

III.

REPORT

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATIONS

1. Introduction

The Free Church has always had a burden to circulate edifying literature. In 1843 the Free Church began republishing the Reformed classics – the works of Knox, Dickson, Rutherford and others. For our forefathers, these older works were more conducive to piety than the majority of the contemporary ones, and this principle still holds good today – even more so. Although the Committee is engaged in publishing what it believes to be helpful booklets on various aspects of the Church’s doctrine and practice, these are not meant as a substitute for reading more deeply. Private reading is never to be used as an alternative to attending the public means of grace, but we strongly urge the Lord’s people to read nonetheless.

Thoughts affect actions, and shallow literature will make for shallow piety. Today’s books generally reflect today’s visible church, and neither is in a particularly healthy state. The New Testament does not encourage the church to change, but to contend for “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). Ministers should therefore encourage their congregations to read the Christian classics, which will help them “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12) and “hold fast the form of sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13). There are no *new* heresies nowadays: modern innovations have been there before – though perhaps a different name was used – and those who stood for scriptural truth then can assist us now. Although our denomination is seen as a minority today, it would have been in the majority at the Reformation, and that should never be forgotten.

2. Magazines

In many ways, the oversight of the Church’s magazines represents the most significant aspect of the Committee’s work, and it has certainly been the case during the last year that the magazines have occupied the bulk of the Committee’s time and attention.

2.1 Editors

Once again the Committee express their thanks to the editors of the magazines for the work they have done over the past year. Rev. Murdo A.N. Macleod is continuing as editor of the *Explorer*, with three years remaining of his current term. However, as we intimated last year, Rev. William Macleod is relinquishing his post as editor of the *Witness* at this Assembly.

It hardly needs to be said that our Church owes a huge debt of gratitude to Mr Macleod. He has edited the *Witness* since its inception, and prior to that he edited *Free Church Foundations* – which amounts to twenty years at the helm. Such work is bound to be time-consuming, and can on occasions be difficult and perhaps even frustrating, but Mr Macleod has performed his role with commendable diligence and efficiency, a concern for the spiritual good of his readers and an evident love for his Master. We wish him a well-earned ‘retirement’, although we hope that he will not be laying down his pen altogether!

The Committee are recommending to the Assembly that Rev. David Blunt be appointed as editor of the *Witness* for a four-year period. In addition they are proposing that a number of assistant editors be appointed by the Committee, each for a four-year term, as part of a ‘Magazine Team’. The appointment of assistant editors, and some other changes the Committee believes are desirable, requires that the existing policy for the magazines be changed: a proposed revised policy is found in the next section of our report.

It is envisaged that the assistant editors will be responsible, in coordination with the Editor, for writing, commissioning and otherwise obtaining material for the magazine on a regular basis. One way in which the

workload may be shared is to divide the *Witness* into a number of sections, as is suggested in the current Editorial Policy, which specifies “theological, devotional, historical, ethical, practical and missionary articles,” plus “comment on current affairs in church and state, book reviews, church news” and other items. The responsibility for the different sections would be divided among the editor and assistant editors, although the editor would still have the final say on the overall content of each issue. The general aim of this new arrangement is to make the best possible use of the talent existing within our Church to instruct our people (and others) in the truths for which our Church is privileged to stand.

The following have been approved by the Committee as assistant editors and have indicated their willingness in principle to serve in this capacity, should the proposed revised policy be approved by the General Assembly: Rev. James Clark, Rev. Trevor Kirkland, Rev. Alasdair J. Macleod.

2.2 Policy

The existing policy for the magazines, which was set by an Act of Assembly in 2001 and an amending Act in 2002, is out of date in several respects. For instance, it contains the names of individuals, who are bound to change over time, and some have changed. The policy would also benefit from being made less prescriptive in a number of other areas. Below is the existing policy, followed by the Committee’s proposed revised policy:

Existing Policy

Act XXIII — Act anent Denominational Magazines

(No 23 of Class II)

Edinburgh, 23rd May 2001

The General Assembly approve the following document outlining the job specification for the editors and the outline of editorial policy:

FREE CHURCH WITNESS

Editorial Policy

1. The denominational magazine shall be called the *Free Church Witness* and the supplement for young people shall be called *The Explorer*.
2. The Editor of the *Free Church Witness* is the Rev. William Macleod and the Editor of *The Explorer* is the Rev. Henry J.T. Woods, both appointments to run for a period of four years from May 2000. The Production Manager is the Rev. James Frew.
3. The magazine and its supplement will be produced monthly, with one issue a year covering two months.
4. The material in the magazine and its supplement will be fully consistent with the doctrine, worship and government of the Free Church of Scotland.
5. There will be a balance of theological, devotional, historical, ethical, practical and missionary articles. There will also be comment on current affairs in church and state, book reviews, church news, occasional Gaelic articles, financial information and a church directory. There will be no letters section in the magazine.
6. The magazine will be produced to the highest standard, making use of all the means of modern technology, and maintaining a balance of text, pictures and colour.

7. The magazine will be made available on the web site.

2. Policy for Editors

1. The Editors will be responsible to the Publications Committee. They will have the assistance of a proof-reading committee consisting of the Rev. John MacLeod, *Principal Clerk*, the Rev. David Blunt and Mr Maurice Grant.

2. The Editors will be responsible for the writing and the commissioning of articles.

3. The Editors will be responsible for involving as many people in the Church as possible in producing material for the magazine and acquiring news from around the congregations.

4. The Editors will ensure a proper balance in the content of each issue, considering the needs of all sections of the Church.

3. Policy for Production

1. Once the Editors have determined the articles and features for a particular issue of the magazine all the material will pass to the Production Manager who will have the responsibility for the format and layout in consultation with the editors.

2. The Production Team will have the use of state-of-the-art hardware and publishing software to ensure the highest quality finish to the magazine, the costs to be met within a budget set by the Finance Committee.

Act XVII — Act amending Act XXIII 2001 anent Policy for Editors

(No 17 of Class II)

Edinburgh, 30th May 2002

The General Assembly add the following to section 2 ‘Policy for Editors’ of the policy document approved by the 2001 General Assembly:

5. The Editors will purchase their own computers;

6. The Committee will purchase software for the use of the Editors suitable to the tasks they are required to perform;

7. The Committee will purchase scanners for the use of the Editors when these are required for specific purposes.

Proposed Revised Policy

DENOMINATIONAL MAGAZINE

1. General

1. The title of the denominational magazine is *Free Church Witness* and the title of the supplement for young people is *The Explorer*.

2. The magazine and its supplement shall be produced monthly, with one issue a year covering two months.

3. The material in the magazine and its supplement shall be fully consistent with the doctrine, worship, discipline and government of the Free Church of Scotland.

4. The magazine shall contain a balance of theological, devotional, historical, ethical, practical and missionary articles. There shall also be comment on current affairs in church and state, book reviews, church news, occasional Gaelic articles and financial information. There shall be no letters section in the magazine.

5. The magazine and its supplement shall be produced to the highest standard, making use of all the means of modern technology, and maintaining an appropriate balance of text, images and colour.

6. The magazine and its supplement shall be made available on the Church website.

7. The Publications Committee shall have overall responsibility for the magazine and its supplement.

2. Magazine Team

1. The production of the magazine and its supplement shall be the responsibility of a Magazine Team, who in turn are responsible to the Publications Committee.

2. The Magazine Team shall consist of the Editors, Assistant Editors, Proof Readers and Convener of the Publications Committee.

2.1. Editors

1. The Editor of the *Free Church Witness* and the Editor of *The Explorer* shall both be appointed by the General Assembly for a four-year term, with nominations being made by the Publications Committee. The Editors shall be ministers of the Church. Editors may be reappointed at the end of their term.

2. The Editors shall have overall responsibility for the content of each issue. The Editor of the *Free Church Witness* shall have the assistance of assistant editors.

3. The Editors shall have the assistance of proof readers.

4. The Editors shall be responsible for ensuring a proper balance in the content of each issue, considering the needs of the whole Church.

5. The Editors shall have the final say on the content of each issue.

6. The Editors shall purchase their own computers for use in work on the magazine and its supplement.

7. The Publications Committee shall purchase software for the Editors as necessary to enable them to perform the tasks the Publications Committee requires of them.

2.2. Assistant Editors

1. The Assistant Editors of the *Free Church Witness* shall be three in number and shall each be appointed by the Publications Committee for a four-year term. The Assistant Editors shall ordinarily be ministers or elders of the Church. Assistant Editors may be reappointed at the end of their term.

2. The Assistant Editors shall be responsible, in coordination with the Editor, for writing, commissioning and obtaining material for the magazine on a regular basis.

2.3. Proof Readers

1. The Proof Readers of the magazine and its supplement shall be three in number and shall

appointed by the Publications Committee as required.

2.4. Convener of Publications Committee

1. The Convener of the Publications Committee shall be a member of the Magazine Team *ex officio*.
2. The Convener of the Publications Committee shall be responsible for liaison between the Magazine Team and the Publications Committee, and shall ensure that there is regular contact between the Magazine Team and the Publications Committee.

3. Design and Layout

1. The Publications Committee shall be responsible for assigning the design and layout of the magazine and its supplement to an appropriate individual, individuals or company, with the costs to be met within the budget of the Publications Committee.

4. Printing

1. The Publications Committee shall be responsible for assigning the printing of the magazine and its supplement to an appropriate company, with the costs to be met within the budget of the Publications Committee.

This policy replaces Act XXIII 2001 (Act anent Denominational Magazines) and Act XVII 2002 (Act amending Act XXIII 2001 anent Policy for Editors).

2.3 Production

The Committee was faced with a considerable difficulty when Rev. Alasdair Macleod indicated to the Committee last April that he intended to resign from his role in the design and layout of the *Witness*. Our hope was to find a replacement from within the Church, but none was forthcoming. In September Mr Derek McDougall of DM Design & Print in Inverness, who is responsible for the printing of the magazines, took on the work as a last resort, and for a nominal sum each month.

It is fair to say that the quality of the work since then has not matched the high standard maintained previously, and this has been reflected in criticisms of the design and layout which have been conveyed to the Committee on the part of individuals who receive the *Witness*. For this reason, and after having carefully researched the various options available to them, the Committee recently agreed to move the design and layout of both the *Witness* and the *Explorer* (the work on the latter is currently done by the editor) to Donald Smith Graphic Design of Aberdeen, beginning with the July-August double issue. This new arrangement has been made with the consent of the editor of the *Explorer*, and the Committee believe that it will result in a consistency in the design of the two magazines (which are really one magazine and a 'supplement'), give a 'professional' look to both magazines, and relieve ministers of a burden of work which ideally should not be placed upon them. The move will of course result in an additional cost, and the Finance & Sustentation Committee has been made aware of this.

The Committee has also agreed to transfer the printing of the magazines from DM Design & Print to Quinns of Belfast, a move which should result in a substantial saving on cost. This new arrangement will also commence with the July-August double issue.

We are thankful to Miss Anne MacAulay, who continues to prepare the puzzle page in the *Explorer* and to mark the entries sent in by children each month.

2.4 Subscriptions and Distribution

The Committee are grateful to Mrs Isobel McQueer for her efficient work as Subscriptions Secretary, and likewise to Mr Bill McQueer who distributes the Church magazines. The feasibility of enabling digital subscriptions to the *Witness* through the Church website, with payments via PayPal, has been explored. However, the upgrades to the site which would be required to enable merchant processing and provide the necessary increased security would have a yearly cost of at least £350 and perhaps as much as £550, and this may be prohibitive.

Mrs Susan Furzer continues to record the magazines for the blind and we pray that the Lord will richly bless her work.

2.5 Circulation

Subscription rates for the *Witness* (including the *Explorer*) were unchanged for 2016. Below are the circulation figures for the *Witness* at the end of April 2017, with the equivalent figures for the end of April 2016 (subscription to the *Witness* includes the *Explorer*):

Print Run:	2017	2016
Magazine:		
<i>Witness</i>	1000	1000
<i>Explorer</i>	1100	1100
Monthly Circulation:		
Subscriptions:		
UK Congregational	566	571
UK Individual	128	107
Overseas	59	50
<u>Total</u>	<u>753</u>	<u>728</u>
Complimentary Copies:		
UK	21	22
Overseas	19	11
<u>Total</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>33</u>
Trade Orders:		
UK	25	27
Overseas	0	0
<u>Total</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>27</u>
<u>Overall Totals:</u>	<u>818</u>	<u>788</u>

(Note:- In addition to the above, an extra 72 (83) copies of the *Witness* are currently sent to various congregations for free distribution, and an extra 120 (120) copies of the *Explorer* are currently sent to congregations and individuals separately from the *Witness*. This makes a total circulation for the *Witness* of 890 (871) copies and a total circulation for the *Explorer* of 938 (908) copies. Also 15 copies of each magazine are archived each month, being reduced to a permanent 2 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.)

We are thankful that after some years of decline there has been a modest increase in the overall number of subscriptions. There are still plenty of copies spare however. Some congregations receive extra copies of the magazines free of charge each month from the Subscriptions Secretary, to distribute locally, and similar requests from other congregations would be welcome. If subscribers wish to pay a subscription for their local library, nursing home or hospital, as already happens in some places, then the Subscriptions Secretary will be happy to hear from them. She continues to appreciate the emails and letters she receives from people who enjoy reading the magazines.

This year, in addition to the regular print run, 13,000 copies of the special evangelistic June issue of the *Witness* are being printed for distribution by our congregations and Home Mission Worker (the figure last year was 17,000). The price for these extra copies remains 25p each and, God willing, orders should be available for collection at the Assembly. Entitled *Good News*, and left undated so that they can be used at any time, these magazines are a valuable tool in the Church's great task of spreading the gospel message of God's saving grace in Jesus Christ. We urge everyone to plead with the Lord that He would bless these magazines to many.

3. Publications

It is perhaps inevitable, given our small size as a Church, and the existence of so many other publishers, that our output of titles is limited, but it is important that we continue to publish worthwhile material.

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 2017 (with figures for 2016 in brackets). Any anomalies in the figures are due to miscounting in previous years, return of stock, and the fact that sometimes the printer will supply more copies of a title than the quantity which was actually ordered:

- (a) *Where is God now Gone?* by Rev. John J. Murray (1250 copies printed in November 2003): 1249 copies now sold or distributed free (1225); 1 copy remaining. (The Books Organiser has 16 copies of a reprint organised by the Home Mission Worker.)
- (b) *Sing the Lord's Song* by Rev. John W. Keddie (500 copies provided to Committee in May 2004): 359 copies now sold or distributed free (348); 141 copies remaining.
- (c) *Echoes from Scotland's Heritage of Grace* by Rev. Hugh M. Ferrier (first printed in May 2007): 416 copies now sold (416); 1 copy in stock.
- (d) *The Five Points of Calvinism* by Rev. John W. Keddie (750 copies printed in May 2010): 494 copies now sold or distributed free (486); 256 copies remaining.
- (e) *The Lord's Supper* by Rev. John Morrison (500 copies printed in May 2011): 420 copies now sold or distributed free (409); 80 copies remaining.
- (f) *The Shorter Catechism* (500 copies printed in May 2012; 750 copies reprinted in May 2013): 616 copies now sold or distributed free (604); 634 copies remaining.
- (g) *The Right of Continued Protest* (80 copies printed in December 2013; 80 copies reprinted in March 2014): 148 copies now sold or distributed free (148); 12 copies remaining;
- (h) *Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) Year Book 2004-15* (500 copies printed in February 2014; 100 copies reprinted in April 2014): 596 copies now sold or distributed free (591); 4 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 (187); 13 copies remaining.

(j) *Worship* by Rev. James Clark (500 copies printed in June 2015):
232 copies now sold or distributed free (304); 268 copies remaining.

(k) *Baptism* (500 copies printed in October 2015):
71 copies now sold or distributed free (32); 429 copies remaining.

(In addition to the above the Committee has 3 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 the content and prices, is on the Church website at:
www.freechurchcontinuing.org/publications/books/list-of-publications

Titles which are either no longer available and are unlikely to be reprinted, or are still in print but will not be reprinted, are placed on the Church website for reading online and/or downloading at:

www.freechurchcontinuing.org/publications/books:

The following titles are available:

Giving to the Lord by Rev. John W. Keddie;

The Reformation 1560 by Rev. John J. Murray;

Scottish Independence: An examination of the Scottish Government's proposals for Scottish independence. Also the 8-page *Scottish Independence: A Summary*.

(*When Justice Failed in Church and State* by Rev. Iain H. Murray & Dr Murdoch Murchison is also available, although not published by the Church.)

The text of *The Right of Continued Protest* is available at:

www.freechurchcontinuing.org/about/other-documents/item/the-right-of-continued-protest

Finally there are 1656 copies remaining of the leaflet *Remembering the Church in your Will* which are stocked by the Committee on behalf of the Finance & Sustentation Committee. The latter Committee may wish to consider a further distribution of these leaflets with the *Witness* later this year.

3.2 New Publications

Booklets

One new title in the '*Finding out about...*' series, which deals with issues of theological and practical importance to our people and Christians in general, was prepared for publication during the past year, namely *Presbyterianism* by Rev. David Blunt.

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 development: Church Discipline (draft submitted), Church Membership (final text submitted), Eldership (final text submitted), Funerals (draft submitted), Marriage (draft in preparation, based on addresses given at the 2017 Spring Conference) and Presbyterianism (ready for publication).

Books

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.

Some progress has been made on the book over the past year. The Introduction and the first ten chapters of the history have been revised and improved. This has taken some time, because of the technical nature of the material included in these chapters. It is believed, however, that the extra effort has been worthwhile. Because of the concentration on this revision, no new chapters have been added, meaning that a third of the

book remains to be completed. However these chapters should be easier to write and therefore less time-consuming. Like all our ministers, Mr Gracie has other commitments. The Committee believes that Mr Gracie is the best person for this job, but if he cannot find the time required for it, the Committee will have to consider appointing someone else to finish the work. The Committee wrote to Mr Gracie and Mr MacCallum recently, expressing their interest in the work and urging them to persevere with it.

Metrical Psalmody in the Free Church of Scotland

The paper prepared by Mr Maurice Grant and Rev. John Keddie entitled *Metrical Psalmody in the Free Church of Scotland*, which was prepared for the Legal Advice & Property Committee in 2013, has now been uploaded to the Church website as a pdf at the following link:

www.freechurchcontinuing.org/publications/books/item/metrical-psalmody-in-the-free-church-of-scotland

The Committee will be giving consideration as to whether the work should be made available in printed form.

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

We reported last year that Rev. John Keddie has written a work on the history of the Free Church covering the period from 1900-2010, and has offered the draft to the Committee. The Committee have put this material on hold until the book on the history of the Division of 2000 has been published, which has allowed Mr Keddie to make some improvements to his draft.

Subordinate Standards of the Free Church of Scotland

The sub-committee appointed to consider the feasibility of publishing the Church's own edition of its subordinate standards, which is obviously a major undertaking, has still not been able to meet.

Acts & Proceedings of the General Assembly

In last year's report we referred to the desirability of digitising the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly (and ideally also Reports to the Assembly) going back to the Disruption in 1843. Regrettably the Committee has not been able to make any progress on this. By way of information, the following documents are known to be available as searchable pdfs, either on the Church website or on a CD produced by Rev. Henry Woods:

Acts of Assembly: 1843-1999 (on CD); 2000-16 (on Church website)

Proceedings of Assembly: 2003-16 (on Church website)

Reports to Assembly: 2014-16 (on Church website).

Other

The Committee have requested Rev. Trevor Kirkland and Rev. Raymond Kemp to produce an article for publication which sets out the Church's principles, beliefs and practice in a brief yet comprehensive way. It is felt that such a publication is greatly needed, particularly for the instruction of our young people but also for handing to enquirers. The article is currently in the planning stage.

3.4 Storage and Distribution

Mr Bill McQueer is responsible for the storage and distribution of the Church's publications, and for fulfilling orders which come in from congregations and individuals. We are thankful to him for his work over another year.

3.5 Books Organiser

Mr Glenn Fraser serves as Books Organiser on behalf of the Committee, maintaining a stock of bibles and other Christian literature for sale among our congregations and at various Church events throughout the

year. The total income from sales in the year since April 2016 was close to £3,000. Included in that figure was the income from two sales which were held at Westhill in December, and one at the Spring Conference in April; the latter was particularly encouraging, with sales of new books reaching nearly £500. Mr Fraser also has a stock of second-hand books and the proceeds from the sale of these books over the same period amounted to just under £400, the income being donated as before to our Church's work in Spain. A pressing need is a vehicle suitable for transporting large quantities of books to the various venues, and at some point Mr Fraser would like to hand over his work as Books Organiser to someone else.

4. Website and Social Media

It is apparent to us all that electronic media are increasingly being used for the communication and reception of information, and it is predominantly by these means that organisations now present a face to the world. It is important therefore that the Church makes good use of these modern media, in a way consistent with her message and her standards.

4.1 Website

The Church website has been updated regularly over the past year to take account of changes in personnel, contact details, etc., as those who have editorial oversight of the website have been notified of them. For the website to work as it should, it is vital that any such changes are indicated immediately, and links at the foot of the relevant pages enable this to be done.

The addition of new material to the website has continued on a regular basis. The Church magazines are available for reading online or downloading approximately one month after publication. During the past year, sixteen recordings have been added to the Sermons section, nine items to the Articles section, thirty-seven items to the Denominational News section, and five items to the Current Comment section. The Committee are grateful to all who provide this material, and to Rev. Bert Pohl, who continues as Technical Overseer of the website.

The Committee recognise that the website, while generally working well, would benefit from a redesign, and hope to take this forward over the next year. There is also the possibility of hosting congregational websites on the same server as the denominational site. While the present package would need to be upgraded (doubling in price from US\$70 to US\$140 per year), the result would be that the capacity would exist to host a website from every congregation in the Church, saving congregations whatever they currently pay for web hosting (which is typically around £50 per year). The Committee is therefore keen to hear from any congregations which would be interested in such an arrangement.

4.2 Social Media

The Church's Twitter account, which was launched in June 2015, had gained 324 followers by the end of April this year, compared to 180 at the same point in 2016. The regular tweets contain Bible verses, publicity for new items on the Church website, quotes on reformed doctrine and the Christian life, and verses from the Metrical Psalms. The Facebook page was launched in September 2015 and at the end of April this year had 703 followers, compared to 557 at the same point last year. The Twitter account feeds into the Facebook page, so the two carry essentially the same content. The use of social media has resulted in a significant number of contacts with people beyond our Church, and enquiries regarding our Church's beliefs and practices.

5. Spring Conference

The Spring Conference took place on Friday 14th April, in the usual venue of Kingsview Christian Centre, which was once again made available to us by the Inverness Associated Presbyterian Church. The Conference was chaired by Rev. Timothy McGlynn (Aberdeen) and the theme was *Reclaiming Marriage*. The speaker at both sessions was Rev. Graeme Craig (Stornoway). The first address was on 'The Pattern for Marriage' and the second on 'The Practice of Marriage': the recordings are available on the Church website. The addresses were well-received and are worthy of being listened to by single people considering

marriage, newly-wed couples or even seasoned married couples. Two Psalmody sessions were run by Rev. & Mrs Bill Scott.

The Committee are thankful to Mr McGlynn for kindly chairing the Conference, to Mr Craig as the speaker, and to the Scotts for running the Psalmody sessions. They also thank 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 Mrs Flora Roberts for organising and running the children's programme.

The attendance was slightly down from the previous year: 75 adults and 16 children were present, making a total of 91, compared to 105 last year. We are pleased however that some new people were in attendance.

The Conference has always been held on the date of the Friday Public Holiday in Spring and the provisional date for next year's Conference is Friday 30th March 2018 (D.V.). However it appears that the present venue may not be available on that date, and on the date of the same public holiday in subsequent years. While the Committee are willing to consider alternative venues if necessary, it is believed that the present venue is very suitable. The situation requires that we consider once again the question of the timing of the Conference, which we raised in last year's report. There is considerable scope within the Spring period. The various possibilities would appear to be:

- (i) continue to hold the Conference on the date used hitherto, with a probable need to find a new venue from 2018 onwards. The date of this public holiday can fall at any point from 20th March to 23rd April;
- (ii) hold the Conference on a Saturday during the Highland school holidays, thus avoiding the date used hitherto and therefore the need to find a new venue. These holidays last for approximately two-and-a-half weeks but their dates vary: in 2017 the holiday ran from Thursday 6th April to Sabbath 23rd April; in 2018 it is due to run from Thursday 29th March to Sabbath 15th April;
- (iii) hold the Conference on the Friday of the same calendar week every year, irrespective of whether that Friday falls within the Highland Council school holiday period. If in any year the date of the Conference fell on the date used hitherto, there would probably be a need to find a different venue for that year.

The Committee invite all interested parties to make their views on this matter known to the Committee.

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, especially by those who have difficulty in attending public worship. A new list containing 50 recordings by 26 different ministers was prepared and circulated with the January issue of the *Witness*. Of these recordings, 43 were sermons, including 1 in Gaelic, and the remaining 7 were papers delivered at the 2016 School of Theology in Larbert. By 30th April a total of 136 CDs had been ordered from the new list by 9 individuals, 8 from Scotland and 1 from Wales.

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

Mr Maurice Grant continues to update the database for the Annals project as further information becomes available, particularly on the early post-1900 ministers. The main source of this information is the Census returns for 1901 and 1911, though in some cases information can also be gleaned from wills, obituaries and other relevant sources. Unfortunately, due to the time and effort spent on other areas of its responsibility, the Committee has not been able to make progress on the suggestion made by Rev. Ronald Christie and referred to in last year's report, namely publishing the information gathered for the project on a website.

8. Disruption 2000 Video

This project dates back to 2002, when the Committee set up a small group to prepare a transcript of the background and events leading up to the division of January 2000. The aim was to produce a video making use of original footage and enhanced by interviews with some of the leading figures involved. As we reported last year, the existing footage, which has been digitised by Rev. Andrew Allan, is of poor quality, and, notwithstanding the importance of the subject, much work needs to be done to produce anything that would be suitable for the public. Unfortunately it has not been possible to make any further progress on this project during the past year.

9. Year Book

Although the text of the draft has been kept updated, the new edition of the Year Book has not yet been published. God willing, publication will take place shortly after the General Assembly, taking account of the changes to personnel which result from the Assembly. The new edition will also be placed on the Church website for reading online or downloading.

10. Media Officer

The Committee wish to record their thanks once again to Rev. John MacLeod (Tarbat) for his work as the Church's Media Officer. We trust that he will be sustained by the Lord in carrying out this and his other responsibilities.

JAMES CLARK, *Convener*
JOHN N. GILLIES, *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, Vice-convener and Clerk;
- 2.1 The General Assembly thank Rev. William Macleod and Rev. Murdo A.N. Macleod for their work as editors of the *Witness* and the *Explorer* respectively. They note that Rev. William Macleod is now relinquishing the editorship of the *Witness* and they express their deep gratitude to him for his lengthy and diligent service to the Church in this role;
- 2.2 The General Assembly appoint Rev. David M. Blunt as editor of the *Witness* for a period of four years;
- 2.3 The General Assembly approve the following revised policy for the denominational magazine:

DENOMINATIONAL MAGAZINE

1. The 1. General

title of the denominational magazine shall be *Free Church Witness* and the title of the supplement for young people shall be *The Explorer*.

2. The magazine and its supplement shall be produced monthly, with one issue a year covering two months.

3. The material in the magazine and its supplement shall be fully consistent with the doctrine, worship, discipline and government of the Free Church of Scotland.

4. The magazine shall contain a balance of theological, devotional, historical, ethical, practical and missionary articles. There shall also be comment on current affairs in church

and state, book reviews, church news, occasional Gaelic articles and financial information. There shall be no letters section in the magazine.

5. The magazine and its supplement shall be produced to the highest standard, making use of all the means of modern technology, and maintaining an appropriate balance of text, images and colour.

6. The magazine and its supplement shall be made available on the Church website.

7. The Publications Committee shall have overall responsibility for the magazine and its supplement.

2. Magazine Team

1. The production of the magazine and its supplement shall be the responsibility of a Magazine Team, who in turn are responsible to the Publications Committee.

2. The Magazine Team shall consist of the Editors, Assistant Editors, Proof Readers and Convener of the Publications Committee.

2.1. Editors

1. The Editor of the *Free Church Witness* and the Editor of *The Explorer* shall both be appointed by the General Assembly for a four-year term, with nominations being made by the Publications Committee. The Editors shall be ministers of the Church. Editors may be reappointed at the end of their term.

2. The Editors shall have overall responsibility for the content of each issue. The Editor of the *Free Church Witness* shall have the assistance of assistant editors.

3. The Editors shall have the assistance of proof readers.

4. The Editors shall be responsible for ensuring a proper balance in the content of each issue, considering the needs of the whole Church.

5. The Editors shall have the final say on the content of each issue.

6. The Editors shall purchase their own computers for use in work on the magazine and its supplement.

7. The Publications Committee shall purchase software for the Editors as necessary to enable them to perform the tasks the Publications Committee requires of them.

2.2. Assistant Editors

1. The Assistant Editors of the *Free Church Witness* shall be three in number and shall each be appointed by the Publications Committee for a four-year term. The Assistant Editors shall ordinarily be ministers or elders of the Church. Assistant Editors may be reappointed at the end of their term.

2. The Assistant Editors shall be responsible, in coordination with the Editor, for writing, commissioning and obtaining material for the magazine on a regular basis.

2.3. Proof Readers

1. The Proof Readers of the magazine and its supplement shall be three in number and are appointed by the Publications Committee as required.

2.4. Convener of Publications Committee

1. The Convener of the Publications Committee shall be a member of the Magazine Team *ex officio*.

2. The Convener of the Publications Committee shall be responsible for liaison between the Magazine Team and the Publications Committee, and shall ensure that there is regular contact between the Magazine Team and the Publications Committee.

3. Design and Layout

1. The Publications Committee shall be responsible for assigning the design and layout of the magazine and its supplement to an appropriate individual, individuals or company, with the costs to be met within the budget of the Publications Committee.

4. Printing

1. The Publications Committee shall be responsible for assigning the printing of the magazine and its supplement to an appropriate company, with the costs to be met within the budget of the Publications Committee.

This policy replaces Act XXIII 2001 (Act anent Denominational Magazines) and Act XVII 2002 (Act amending Act XXIII 2001 anent Policy for Editors).;

- 2.4 The General Assembly note that Rev. James Clark, Rev. Trevor Kirkland and Rev. Alasdair J. Macleod have been approved by the Committee as assistant editors and have indicated their willingness in principle to serve in this capacity;
- 2.5 The General Assembly thank Mr Derek McDougall of DM Design & Print for his recent work on the design and layout of the *Witness*, and for organising the printing of the Church magazines over the last four years;
- 2.6 The General Assembly thank Miss Anne MacAulay for her work in providing the puzzle page for the *Explorer*;
- 2.7 The General Assembly thank Mrs Isobel McQueer for her work as Subscriptions Secretary;
- 2.8 The General Assembly thank Mr Bill McQueer for his work as the distributor of the Church's magazines;
- 2.9 The General Assembly thank Mrs Susan Furzer for her work in recording the Church magazines for the blind;
- 2.10 The General Assembly thank the proof-readers of the magazines for their work;
- 2.11 The General Assembly thank all who from time to time contribute articles both to the *Witness* and the *Explorer*;
- 2.12 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;
- 3.1 The General Assembly thank those who have written, or are engaged in writing, material in the series '*Finding out about...*' and encourage the Committee as they oversee the production of these booklets;
- 3.2 The General Assembly note the lack of progress on the preparation of an account of the events leading up to and following the division of 2000. They urge the authors and the Committee to give what

- priority they can to this work, and to bring it to completion as rapidly as is possible;
- 3.3 The General Assembly note the other publishing projects which the Committee have either completed or are pursuing and pray that the Lord will grant the Committee every help as they seek to advance them;
 - 3.4 The General Assembly thank Mr Bill McQueer for his work in storing and distributing the Committee's publications;
 - 3.5 The General Assembly thank Mr Glenn Fraser for his work as Books Organiser and pray that the Lord will bless the circulation of bibles and good literature;
 - 4.1 The General Assembly thank those who operate 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. They encourage the Committee to pursue a redesign of the website to increase its attractiveness to visitors and usefulness to the Church;
 - 4.2 The General Assembly note with pleasure that the awareness of and interest in the Church which is generated by the Church's Twitter account and Facebook page continues to increase. They pray that the Committee will be given wisdom as they continue to exploit the power of social media to promote the cause of Christ;
 - 5 The General Assembly thank everyone involved in the organising and running of the recent Spring Conference, including the Inverness Associated Presbyterian Church which once again granted the use of the Kingsview Christian Centre. They urge ministers to promote the Conference and encourage their people to attend;
 6. The General Assembly thank Mr Bill McQueer for his ongoing work in producing and distributing CDs of sermons and lectures by our ministers. They pray that the Lord will use this ministry for the spiritual good of many;
 7. The General Assembly thank Mr Maurice Grant for his continuing work in gathering information for the Annals of the Free Church of Scotland. They direct the Committee to pursue the possibility of the publication of the material on the Internet;
 8. The General Assembly note the lack of progress on the project to produce a video on the disruption of the Church in 2000. They urge the Committee to make every attempt to take this project forward;
 9. The General Assembly note the delay in the publication of the new edition of the Year Book. They direct the Committee to have the Year Book printed as soon as possible after the rising of the Assembly;
 10. The General Assembly thank Rev. John MacLeod (Tarbat) for his work as the Church's Media Officer over the past year.