

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

As the Commissioners of this General Assembly are aware, the training of ministers of the Gospel has a long history (2 Kings 6:1) and is a crucial function of the Church of Jesus Christ. The Church has charged the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee with directing this task, but how can we discharge our duty if no offers of service are received? We cannot make bricks without straw.

This opportunity is taken, therefore, to call Commissioners to consider returning to their Presbyteries and Congregations with a burden to declare the crying need for workers in the harvest field, and the need of young men to come forward to train as pastors of the flock. Are there young men (and not so young) within your ambit who would be suitable candidates for this high calling? If you know of such, would it not be your place to urge them to consider what is no easy task, but the best of all callings.

This is said in the context of a clamant need. With regard to the Church in Scotland, there will likely be four vacancies before the end of this year, with the possibility of an additional two in the next three years, so that, if no student enters training in September of this year, these six vacancies would remain unfilled until, at least, June 2024. This is what gives urgency to the appeal presented now. *Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.* (Matt. 9:38)

Let us go further, and point out that those Congregations where our main strength lies are in areas of a diminishing and ageing population. Unless we put manpower into establishing new congregations in the areas of denser population, we are looking at extinction in the next ten to twenty years. Can we meet the challenge?

Turning to the progress of the Committee's remit since their last Assembly Report in October 2020, the Committee has to report that one student from the Presbytery of the United States of America has reported that he is unable to proceed with his studies. After consultation with his Presbytery, it was agreed that his training be suspended in the meantime, with the hope and prayer that he will be able to resume in the future.

An application received from another student in the USA was processed, and this student is now completing his studies in the Seminary in terms of the ACT XIX 2017. It is hoped that will gain his Completion Certificate over the summer. We commend him to the prayers of the Church.

The Commissioners will know of a student from France, who studied under Rev. Dr Ruiz, whose application came before the Committee. The Committee is indebted to the Seminary lecturers, and in particular the Principal, for aligning his studies with what the regulations stipulate, and in terms of what was accepted at the last General Assembly, the student has been able to enter a course in the Seminary, tailored to his needs under ACT XIX 2017. He is expected to receive his Completion Certificate in the near future, once all the Exit Exams have been passed. This will enable him to apply for Licence. It is expected that, initially, any Licence granted will be restricted to the Spanish & French Mission field. To obtain an unrestricted Licence will require him to complete a secular degree, and this he is happy to do. One year will be needed to gain university entrance.

For the successful progress of these two students, we are indebted to the flexibility of the lecturers to help make up for any gaps in their previous studies. This has enabled the students, in so far as is practicable, to sit the same, or virtually the same, exit exams as those undertaking the normal course of studies at the Seminary. Where there has been limited adaptation of curricula in the Old & New Testament Courses, this has been done whilst ensuring language and other standards are maintained.

The Committee were in consultation with the Home & Foreign Missions Committee concerning an application forwarded from Sri Lanka. This application has been withdrawn in the meantime, however. Such an application needs special arrangements commensurate with the educational and cultural conditions prevailing in the country.

The lecturer in Systematics, Rev. William Macleod, deserves particular thanks for continuing his service for an extra year at the request of the Committee. The Moderator will be asked to express the gratitude of the Church for Mr Macleod's dedicated services, as he now retires.

The Committee have had forwarded to them an Application for Admission from a minister who resides overseas. It was noted that the Home & Foreign Missions Committee, acting *in loco synodi*, had not been able to interview him in person but only by video-conference, and the Committee were of the view that in fairness to the applicant, and also to assist the Committee in their work, it would be better if he were able to come over to Scotland and be interviewed in person. This would also enable him to get to know the Church in Scotland better, and also help the brethren in Scotland know him better. Given the limited time the Committee had, and the current travel restrictions, such a visit was impossible to organise before the Assembly. The Committee have therefore held over the application until the 2022 General Assembly.

DAVID S. FRASER, *Convener*  
DONALD A. ROBERTSON, *Vice-convener*

### SEMINARY REPORT

The past year has been a busy yet encouraging time for the Seminary, even although there are at present no 'home-based' students. Groundwork has been laid on a number of fronts which should increase the usefulness of the Seminary. Alongside the Principal, all the lecturers have to some extent been involved in these developments. It is their prayer that the Seminary may increasingly be of use in the service, not only of the Free Church (Continuing), but of other Churches throughout the world.

The Seminary were actively involved in providing advice to the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee as to the implementation of Act XIX, 2017 and Acts VI, 2020. This is the first time that students have been enrolled in the Seminary under these Acts. The Seminary lecturers having analysed, on the basis of the available data, the previous studies of these students, compared them with their own courses in order to ascertain where there might be gaps in each student's studies which could be filled in by the Seminary, so as to satisfy the requirements for theological training set by the Assembly. In doing so, the Seminary were aware that it was not their role to vouch for the suitability or orthodoxy of the previous studies undertaken, but that of the Presbytery of the Bounds. They indicated, however, that they were more than willing to address specific areas of teaching which might need reinforcement in line with the Church's Subordinate Standards, should this be found necessary. A personalised course of study for each student was then suggested to the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee. To a greater or lesser degree, all the lecturers have provided some teaching to these students. They are also involved with Exit Exams and Discourses. Generally the implementation of this process has been working well, and the Seminary have been doing all that they can to ensure that these students will have their additional studies completed by the end of the Session. They are also seeking to provide the necessary Exit Exams at a rate at which each student can cope, given other pressures that they may face. The Principal has taken an active role in supervising the whole process and regularly liaises with the lecturers and students. The willingness of the lecturers to be flexible in their approach has contributed to the progress thus far made. It is hoped that the implementation of the Act, as outlined, proves successful, and if so, it will provide a pattern for future years.

As was reported in 2020, the Seminary agreed to lift the moratorium on private students. A number of enquiries have been made to the Principal from both individuals and other denominations. The Seminary

Committee welcomed an approach from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, a small Presbyterian body who hold to the same Subordinate Standards and principles of worship as the FC(C). This denomination are currently reconsidering the best method by which they might train their students, and the Principal has met with their Training Committee to provide them with more information. The meeting was deemed most profitable, and highlighted what the Seminary could provide by way of distance learning. It is unclear what eventual decision they will make regarding the training of their students, and at the date of writing, this matter has not progressed further. The Seminary Committee have indicated that they are willing to provide distance-learning training for students for the Ministry of other denominations, on the basis that the teaching provided will be that prescribed by the General Assembly for Candidates for the Ministry of the Free Church (Continuing). It has also been agreed that all private students and students for other denominations will sit the Exit Examinations as their final exams in a course. This will avoid potential problems arising should a private student wish to be granted recognition as a Candidate for the Ministry of the FC(C). The possibility of serving the wider Church throughout the world by this means is greatly encouraging to the Seminary, and may be a means of promoting sound doctrine throughout the world, as well as encouraging closer relations amongst like-minded Churches.

Rev. William Macleod had intended to retire as Lecturer in Systematic Theology as from the end of the 2020 Session, but the uncertainties due to the Covid health crisis led him to agree to continue that work until the end of the 2021 Session. The Seminary thank him for his diligent labours since his appointment in May 2017 and pray that the Lord will continue to bless him as he continues in the Lord's service in various other capacities.

The *Certificate in Theological Studies Course* continues to gain interest. The first two students completed their studies at the end of 2020 and were awarded their Certificates. There are currently three students in their second year and three more began studies in January 2021. The course is of benefit to those men who wish to gain some theological training, but who are not being prepared for full-time ministry. It has been agreed that, with the limited number of places on the course, priority be given to FC(C) Office-bearers and members who apply, then UK-based applicants and finally other applicants.

It is hoped that the 6<sup>th</sup> Volume of the annual *Seminary Journal*, which was originally planned for October 2020, will be available in May 2021, and this work is commended to the Church. The *Seminary Handbook* has also been updated, and with the agreement of the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee, it also contains, as an Appendix their *Handbook for Free Church Students*. It is hoped that this may prove beneficial to future FC(C) Students, and it is the prayer of the Seminary that the Lord would raise up a new generation to be faithful heralds of the Gospel of free grace.

The Seminary are conscious of the vital role they play in the work and ministry of the Church, and that they have need of the Lord's help that they may be Christ-centred and faithful. They are grateful to the Lord's people for remembering them in prayer.

GRAEME CRAIG, *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 Clerk;
2. The General Assembly thank the Principal and lecturers of our Seminary for their ministry throughout the year, and in particular, their flexible approach to the needs of the two students studying under Act XIX, 2017;
3. The General Assembly note with satisfaction the progress towards completion of our two students, one from France and one from the USA;

4. The General Assembly note with regret that one student has withdrawn his Application and another has suspended his studies and trust that they may be able to find a way forward to continue with their Application/studies;
5. The General Assembly note that, in the prevailing circumstances, an Application for Admission from a minister from overseas has been deferred until the 2022 General Assembly;
6. The General Assembly, noting the growing number of vacancies and lack of new candidates for the Ministry coming forward, bring to the attention of Ministers and Elders the need to seek out suitable men for training and to commend the ministry of the Gospel to them;
7. The General Assembly commend to the Church at large that *they pray the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth labourers into his harvest*;
8. The General Assembly express its heartfelt gratitude to Rev. William Macleod for his sterling service as lecturer in Systematics over the past four years, and especially for his willingness to serve a further year during the current health emergency.