

III.

REPORT

OF THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATIONS

1. Introduction

The Publications Committee sees their main function as publishing Christian literature from a Biblical and Reformed perspective which will find acceptance not only within our own constituency but also from those outwith the Free Church (Continuing). Given that we are a small denomination the Committee must not overstretch themselves and must be selective in what they decide to publish. However the Committee also recognise that they have a responsibility to publish material which explains the 'distinctives' of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), firstly to our own people and then to others. For example, the Church has acknowledged the need for a history of the division of the Free Church of Scotland in 2000. Office-bearers and members of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) should have a clear understanding of what led up to the division in the Free Church, and the Committee are seeking to fulfil the responsibilities laid upon them by the General Assembly in this regard.

Following the pattern of previous reports all the various activities in which the Committee have been engaged during the past year are covered briefly below. The Committee are involved in many projects and are attempting to advance them all: however the limited time and resources available and other difficulties which present themselves mean that progress sadly is often slow.

2. Magazines

2.1 Editors

The two magazines have an important role in our denominational life and testimony and we are therefore grateful to Rev. William Macleod and Rev. Murdo A.N. Macleod, editors of the *Witness* and *Explorer* respectively, for their endeavour over another year. Their work is demanding and time-consuming and no doubt has its occasional frustrations but we trust that as they aim to glorify God through the printed page they know that their labour is not in vain in the Lord. The Committee encourage those who read the magazines to remember both men in their prayers.

2.2 Production

Although he is now settled in a charge with the demands on his time which that involves we are pleased that Rev. Alasdair Macleod continues to compile the *Witness* and we thank him for his diligent work. Miss Anne MacAulay likewise continues to devise material for the puzzle page in the *Explorer* and mark the entries sent in by children, for which we are grateful. The printing of both magazines remains with DM Design & Print of Inverness and the Committee are pleased not only with the production standard but also with the fact that the cost has not risen since January 2013 when we first used this printer.

2.3 Subscriptions and Distribution

The Committee are thankful to Mrs Isobel McQueer for the way in which she carries out her work as Subscriptions Secretary and the contact she maintains with readers of the magazines. Mr Bill McQueer continues to distribute the magazines in an efficient manner. The late arrival of the magazines in congregations in the first three months of the year was due to late delivery from the printer and the matter having been drawn to his attention the situation improved somewhat in April; the Committee trust that things will soon return to the situation where the magazines are with congregations for the first Sabbath of the month.

This year we must report that Mrs Fionna Macleod, who for many years has been recording the Church magazines for the blind, has decided to relinquish her work. The Committee have acknowledged the Church's gratitude to Mrs Macleod directly and are now happy to do so publicly. We wish Mrs Susan Furzer every encouragement as she takes up this valuable ministry and pray that it may enjoy the Lord's blessing.

2.4 Circulation

Subscription rates for the *Witness* (including the *Explorer*) were unchanged for 2015. Below are the circulation figures for the *Witness* at the end of April 2015, with equivalent figures for the end of April 2014 (subscription to the *Witness* includes the *Explorer*):

Print Run:	2015	2014
Magazine:		
Witness	1000	1000
Explorer	1100	1100

Monthly Circulation:

Subscriptions:		
UK Congregational	589	637
UK Individual	116	141
Overseas	55	52
Total	760	830

Complimentary copies:		
UK	22	29
Overseas	11	8
Total	33	37

Trade orders:		
UK	22	20
Overseas	0	0
Total	22	20

Overall Totals:	815	887
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(Note:- In addition to the above an extra 101 (102) copies of the *Explorer* are ordered separately from the *Witness* and an extra 66 (51) copies of the *Witness* are currently sent to various congregations for free distribution. Also 15 copies of each magazine are archived each month, being reduced to a permanent 2 (3) copies at the end of the year. Extra copies of issues containing articles of special interest, such as issues of the *Witness* which contain obituaries, are kept back and then supplied to the relevant parties, as requested, at no cost.

There are many copies of the magazines spare each month and as there is no real economy to be made in reducing the present print run we once again encourage congregations to order extra copies each month for free distribution in their locality. The magazines are a helpful introduction to our denomination and can be a useful tool in developing contacts with people who do not as yet attend our services. The Subscriptions Secretary will be happy to hear from anyone who would like extra copies.

This year more than 18,000 copies of the special evangelistic June issue of the *Witness* are being printed for distribution by our congregations and Home Mission Worker; this figure exceeds the previous highest total of 16,000 from last year. The price for these extra copies has once again been kept to 25p each and

ministers who have made orders should be available to collect them at the Assembly. No good will be accomplished by the circulation of literature without the gracious Spirit of God and we therefore urge that our ministers and people pray for the Lord to bless the content of these magazines to those who in His providence may read them.

3. Publications

3.1 Existing Publications

Below are approximate figures representing cumulative totals for sales and/or complimentary distribution of our in-print titles at the end of April 2015 (with figures for 2014 in brackets):

- (a) *Where is God now Gone?* by Rev. John J. Murray (1250 copies printed in November 2003):
1239 copies now sold or distributed free (1240); 11 copies remaining.
- (b) *Sing the Lord's Song* by Rev. John W. Keddie (500 copies provided to Committee in May 2004):
338 copies now sold or distributed free (324); 162 copies remaining.
- (c) *Echoes from Scotland's Heritage of Grace* by Rev. Hugh M. Ferrier (first printed in May 2007):
408 copies now sold (407); 8 copies in stock.
- (d) *The Five Points of Calvinism* by Rev. John W. Keddie (750 copies printed in May 2010):
487 copies now sold or distributed free (469); 263 copies remaining.
- (e) *The Lord's Supper* by Rev. John Morrison (500 copies printed in May 2011):
434 copies now sold or distributed free (391); 66 copies remaining.
- (f) *The Shorter Catechism* (500 copies printed in May 2012; 750 copies reprinted in May 2013):
671 copies now sold or distributed free (452); 579 copies remaining.
- (g) *The Right of Continued Protest* (80 copies printed in December 2013; 80 copies reprinted in March 2014):
143 copies now sold or distributed free (98); 17 copies remaining;
- (h) *Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) Year Book 2004-15* (500 copies printed in February 2014; 100 copies reprinted in April 2014):
559 copies now sold or distributed free (N/A); 41 copies remaining;
- (i) *Scottish Independence: An examination of the Scottish Government's proposals for Scottish independence* (200 copies printed in August 2013):
187 copies now sold or distributed free (N/A); 13 copies remaining.

(In addition to the above the Committee has 4 copies of the book *When Justice Failed in Church and State* by Rev. Iain H. Murray & Dr Murdoch Murchison in stock.)

A list of the available publications, with information on content and prices, is on the Church website at:
<http://www.freechurchcontinuing.org/publications/books/list-of-publications>

Where possible titles which are no longer available and are unlikely to be reprinted are placed on the Church website for reading online and/or downloading and two such titles have been uploaded: *Giving to the Lord* by Rev. John W. Keddie; *The Reformation 1560* by Rev. John J. Murray. *When Justice Failed in Church and State* by Rev. Iain H. Murray & Dr Murdoch Murchison has also been uploaded. Two more such titles are due to be uploaded soon: *A Vulnerable Society*; *The Sabbath: Some Practical Observations* by Rev. William B. Scott. Three titles which are still in print but are unlikely to be reprinted are also on the website or due to be uploaded soon: *The Right of Continued Protest*; *Free Church (Continuing) Year Book 2004-15*; *Scottish Independence: An examination of the Scottish Government's proposals for Scottish Independence*. These titles are found at: <http://www.freechurchcontinuing.org/publications/books>

In addition there are 1300 copies remaining of the leaflet *Remembering the Church in your Will* which are stocked by the Committee on behalf of the Finance & Sustentation Committee.

3.2 New Publications

Booklets:

The Committee have approved final texts for two booklets in the 'Finding out about...' series which deals with issues of theological and practical importance to our people and Christians in general. The titles are 'Worship' by Rev. James Clark and 'Baptism' by Rev. John Macleod (rtd). Every effort is being made to have these printed in time for this year's Assembly.

3.3 Future Publications

Booklets:

At the time of writing booklets on the following subjects for the '*Finding out about...*' series are at various stages of planning or preparation: Church Membership, Eldership, Funerals, Marriage and Presbyterianism. The Committee have also been informed of material on the subject of Church Discipline which has been produced by one of our ministers and they hope that it may be possible for this to be reworked into a suitable form for another title.

Books

John Kid and John King

Last year we reported that the manuscript by Mr Maurice Grant on the lives of two Covenanter ministers, John Kid and John King, had been accepted for publication by the Scottish Reformation Society for publication in their *Scots Worthies* series and was likely to appear very soon. In the end the Society's other publishing commitments, particularly the *Historical Journal*, caused a delay but we understand that the book is now nearly ready for publication and we wish it every success.

History of the Division of 2000

The 2008 General Assembly instructed the Committee "to take the necessary action to have a draft manuscript prepared in popular format recounting the events leading up to and following the division of 2000." The Committee appointed Rev. James Gracie to begin work on producing a book on the Division in consultation with Mr Lindsay MacCallum and anyone else who may be suitable. In 2013 the Committee requested the Southern Presbytery, with the concurrence of the Edinburgh congregation, to grant Mr Gracie leave of absence for four weeks in order for him to be able to make greater progress on the writing of the history. This request was granted and Mr Gracie completed a draft of the first nine chapters of the history up to and including the 1996 court case. The Committee were of the view that if a manuscript of the division in 2000 was to be ready for printing by the end of 2014 then Mr Gracie would require more leave of absence. The Committee therefore requested Mr Gracie's Presbytery, again with the concurrence of the Edinburgh congregation, to allow Mr Gracie a further six-week period of leave at some point before the end of 2014 to work on the history, the period to consist of four weeks for completion of the draft and two weeks for revision of the material. While the Committee's request was granted, Mr Gracie, due to an excessive workload, has so far been able to take the time off. To date, the first nine chapters of the book have been proofread and work has begun on Chapter 10. It is hoped that a draft of the complete history will be available for the Committee by October 2015.

Metrical Psalms in the Free Church of Scotland

In June 2014 the Legal Advice & Property Committee forwarded to the Committee a paper prepared by Mr Maurice Grant and Rev. John Keddie entitled *Metrical Psalms in the Free Church of Scotland*. The paper has been circulated to the members of the Committee and it is hoped to make this work available on the Church website in a suitable form soon and possibly in printed form at a later date.

History of the Free Church of Scotland in the 20th Century

A work on the history of the Free Church covering the period from 1900-2010 has been offered to the Committee by Rev. John Keddie. The Committee have put this material on hold until the book on the history of the Division of 2000 has been published.

Subordinate Standards of the Free Church of Scotland

At their October meeting the Committee considered a proposal from Rev. John Keddie advocating the republication of the Westminster Confession of Faith and other subordinate standards and authorised documents of the Church. The suggestion met with their approval and a sub-committee was appointed to carry this forward, initially by obtaining information on the likely timescale and cost of production. The sub-committee has not yet been able to meet.

Other

While not strictly within their remit the Committee noted that the practice which had been followed in recent years of a one-page A4 summary of the major business transacted at the Assembly being compiled for issuing to ministers that they might print and distribute it within their congregations was not followed in 2014. The Committee believe that such a publication is of encouragement and benefit to our people and recommend that it be resumed.

3.4 Storage and Distribution

Mr Bill McQueer is responsible for the storage and distribution of the Committee's stock of publications. In May 2014 the Committee purchased sufficient shelving to ensure that Mr McQueer has adequate storage space for the present stock and archived copies of the Church magazines.

3.5 Book Stock for Sale

At their meeting in June the Committee considered a proposal from Mr Glenn Fraser that the Church provide support to establish a book stock for sale among congregations and at various Church events throughout the year. Bookstalls are currently operated at the General Assembly, the Spring Conference, the Inverness Bible Conference and other meetings but they require separate organisation as there is little or no permanent book stock apart from the Church's own publications, which most people who attend these meetings already have. At their meeting in March the Committee approved this proposal and agreed to include a sum of £2,000 in their budget for 2016 for the purchase of a book stock. It is envisaged that the stock would include bibles and other scripture portions as well as a range of suitable titles. The Committee believe that this is a worthwhile venture in a day when the reading of good books needs to be encouraged and it is possible that it could lead to a reviving of the colportage work in time to come.

3.6 Principles for Publishing

In July the Committee was informed of a meeting of editors of evangelical magazines and newspapers in the UK being organised by Affinity. The purpose of the meeting, as stated by Dr Peter Milsom, Director of Affinity, was "to discuss the possibility of establishing a Code of Conduct to which we can ascribe and which will outline biblical and ethical principles which we should respect in our publications." Rev. William Macleod was invited as editor of the *Witness* but was unable to attend the meeting and the Committee decided not to send anyone in his place. A draft Code of Conduct which had been drawn up by the editor and directors of *Evangelical Times* was circulated by Dr Milsom and the Committee agreed to respond by compiling their own document entitled 'Principles for Publishing', as follows:

Principals for Publishing

The Free Church (Continuing) believe that biblical principles should govern all that we do as Christians, including the important work of publishing. We believe that the Larger Catechism, one of our subordinate standards, contains some very useful instruction on this subject. The relevant sections are given below with the Scripture references and a few comments which the Committee consider are appropriate. The teaching, of course, applies more widely than actual publishing.

Publications Committee

August 2014

The area we are interested in here is covered by the ninth commandment: “*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour*” (Exod. 20:16). The Larger Catechism indicates firstly the duties which are required by this commandment:

Q. 144. *What are the duties required in the ninth commandment?*

A. The duties required in the ninth commandment are, the preserving and promoting of truth between man and man,[b] and the good name of our neighbour, as well as our own;[c] appearing and standing for the truth;[d] and from the heart,[e] sincerely,[f] freely,[g] clearly,[h] and fully,[i] speaking the truth, and only the truth, in matters of judgment and justice,[k] and in all other things whatsoever;[l] a charitable esteem of our neighbours;[m] loving, desiring, and rejoicing in their good name;[n] sorrowing for,[o] and covering of their infirmities;[p] freely acknowledging of their gifts and graces,[q] defending their innocency;[r] a ready receiving of a good report,[s] and unwillingness to admit of an evil report,[t] concerning them; discouraging tale-bearers,[v] flatterers,[w] and slanderers;[x] love and care of our own good name, and defending it when need requireth;[y] keeping of lawful promises;[z] studying and practising of whatsoever things are true, honest, lovely, and of good report.[a]

[b] Zech. 8:16. [c] 3 John 12. [d] Prov. 31:8,9. [e] Ps. 15:2. [f] 2 Chron. 19:9. [g] 1 Sam. 19:4,5.

[h] Josh. 7:19. [i] 2 Sam. 14:18-20. [k] Lev. 19:15. Prov. 14:5,25. [l] 2 Cor. 1:17,18. Eph. 4:25.

[m] Heb. 6:9. 1 Cor. 13:7. [n] Rom. 1:8. 2 John 4. 3 John 3,4. [o] 2 Cor. 2:4. 2 Cor. 12:21.

[p] Prov. 17:9. 1 Pet. 4:8. [q] 1 Cor. 1:4,5,7. 2 Tim. 1:4,5. [r] 1 Sam. 22:14. [s] 1 Cor. 13:6,7. [t] Ps. 15:3.

[v] Prov. 25:23. [w] Prov. 26:24,25. [x] Ps. 101:5. [y] Prov. 22:1. John 8:49. [z] Ps. 15:4. [a] Phil. 4:8.

We may summarise this teaching broadly as follows:

- we should speak the truth about ourselves and others and never anything but the truth, especially in matters of law (“*A faithful witness will not lie: But a false witness will utter lies.*” – Prov. 14:5);
- we should be more ready to speak good of others than to speak ill of them (“[Charity] *Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*” – 1 Cor. 13:7);
- we should discourage those who speak ill of others with little regard for the truthfulness of what they say about them (“*The north wind driveth away rain: So doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.*” – Prov. 25:23).

We believe that although we have an obligation to think the best of others our duty to the truth is paramount. Therefore when an issue of justice or principle arises the truth relating to the individuals involved in the matter must be stated even when it may cause them offence and bring difficulties upon ourselves. (“*But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?*” – Acts 5:3; “*But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.*” – Gal. 2:11; “*But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay*” – 2 Cor. 1:18; “*And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?*” – 1 Kings 18:17; “*Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?*” – Gal. 4:16)

The Larger Catechism then indicates the sins which are forbidden by the ninth commandment:

Q. 145. *What are the sins forbidden in the ninth commandment?*

A. The sins forbidden in the ninth commandment are, all prejudicing the truth, and the good name of our neighbours, as well as our own,[b] especially in public judicature;[c] giving false evidence,[d] suborning false witnesses,[e] wittingly appearing and pleading for an evil cause, out-facing and over-bearing the truth;[f] passing unjust sentence,[g] calling evil good, and good evil; rewarding the wicked according to the work of the righteous, and the righteous according to the work of the wicked;[h] forgery,[i] concealing the truth, undue silence in a just cause,[k] and holding our peace

when iniquity calleth for either a reproof from ourselves,[l] or complaint to others;[m] speaking the truth unseasonably,[n] or maliciously to a wrong end,[o] or perverting it to a wrong meaning,[p] or in doubtful or equivocal expressions, to the prejudice of truth or justice;[q] speaking untruth,[r] lying,[s] slandering,[t] backbiting,[v] detracting,[w] tale-bearing,[x] whispering,[y] scoffing,[z] reviling,[a] rash,[b] harsh,[c] and partial censuring;[d] misconstructing intentions, words, and actions;[e] flattering,[f] vain-glorious boasting,[g] thinking or speaking too highly or too meanly of ourselves or others,[h] denying the gifts and graces of God;[i] aggravating smaller faults;[k] hiding, excusing, or extenuating of sins, when called to a free confession;[l] unnecessary discovering of infirmities;[m] raising false rumours,[n] receiving and countenancing evil reports,[o] and stopping our ears against just defence;[p] evil suspicion;[q] envying or grieving at the deserved credit of any, [r] endeavouring or desiring to impair it,[s] rejoicing in their disgrace and infamy;[t] scornful contempt,[v] fond admiration;[w] breach of lawful promises;[x] neglecting such things as are of good report,[y] and practising, or not avoiding ourselves, or not hindering what we can in others, such things as procure an ill name.[z]

[b] 1 Sam. 17:28. 2 Sam. 16:3. 2 Sam. 1:9,10,15,16. [c] Lev. 19:15. Hab. 1:4. [d] Prov. 19:5. Prov. 6:16,19. [e] Acts 6:13.[f] Jer. 9:3,5. Acts 24:2,5. Ps. 12:3,4. Ps. 52:1-4.[g] Prov. 17:15. 1 Kings 21:9-14.[h] Isa. 5:23. [i] Ps. 119:69. Luke 19:8. Luke 16:5-7. [k] Lev. 5:1. Deut. 13:8. Acts 5:3,8,9. 2 Tim. 4:16. [l] 1 Kings 1:6. Lev. 19:17. [m] Isa. 59:4. [n] Prov. 29:11. [o] 1 Sam. 22:9,10 compared with Ps. 52:title,1-5. [p] Ps. 56:5. John 2:19 compared with Matt. 26:60,61. [q] Gen. 3:5. [r] Isa. 59:13. [s] Lev. 19:11. Col. 3:9. [t] Ps. 50:20. [v] Ps. 15:3. [w] James 4:11. Jer. 38:4. [x] Lev. 19:16. [y] Rom. 1:29,30. [z] Gen. 21:9 compared with Gal. 4:29. [a] 1 Cor. 6:10. [b] Matt. 7:1. [c] Acts 28:4. [d] Gen. 38:24. Rom. 2:1. [e] Neh. 6:6-8. Rom. 3:8. Ps. 69:10. 1 Sam. 1:13-15. 2 Sam. 10:3. [f] Ps. 12:2,3. [g] 2 Tim. 3:2. [h] Luke 18:9,11. Rom. 12:16. 1 Cor. 4:6. Acts 12:22. Exod. 4:10-14. [i] Job 27:5,6. Job 4:6. [k] Matt. 7:3-5. [l] Prov. 28:13. Prov. 30:20. Gen. 3:12,13. Jer. 2:35. 2 Kings 5:25. Gen. 4:9. [m] Gen. 9:22. Prov. 25:9,10. [n] Exod. 23:1. [o] Prov. 29:12. [p] Acts 7:56,57. Job 31:13,14. [q] 1 Cor. 13:5. 1 Tim. 6:4. [r] Num. 11:29. Matt. 21:15. [s] Ezra 4:12,13. [t] Jer. 48:27. [v] Ps. 35:15,16,21. Matt. 27:28,29. [w] Jude 16. Acts 12:22. [x] Rom. 1:31. 2 Tim. 3:3. [y] 1 Sam. 2:24. [z] 2 Sam. 13:12,13. Prov. 5:8,9. Prov. 6:33.

We may summarise this teaching as follows:

- we should not speak falsely about ourselves or others, especially in matters of law (“*A false witness shall not be unpunished, And he that speaketh lies shall not escape.*” – Prov. 19:5);
- we should not be silent when the cause of justice requires us to speak (“*And if a soul sin, and hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness, whether he hath seen or known of it; if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity.*” – Lev. 5:1);
- we should not speak the truth in a way that is unnecessary or is prejudicial to the cause of justice (“*[Charity] Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;*” – 1 Cor. 13:5).

We believe that, notwithstanding the above, whenever there is a public misrepresentation of the facts such that our good name or that of others is defamed or prejudiced we have a right and indeed a duty, for the purpose of vindication, to make the truth of the matter known for the good of all concerned. (“*For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth*” – 2 Cor. 13:8; “*Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.*” – Lev. 19:17; “*Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.*” – Psa. 141:5; “*But speaking the truth in love*” – Eph. 4:15)

The document was sent to Dr Milsom who circulated it to the editors invited to attend the Affinity meeting, which took place on 2nd September. In October Dr Milsom conveyed the meeting’s appreciation of our

document and forwarded a revised draft of the Code of Conduct which had been prepared following the meeting. Certain points in the revised draft caused us concern but following advice from the Principal Clerk that matters relating to Affinity belong within the remit of the Ecumenical Relations Committee our Committee did not communicate further with Affinity but recommended to the Ecumenical Relations Committee that they respond to Affinity as follows: "With regard to the proposed Code of Conduct for Evangelical Magazines and Newspapers prepared by Affinity the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) maintains the right to publish material on issues which other parties, having been afforded due opportunity, have been unwilling to discuss, or on any issue or issues which, being in the public domain, it is legitimate to comment upon as required by the Standards and Practice of the Free Church of Scotland and in keeping with the Principles for Publishing which have been drawn up by the Publications Committee." We forwarded the Principles for Publishing to the Ecumenical Relations Committee and recommended to them that the Church does not sign up to the Affinity Code of Conduct as it is presently drafted.

4. Website

The Church website has been operating reasonably well over the past year with news items, comment pieces and articles being added regularly. Once again we encourage ministers and others to inform the editorial oversight of any events which should be publicised and of any corrections to contacts, addresses, etc., which need to be made. This may be done on the website itself by using the links at the foot of the relevant page.

We were encouraged to learn from the report supplied by the technical overseer to the Committee in March that the traffic to the website has increased to a level where the hosting package may need to be upgraded. The software which runs the site has also reached a point where it needs upgrading for security purposes.

4.1 Social Media

Last year we reported that the Committee was considering the question as to whether the Church should make official use of modern social media such as Facebook and Twitter, to work in conjunction with the Church website. Having investigated the matter the Committee have been persuaded of the benefit of these tools and have agreed to recommend to the denomination the use of a Twitter account and a Facebook page, both under the oversight of the Committee.

The Twitter username '@fccscot' has already been registered by us (without any commitment to it being used). The main aims in having such a facility would be to intimate events taking place in the Church, to advertise new material added to the Church website or appearing elsewhere on the Internet and to make brief comment on issues of importance as they arise. Facebook has proven to be a useful medium, when properly moderated, for raising the profile and promoting the testimony of churches. An 'unofficial' Free Church (Continuing) Facebook group exists which was established by Rev. David Lachman some years ago and which has been operating as a 'closed' group; postings are made by individuals in their own names. Mr Lachman recommends that this group remain unofficial but that the Publications Committee note its existence and ask the owner and administrators to ensure that the discussions are honouring to God and further His work in our Church. He suggests that the Church open and run a new Facebook 'page'. A 'page' has advantages over a 'group' in that the page owner (and anyone who is given administrator privileges) is able to post officially in the name of the Church. People would be able to interact on a subject but the Church's posts would have the central place and other posts would be set apart from them. Mr Lachman thinks it would be wise to have significant coordination between Facebook, the Church website and any other social media which the Church might use. These ideas commend themselves generally to the Committee.

While the Committee appreciate that having come to this view they might simply proceed to establish a presence on both these media they are mindful that when the Church website was set up this was done with the approval of the General Assembly which also approved a policy for its operation. Included in that

policy is the following: “The website will not provide a message board.” (1.2) While Twitter and Facebook are not exactly the same as a ‘message board’ they too may attract undesirable postings and moderation would be required to prevent these from appearing or remaining. The Committee are therefore seeking the Assembly’s permission to operate a Twitter account and a Facebook page on behalf of the denomination.

5. Spring Conference

The Spring Conference took place on Friday 3rd April, the venue once again being the very suitable Kingsview Christian Centre which was kindly made available to us by the Inverness Associated Presbyterian Church. The attendance was similar to the previous year at about 95: there were slightly more adults but fewer children than last year.

The conference was chaired by Rev. Harry Woods and the theme was ‘The Worship of God’. In the morning session Rev. William Macleod, Minister of Knightswood, spoke on ‘Old Testament Worship’. Mr Macleod surveyed the whole Old Testament to demonstrate the principles of worship and to show how it developed under the old covenant. Much helpful detail was provided, particularly from Genesis and such accounts as Cain and Abel worshipping God and Abraham and Isaac on mount Moriah. The awesome holiness of God was brought out from the record of Nadab and Abihu, who offered “strange fire” to the Most High and perished and also from Isaiah’s humbling vision of the Lord in His majesty and glory. These and other passages were used to emphasise the regulative principle of worship: we must only offer to the Lord in our worship what He has first commanded of us in His Word.

In the afternoon session Rev. David Blunt, Minister of North Uist & Grimsay, addressed the topic of ‘New Testament Worship’. Concentrating on public worship Mr Blunt began by defining NT worship and then explained how it was introduced. After indicating three particular principles of NT worship he then referred to the worship in the synagogues as the model for NT worship. Finally he dealt with the various elements of NT worship, dividing them into regular, occasional and extraordinary elements. A question time was held after the second address which led to some interesting responses from the speakers.

It was particularly appropriate this year that there were two Psalmody sessions during the Conference. Those with the adults were run by Rev. Bill Scott, during which both familiar and new tunes were practised. Mrs Scott held similar sessions with the children.

The Committee are most thankful to Rev. Harry Woods for chairing the proceedings, to the two speakers, to the Scotts for running the Psalmody sessions, and all who helped in any way with this year’s Conference, in particular the following: Mr & Mrs Glenn Fraser for their work in organising and running the catering; Mr Lindsay MacCallum for his work as booking secretary; Mr Glenn Fraser for organising and running the bookstall; and Miss Flora MacLeod for organising and running the children’s programme.

While the accounts for this year’s Conference are not yet available it is the case that the pattern over recent years has been a declining attendance and a declining income. The Committee are conscious that there is a need to make the event as economic as possible and will consider ways of doing this when the figures are to hand. The booking fees have not been raised since 2013 and consideration will need to be given to increasing the charges for the 2016 Conference so that the income does not continue to dip – at the same time remembering that too large an increase may have a negative effect by deterring attendance.

6. Audio Ministry

The Audio Ministry which is overseen by Mr Bill McQueer provides a selection of sermons in CD format at a price of £1 each including postage and packing. The sermons are mostly from our own ministers, including retired men, and we believe they are appreciated both within and beyond our Church. A new list containing 53 recordings by 27 different ministers and speakers was prepared and circulated with the January issue of the Witness. Of these recordings 46 were sermons preached in our congregations, including 1 in Gaelic, and the remaining 7 were papers delivered at the 2014 School of Theology in Larbert.

By 30th April a total of 196 CDs had been ordered from the new list by 12 individuals, all from Scotland. In terms of equipment for the Audio Ministry in March the Committee purchased a new printer for printing details on top of the CDs.

7. The Annals of the Free Church of Scotland 1900-2000

Mr Maurice Grant has made some further updates to the Annals where additional information has come to hand, though inevitably the instances of this become less frequent as time goes on. The basic situation regarding the Annals does not change from one year to the next and is unlikely to do so pending a resumption of contacts with the residual body of the Free Church, which presently appears to have no interest in taking forward a production covering the period post-1900.

There has been a development in regard to the period pre-1900 with the launch in February of a website entitled 'ecclegen' which is intended to provide information – mainly genealogical – concerning all Ministers of the Free Church of Scotland from 1843-1900 and their families. The site also contains the texts of William Ewing's *Annals of the Free Church of Scotland* (1914 edition) and Thomas Brown's *Annals of the Disruption* (1892 edition). The address is: <http://ecclegen.com>

8. Disruption 2000 Video

The sub-committee dealing with this subject has not been able to meet during the past year. Although regrettable this is a reflection of what we stated in our introduction, namely that because of the limited time available to those who are engaged in work for the Committee projects have to be prioritised. As the Lord enables every effort will be made to take this matter forward during the coming year.

9. Year Book

The present edition of the Year Book was published in February 2014 when 500 copies were printed, with a further 100 copies being printed two months later. After 80% of the stock had been disbursed the Year Book was placed on the Church website for reading online or downloading. As time elapses after publication an increasing amount of the information contained in the Year Book becomes incorrect and it has therefore been agreed to update the online version periodically. It is planned that a new printed edition of the Year Book will be published early in 2016, D.V.

10. Press Officer

The Committee wish to record their thanks to Rev. John MacLeod (Tarbat) for his work as the Church's Press Officer and are grateful to the Lord for assisting him in his duties since his illness some years ago.

LINDSAY MACCALLUM, *Convener*
JAMES CLARK, *Vice-convener*

PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

1. The General Assembly receive and adopt the report of the Publications Committee and thank the Committee and especially the Convener and Vice-convener;
2. The General Assembly express their gratitude to Rev. William Macleod and Rev. Murdo A.N. Macleod for their work as Editors of the *Witness* and *Explorer* respectively;
3. The General Assembly thank Rev. Alasdair Macleod for his work on the design and layout of the *Witness*;
4. The General Assembly thank Miss Anne MacAulay for her work in providing the puzzle page for the *Explorer*;
5. The General Assembly thank Isobel McQueer for her work as Subscriptions Secretary;

6. The General Assembly thank Mr Bill McQueer for his work as the distributor of the Church's magazines;
7. The General Assembly thank Mrs Fionna Macleod for her diligent work in recording the Church magazines for the blind over many years and pray that the Lord will bless Mrs Susan Furzer who has now taken up this ministry;
8. The General Assembly thank the proof-readers of the magazines for their work;
9. The General Assembly thank all who from time to time contribute articles both to the *Witness* and the *Explorer*;
10. The General Assembly note once again the special June issue of the *Witness*, thank those who contributed to it and pray that it would be used for the extension of Christ's kingdom;
11. The General Assembly note the increasing number of titles on the Church website and pray that they will be a blessing to all who are able to read them in this way;
12. The General Assembly thank those who are engaged in preparing material in the series '*Finding out about...*' and encourage the Committee as they oversee the production of these booklets;
13. The General Assembly note the further progress regarding the preparation of an account of the events leading up to and following the division of 2000. They trust that this work will soon come to its final fruition and pray that all who are involved in it will know the Lord's help;
14. The General Assembly note the various other publishing projects which the Committee have in hand and pray that the Lord will give them every encouragement as they seek to advance them;
15. The General Assembly approve the Committee's recommendation that the practice of compiling a one-page A4 summary of the major business transacted at the Assembly for issuing to ministers for printing and distribution within their congregations be resumed;
16. The General Assembly thank Mr Bill McQueer for his work in storing and distributing the Committee's publications;
17. The General Assembly note the document entitled 'Principles for Publishing' produced by the Committee and commend it as a useful guide to biblical teaching on the subject;
18. The General Assembly thank all who are involved in the running of the Church website, especially Rev. Bert Pohl as technical overseer and Rev. Andrew Allan, Rev. David Blunt and Rev. John J. Murray as editorial overseers;
19. The General Assembly approve the establishing and operation of a Twitter account and a Facebook page for the denomination. They urge the Committee to exercise due care that the Church's involvement in these media be to the glory of God;
20. The General Assembly thank all those involved in the organising and running of the recent Spring Conference and the Inverness Associated Presbyterian Church for the use of the Kingsview Christian Centre. They once again urge ministers to promote the Conference and encourage their people to attend;
21. The General Assembly thank Mr Bill McQueer for his work in producing and distributing CDs of sermons by our ministers. They pray that the Lord will bless this ministry;

22. The General Assembly thank Mr Maurice Grant for his ongoing work in updating information for the Annals of the Free Church of Scotland and once again express the hope that this project may eventually be able to proceed to publication;
23. The General Assembly encourage the Committee in their efforts to advance their project to produce a video on the disruption of the Church in 2000;
24. The General Assembly note the availability of a regularly-updated version of the Year Book on the Church website and the Committee's intention to publish a new printed edition early in 2016;
25. The General Assembly thank Rev. John MacLeod (Tarbat) for his work as the Church's Press Officer and thank the Lord for granting him a significant improvement in his health over the past year.