

IV. REPORT

OF THE WELFARE OF YOUTH COMMITTEE

Introduction

In Psalm 144 David expresses the hope that “our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace”. It is that same desire for spiritual prosperity for our sons and daughters which lies at the very heart of all that this Committee seeks to do year after year. Like the Apostle John nothing gives us greater joy than to see our children “walking in truth.” (2 John:4)

The powers of darkness have ever opposed such progress and in our day they seem to prevail as we see a growing hostility towards the Gospel. Our children and grandchildren feel these pressures coming to bear on themselves at an ever-increasing pace.

It is in such an environment that the Committee have sought to fulfil their remit in the year under review. Much of our work has been what we might call general routine but it is no less important for that.

Sabbath School Syllabus

The ongoing work of updating the Sabbath School workbooks has continued over the past year and is now coming to an end. This work has not attempted to alter the core curriculum but has sought to gradually improve and update the workbooks by inserting colour and pictures and developing the puzzles and activities. Particular attention has been given to the materials for the younger children as we have attempted to produce these in a format more suitable for their age group. During the past year the Committee have received further positive feedback as regards the material. The Infant or Grade One material runs on a three year cycle and the work of revision on this part of the syllabus has now been completed. The other two grades are on a four year cycle and they have one further year of updating before they are complete. This work has been undertaken single-handedly by the Clerk and she is due the thanks of the Assembly.

Sabbath School Exams

The annual examination was held on Saturday 7th March and attracted thirty one entrants, an increase of one on the previous year. Twenty two of these were from Grade 2 (Junior) and nine from the Bible Class Grade. A full list appears as an appendix to this Report. The Committee are grateful to those who give of their time to prepare and mark the examination papers.

Maurine Murchison Memorial Prize

After a number of years of attracting a growing number of entrants the Committee were disappointed that this year there were only six entries. Participants receive a book token to the value of £10. The Committee will endeavour, in the coming year, to do more to highlight this prize in the hope of attracting, once more, a good number of entrants. They encourage parents and Sabbath schools to seek ways in which they could promote this worthwhile scheme in the coming year.

Shorter Catechism Diploma Scheme

The Committee continue to monitor this excellent method of memorising the Shorter Catechism. As with the Maurine Murchison Memorial Prize there has been a drop in the number of entrants. However the Committee are pleased to see two youngsters who achieved a Silver Award last year now achieving their Gold Award.

All-Age Holiday

The All-Age Holiday, which is held annually, continues to attract people from within and outwith our denomination. The success of the All-Age holiday has been due, in no small part, to the diligence, self-sacrifice and enthusiasm of Derick and Maryann Gillies to whom the church owes a great debt. They have indicated that they wish to hand over this rôle and the Committee is working towards identifying new leaders. From its earliest days the primary aim of the All-Age Holiday has been to promote Christian fellowship in a relaxed environment; making new friends and renewing old friendships. Last year the location, once again, was the Windmill Centre in Arbroath. It has proved to be a suitable location and will also be the location this summer.

Youth Camps

The 2014 camp returned once more to the now very familiar location at Badaguish near Aviemore. It was a joy to see the first Senior Camp established and to get such positive feedback from both campers and leaders. The Senior Camp was led by Rev. James MacInnes and Rev. Greg MacDonald was leader at the Junior Camp. Following a number of years in which there had always been more girls than boys attending it was encouraging to note that the Junior Camp had a significant increase in the number of boys. The topic for the camp project focussed on the various mission works in which we as a denomination are involved. This proved to be a successful and wide ranging topic. The project leader this year was Mrs Mary Gillies, Stornoway. The Sabbath services were shared by Mr MacDonald and Mr MacInnes. The usual spread of activities was enjoyed and some new ones were introduced. Joan MacKintosh proved, once more, to be an excellent cook and she was ably assisted by Mrs Mary MacDonald, Stornoway.

God willing the 2015 camps will be held at Badaguish and the Committee are happy to report on an encouraging level of interest. However changes in the campsite and a subsequent increase in camp costs have led to an ongoing investigation of alternative sites for future camps.

The Committee continue to covet the prayers of the church for the work of the camps.

Olivet Distance Learning Course

The Committee are indebted to Rev David Fraser for his diligence in preparing and promoting the Olivet Learning Course. They commend this course to the prayerful interest of the church and would be glad to assist with any enquiries.

Education

The Committee have continued to maintain their interest in the vital area of Christian Education. They have received periodic reports on this subject. Some members of the Committee have a long-standing relationship with the Lewis Independent Christian School and periodic reports are received by the Committee. The Lewis school continues to seek permanent premises which would allow them to develop their facilities. The Committee have also maintained a prayerful interest in the efforts being made to further develop and establish a Glasgow Christian School, which have made good progress. The Committee commend all those involved in education, whether in the state sector or in the differing parts of Christian Education, to the prayers of the church.

The Committee continue to operate a limited Christian Education Fund. It was agreed that all home-schooling parents worshipping within the denomination would qualify for an annual grant of £50. Where the children attended an established Christian school the same sum would be given but, in this instance, it would be paid directly to the school.

Clerk

The Committee wish to record their thanks for the past year to the Clerk, Mrs Isobel Ann Macleod.

MURDO A N MACLEOD, *Convener*
DONALD ROBERTSON, *Vice-Convener*

PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

1. The General Assembly receive and adopt the report of the Welfare of Youth & Education Committee and thank the Committee;
2. The General Assembly thank Mrs Isobel Ann Macleod for her work as Clerk;
3. The General Assembly note with interest the ongoing work being done to improve the presentation of the Sabbath School and Bible Class workbooks. They thank Mrs Isobel Ann Macleod for what has been achieved thus far to that end and commend to all the Sabbath School and Bible Class workbooks;
4. The General Assembly thank those who teach in the Sabbath Schools and who so freely give of their time;
5. The General Assembly record their thanks to those involved in preparing and marking the annual Sabbath School and Bible Class Examination;
6. The General Assembly commend the Maurine Murchison Memorial Prize and congratulate all those who participated this year;
7. The General Assembly congratulate those who successfully completed the Shorter Catechism Diploma and encourage Sabbath School Superintendents to continue to promote this scheme;
8. The General Assembly thank Mr Derick Gillies for his faithful work in organising the All-Age Holiday and would encourage the Committee as they search for new leaders;
9. The General Assembly thank Rev. Greg MacDonald and Rev. James MacInnes for their faithful leadership of the Youth Camp, Miss Joan MacKintosh for all the catering arrangements, and all who assist in the work of the camps;
10. The General Assembly note with gratitude to the Lord that the Senior Camp has now been established and commend the work of the camps to the prayers of the Church;
11. The General Assembly encourage Rev. David Fraser in his work with the Olivet Course;
12. The General Assembly commend the whole area of Christian education and in particular the encouraging new developments in Glasgow to the prayerful interest of the wider Church.

APPENDIX

Sabbath School and Bible Class Examinations 2014-2015

The following is a list of all who took part in the examinations and prizewinners.

Bible Class Grade

9 took part in the examination (an increase of 2 from 2013-2014)

Prizewinner: Joanna Gillies, Stornoway

Aberdeen - Matthew McGlynn, Sophie McGlynn, Verity McGlynn

Stornoway - Emma Craig, Lily Craig, Joanna Gillies, Duncan Macdonald

Tarbat - Ethan C. MacLeod, Murdo D. MacLeod

Grade 2

22 took part in the examination (a decrease of 1 from 2013-2014)

Prizewinner: Matthew S. Keddie, Shettleston

Cross - Hugh Macdonald, Murray Macdonald, Calvin Mackenzie, Felicity MacLeod, Heidi MacLeod, Calum S. Morrison, Kirsty Morrison

Harris - Rachael Campbell

Knock & Point - Alexander Macleod, Christina Macleod, Ruairidh Macleod

Partick - Rachael Jobson, Kenny Mackinnon, Mairi Mackinnon

Shettleston - Elizabeth J. Keddie, Matthew S. Keddie

Stornoway - Sarah Craig, Thomas Craig, Lydia MacDonald, Susanna MacDonald, Ross Morrison

Tarbat - Malcolm S. MacLeod

Maurine Murchison Memorial Prize

Ayr: Aletheia Beers, Benaiah Beers, Caleb Beers, Isaac Beers, Nathanael Beers

Duthil-Dores: Jonathan Brooks

Catechism Diploma

Gold: Stornoway: Lydia MacDonald, Susanna MacDonald