

IV. REPORT OF THE WELFARE OF YOUTH COMMITTEE

1. Introduction

Robert Murray M'Cheyne, in a report to Aberdeen Presbytery in 1842, said; "At the time of my return from the Mission to the Jews I found 39 prayer meetings held weekly in connection with the congregation and five of them were conducted and attended entirely by children. The ministers engaged in the work of God in this place believing that the children are lost, and may through grace be saved, have therefore spoken to children as freely as to grown persons; and God has so greatly honoured their labours that many children from ten years old and upwards have given full evidence of their being born again. I am not aware of any meetings that have been held peculiarly for children with the exception of the Sabbath School, the children's prayer meetings and a sermon to the children on a Monday evening after the communion. It was commonly at the public meetings in the house of God that the children were impressed, often also in their own little meetings, when no minister was present."

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. Increasingly 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 or routine, but it is no less important for that.

2. Sabbath School Syllabus

The ongoing work of updating the Sabbath School workbooks has continued over the past year. The Committee has received further positive feedback as regards the material. The infant or Grade One material runs on a three-year cycle. The other two grades are on a four-year cycle and the work of revision on this part of the Syllabus has now been completed, subject to a second proof reading. This work has been undertaken single-handedly by the Clerk and she is due the thanks of the Assembly.

3. Sabbath School Exams

The annual examination was held on Saturday 5th March and attracted thirty-one entrants, an equivalent number to the previous year. Nineteen of these were from Grade 2 (Junior) and twelve 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.

4. Maurine Murchison Memorial Prize

The Committee is pleased to see eleven children taking part this year (see Appendix). The Committee are grateful to Dr. Murchison for continuing to provide the funds that enable the Committee to offer this award. Participants receive a book token to the value of £10. The Committee would encourage parents and Sabbath Schools to seek ways in which they could promote this worthwhile scheme in the coming year.

5. Shorter Catechism Diploma Scheme

The Committee is pleased to see eleven youngsters who achieved an award at differing levels (see Appendix). As with the Maurine Murchison award the Committee would encourage parents and Sabbath Schools to seek ways in which they can promote this worthwhile scheme. Those attaining the Gold Award receive a leather-bound Bible.

6. 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. This year Rev. and Mrs Andrew Allan have kindly agreed to accept responsibility for the organising. While Derick and Maryann will be a very hard act to follow, the Committee believe that Mr & Mrs Allan will make their own gracious contribution. From the 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 proven to be a suitable location and will again be the location this summer.

7. Youth Camps

The 2015 camp returned once more to the now very familiar location at Badaguish near Aviemore. The Senior Camp was led by Rev. Greg MacDonald, while Rev. James MacInnes was the leader of the Junior Camp. As in recent years it was encouraging to see an increase in the number of boys attending. There was an international involvement with one boy from Spain at the Senior Camp, and a brother and sister from France. The topics for the camp were John G Paton (Junior) and Christian Thinking in a Connected World (Senior). The project leader this year was Miss Flora MacLeod. The usual spread of activities were enjoyed and some new ones introduced. Joan MacKintosh's culinary skills were appreciated, and she was ably assisted by Annette Campbell, Ness and Ishbel Campbell, Harris. The Committee would continue to covet the prayers of the Church for the work of the camps, and greatly appreciate the vital financial contributions made by the denomination.

8. 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.

9. 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 reviewed by the Committee. The Lewis school continues to seek permanent premises which would allow them to develop their facilities.

The Committee would 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.

10. Clerk

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

DONALD A. ROBERTSON, *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;

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 making the annual Examinations;
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 the Sabbath School Superintendents to continue to promote the scheme;
8. The General Assembly thank Mr & Mrs Derick Gillies for their faithful work in organising the All-Age Holiday and encourage Rev. & Mrs Andrew Allan as they undertake the organising this year;
9. The General Assembly thank Rev. Greg MacDonald and Rev. James MacInnes for their faithful leadership of the Youth Camps, Miss Joan MacKintosh for all the catering arrangements, and all who assist in the work of the camps, and commend the work of the camps to the prayers of the Church;
10. The General Assembly encourage Rev. David Fraser in his work with the Olivet Course;
11. The General Assembly commend the whole area of Christian education to the prayerful interest of the wider church.

APPENDIX

Sabbath School and Bible Class Examinations 2015-2016

The following is a list of all who took part in the examinations and the prize winners

Bible Class Grade

12 took part in the examination (an increase of 3 from 2014-2015)

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| Prizewinner: | Emma Craig |
| Aberdeen | Matthew McGlynn, Verity McGlynn |
| Cross | Hugh Macdonald, Kirsty Morrison |
| Harris | Rachael Campbell |
| Knock & Point | Alexander Macleod |
| Shettleston | Matthew S. Keddie |
| Stornoway | Emma Craig, Lily Craig, Duncan Macdonald |
| Tarbat | Ethan C. Macleod, Murdo D. MacLeod |

Grade 2

19 took part in the examination (a decrease of 3 from 2015-2016)

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| Prizewinner: | Thomas Craig, Stornoway |
| Cross | Murray Macdonald, Felicity MacLeod, Heidi MacLeod |
| Duthil-Dores | Callum Arie Morrison, Lewis Fraser, Kenneth J. Hutton, Emily Hutton, Jonathan Brooks |
| Knock & Point | Alexander Macleod, Christina Macleod, Ruaraidh Macleod |
| Partick | Kenny Mackinnon, Mairi Mackinnon |
| Shettleston | Elizabeth J. Keddie |
| Stornoway | Sarah Craig, Thomas Craig, Lydia MacDonald, Susanna MacDonald |
| Tarbat | Malcolm S. MacLeod |