

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

1. Introduction

The Committee and the Seminary share a common vision to seek to train and equip men to serve in the ministry of our Church. The Committee exercise a responsibility over the student to ensure that he receives the theological education required by the General Assembly. The Seminary has the remit to provide the stipulated education and to 'bring the best out of the student'. Obviously, the Seminary deals directly with the student(s) and is able to draw closer to them during their studies, and so will be more aware of the difficulties and situations that they encounter. It is essential that there is a close relationship between the Seminary lecturers and the Committee, so that any areas of concern can be identified and dealt with in a sensitive and understanding manner.

2. Students

At the end of the Seminary report last year the Principal made an appeal for the Church to call upon God that he would raise up men for the ministry. As a Committee we are delighted that three men have been interviewed and accepted as Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) divinity students. Thomas Buchanan, Ballyclare & Doagh, and Thomas Budgen, Stornoway, will begin their three year course in September 2016 (D.V.). Alastair Manderson, Knightswood, will commence his studies the following September. Please remember these men in prayer as they begin their journey into the gospel ministry.

Two students, Murdo Maciver and James S. Haram, have completed their studies and have been licensed. They now await a call from a congregation. Last October Rev. Iain Smith was re-admitted into the denomination and has been subsequently called and inducted to the Harris (Leverburgh) congregation, bringing to an end that congregation's long vacancy.

3. USA Divinity Students

The way that students from the USA congregations enter into the holy ministry varies from congregation to congregation and is somewhat different from their UK counterparts. UK students receive financial support from the denomination during their period of study, and some on occasions, from the congregation they are associated with. This is not the case with the USA divinity students, who in some cases face the need to maintain full-time employment to support themselves and their families, and perhaps also bear responsibility for a preaching station, while they engage in a full-time theological study programme. The Committee would encourage the USA Presbytery to explore ways to alleviate the plight of their students, and to provide financial support for them where that is possible.

4. Candidate of the Ministry Application Form

When an application from a prospective divinity student is received, the Committee would remind Kirk Sessions and Presbyteries of the need for full answers to be given when completing their sections in the application forms. We are a small denomination and although the applicant may be known to some members of the Committee, it may well be that the only information the Committee has of the applicant comes from the form. Furthermore the Kirk Session and the Presbytery will be more aware of the applicant and be in a good position to answer the set questions. To help in this the Committee have revised the form so that it can be filled out using a computer. What the Committee are looking for is answers that are full, but not verbose.

5. Student Loans

Following the 2015 General Assembly Finding, the Committee, in consultation with the Finance and Sustentation Committee, have considered the implementation of a system in which students who are either ordained to the ministry or are actively involved in Christian service within the Free Church (Continuing) have their loans amortized (i.e. proportionally reduced) over a period of 5 years, at a rate to be proposed by the Finance & Sustentation Committee at the 2016 General Assembly. From the consultation the following points emerged:

- If the loans are written-off, HMRC will regard the loan as earnings which will almost certainly result in the minister having to pay tax on the loan.
- Writing-off the loan will have an adverse effect upon the denomination's balance sheet. As money the denomination is deemed to be expecting to receive, it will not. In cash terms, it has no effect, as the cash has already been paid out.
- If an individual has both a car loan and a student loan, they both need to be taken into consideration (not looked at separately). If the combined value exceeds £10,000 there most likely is a benefit in kind issue and requires to be reported on Form P11D. With regards to potential write-offs, it matters not the value of them, but if both were written off, they would fall into the same situation as the first point above.

6. Right of Continued Protest

Following a Finding of the May 2013 General Assembly the Committee were instructed to examine students on the Right of Continued Protest, but there was no similar instruction within the legislation regarding ministers and probationers seeking admission to the denomination. The Committee believe that the spirit of the legislation would support that all who would aspire to be in the ministry of the Church should be examined on the Right of Continued Protest, not just students. If it is important for students to be examined, why not ministers seeking admission to our denomination? Can we assume that ministers know about the events, circumstances and principles that led to the division in 2000? The Committee propose an amendment to the present legislation to rectify this apparent anomaly.

7. Jewish Evangelism

Following last year's Assembly when the Committee in conjunction with the Seminary were asked to give consideration to the inclusion of a module on Jewish evangelism, it is expected that in the next academic year suitably qualified and experienced persons will deliver lectures to the students on Jewish evangelism.

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

SEMINARY REPORT

Last June we had the joy of seeing two students graduate from the Seminary (Murdo MacIver and James Haram). These men have subsequently been licensed by the Southern Presbytery. We wish them the guidance of the Lord for blessed ministries. The Seminary itself, however, has been quiet with no classes at Inverness since 2014. The lecturers, however, have been involved with some distance learning private students (presently 6). They have also been engaged on a project to produce an annual Journal, the second volume of which has just been published. In the context of a paucity of students for our own ministry at home the address by the lecturer in Practical Theology at the close of the 2014-15 Session, reproduced in

the current (2016) Journal, is apposite: “Pray Ye the Lord of the Harvest...” We encourage our people to pray for the raising up by the Lord of men for the ministry. You will have read elsewhere of the students expected to begin their courses in the coming Session. Besides the Journal, the Seminary has also published a date-neutral Seminary Handbook. This provides all the necessary information about the Seminary, its lecturers, courses and other procedures. Timetables and scales of fees, which frequently change, will be produced as inserts as and when required.

In relation to the work of the Seminary the lecturers have been considering three important areas in the work of the Seminary:

- (1) The first is a review and updating of the Seminary Constitution. This has involved the amendment of the pre-2000 existing Constitution (1979) and the incorporation of post-2000 Acts relating to the set-up of the present arrangements. Work on this is more or less complete and a proposed Deliverance for acceptance by the Church should be forthcoming for 2017, Lord willing;
- (2) The lecturers are reviewing arrangements for distance learning, private students. It is recognised that the principle purpose of the Seminary is the preparation of our own men for our ministry. It was felt that some stated policy was required in relation to distance-learning private students so that the lecturers would not be over-burdened by too many such students, including any who were inclined to tackle the course piecemeal. It is intended to incorporate something on this in the new Constitution and meantime to implement a policy from the 2016-17 Session;
- (3) In order to increase the usefulness of the Seminary for the wider Church amongst both ministers and other office-bearers, it is hoped that some classes may be held for office-bearers, either in the presbyteries or centrally located in Inverness. Discussions are taking place on this among the lecturers and with the Presbyteries and it is hoped that some arrangements may be in place before the end of the year.

The prayers of the Church are sought for the Seminary and its lecturers, that their work and witness may be blessed of the Lord in producing able ministers of the New Testament; labourers in our harvest field at home and wherever the Lord may give us influence beyond these shores.

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, particularly those who have been licensed yet remain without a Call;
4. The General Assembly retain the present system of grants and loans;
5. The General Assembly amend paragraph 19 of the Finding of the General Assembly of 23rd May 2013 anent the Report of the Legal Advice & Property Committee by the insertion of the phrase “and ministers and probationers seeking Admission” after the word “students”, the paragraph to now

read as follows: “The General Assembly welcome the completion of the revised edition of the document on the Right of Continued Protest in terms of the remit given to the Committee by the Assembly. They thank all those who have contributed to the work, especially Mr Maurice Grant and Rev. John Macleod (Duthil-Dores, Rtd). While recognising the document has no constitutional status for the Church and is therefore not binding on office-bearers, the General Assembly forward it to the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee and Presbyteries for their guidance in examining students and ministers and probationers seeking admission on their knowledge of the causes of the division in our Church arising from the events leading up to and including the year 2000. Further they commend the document to the wider Church.”