

X.
REPORT
OF THE
TRAINING OF THE MINISTRY & ADMISSIONS COMMITTEE

1. Seminary Lecturers

The Committee noted the retirement of Rev. John Morrison from his position as Systematic Theology lecturer in our Seminary. Mr Morrison has held the post since the Seminary was formed in 2003 and has given dedicated and sterling service to the Seminary, students and the Church. We wish Mr Morrison a long and happy retirement to be able to spend time with his wife Agnes and their family.

With the forthcoming translation of Rev. Gavin Beers from the Ayr congregation to Mebane, USA, the Committee noted his resignation from his position as lecturer in Hebrew & Old Testament in the Seminary. Mr. Beers has been in the post from 2009. We wish him and his family the blessing of the Lord as they seek to serve our denomination in the USA.

Both men will be sorely missed and we thank them for their willingness to serve the Church.

The Committee, in line with present legislation, has taken the necessary steps to fill the vacancies that will result from the above moves. All Presbyteries were informed of the upcoming vacancies, and were invited to submit to the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee one or more nominations for the posts of lecturer in Systematic Theology and lecturer in Hebrew & Old Testament studies.

The returns received are the subject of a Supplementary Report.

2. Act XIV 2016 Act anent Divinity Students in USA

The Addendum passed by the Assembly last year, anent Divinity Students in the United States of America, caused some consternation to the Committee. The proposed Addendum had not been before the Committee, and had not been approved by the USA Presbytery. The Committee noted with concern that the Act had effectively taken the approval of some students from America out of the hands of the Committee, and placed it into the hands of the USA Presbytery.

Nevertheless the Committee have approached our USA brethren to enquire how best we may proceed. Proposals have been drawn up to repeal the 2016 Act, and to bring forward new legislation which would meet the needs of the USA students and satisfy the concerns of the Committee.

The proposed new legislation covers all Presbyteries, stipulating that the External Examiners will now produce the Exit Examinations, which is a return to the practice prior to 1994. These new Exit Examinations will take account of the theological studies undertaken by mature students in America. This will ensure a level playing field for all students within the denomination, while at the same time taking account of the unique situation faced by some American students. Following the consultation which has taken place, it is hoped the USA Presbytery will be supportive of the new legislation. The proposed new legislation is detailed in the proposed Deliverance.

3. Student Update

There are two students in the Seminary at present and they are proving to be capable and diligent. One new student, who was scheduled to commence his studies this September, may not now enter the Seminary. Please remember these men in prayer.

4. Student Handbook

Any man considering applying to become a student for the ministry in our denomination should seek to familiarise himself with the Students' Handbook. In the Handbook the student will find vital information about the course of studies to be undertaken and what is expected of him. The Committee would encourage Ministers, Kirk Sessions and Presbyteries to familiarise themselves with the Handbook, in order to be able to help any approaching them regarding applying for the ministry in our denomination.

5. Lecture Notes Translation

The Committee were approached asking if they could facilitate the translation of the Seminary lecture notes into Spanish. The Committee, having been instructed by the Assembly to support Mr Ruiz and the Kirk Session in their efforts to bring the Gospel and the doctrines of grace to the Spanish-speaking world, passed the request onto the Seminary Committee with their commendation.

6. Seminary Rent

The Committee met with Inverness Greyfriars Deacons' Court and discussed the rental agreement for the Seminary's use of their building. After some fruitful discussion it was agreed that the annual Seminary rent be reduced from £250 to £200 per month with effect from 1st January 2017 and until further notice.

7. Seminary Constitution

Work on revising the Seminary Constitution is underway. A Constitution for the Free Church College was approved in 1979 by the General Assembly. Our own Seminary was established in 2003. The College (Seminary) Committee felt that it was necessary to revise the Constitution to reflect our own new circumstances, and so the preparation of an updated Constitution was put in hand. Involved in this process was the desire to clarify the matter of private students seeking to undertake the courses wholly by distance learning. An attempt has been made to make this as comprehensive as possible. Together with the annually produced Seminary Handbook, this Constitution will largely regulate the operations of the Seminary and its work. A proposed draft of the new Constitution will be available to Commissioners at the General Assembly, in the hope that a final version will be presented to a future General Assembly or to one of its Commissions for approval.

ANDREW R. ALLAN, *Convener*
RAYMOND A. KEMP, *Vice-convener*

SEMINARY REPORT

We are thankful to the Lord that two students began studies for the ministry in September. It is always an encouragement to the Church when the Lord puts it in men's hearts to desire the work of the ministry. Though there are some private distance-learning students, at present the Seminary lecturers are not taking on any others. It has been felt that some distinct policy in relation to private (distance-learning) students is required to be worked out. To this end an exercise has been undertaken to establish a Constitution for the Seminary. It is hoped to present this to the General Assembly through the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee. In effect it is a revision and updating of the last Constitution agreed in 1979.

One sadness to report is the fact that two lecturers are laying down their Seminary work this year. Rev. John Morrison has been lecturer in Systematic Theology since the outset of the Seminary in 2003. He is retiring from the work. Rev. Gavin Beers, who took on the lectureship in Hebrew & Old Testament in 2009, has accepted a call to our congregation in Mebane, North Carolina. Both men will be greatly missed by the Seminary. What a blessing from the Lord it has been to have had such skilled theologians and tutors teaching our students. We are gratified that Mr Morrison has recovered so well from his surgery this year. In the goodness of the Lord, congregations will continue to have the pleasure and challenge of their preaching. May these men be blessed by the Lord in their lives and continuing ministries. May those who replace them know the Lord's grace and help, as they take up this important work for Him.

Once again this year a Seminary Journal has been published with contributions from each of the lecturers. Copies should be available at the General Assembly (DV).

Our prayer to the Lord is that He would bless the work of the Seminary and its lecturers and that He would be pleased to raise up men for our ministry. Our thanks are expressed to the congregation and Deacons' Court of Greyfriars Free Church (Continuing) for the use of the building at Westhill as a location for the Seminary work.

John W. Keddie, *Principal*

PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

1. The General Assembly receive and adopt the Report of the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee and thank the Committee, especially the Convener and also the Clerk for his diligent efforts throughout the year;
2. The General Assembly thank the Principal and lecturers in the Seminary for their work over the past year;
3. The General Assembly covet the prayers of the Church for all our students;
4. The General Assembly note with approval the work done on a new Constitution for the Seminary and direct the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee to present a final version of the Constitution for approval to the 2018 General Assembly, or to a Commission of Assembly if appropriate;
5. The General Assembly, recognising the problems being encountered by students from the Presbytery of the United States of America, and the need to maintain high and uniform standards of training for students throughout the denomination repeal Act XIV (Class II) 2016, anent Divinity students in USA;
6. The General Assembly, having taken under their serious consideration the great danger to which the interests of religion and of this Church may be exposed by licensing any to preach the gospel who are not duly qualified for that important trust, and also noting the ministerial problems presently being experienced within the Presbytery of the United States of America, do hereby enact and ordain the following regarding students from within the bounds of the Presbytery of the United States of America:-
 1. Students from within the bounds of the Presbytery of the United States of America shall be required to complete a minimum of one Session in the Free Church (Continuing) Seminary, during which time they shall study Scottish Church History [including the history of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)], Free Church Principles, Free Church Practice, and whatever other subjects the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee may deem appropriate.
 2. Any student from within the bounds of the Presbytery of the United States of America who has not previously entered into formal divinity studies shall, after completing approved pre-divinity studies as determined by the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee, undertake the normal course in the Free Church (Continuing) Seminary.
 3. The General Assembly reaffirm that the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee may, at their discretion, credit a student with approved theological studies

undertaken in institutions in the United States of America.

4. To assist the Committee in its work, the Presbytery of the United States of America shall furnish the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee with an up-to-date list of recommended courses in theological institutions within its bounds.
 5. A student must make application in the first instance to the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee before beginning a proposed course of study.
 6. Students must produce to the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee satisfactory evidence, including certificates under the hands of the Professors whose classes they have attended, that they have satisfactorily completed the relevant courses, and that their attendance has been regular, their diligence satisfactory, and their conduct so far as may be known, suitable.
 7. The General Assembly affirm that it shall be required of the Presbytery of the United States of America, in consultation with the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee, to be satisfied as regards the appropriateness of a congregation to which any student studying in an American institution wishes to affiliate.
 8. Notwithstanding the above, students within the bounds of the Presbytery of the United States of America shall sit the requisite Entrance and Exit Examinations as set by the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee, as well as the full schedule of Presbytery examinations. They shall also be required to submit, and have sustained, three discourses.
7. The General Assembly, committed to ensuring high standards of education for those studying for the holy ministry, and seeking to ensure that there is a uniform standard for all students receiving a Certificate of Completion from the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee, do hereby enact and ordain the following:-
1. Exit Examinations, conducted by the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee, shall be reintroduced.
 2. The Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee shall appoint annually an Examinations Committee comprising the External Examiner in Systematic Theology, the External Examiner in Greek and New Testament studies, the External Examiner in Hebrew and Old Testament studies, the External Examiner in Church History, the External Examiner in Apologetics and Pastoral Theology, and the Examiner in Scripture along with the Convener of the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee to facilitate the undertaking of the Exit Examinations.
 3. The General Assembly resolve that the remit and work of the Examinations Committee shall be as follows:-
 - 3.1 The Clerk of the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee shall forward to the Examinations Committee the details of any approved foreign courses being undertaken by any student.
 - 3.2 The Examinations Committee shall prepare draft examination papers for all Free Church (Continuing) students, taking account of the various courses being undertaken by the students.

- 3.3 The Examinations Committee shall submit the proposed examination papers to the relevant lecturers in the Free Church (Continuing) Seminary for cross-checking, the decision of the Examinations Committee being final in any disagreement.
 - 3.4 The Examinations Committee shall forward the finalised examination papers to the Clerk of the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee not later than 20 April, and the Clerk shall then make suitable arrangements for the conducting of the examinations, including forwarding the papers to a suitable invigilator.
 - 3.5 Completed scripts will be forwarded by the invigilator to the relevant External Examiners for marking, with a copy forwarded to the Clerk of the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee.
 - 3.6 A report from the Examinations Committee tabulating the results shall be sent to the Clerk of the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee in time for the said results to be presented to the June meeting of the Committee.
 - 3.7 Notwithstanding the above, students from the United States of America may choose to sit the Exit Examinations outwith the above timescale and, with permission from the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee, the Examinations Sub-committee shall endeavour to accommodate such a request.
 - 3.8 Where determined by the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee, the Examinations Sub-committee will be responsible for appointing and sustaining three discourses from foreign students who have majored in approved courses outwith the Free Church (Continuing) Seminary.
4. All students shall sit the Exit examinations and submit three discourses prior to receiving a Certificate of Completion.
 5. Act XXVIII 1994 (No 28 of Class II) anent College Examinations is hereby repealed.