalan (RPCNA) has recently accepted an invitation to be become resident pulpit supply from April 2024, and is making Application for Admission to the FC(C) at this General Assembly. In March, the Presbytery also received a petition from the Fredericksburg preaching station requesting to be raised to a fully-sanctioned Charge. There are presently around 35-40 people attending worship services each week. The Presbytery also received a Petition from a Congregation in Dallas, Texas, desiring to be admitted to the FC(C) and have forwarded the Petition to the General Assembly.

The Presbytery currently have one official FC(C) Divinity Student under their care – Mr. Tyler Ray. Another student, Mr. Jacob Carne, who has studied at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and has completed two years of membership in our Greenville Congregation, has applied to be recognised as a Candidate for the Ministry. In addition, expressions of interest have been received from other ordained ministers who would like to make Application for Admission in the future, and the Presbytery have recently established a practice for standard thorough assessment of men who make such a request to them.

The Preaching Station in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, continues to encourage, and a number of visits have taken place throughout the last year with conferences and communion seasons being held. There are currently around forty people connected with this work, but they lack regular pulpit supply. The Presbytery invite the denomination to join them in prayer for a man to go to Nuevo Laredo full time to minister to the saints there. Any help of available men from Scotland to supply the pulpit for a period of weeks would be welcome, as local men are able and willing to provide live translation in the services.

The Presbytery held their annual Family Conference in Lexington, Kentucky, August 2023 and were delighted to be able to have Rev. David Blunt as a visiting speaker from Scotland who preached a series of messages on the source, fruit, and evidences of salvation. Other messages from ministers in the Presbytery included "Seeing the Unseen", "The Biblical Identification of The Antichrist", "Jesus & Our Sicknesses", and "The Life of John Eliot." All conference addresses are published on the US FCC Presbytery YouTube channel https://www.youtube.com/@uspresbyteryfcc3817. The conference had its all-time highest attendance last year numbering three hundred and fifty. Registration for 2024 has opened and many people have signed up from as far away as the UK. Rev. S.N.V. Partheepan is scheduled to be the visiting speaker in August 2024.

Grange Press Trust, the Presbytery's publishing arm, continues to publish its quarterly periodical, *The Master's Trumpet*. The digital Psalm singing albums, and the *Shorter Catechism Deck*, for memorization, continue to sell well, with the latter being recently republished in improved quality. The *Greek New Testament Reader* based on the Received Text of Scripture has seen successful sales and all costs of publication have been recovered. The 1650 Psalter with explanatory notes by John Brown is also selling well. Other books in line to be published include John Brown of Wamphray on the *Nature of the Church*, Gisbertus Voetius' treatment on musical instruments in worship; and a work on *The Free Church's Heritage in relation to the Covenanters* by Gavin Beers. Further details about Grange Press are available on its website, www.grangepress.com.

With the significant growth of the Presbytery over the last number of years, preparations are being made toward establishing an indigenous denomination in the USA. There are presently seven Congregations within the borders of the United States with one preaching station seeking to be raised to a fully-sanctioned Charge and another Congregation seeking admission into the FC(C). We also have two preaching stations just over our Southern and Northern borders in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, and Nobleford, Canada respectively. The Presbytery are thinking ahead and aware that there is much groundwork required before an indigenous denomination could be established. The initial aim would be to have three Presbyteries with four Congregations in each, and a Synod formed from these three Presbyteries. We solicit the prayers and guidance of the Church in Scotland as we consider this possibility.

5. The Jews

As in previous years the Committee has allocated £1,000 to support the work of IMJP (International Mission to Jewish People) and would encourage local Congregations and individuals to support this ministry.

6. Mission Support

The Committee are aware of a mission support group in Stornoway that meets regularly to receive updates concerning the Church's mission work, to pray for it, and raise financial support. The Committee are thankful for all who express an interest in the work of mission and for the opportunity through the *Free Church Witness* magazine to provide information on ongoing developments.

7. Mission Bequests

Two generous bequests were received for Mission work. One for the sum of £10,000 was specifically for European Mission and allocated to the Ministry Support Fund of the Presbytery of Navarre & Aragon. No specific instruction was given regarding the other bequest of £1,000 which was allocated to the Sri Lanka mission, to be divided between Karis Care and the new developments in Hatton.

8. Home Mission

An update on 'Home Mission' will be provided in a Supplementary Report distributed at the General Assembly.

A. JAMES MACINNES, *Convener*
KENNETH M. MACDONALD, *Vice-convener*

PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

1. The General Assembly receive and adopt the Report of the Committee on Home & Foreign Missions, and thank the Committee;

2. The General Assembly note that Mr Donald John Morrison has served as Clerk to the Home & Foreign Missions Committee for many years. They note Mr Morrison's resignation as Clerk and thank him for his faithful service;

3. The General Assembly note that Rev. Stuart Farmes is expected to be appointed as Clerk to the Home & Foreign Missions Committee and commend him to the prayers of the Church in this new role;

4. The General Assembly note the encouraging development of the Ministry Support Fund of the Presbytery of Navarre & Aragon, and commend its support to the wider Church;

5. The General Assembly note the opportunity given for fellowship and to develop fraternal bonds through inviting Ministers and Divinity Students from the Presbytery of Navarre & Aragon to attend the annual School in Theology;

6. The General Assembly note the financial support that has been provided to facilitate local Congregational conferences within the bounds of the Presbytery of Navarre & Aragon, and commend to the Congregations of the Presbytery the wisdom of continuing to invite speakers from other Presbyteries of the Church;

7. The General Assembly note the initiative to encourage learning of the Scriptures and Shorter Catechism in European languages and commend the development of a suitable scheme;

8. The General Assembly note with thankfulness the recent outreach services at Anglet, and commend Mr Pierre and the Congregation at Pau to the prayers of the Church;

9. The General Assembly note with thankfulness the establishment of regular services at Valencia, and commend Mr Ruiz and the Congregation at Rubí to the prayers of the Church;

10. The General Assembly note with thankfulness the ordination of an elder in Braga and commend the Congregation at Braga to the prayers of the Church;

11. The General Assembly commend the work of Miss Marjanne Hendriksen in developing Christian Education in Zambia. They affirm support for this vital work amongst the children in the Christian schools;

12. 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, together with their daughter Diyaththika, to the prayers of the Church;

13. The General Assembly note that an Administrator has been employed by the Reformed Protestant

Mission, Sri Lanka, since 2016, with funding provided through the Committee's budget, and hereby authorise the post of Administrator and the funding thereof;

14. The General Assembly commend Mr Beniel Jayolasingtan, Deacon, the Evangelist, Piratheepan, and the Administrator Jayram to the prayers of the Church;

15. The General Assembly note the development of Karis Care as a means of providing practical support to disadvantaged families with disabled children, and commend it to the generosity and prayers of the Church;

16. The General Assembly note the generous provision made for the purchase and development of Ra-annan Farm and commend this project to the prayers of the Church;

17. The General Assembly note the ongoing work in both Knox Christian Preschool and Selvanagar Preschool. They express thanks for the generous support from Singapore and readers of *The Explorer* magazine, and commend the preschool teachers and children to the prayers of the Church;

18. The General Assembly note that funding is in place for a six-month trial period, having commenced in February 2024, to allow for theological training in the Hatton district, south of the present areas of operation in Sri Lanka. Subject to a positive recommendation for the work being received by the Committee from the Kirk Session, the General Assembly sanction the work in Hatton hereafter, and authorise funding for the remaining five months of 2024 at an overall cost of £625;

19. The General Assembly note that steps are being taken to ensure that the different parts of Reformed Protestant Mission, Sri Lanka, are appropriately registered according to Sri Lanka law;

20. The General Assembly encourage the Home & Foreign Missions Committee to continue in consultation with the Finance & Sustentation Committee to ensure that, as far as possible, the funding arrangements for the Mission work in Sri Lanka, including caring for the future personal needs of Mission Personnel, may be managed at a local level with appropriate input from Assembly Committees;

21. The General Assembly acknowledge the generous support provided for Reformed Protestant Mission, Sri Lanka, and commend the ongoing work to the prayers and practical generosity of the Church;

22. The General Assembly express their thankfulness for the Congregation in Smiths Falls, and commend its ongoing needs to the prayers of the Church;

23. The General Assembly note the ordination and induction of Rev. Logan Shelton to Auburn-Opelika and commend Mr Shelton and the Congregation to the prayers of the Church;

24. The General Assembly note the induction of Rev. Craig Scott to Greenville, Texas, and commend Mr Scott and the Congregation to the prayers of the Church;

25. The General Assembly note the developments in the new preaching station in Nobelford, Alberta, and commend the work to the prayers of the Church;

26. The General Assembly note the developments in the new preaching station in Fredericksburg, Virginia, and commend the work to the prayers of the Church;

27. The General Assembly give thanks for the outreach in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, and commend the Congregation to the prayers of the Church;

28. The General Assembly note the development of the North American annual Family Conference and

commend this to the prayers of the Church;

29. The General Assembly note the ongoing work of Grange Press, encourage the Presbytery of the United States of America in developing this work, and commend it to the prayers of the Church;

30. The General Assembly note the forward thought given by the Presbytery of the United States of America toward the development of an indigenous Church and commend the Presbytery to the prayers of the Church;

31. The General Assembly note with appreciation the work undertaken by those who serve as assessor elders on the Presbytery of Navarre & Aragon and various Kirk Sessions in the developing mission work;

32. The General Assembly commend the work of International Mission to Jewish People to the prayers and practical generosity of the Church;

33. The General Assembly commend the practice of organising, as practicable, mission support groups within local Congregations;

34. The General Assembly commend the practice of remembering the mission work of the Church through a bequest.

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT (A)

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON HOME & FOREIGN MISSIONS

Over the years some of the Church's Ministers have had the opportunity and privilege of ministering in Brazil. The Puritan Project does much good. It holds an annual conference, promotes experimental preaching, Psalm-singing in worship and Puritan books.

Brazil is a large country, similar in size to the United States. The language spoken is Portuguese and the population numbers 215 million. In the past, like the rest of South America, it was solidly Roman Catholic but that has changed over recent years with Protestant churches growing rapidly. Interestingly, one of those who began the spread of the Gospel in Brazil was a Scotsman, Dr Robert Kalley, whose work in Madeira led to the Free Church having a mission and a Minister on that island in the days after the Disruption. In God's providence it was persecution in Madeira that led to Dr Kalley and many converts heading to the Americas and ultimately to his work in Brazil.

Today the Presbyterian Church of Brazil (IPB) has around 750,000 members, growing from 500,000 in the last twenty years. It is generally evangelical, with the two largest groups in it being the Charismatic wing and the Arminian fundamentalist wing. There is a small but growing theologically liberal party, and also what is mockingly called the Neo-Puritan group. This is composed of around 150 Ministers and Congregations and they delight in experimental preaching and are moving towards purity of worship, with Psalms only in their services. They are a minority who are somewhat persecuted by the majority. One minister who trained at Greenville Seminary in the USA on returning to Brazil was initially refused ordination as he was regarded as "too Confessional".

Members of the Committee were contacted recently by a Minister from this denomination. He and others had been in contact with a North American denomination with a view to leaving the IPB and joining them. The idea was that a presbytery could be formed in Brazil and that this would make it easier for those who desired a purer Church and freedom, for example, to fence the Lord's Table, to be able to do so. The Brazilians did not want to form a new Church but to be part of an existing Church and to benefit from the counsel, wisdom and advice of a Synod or Assembly, and of senior brethren. Eventually after six months of negotiations it was decided not to proceed, as this Church, though strong on some points, was rather weak on others. At this stage one of the Committee was contacted, wondering if there was a Church in Scotland whom they could join. It was suggested that the FC(C) could be that Church and with this suggestion they were delighted.

The Minister from Brazil who was leading the negotiations is well trained, with several degrees. He is well-read and has been involved in the translation of several Puritan and similar English authors into Portuguese. He was ordained in 2019 to a Church plant with around 25 members. His Congregation now has 135 members and adherents. They reckon that five to ten other Ministers and Congregations would be keen to join the Free Church (Continuing) at this stage, but he is hopeful that over a period of time many more would join. The idea is that as the group expanded they could form two presbyteries and at that stage they could become an independent sister Church.

This group are not looking for financial help as they have self-supporting Congregations. They wish wholeheartedly to subscribe the Westminster Confession of Faith and the other Westminster Standards. They believe the Pope to be the Antichrist and hold to a six-day creation. They believe that only "inspired materials of praise" should be sung in public worship. They still occasionally use a piano but are happy to get rid of this. They wish to be more Scriptural and faithful in the way the Lord's Supper is observed and apply proper Church discipline. They believe in keeping the commandments, including keeping the Sabbath

day holy. They have been given a copy of the Questions addressed to Ministers when they are ordained, and the Formula which has to be signed, and with these they are very happy.

The Committee have given serious consideration to their request. They have decided that it is best simply to notify this Assembly, but feel that it would be wise to give some further time to considering this development. It is expected that one or possibly two Applications for Admission from Ministers will be in the hands of the Clerk of the Committee by the time the Assembly meets, and that Petitions from their Congregations for Admission will follow in due course. The Committee believe that initially at most only two Applications and potential Petitions should be dealt with through the usual procedures, with them being processed by the Home & Missions Committee acting *in loco synodi* and the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee in time for them to be disposed of at the October meeting of the Commission of Assembly. Further Applications for Admission or Petitions from Congregations for Admission could then be disposed of by the 2025 Assembly. It should be noted that the Committee are of the view that there are sound providential reasons for dealing with the initial Applications at the October Commission, as opposed to waiting until the 2025 General Assembly, and that these should be given due weight by the Assembly.

Should Applications be forthcoming, and the Commission of Assembly receive and admit Ministers and Congregations, the Committee would then have to consider how a Presbytery might function in Brazil. In laying the groundwork for the initial development of the work there, the ultimate goal would be the setting up of a sister Church in Brazil as soon as it were practicable.

Given the need for all parties to be fully informed and to prevent misunderstandings and do due diligence, the Committee believe it is of the utmost importance that a visit be made to Brazil early in September by up to three Ministers to meet with the interested parties in Brazil. The Committee have informed the Finance & Sustentation Committee and requested that additional funding be allocated to the Home & Foreign Missions Committee budget to allow for this unexpected and unforeseen development. Although the cost may be around £3,000, the Committee believe that it is a small price to pay in the longer term for what could be a significant step in strengthening the work of the Kingdom of Christ in Brazil, and in aiding the cause of reformation and a return to sound Biblical doctrine and worship which is scriptural and God-honouring.

WILLIAM MACLEOD, *for the Committee*

PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

1. The General Assembly receive and adopt the Supplementary Report of the Committee on Home & Foreign Missions and thank the Convener and the Clerk;

2. The General Assembly rejoice in the interest expressed by Ministers and Congregations in Brazil in joining the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing);

3. The General Assembly note that Applications for Admission from Ministers from Brazil are currently or may soon be in the hands of the Clerk of the Home & Foreign Missions Committee, and direct that at most only two Applications for Admission from Ministers in Brazil be processed for consideration at the October meeting of the Commission of Assembly;

4. The General Assembly note that Petitions for Admission from Brazilian Congregations are likely to be forthcoming and direct that at most only two such Petitions from Brazil, should they be received by the Principal Clerk, be considered at the October meeting of the Commission of Assembly;

5. The General Assembly hereby discharge the Commission of Assembly from taking up any further Applications for Admission or Petitions for Admission from Brazilian Congregations, but direct the Principal Clerk of Assembly to inform any such applicants that their Applications will be held over and disposed of, DV, at the General Assembly of 2025;

6. The General Assembly hereby authorise the Home & Foreign Missions Committee to send up to three Ministers to visit Ministers and Congregations in Brazil interested in joining the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), and direct the Finance & Sustentation Committee to adjust the Committee's current budget thereanent.