IV.
REPORT

OF THE

WELFARE OF YOUTH & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Introduction

Scotland, to say the least, is a nation in crisis. It is in crisis spiritually, morally, socially, culturally, educationally, and in 1,001 other ways, all because it has turned its back on God. Any nation that turns its back on God and the Bible inevitably incurs his wrath and displeasure. And such turning away has an adverse effect on every facet of society and all who live within its bounds. The youth, children and even the unborn are not an exception. They too suffer. It is desperately shocking and paralyzing to think that our civil authorities have slaughtered more children in the womb than Nazi Germany did in the Jewish community during the Second World War, all because God is not acknowledged nor given his rightful place.

The heart-breaking statistics speak for themselves. Between 1967 and 2012 some 7.5 million abortions were performed in Great Britain. Since the Abortion Act became law in 1967, it is officially recorded that 98% of abortions were for "social" reasons. There are about 200,000 abortions in Britain each year (187,000 in England and Wales and 12,000 in Scotland). That amounts to about 550 abortions every day. In Scotland alone some 1.5 million babies have been aborted over the past 44 years. This appalling statistic is both shocking and hardly imaginable. How depraved Scotland has become, when our lawless civil government allows and facilitates the murder of those babies. This is the inhumane and godless country where our children, at least those of them who are allowed to survive, live in. What these children see, or maybe don't see, as they grow up certainly doesn't make for good reading either.

With the approval of the Scottish Government, one of the most godless organisations in our nation, Stonewall (Scotland) was given permission to issue primary school children with a collection of books which encourage the celebration of difference and diversity. This group stands for nothing less than what is educationally distasteful and sinful, and seeks to influence children under the banner of "lesbian, gay and transgender equality."

Crime and disorder stands at an all-time high, with murder even on public show. In March 2013 a young school girl of 16, Christina Edkins, was ruthlessly stabbed to death in cold blood on a crowded double-decker bus in Birmingham. Witnessed by a terrified onlooker, the murderer rose silently from his seat and stuck a knife into her without uttering a word. Her death was in addition to the 550 who were also murdered in the UK over a 12 month period, up to the end of 31 March 2012. The previous year the number was 636. Although the statistics have not yet been released, the police are "alarmed" at the number of murders recorded over the past year. It is public knowledge that Britain's violent crime record is worse than any other country in the European Union.

As for adultery "the powers that be" are completely oblivious to the reality that divorce and family breakdown is one of the most destructive scourges of our time. Nobody knows that more than the estimated 3.8 million children that are caught up in the family justice system each year. Adultery and divorce continues to have damaging and devastating consequences for children of every age across society.

These depressing and disturbing statistics "in a country which prides itself on human rights and social progress" tell us that not one law of the Scottish or UK government is going to reverse them. Once known as the "land of the book" what Scotland desperately needs is to turn back to its spiritual roots, turn back to God, turn back to Divine laws, turn back to the Bible and turn back to truth. The Committee wholly believes that nothing less

than this will do if, under God's leading and power, the hearts of our precious children are to be turned back to God.

It is a joy, albeit in some small measure, to bring the 'good news' of Christ before our youth and children through all the various activities we are involved with, in one way or another, throughout the year in all our Congregations, to encourage the youth who are our future, to instruct the children with God-given principles and to serve our communities and this nation: *"Let us not fool ourselves – without Christianity, without Christian education, without the principles of Christ inculcated into young life, we are simply rearing pagans."* (Peter Marshall) The Biblical admonition is *"Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons…that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children."* (Deuteronomy 4v9, 10b)

Maurine Murchison Memorial Prize

The Committee would like to record their sincere appreciation to Dr Murduch Murchison for generously donating the sum of £1,000 towards the Maurine Murchison Memorial Prize. The donation enables the Committee to continue with the prize for another few years. This year £120 was shared out in prizes amongst those who successfully learned various portions of Scripture. The Committee were delighted that Isla MacLeod completed grades 1 and 2 of the Scripture Memory Scheme. We would continue to encourage the various contacts to promote this worthwhile scheme throughout their congregations.

Shorter Catechism Diploma Scheme

In April the various levels of the Shorter Catechism Diploma Scheme were successfully completed by our young people, namely: Gold – (in one sitting) Isla Macdonald, Isla MacLeod, Silver – Duncan Macdonald, Bronze – Emma Craig, Lily Craig, Susanna Macdonald and Lydia Macdonald.

Sabbath School Exams

As we were just going to print with this report exams were taking place and being marked. Of the 30 exam papers which went out, 12 were for Bible Class and the other 18 Junior Class. The Bible class marker indicated that the questions were all answered to a very high standard, for which we are deeply thankful to God.

The new Sabbath School workbooks were issued at the beginning of the new session. They have a new revamped layout and design, with the memory work now included on each page (catechism, psalm & scripture verse). Questionnaires were circulated at the beginning of the year, and were duly returned with an array of suggestions and modification ideas. Samples of the new workbooks were also sent out to the Sabbath Schools currently not using them, with a few coming back indicating that they will now do so in the future. The general consensus has been that everyone is pleased with the new improved appearance of the books, which now include additional puzzles, questions, colour text and pictures for the younger children to colour in. The memory work being included on each page encourages learning, while the previous blank revision pages now have a full page of work for the children to complete, therefore making it easier for the teachers as well.

All-Age Holiday

The All-Age Holiday, which is held annually, continues to attract people from within and outwith our denomination. The primary aim is to promote Christian fellowship in a relaxed environment; making new friends and renewing old friendships. It continues to be held at Carronvale House, a mansion house set in picturesque surroundings, in Larbert (near Stirling). It is ideally situated in the central belt with good motorway and rail links to Glasgow, Edinburgh and Stirling. There are a host of visitor attractions in the area for sightseeing, relaxing activities or shopping.

The Holiday, which was held in July, was well attended, with the folk present, ranging in age from a youngster

of 2 to an elderly but spirited 80+ (one prefers to stay on the safe side!) year-old lady, thoroughly enjoying their time of united Christian fellowship and Biblical teaching.

The main speaker this year was Rev. Maurice Roberts, who kindly offered to step in at the last minute in place of the speaker who had to drop out. He spoke on a number of interesting and engaging spiritual topics, which afterwards generated much discussion. The Committee would like to thank Mr Roberts most sincerely for agreeing to speak in the midst of an already busy schedule of preaching and conference engagements in the UK and the USA, along with Rev. David Fraser (missionary speaker) and Rev. Bill Scott (guest speaker) for their valuable contributions.

The continuing success of the All-Age Holiday is mainly due to the faithful efforts of Mr Derick Gillies, who often works quietly away behind the scenes ensuring nobody can say that they didn't know about the Holiday. Such excursions, and all that happens with them, do not take place without a considerable commitment from the many willing feet and willing hands that are involved. The Committee would like, once again, to place on record their heartfelt thanks to Mr Gillies (and all his helpers), Mr Murdo MacDonald, Mrs Maryann Gillies and Miss Esther Semmens for all their extensive voluntary labours, which make the Holiday the success it is for those who attend. Although unable to be present, Miss Semmens arranges and circulates a large quantity of the advertising materials that have to be drawn up and distributed near and far. The Committee are indebted to her for all her valuable contributions behind the scenes, and also to Mr Donald MacLeod, of the Knock & Point Congregation for setting up a helpful web-page for the Holiday. It can be found at www.allageholiday.org.uk.

It cannot be overstated that such time spent together in united Christian fellowship can only benefit those within our Congregations and encourage some who may not have opportunity for other family holidays. The Committee also wish to highlight to the Church at large that this holiday is open to all and would appreciate if a special effort was made to timeously inform members and adherents of the date of the Holiday through posters and advertising in Congregational bulletins. The Committee would also ask that Deacons' Courts would give consideration to financial help, especially for families. Rev. Harry Woods has agreed to be the main speaker for this year's holiday from 13th to 20th July DV.

Youth Camp

The overall success of the Church's youth camp continues. Organised over the summer the camp location returned to the superb facilities at Badaguish, near Aviemore. The camp, which enjoys annual growth, was as usual well attended with everyone present thoroughly enjoying the spiritual fellowship, along with all the recreational activities on offer. These activities were equally taken up, not just by the men and boys, but also by the women and girls! The Biblical theme for the camp week was "John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress", with the associated talks given by Rev. James MacInnes. He gave a thorough and well enjoyed stage-by-stage analysis of the Christian going through this world and his experiences in the journey of life, with all its spiritual battles. This brought out much discussion and questions during the course of the week.

Rev. Greg MacDonald was not slow in going forward, as he inevitably had to with all the active and energetic campers he had to lead, guide and instruct each day. They were kept fit through all the games, sports and activities they were enthusiastically engaged in, both on land and on sea, with everyone making the most of some new facilities that were available. It is understood they all survived. The attendance of a camper with special needs was not a distraction to any of the other campers: rather his company brought much joy and happiness, and united them in a very special way. This is a wonderful Biblical example of the importance of keeping an eye out for others, especially maybe those who are not as fortunate as ourselves. People with special needs are often special people and we should endeavour, like our friends did at the camp, to remember them in a special way. *"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 2:4,5)

Stomachs and appetites were not forgotten either! Sumptuous provision was dutifully attended to morning,

noon and night by the catering experts, namely Joan MacKintosh and Eileen Murray. All the good food was demolished, or should I say devoured, by the appreciative eaters. The Committee are also thankful to Miss Flora MacLeod for effectively organising the afternoon projects, which were thoroughly enjoyed by everyone.

The 2013 summer camp is scheduled to take place at the same time during the summer holidays, with additional accommodation becoming available. It is open to all from those entering Primary 7 to those leaving on Secondary 4. The Committee would like to express their special thanks to the various Deacons' Courts who subsidise campers, to the Stornoway Congregation for making a major contribution to the hire of a mini-bus, to everyone who helped out with the catering arrangements, to Rev. James MacInnes (and all his loyal helpers) for organising the camp, and to everyone else who were involved in making last year's camp such a success.

The Committee would also ask that Deacons' Courts would give consideration to any financial help they can give, especially to families who might be unable to afford the camp due to budgetary constraints. As has been often said in these pages in the past the main aim is reinforcing all the spiritual lessons which are taught both at home and in the various Congregations, in the sincere hope and prayer that the Biblical truths taught will be lodged in the hearts of all campers, to the saving of their precious souls. We continue to pray that many of them will be bright lights in tomorrow's church in Scotland.

Christian Education

The Committee were delighted to have the opportunity to meet with Board members of the Lewis Independent Christian School in Stornoway during November 2012. The Committee heard first-hand about various aspects of the Christian education curriculum being followed in the school. There was general consensus that the meeting had proved beneficial both to the Committee and to the School Board, the Committee offered whatever help it could provide to the School in relation to speakers and practical support. It was agreed to maintain contact with the Board.

The Committee would like to applaud the valiant efforts of all who are involved in plans to see a Christian school established in Glasgow. A number of meetings recently held in the city attracted quite a number of people. At one of the most recent meetings, Mr Alan Wilson, who is an elder in the Shettleston Congregation and Head of Art in Hamilton College, spoke on the given topic "What is a Christian School?"

At the meeting Mr Wilson talked about the crisis in our current education and the Government's answer to the crisis: the new Curriculum of Excellence. He described how the schools were handed over to the Government in 1872, as a result of secularisation winning an upper hand in society. The purpose of education is to transmit culture. As Christians we should embrace culture since we were made by God to be cultured people. If High-Culture is the best of what has been thought and said, then surely it needs to include the Bible. The Bible needs to be the bedrock for all that has been taught and done in education. A Christian School has to have a strong belief in the cultural mandate. A Christian school is an extension of the family, teaching the Christian worldview. Secularism tends to separate "religion" into a topic among others. But there are no facts that are not God-created and hence all facts, all knowledge, must acknowledge God. There is no secular / sacred divide in the true Christian world view. Christian teachers need to engage and stimulate pupils and be enthusiastic about teaching and their subject. The school is to embody "life in full" since Christ is our life. Learning is to be "concentrated playfulness". The two major goals are educational growth and moral growth – and above all: "To glorify God and enjoy Him forever."

The Committee are fully supportive of those involved in the Glasgow Christian school plans, as they investigate in these early stages what can be done to bring them forward to development.

Olivet Distance Learning Course

Rev. David Fraser is still running the Olivet Distance Learning Course and the Committee wish to encourage

more promotion of the Course within Congregations, and would be pleased to forward to any the material presently used.

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

DONALD J. MORRISON, *Convener*
GREG MACDONALD, *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 thank Dr Murduch Murchison for his continuing financial support towards the Maurine Murchison Memorial Prize;

4. The General Assembly thank Mr Derick Gillies for his faithful work in organising the All-Age Holiday, and encourage him to continue with it, along with Mr Murdo MacDonald, Mrs Maryann Gillies and Miss Esther Semmens for all their respective and valuable contributions;

5. The General Assembly thank Mr Donald MacLeod, of the Knock & Point Congregation, for setting up the All-Age Holiday website;

6. The General Assembly thank Rev. James MacInnes for organising and running the Youth Camp, Rev. Greg MacDonald for leading and guiding the campers with sports activities, Miss Joan MacKintosh and Miss Eileen Murray for all the catering arrangements and Miss Flora MacLeod for her involvement with the projects;

7. The General Assembly thank those who teach in the Sabbath Schools and who so freely give of their time;

8. The General Assembly continue to encourage the spread of Christian Education, and encourage Christian teachers who teach in the secular schools;

9. The General Assembly continue to encourage the work of the Independent Christian School in Stornoway, and also the efforts to establish a Christian school in Glasgow;

10. The General Assembly note the results of the Sabbath School and Bible Class examinations, thank those who were engaged in setting and marking the papers, and congratulate those who sat the exams and the prize winners;

11. The General Assembly encourage Rev David Fraser in his work with the Olivet Course.

APPENDIX

Sabbath School and Bible Class Examinations 2012-2013

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

Bible Class Grade

8 took part in the examination (an increase of 2 from 2011-2012)

Prizewinner: Jonathan Gillies, *Stornoway*

Aberdeen - Sophie Elise McGlynn, Verity McGlynn
Harris - Sarah K. Campbell
Stornoway - Emma Craig, Joanna Gillies, Jonathan Gillies, Isla G Macdonald
Tarbat - Murdo D. MacLeod

Junior Grade

12 took part in the examination (a decrease of 1 from 2011-2012)

Joint Prizewinners: Lily Craig, *Stornoway* & Matthew S. Keddie, *Shettleston*

Aberdeen - Matthew McGlynn
Harris - Rachel Campbell
Knock & Point - Alexander MacLeod, Ruaraidh MacLeod
Shettleston - Elizabeth J. Keddie, Matthew S. Keddie
Stornoway - Lily Craig, Thomas Craig, Ross Morrison, Andrew Smith
Tarbat - Ethan MacLeod, Malcolm MacLeod

Maurine Murchison Memorial Prize

Snizort: Andrew D. Macleod**,** Jonathan S. Macleod - Grade 1

Stornoway: Sarah Craig, Lucy Duncan, Samuel Duncan, Isla Macleod - Grade 1
Lydia Macdonald, Calvin Mackenzie, Isla Macleod, Eilidh Smith - Grade 2

Catechism Diploma

Bronze: Stornoway: Emma Craig, Lily Craig, Lydia Macdonald, Susanna Macdonald

Silver: Stornoway: Duncan Macdonald

Gold: Stornoway: (in one sitting) Isla G. Macdonald, Isla Macleod