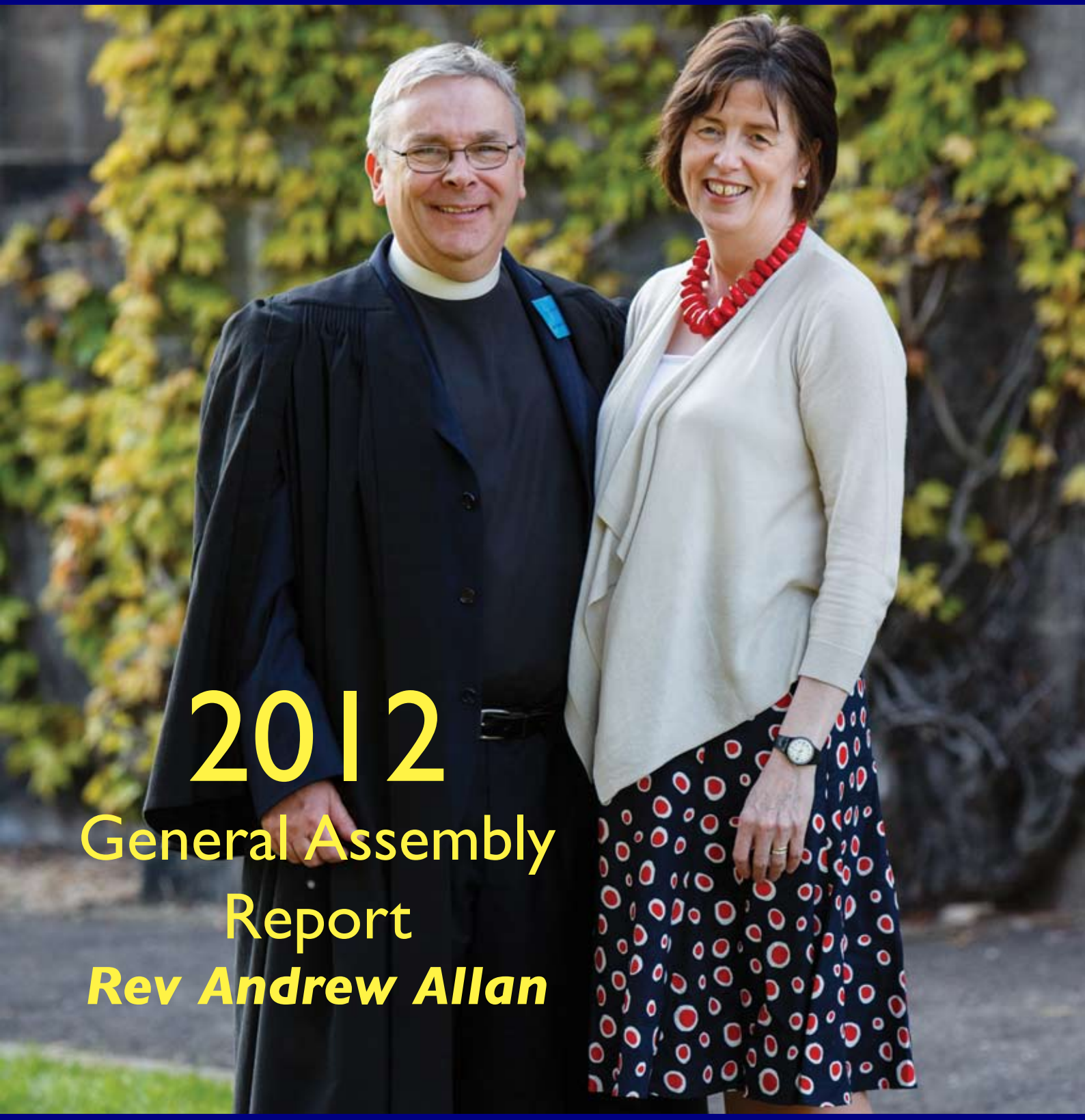
Free Church Witness

JULY/AUGUST 2012 ISSUE



2012 General Assembly Report

Rev Andrew Allan

Published by the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)

Price: £4.00

CONTENTS

Editor
Rev William Macleod
B.Sc Th.M

25 Branklyn Crescent
Academy Park
Glasgow
G13 1GJ
Tel 0141 959 0292
williammacleod@fccontinuing.org

Page

Bringing Up Children 3

Assembly Sermon 5

Moderator's Address 8

General Assembly Report 13

Scottish Reformation 27

Obituary - Alex Campbell 28

Obituary - Rev B. H. Baxter 29

News Desk 30

Remittances - May 2012 33

Letter from Zambia 34

Design and Layout: Alasdair Macleod
Cover: Rev James and Mrs Catriona Gracie (*Courtesy of Rev Bert Pohl*)

Subscription Details

Subscription rates (including postage) for a year's issues of the two magazines mailed to one address are:

U.K.	*£25.00*
Europe (Airmail)	*£30.00*
Overseas (Airmail)	*£35.00*

The congregational rate is £22.00.
We would like to encourage churches to make bulk orders. The *Explorer* may be ordered separately for Sabbath Schools.
Cheques/Postal Orders should be made payable to:
"Free Church Witness"
Subscriptions and orders should be sent to:
Mrs Isobel McQueer
The Manse, Tordarroch, Farr, Inverness IV2 6XF.
Email: isobel@snizort.com

Witness on Tape

The Free Church Witness magazine is available on two tapes which can be ordered at no cost.
Please order your tapes from:
Mr D Grant
4E Belmar Court
Linwood PA3 3EE

FCC Audio Ministry

Sermons by ministers of the Free Church (Continuing) are available on CD and a catalogue listing the sermons may be obtained. The cost of each CD (including postage) is £1.00.
Cheques/Postal Orders should be made payable to:
"Free Church (Continuing) Tape Ministry"
Please order your catalogue and CDs from:
Mr Donald Morgan
7 Cearn Sheileidh, Stornoway
Isle of Lewis HS1 2YW
Tel. 01851 702476
email: donaldmorgan186@googlemail.com

Psalmody CDs

Available from Mrs Isobel Scott
Tel.01506 652168
www.sing-the-psalms.webs.com.

Church Website at www.fccontinuing.org

Gifts and Donations

All donations and gifts for the Church should be sent to the Financial Administrator:
Mrs Muriel Smith
1a Stewartfield
Stornoway
Isle of Lewis
HS1 2UW
from whom further information may be obtained. Cheques should be made payable to "Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)".
The Church is a recognised Scottish Charity (No. 030976).

General Treasurer

The General Treasurer is:
Angus Macmillan, 46a Newmarket, Isle of Lewis, HS2 0DU
Tel: 01851 703965 (Home)
Tel: 01851 700235 (Work)
Mobile: 07786 296931
Email: generaltreasurer@fccontinuing.org

Published by

Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)
25 Branklyn Crescent
Academy Park
Glasgow
G13 1GJ

COMMUNIONS

August:-

19	Bracadale
26	Stornoway

September:-

2	Portree
9	North Uist
16	Scalpay, Knightswood

Printed by

MMS-Almac Ltd.
Unit F Isla Bank Mills,
Keith AB55 5DD
Tel: 01542 886409

Bringing Up Children

The bringing up of children for God is a very important subject. It is wonderful to be married to a godly wife or husband and such can be a great help to you on the road to heaven. The reasons for marrying are companionship, purity and the raising of children. The Psalmist says: 'Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate' (Ps.127:3-5). Children can be a real blessing to their parents. But we certainly do not want to bring children into the world to train them for hell. It is awful to think that we will get to heaven and our family be lost. We love our children and do not want them to be eternally separated from us. So how are we to bring up our children? No one can say, 'I am an expert'. We all need grace. God has to help us or we will fail. It is an impossible task without God's help.

Children need to be saved

First of all, it is vital to remember that all children are born sinners. The little child appears so innocent, dependent and pure. Some will say 'Surely babies can't sin?' Alas, yes they can. Even before they are born, all have sinned in Adam. When our first parent ate the forbidden fruit we ate it too. In this sense we are all guilty even before actually sinning. But sin also displays itself very quickly in young lives. Babies can show bad temper and discontentedness. They are often jealous of other children and will not share toys. As they get older they will say 'No' to mum and dad. They do not have to be taught to tell lies or to fight. They want to do their own thing. All this shows how they are sinners, how they have a fallen nature and must be born again. Godly parents can sometimes have ungodly children, e.g. Isaac, Eli, Samuel and David. Some Reformed churches argue that children of Christians should be treated as Christians until they profess faith or rebel. The danger with this approach is that it encourages nominal Christianity. As with the Pharisees in the time of Jesus they took it for granted that they were right with God and forgot that they required to be born again.

Promises

God has made covenants with His people and their children. All God's covenants, e.g. with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the Israelites and David, included children. In the New Testament the new covenant would therefore be expected to include children and this is shown to be the case by Peter's words on the day of Pentecost, 'For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call' (Acts 2:39). Children have a special place. Jesus demonstrated a special interest in children: **'**Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence' (Mt.19:13-15). God loves us and our children. The children of the godly are special.

Expectancy

This should lead us to expect their conversion. It is very important that we believe in covenant blessings and look for our children's salvation. If you expect your children to be lost they will very likely be lost. Expecting them to be saved will encourage you to bring them up for God. It will encourage you to lay upon them the requirement of faith and repentance and call them to respond to God. He gives us children and we must bring them up for Him, but we need His help. Pray, with faith in the promises, and look for your children to be converted.

Danger

There is a danger here. Grace does not run in the blood. While children are young they will agree with their parents and do anything to please them. But as they get older they will want to do their own thing. Some churches happily accept children's professions of faith when they are still only 10 or 12 years. They treat the children from then on as Christians. Now God can save children even in the womb but it is wiser to wait till they grow up a bit more and pass through the critical early and mid-teen's stages. Many Christian children rebel as teenagers. The world becomes very attractive, the lust of the flesh is powerful and they begin to follow friends in the world rather than parents. Give them time to prove that they are Christians. Don't encourage premature conversions and leave children thinking they tried Christianity and there is nothing in it.

Prayers

In bringing up children the most important thing is prayer. Pray for your children. God loves to hear prayer. Only God can save them. We cannot save them. They are dead in sins and cannot save themselves. They need the irresistible grace of God to operate in them. Pray for them till they are converted. Continue to pray for them all their days.

But also pray with your children. Let them hear you praying for them. Let them see that nothing is more important to you than their salvation. Make it plain to them that you will die in the deepest disappointment if they reject Christ and turn away from Him. For them to be saved is far more important to you than that they should be rich, or successful, or do well in their education or in their job. What is the good of them making lots of money if they end up in hell?

Teach your children to pray themselves. Get them to pray meaningfully. Set forms are not good. Get them to think through their own prayers. Stress to them the importance of praying for their own soul's salvation.

Law

A very important part of instruction is the law of God. God has given us ten commandments. These need to be stressed. God demands holiness from men and women. The moral law is the standard which will be used on the judgment day. The

law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. It shows us our guilt. The more we try to keep the law the more we see how far short we come. That forces us to cry out to Christ, 'God be merciful to me a sinner'. As Christians the law shows us how to live and how to express the love which we have to God.

Discipline

It is vital for children to be punished when they do wrong. They must learn that sin does not pay. Never punish in anger. Let it hurt you as much as it hurts them. Show your children that you really care for them. Let your love shine through. I once stole some little money as a child and bought sweets. When I was found out I expected to be sorely punished but my mother took me aside and wept with me. It was sorer than a beating. I could see that she loved me and that she was deeply hurt.

Gospel

Some parents make the mistake of teaching only the law to their children – the do's and don'ts. But that will never save our children. In fact it has a tendency to harden them. It causes them to have a very negative view of salvation and the Christian life. We must teach them about grace – about God's love. We must stress to them the need to repent and believe in Jesus, but also the willingness of Christ to save. Plead with them to give their life to Christ, to cast themselves upon His mercy and to commit their souls to His keeping. Also, encourage them to seek assurance. They must not take it for granted that they are saved. They are to strive to make sure: 'Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall' (2Pet.1:10). It is a lifelong occupation. Teach them Scripture verses off by heart and also the catechism. Store their minds when young with truths which will be a blessing to them all their life. It is much easier to memorise when young.

Church

Church should have a very important part in the bringing up of our children. Take them to church from a very young age. Make church their second home. They should if possible be brought to all the regular meetings of the church. The preaching in our churches has a duty to aim at the children as well as the adults. Children came to listen to Jesus. The Apostles in their Epistles had a word for the children. Ministers should address them particularly from time to time and they must aim to make the difficult things of the gospel clear to the young. They should speak in language which the children can understand.

Education

Education is very important for children. Teach them to read as soon as possible. Get them to read Scripture for themselves. Be aware that a school can undermine the teaching of the home. Ask your children each day what they are taught. This can be hard work but it is worth it. Talk to your children and spend time with them to see what they are thinking. It is very important to listen to them. Be careful not to do all the talking. Try to build up trust and love with your children and do not ignore their concerns. Do not unnecessarily embarrass them.

Companions

How often children are led astray by bad friends! It is very important to be aware of this. Friends are a huge influence especially in teenage years. Try to keep them away from bad friends. Encourage them to make friends with those who will help them. It is better for them to have no friends than to have friends who will lead them into evil. Watch your children and know where they are. Keep them much about the home, near yourself and other good Christians. A strong, united, loving family will be a great antidote to evil. Realise the world and the devil are out to get your children. There are huge temptations out there for teenagers.

Example

Finally, of very great importance in bringing up children is to set a good example before them. All you say is judged by your life. If you are a hypocrite your children will see through you. Don't tell them to do things that you don't do. Show that your Christianity is real by living a holy, loving life before them. Be a godly person all the time – in the secrecy of your own home as well as when people are watching. This is hard but seek God's grace so that you can honestly say to your family, 'Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ' (1Cor.11:1). How many children have been turned off Christianity by the inconsistent lives of their parents and on the other hand how many children have known the truth of Christianity because they saw it lived out as a reality before them!

'Some parents make the mistake of teaching only the law to their children – the do's and don'ts. But that will never save our children. We must teach them about grace – about God's love. We must stress to them the need to repent and believe in Jesus.'

An Army With Banners

Rev Graeme Craig

Substance of a Sermon preached at opening of 2012 General Assembly of Free Church (Continuing), Edinburgh, 21st May 2012 on the words, 'Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?' (Song of Sol.6:10).

The Song of Solomon reminds us that Biblical religion is more than a set of theological statements or a way of life. It has to do with the heart and with a person, the Lord Jesus Christ, for the church as a body and individuals as believers are in a living relationship with their Lord. Like any relationship in this world, the relationship between Christ and the believer or the church has its ups and downs. In Chapter 5, she is seen to be cold and sleepy, even when her beloved Lord seeks to arouse her. There then follows a time of seeking the Lord's presence, before the sweetness of fellowship with Christ is renewed, and love and praises flow, culminating in the declaration 'yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem'.

There then follows in Chapter 6, Christ's commendation of the believer or the church. When she is as she should be, seeking Him, faithful, walking with Him, then she is delightful to Him. Chapter 6:4 provides Christ's threefold description of the church. In firstly saying she is 'beautiful as Tirzah', the Lord compares her to the well-watered city in north Israel whose name means 'delightful' or 'accepted'. Here is a reminder that the Lord always accepts the penitent backslider, whether an individual or a church. A holy church pleases Him. The second description, 'comely as Jerusalem' is a reminder that the church is the temple of God, the place where He holds court and is worshipped. When she offers God-ordained, holy, orderly, united worship, He is glorified and delights to be in her midst. Thirdly, she is 'terrible as an army with banners', like an awesome, formidable army, well ordered and marching to victory. Thus the church on earth, the church militant, as she is faithful to her Lord and seeks Him, is a formidable sight, and advancing under the banner of the Lord Jesus, fights against the world and the Devil to advance the kingdom of God in this world. This is emphasised by the repetition of this third picture in v10, which may be the statement of the daughters, or of the Lord Himself. Here then, is what the church is called to be and what we as a body of believers should strive to be today. We long to see the Lord's cause strengthened and gather together in General Assembly with the purpose of advancing the cause of Christ. Are we like this repeated description here? What exactly makes the church a formidable sight and what is the effect of this formidable sight? Let us learn lessons from the picture here.

I. What makes the church a formidable sight?

a) Her unity

A banner is a rallying point. When the standard is raised the troops rally round it. The picture is of troops who have rallied around the various banners of the one army and are united and orderly as they progress into battle. A disunited army will never fight very well. In unity there is strength.

Christ in the gospel is the great rallying point for believers, for in Him the Lord has 'set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth' (Is.11:12). Having come to a common faith in Christ Jesus we have enlisted in His service, and loving Him and those whom He loves, we have become united one to another. We have rallied under His banner, to serve Him. When the church is united she is a formidable sight.

It is an army with banners, indicating that there are various divisions which make up this army. Each banner may differ somewhat, but they all bear the symbols of the same King. Yet each division must be united. Thus each branch of the church and each congregation within the church must preserve unity and order if they are to be formidable. How easy it is to disturb the unity of the saints! Let us love one another and seek one another's good for Christ's sake. 'Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others' (Phil.2:3-4). It is when this Christ-like spirit prevails that unity is preserved. As we debate in the Church courts let us remember who alone really matters and say with John the Baptist, 'He must increase, but I must decrease'.

There must also be unity in the whole army. Warring factions weaken any army. It is a grievous thing to see the professing church of our day so divided and our weakness so exposed. What a mess the professing church in Scotland is in! It is anything but formidable, or as an army with banners. Let us ever seek to heal the breaches in Zion, but not at the expense of truth or holiness. Neither the organisational unity of Romanism nor the spurious unity of the modern ecumenical movement is real unity at all. Let us ever seek to maintain the unity of the Spirit and love the brethren. Sadly, we have all come through a recent division. We know why we are divided from others. We cannot ignore it and must not forget why we are where we are. We wish it were otherwise, but our allegiance to Christ, to truth and righteousness, and the maintenance of a good conscience means we cannot compromise. Oh for the day when the church in our land were more united! Then indeed she would appear more formidable, like an army with banners.

b) Her arms

A group of people without armour, however well ordered, are of little use in battle. A formidable army is not only united but well armed with the right sort of weapons. Wrong arms or poor armour has caused many defeats, not only in history but in spiritual warfare as well.

The church is tempted constantly to use the wrong sort of arms. In a pragmatic age, when the end is often viewed to be

'Confidence in battle is a necessity. Thus the church must have faith. She must have confidence in her message – that the arms are the right arms. She must have hope in God, aware that He can raise the spiritually dead and bring them to life. How we need to remember that all we do is for God's glory and for the deliverance of sinners from a state of sin into a state of salvation by bringing them to Christ.'

more important than the means, how we need to remember that 'the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds' (2Cor.10:4). Using worldly marketing techniques and worldly ways to attract people to Christ will not work, but only results in failure. We can be tempted by the apparent success of others to adopt their methods, regardless of how sound or biblical they are. There is always the danger of forgetting how success is to be assessed. One day the Lord will try every man's work. What sort of congregation were they trying to build? The day of testing will come. For some, all the apparent success will be exposed as useless, like a building built of wood, hay and stubble which cannot withstand a fire. Others will find that God has indeed blessed their labours (1Cor.3:14). In today's multi-media, PR-obsessed age, how the church and individuals need to remember that God uses 'the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe' (1Cor.1:21). It is the truth which is able to search hearts and that liberates souls. Let us have confidence in the arms God has given His church and maintain our emphasis on the need for faithful preaching of the Gospel.

Similarly, God uses the word of God 'preached' in the holy lives of His people. Let us remember that we are called to holiness, which includes practical good works (Mt.5:14, 44; 1Pet.2:1-13). All God's people have their rôle to play in being living witnesses to the truth in their lives. How often God has used the godliness of an individual to awaken a sinner and draw him to Himself. In a day when many in the church seek to minimise the difference between the church and the world, let us be unashamed of holy living. A holy church is a formidable, well-armed church.

c) Her faith

Arms are of little use to an army if the soldiers lack the confidence to use them, or are terrified of the enemy. Whenever the engagement comes, the fearful will flee at the slightest difficulty. Confidence in battle is a necessity. Thus the church must have faith. She must have confidence in her message – that the arms are the right arms. She must have hope in God, aware that He can raise the spiritually dead and bring them to life. How we need to remember that all we do is for God's glory and for the deliverance of sinners from a state of sin into a state of salvation by bringing them to Christ.

Sadly, the faith of the church often fails. Once this happens the professing church loses her way. In the 1870s the Church in Scotland lost confidence in the Bible as the inspired, infallible word of God. This led to liberalism, a 'social gospel' and neo-orthodoxy wreaking havoc in the nation. The church has never recovered from this, and will not until meaningful confidence in the Bible as God's word is restored. Let us maintain confidence in the Word and remember that God is able to build His church. Indeed, He has promised that she

shall yet have the victory and that the gates of Hell will not prevail. Do we really believe this? Without faith, we shall never be formidable.

d) Her Commander

Although all the divisions in an army may have slightly different banners, they will all carry the symbol of their leader. If the commander is present, and he is known for his wisdom and courage, this will help strike terror into the hearts of the enemy. If he is absent or falls in battle, the enemy will take courage and defeat may occur. Christ himself is Captain of the Lord's host. He is the mighty, wise commander whom the church has come to trust for salvation. We follow Him and are under His banner. As we battle in His name, using His strategy and depending on Him for blessing, we may have confidence. However, it is only as He is present that true unity will prevail and that the church will be empowered. He alone can make people submit to Himself in faith and obedience. Oh for a day of His power with Him present in the gatherings of His people (Ps.18:43f; Ps.110:3)! How we need to pray constantly for His presence and blessing! We must avoid anything that may possibly offend Him. All that we do in General Assembly and in congregational and personal life must reflect the fact that He is the one that matters, that our service is to Him, and that it is His cause that is to be advanced, for His own glory. It was as the church was faithful and seeking Him that she was 'terrible as an army with banners'. Let us ever seek the presence of Christ, our great Commander in Chief. When He is present, the church is strong.

II. The effect of this formidable sight

A formidable army going forward into battle will have an effect on the enemy. This is true of the church also, for when she is 'terrible as an army with banners' things happen.

a) The effect on individuals

As a mighty army may strike terror into the hearts of individuals, so the church, when faithful, will affect individuals. The consciences of the ungodly and unconverted are stirred by the witness of faithful believers. Some will be restrained from sin. Thus we read of 'Herod [who] feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly'. Although not brought to repentance, he was restrained from much sin by what he saw and heard form John. Our own godliness should have a restraining influence on our families, which is no small blessing. How often revival breaking out in a community has left the civil magistrate with little to do! It is little wonder that sin, immorality and criminality is so prevalent in our own land today, when the church is so weak and ineffective.

There will, of course, always be some who, like the Pharisees, remain implacably opposed to King Jesus. However, just as they were restrained in their opposition by the influence of others, so outright rebellion and sin has a tendency to hide itself when the church is strong. Such men love darkness and do not want to be exposed by the light of truth and holiness.

b) The effect on false systems

What is true of individuals is also true of error and false systems. Error cannot stand before the truth. With Christ present and the church and individuals faithful and earnestly contending for the faith, then false religion and error will be kept at bay. Error and false religions creep in when the church is weak, people are ill-taught, the power of godliness is waning and the love of many has grown cold. We live in a day when this has occurred. However, the Lord has given us His word and let us not be ashamed of Christ or His Gospel, but boldly proclaim the truth as it relates to all areas of life. What our society, our towns and our villages need is a return to the truth. May God once again make His Church terrible as an army with banners.

c) The effect on the growth of the Kingdom

When the church is formidable, it leads to the advance of the kingdom of God on earth. When Christ is present in the gatherings of His people and at work in them in their witness, then they are invincible. The opening words of v10 speak of growing light – of the first glimmer of dawn, of the stronger light of the moon, and of the full power of the sun. As the Church returns and seeks the fellowship of her Lord, then she grows in vigour and strength.

Today it is all too easy to become depressed at the state of the church. However, there have been dark days before – the days of Noah, of Jeremiah, of the Moderates etc. Yet God can and will bless his church. There have been setbacks but also advances in the Lord's cause. His Kingdom is to be 'like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: but when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it' (Mk.4:31-32). Christ shall yet have the victory on the earth. All nations shall serve Him and kings shall yet be nursing fathers to His cause. Knowing that He shall triumph should encourage us to press on in the battle, looking for His blessing.

How often the church is half asleep. She needs to be stirred up and to keep her graces lively. Then, looking to Christ and with Him present, she shall prevail in the world. Today in our needy land, may God make us as a branch of the professing church, 'terrible as an army with banners'. May He reform and reunite the professing church in the land. Then we shall see the kingdom advancing – all to the glory of our great King, Commander and beloved Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

'When the church is formidable, it leads to the advance of the kingdom of God on earth. When Christ is present in the gatherings of His people and at work in them in their witness, then they are invincible.'

Same Sex Marriage

Moderatorial Address of Rev James Gracie

(Delivered on the Tuesday morning of the 2012 General Assembly)

The Moderator's opening address affords a unique opportunity for our denomination to speak to the nation. In so doing today, I wish to confront one subject that continues to cause us great concern; indeed, it is the subject which, within Scotland, provoked the greatest response to any consultation exercise hitherto, and is an issue which continues to stimulate serious discussion within the Scottish media. That subject is, of course, the Scottish Government's current proposals to introduce same-sex marriage. Similar proposals are under consideration in Westminster. I address this subject for two reasons:

Primarily, and put very simply, homosexual practices are a grievous sin. While the question is asked what is wrong with two human beings 'loving' each other and being 'faithful' to one another, we would respectfully point out that the Bible never defines a homosexual relationship in these terms. Paul describes such behaviour in his epistle to the Romans not as love, but as 'vile affections' and as 'lust' (Romans 1:26-27). When commenting on these verses, John Calvin describes homosexuality as 'the dreadful crime of unnatural lust' and goes on to say that the practice of it is highly degrading since it reverses the whole order of nature.

John Gill, the great 18th Century theologian, commenting on the same passage in Romans, states 'The very sin of "sodomy" is here designed ... an exceeding great sin this is, contrary to nature, dishonourable to human nature, and scandalous to a people and nation among whom it prevails'. One could replicate these sentiments from a variety of Christian theologians of all shades down through the centuries.

Further, in November of last year, I was reported to the police by several persons accusing me of 'homophobia' and of comparing homosexuality with paedophilia. The fact that to date no action has been taken by the police or by the Procurator Fiscal is probably a reflection of the fact that I never actually said the things of which I was accused eg of directly comparing homosexuality with paedophilia. That is to some an irrelevance. The homosexual lobby uses intimidation, the cry of 'Homophobia!', and the threat of the law to try to close the mouth of anyone who seeks to oppose their view. My address today should be a sign to the people of Scotland that no such intimidation will close our mouths in speaking out against proposals for sinful legislation; no threat of the police or the courts of the land will prevent us from warning the people of Scotland against homosexuality, whether such legislation is passed or not.

My address is in two parts:

1. The Christian view of same-sex marriage

What is the Christian view of same-sex marriage? One may wonder why such a question should be asked. After all, are the Scriptures not abundantly clear on this issue? Apparently not, in the eyes of some. Numerous homosexuals believe the Bible condemns their practice and will openly say so; sadly, they care little about that fact. Increasingly, however, one hears of 'Christian Gay Associations' and 'Gay Churches' where it is deemed acceptable to consider oneself a Christian and a practising homosexual at one and the same time. For example, we now have a self-professed homosexual as an ordained minister within the Church of Scotland. What then is the proper Christian view on same-sex marriage?

One may look at the view of the fathers of the church, or consider what eminent theologians of the past have said on this issue, and rightly conclude that those who argue against us are not simply arguing against the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing). Indeed, their argument is not primarily with any of the churchmen of today. Their argument is with the whole weight of Christian opinion over the past 2,000 years. For any politician to arbitrarily redefine marriage, a Christian ordinance, in the face of the overwhelming opinion of the Christian church for over 2,000 years is to demonstrate a degree of arrogance which is almost unimaginable and truly staggering. Yet this is what is happening today.

But the collective view of the church is not the primary reason that determines the issue for the Christian. The Bible is our ultimate authority and not the traditions or views of men. 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them' (Isaiah 8:20).

We today could set out all the arguments from the Old Testament to prove without any doubt that homosexuality is an abominable sin and, by reasonable deduction, that same-sex marriage is condemned in the Old Testament. For example, Leviticus 18:22 states: 'Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination'. The Old Testament should be authoritative for us because it stands written in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 with reference to the Old Testament: 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works'. But some may reject the authority of the Old Testament. If so, consider what the Lord Jesus Christ has to say about it and He is never wrong. Surely His view should put an end to all disputation for the Christian. What then does the Lord say about marriage?

Let us look at one passage in Matthew's Gospel. In Matthew chapter 19, Jesus addresses the issue of marriage and divorce. The Pharisees came to Him to tempt Him saying, 'Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?' These Pharisees were not really serious nor interested about knowing what Jesus had to say, but were more interested in justifying themselves. One wonders if that may be true of many who speak on the subject today too. Are we really interested in what the Lord has to say? The Pharisees approached Jesus with their question which was to the effect, 'Should there be such a thing as 'quickie divorce' procedures as we now have them in Scotland?' Moses had permitted divorce but how would Jesus respond? To what moral standard, if any, would the Lord

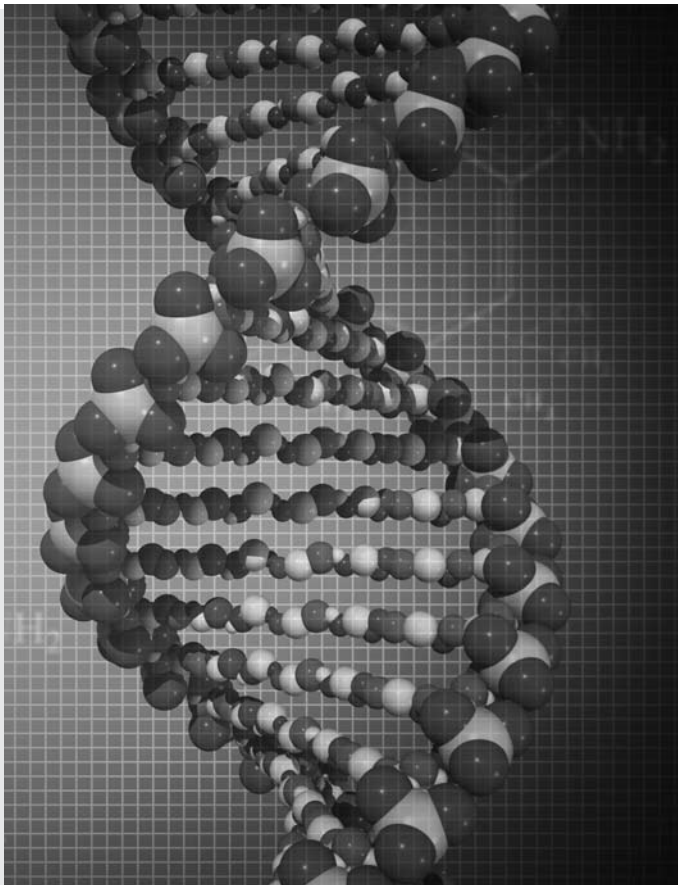
appeal, and how would His response compare to Moses? Jesus answered as follows:
'Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female...For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.' (Matthew 19:4-6).
We note several points from this answer of our Lord.

1. In addressing this question, the Lord goes back to the Genesis account. He says, 'Have you not read...' Later in the same incident, when He is asked why Moses commanded to give a writing of divorcement, again the Lord refers to the initial institution of marriage as given in Genesis, saying, 'but from the beginning it was not so' (v8). By this response of the Lord, we can establish two facts:
a. Jesus lent the full weight of His own authority to the account of marriage as given at the beginning of Genesis; and,
b. He confirms that that account is itself absolutely authoritative and determinative when it comes to identifying what marriage is. In answering any question on marriage, we have the authority of Jesus Christ to determinatively use the Genesis account as the God-given template because that is what He did himself.

2. The Lord refers to the Genesis account, by stating, 'He which made them at the beginning made them male and female'. Adam and Eve were created with a clear distinction between them; the one was male and the other female. Indeed, the Genesis account lays the obligation upon them to 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth' an obligation that would have been truly hindered were either of the two of them anything other than fully heterosexual. While it may be somewhat convenient therefore for homosexuals to suggest that there is some gene within their biological makeup which uniquely determines that they are born different to the rest of humanity, such an idea is clearly refuted by the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. Adam was created a man; Eve was created a woman. It is true that as a result of the fall of our first parents deviations and many perversions from God's created order have been introduced into the world. Indeed, it would be incredible were that not to be the case as we are all born sinners and, as such, we all have sinful inclinations of one kind or another; in that a homosexual is no different to the rest of us. However, temptation or inclination is not the sin; practising the inclination or succumbing to the temptation is. No matter how one looks at it, homosexual behaviour is a lifestyle choice for the homosexual just as much as it is a lifestyle choice for the paedophile, the murderer, the thief, the liar, the drunkard or the adulterer. In every case, it is man who freely chooses to depart from God's way of living. Judgment came very severely upon Sodom and Gomorrah for this very reason. They freely chose to depart from God. As such, God left them to their own heart and when He did, they freely chose to practise what later became identified as sodomy. The practice of sodomy was therefore itself part of God's judgment upon them, while at the same time it was a lifestyle of their own free choosing.

3. Jesus states further, 'For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife'. It should be noted that the injunction for a man to leave his father and his mother and to cleave to his wife was not a commandment that was given simply to Adam. He had no mother or father to forsake. This gives us the clearest indication that the account of marriage

'While it may be convenient for homosexuals to suggest that there is some gene within their biological makeup which uniquely determines that they are born different to the rest of humanity, such an idea is clearly refuted by the words of the Lord Jesus Christ.
It is true that as a result of the fall of our first parents deviations and many perversions from God's created order have been introduced into the world. However, temptation or inclination is not the sin; practising the inclination or succumbing to the temptation is.'



in Genesis, and the specific details contained therein, are of universal application; rules to be observed throughout the generations. They were not given just for Adam's good but for the good of us all. Is this not exactly what Jesus recognised when He quoted these verses in response to the Pharisees?

4. When Jesus says, 'For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother', to what cause or reason is he referring? It is surely to the 'fact' which he had just quoted from Genesis, that God had created them male and female ie 'Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female...For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife'. This is why man should marry and why he should forsake his paternal home and cleave to his wife. His wife alone was able to be the true help meet for him. She alone was designed psychologically, emotionally and physically to help him in his quest to glorify his Creator, and she alone was created by God to assist him fulfil God's purpose in replenishing the earth. Eve had been specifically created by God with that role in mind. To suggest that someone else can fulfil that role, or that any other combination can now replace this God-given model is to suggest that we know better than God Himself. Such a thought is, of course, blasphemy.

5. Among all the institutions and offices belonging to human society, the marriage commitment is the foremost of all, and the most sacred. Even the close relationship that exists between parents and their son must take a back seat to the marriage relationship; a son must leave his paternal home and cleave to his wife. In the eyes of the Lord, marriage outweighs every civil relationship. It is therefore a most solemn and a most serious thing for a nation to seek to redefine marriage simply to accommodate a small minority within society. Such a suggestion will inevitably have dire consequences for Scotland and for the United Kingdom.

6. If, as the words in Genesis clearly indicate, marriage is the most fundamental of all civil relationships within society, then we also learn a further two very important lessons from our Lord's words:
a. Faithfulness – there must be faithfulness in marriage. The man is to 'cleave to his wife'. If there is no faithfulness in marriage why should we expect it in politics, in the press, in the boardroom, or anywhere else for that matter? The marriage bond, out of all relationships, must surely exemplify true faithfulness.
b. Morality – there must equally be morality in marriage. The man is to cleave, but he is to cleave to his wife, not to another man. If there is no moral code in marriage, why should we expect moral standards in politics, in the press, in the boardroom, or anywhere else? If marriage is to exemplify true faithfulness, it must equally exemplify sound morality. The only moral standard for marriage so far as the Lord Jesus Christ is concerned is that set before us in Genesis where a man cleaves to his wife.

7. The assertion is often made that marriage is a civil institution, and therefore why should homosexuals not avail themselves of marriage as a civil right? This assertion is correct in one respect in that marriage is indeed primarily a civil, and not a church, institution. It is certainly not a church sacrament. It was instituted before the fall and therefore applies civilly to all mankind. However, what that assertion fails to take account of is the fact that marriage, as opposed to what is today called civil partnerships, is a Divine ordinance. This is clearly shown in the words of the Lord before us, 'What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder'. This is why so many homosexuals are not interested in these proposals coming before Parliament. Many of them are not religious and cannot understand why marriage is such an issue. They already have all the privileges afforded to them under a civil partnership; why the need for marriage?

2. The Christian response to same-sex marriage

Considering the above, what is to be the response of the Christian church? All would surely agree that there must be some response, but what is that response to be? Is ticking a box on the computer, registering your vote in yet another petition, the answer or are the words of Micah 6:1 more appropriate, 'Hear ye now what the Lord saith; Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice'.
I wish to look at four areas where we must contend, and where we must lift up our voices, and even let the hills echo with our cries.

To the Lord

This is surely a day for prayer, to lift our voices to the Lord. We must encourage our people to pray for the future of marriage. We must gather with like-minded Christians and press the Throne of Grace for God's mercy that the sanctity of marriage in our land would be respected. In this regard, let our prayers to the Lord be both broad and full. Perhaps there are times when our prayers are characterised by being very narrow, simply asking for deliverance. But what if it is not God's will that we should be delivered? What if it is within God's decretive purpose that our nation under judgment will descend more and more into immorality and godlessness? We have no promise that the Lord will even keep the Gospel light in this land, let alone safeguard marriage. These are things that are hidden from us, but our prayers in such a situation must be broad and full, conditioned by the petition, 'not my will, but thy will be done'. For what should we then pray?
While deliverance for our nation must be a primary desire as we pray, surely our first point in prayer is thankfulness. We must thank God for the gift of marriage and the great blessings marriage brings. As the basic building-block of society, marriage brings stability to families and communities where children can be raised with both a mother and a father. In the Genesis account quoted earlier, where the Lord deals with the issue of marriage, the son is to leave his 'father and mother' and to cleave to his wife. The happy picture is of the son leaving the great blessings of a stable home with a father and a mother, to take up that same responsibility with his own wife. We must pray that parents will be given the necessary skills to raise their children so that children's early training would enable them to benefit fully from the marriage bond. We must pray that in a day where almost every medium is used to promote uncleanness, the innocence of our children would be protected.
But we must also remember in prayer the many children today who are being raised within civil partnerships where there are no proper role-models, and where the environment within which they are being raised will undoubtedly convince

'We must pray and thank God for the stable marriage relationships within the church and within society. We should pray that such marriage ties would be strengthened. It is surely a great indictment on the Christian church of the present day when one hears of divorce among Christian couples.'

them that homosexuality is the norm. Such an environment is more likely to deceive these children into believing they are themselves homosexual when in fact they are not. While there is little evidence to suggest homosexuality is fundamentally genetic, there is much evidence to show that the environment within which a child is raised plays a major part in his or her future sexual behaviour. We should therefore pray for children being raised by adults in a same-sex relationship.

We must pray and thank God for the stable marriage relationships within the church and within society. We should pray that such marriage ties would be strengthened. It is surely a great indictment on the Christian church of the present day when one hears of divorce among Christian couples. What a sad example that is to the world of Christian marriage. We should pray for healing in such situations. We need to pray that Christians especially are properly schooled in all the obligations as well as all the benefits of married life so as to show to the world that 'marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled' (Hebrews 13:4).

Above all, we must pray that the Lord will deal with the leaders of our nation that they will repent of such proposals as are now under consideration. The same God who gave King Saul another heart is able to give our leaders another mind on this issue. We pray it may be so. The Lord is able to do mighty things with us and for us: 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much' (James 5:16). Does the time not call above all for fervent prayer?

To the church

If our first cry is to the Lord, our second cry is to the church. In considering this, we must pose the question: What is the church? In this we must consider two issues. In the first place, there is the need to recognise that ministers who are practising homosexuals are not true ministers of Christ and ought to have no place as ministers of the church. Christ defines marriage in terms of a man and a woman as in the Genesis account. But He also says elsewhere, 'if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples' (John 8:31). Ministers who are practising homosexuals are not disciples of Christ because they do not continue in Christ's word. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Paul states, 'Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God'. Now is the time for those evangelical ministers who sit in the same General Assembly as such men to take a clear and a principled stand. Will they implicitly acknowledge those ministers as true ministers of the Gospel by their actions, or will they make their views known not only by word but also in deed? Whatever happens, we pray the Lord will give such men the wisdom, courage, and grace to do what is right and what is God -honouring.

Yet, we must also ask ourselves, with whom we are to unite in our opposition to the same-sex marriage proposals. For example, are we at liberty to join forces with the ecumenical group 'Scotland For Marriage' or are we not? This is a very relevant question for us as some Christian organisations believe we are.

At the rally organised by 'Scotland For Marriage' leaflets were distributed. One such leaflet correctly identified the problem of same-sex marriages and the dangers posed by the immorality of the present day. The leaflet began by quoting Romans Chapter 1. However, it then asked the question, 'This is so big a problem, why has God not intervened?' The answer given in the leaflet is as follows:-

'He has! He sent His mother and ours to Quito, to Akita, to Fatima and to several other places... Our Lady reiterated the

basic message of the Gospel – prayer, penance and amendment of life ... Say the Rosary every day to obtain peace for the world... [Our Lady] appeared in 1925 and said "all those who for five months on the first Saturday go to confession, receive Communion, say five decades of the Rosary, and keep Me company for 15 minutes meditating on the Rosary, with the purpose of making reparation to Me, I promise to assist them at the hour of death with all the graces necessary for the salvation of their souls"... Jesus also spoke... "Have pity on the heart of your Most Holy Mother which is covered with thorns...". You can remove thorns from Her heart with your loving "First Saturday" devotion and receive the graces She promises... Have confidence in God and Our Lady... May God and Our Lady be with you!'

While we are very pleased that others have stood out against same-sex marriage, and indeed would fully acknowledge that some have made their position on the matter clear in a most courageous and commendable way in the face of much fierce opposition, for us Scripture truth and the Gospel must come first. It is not to be voted on by referendum of the people, and it should not be compromised for the sake of advantage.

In Deuteronomy 22:10 we read 'Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together'. Paul expands on this in 2 Corinthians 6:14,17, 'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness... Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord...'. How can we in conscience protest about two of the same sex being unequally yoked if, in so doing, we ourselves become unequally yoked?

We call upon all who love the Gospel message of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, by Christ alone, and the Scriptures alone to be separate, to go forward together in full dependence on the Lord, trusting not in the arm of flesh, but trusting alone in the power of the Almighty, knowing that Jesus has been raised, 'Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come' (Ephesians 1:21).

To the Nation

If our first cry is to the Lord, and the second is to the Church, our third cry is to the nation. We would respectfully place before the Scottish nation the following:

The demand by a minority to change the definition of marriage has, in our opinion, little to do with equality, but has everything to do with imposition. 'Equality' is already enjoyed within civil partnerships. 'Marriage' will add little to this. What then will redefining marriage achieve? We believe it will achieve exactly what its proponents want it to achieve; the imposition upon society of same-sex marriage. Many may innocently ask what is wrong with that. Surely this law will bring equality within Scotland and at the same time no minister will be required to perform such a marriage against his conscience. What is the problem?

We believe this will have a major impact on virtually every family in the country. We believe this is but another step towards homosexuality being imposed on our children. Schools will no longer be able to speak about marriage without teaching the equality of same-sex partnerships. Children's books from infants upwards will be required to recognise it. Why? Because the law recognises it.

While it is stated that a minister may not be forced to perform a same-sex marriage, will that same minister be persecuted as others have been in our nation for speaking out against homosexuality once same-sex marriage is legalised? Surely if something becomes law, every institution will be expected to at least acknowledge that law. Will parents be persecuted when they remove their children from classes and maybe even be forced to remove them from state schools altogether to protect the moral upbringing of their children? Will private schools be prosecuted for failing to acknowledge such unions? The humanists, of course, support same-sex marriage and one can understand why. Humanists remove their children from religious education. With the introduction of same-sex marriage into the school curriculum, Christians would be forced to remove their children. Herein is a very subtle way of ensuring that religious education is removed from the school curriculum altogether. This, of course, is a prime aim of the humanist movement, but such an outcome will deprive many parents of the right to have their children taught some decent moral standards in school.

School plays are a reality in most schools. Will such plays now have to reflect the new law? Will school plays have to include a scene with a same-sex couple just as virtually every television drama and soap does? We believe the parents of Scotland should be made aware of these things. They have a right to know the consequences for their children should this become law.

The people of Scotland are well aware that homosexuality is a sin. The Bible says so. An examination of history confirms it. Conscience cries out within as an echo of God's truth. However, men hold such truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18). There are really only two ways in which this truth can be readily suppressed. The first is to normalise homosexuality and to try to make it the same as marriage. This is why there is such a vociferous campaign on the part of many homosexuals for same-sex marriage. The second way of suppressing the truth is to close the mouth of anyone who expresses any counter opinion. The germ of this has already been witnessed in our land. Is it yet to get worse?

We would caution the Scottish Government that the passing of such legislation would be the means of introducing persecution against the Lord's people. The small but belligerent homosexual lobby will not be satisfied until all opposition to their way of life is snuffed out. We do not imply that this is what is intended by the Scottish Parliament in considering these proposals, but we fear that this will almost certainly be the unwelcome outcome. We would therefore plead with the parliamentarians of our day not to succumb to the idea that the introduction of this legislation is all about equality. In reality, equality has, in our humble opinion, got very little to do with it.

To The Homosexual

Our final cry is to homosexuals themselves. To them we say, Christians are not your enemies. We in the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) are not your enemies. I believe I can speak authoritatively on behalf of every member of the General Assembly gathered here today in stating that we seek nothing but your spiritual good. We recognise that there are those within society who employ gratuitous and abusive

'True marriage typifies the relationship between Christ and His church. It shows the wondrous love of Christ who gave Himself for the church. We pray that you may come to personally know this wondrous love of Christ in your own lives.'

language against you. Sadly, there are even some who use physical violence against you. Christians are not such people. On the contrary, we deplore such behaviour.

However, in seeking your spiritual welfare we are duty-bound to speak the truth to you. Were you to see someone heading for a precipice and certain death, would it be a kindness on your part to just walk past and not to cry out a warning? For the love of your souls we must cry out a warning. That warning is not simply our warning, it is the Bible's warning: 'For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad' (2 Corinthians 5:10).

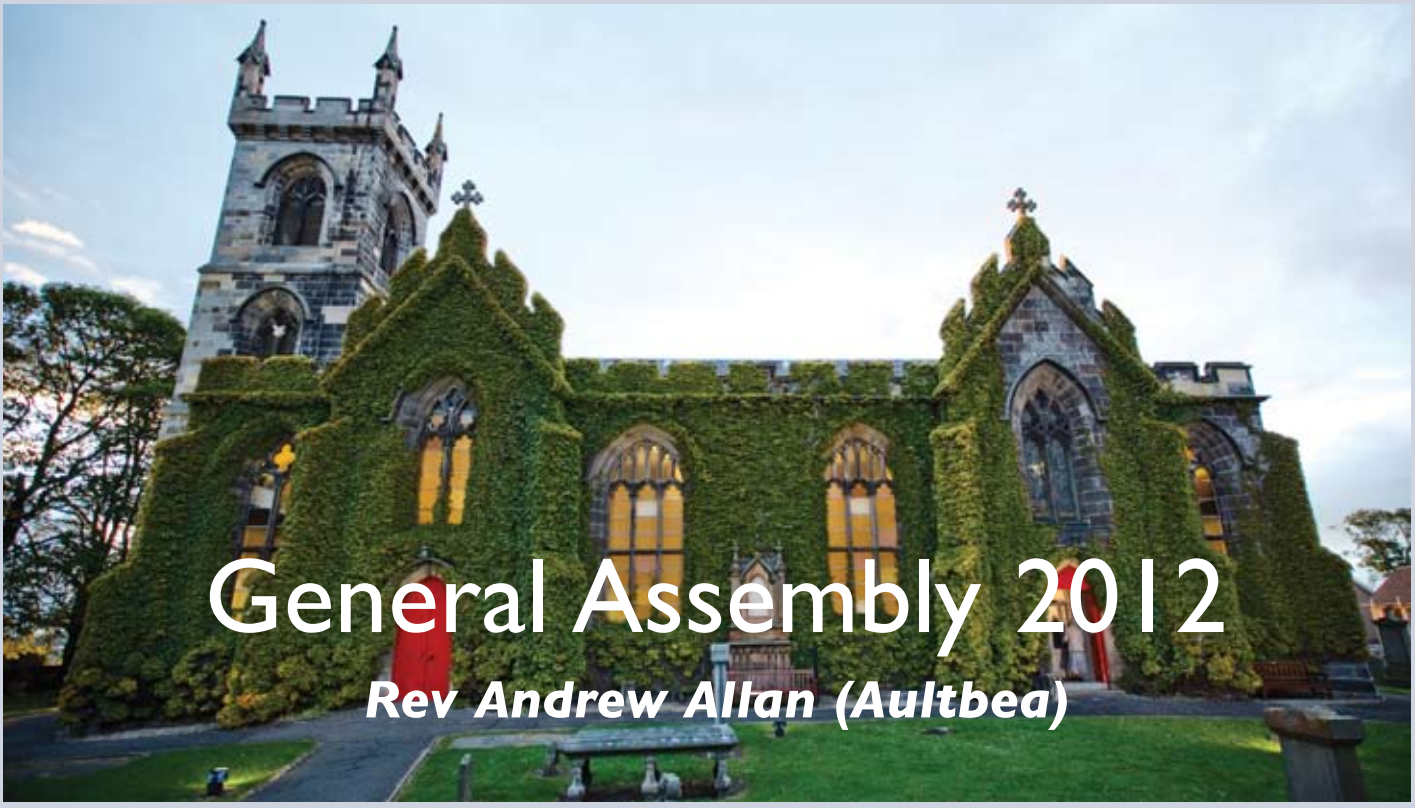
You may feel it is offensive to be challenged by us about homosexuality being a sin. After all, are Christians perfect? I address the first point by disabusing you of any notion of a positive answer to the second. We are not perfect. Indeed, many Christians were just as annoyed and offended when they were challenged about their particular sins before coming to know the Lord.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 'Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God'. This is indeed a formidable list. Yet the full potency of this list is really only seen when you read on into verse 11, where it says, 'And such were some of you'. It is obvious that there were Christians at Corinth who had been thieves, fornicators, extortioners and, yes, homosexuals. Yet the Gospel of Jesus Christ changed their lives. This is what they had been, but now they were different. Paul continues, 'but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God'.

The Gospel or good news of Jesus Christ is for sinners. It is for homosexuals just as it is for every other sinner. It is this Gospel that meets the needs of every kind of sinner. In Christ there is forgiveness of sin; there is a righteousness that is perfect; there is the power to overcome sin and to live for His glory. All this is in Christ and nowhere else.

It is for this reason that this General Assembly invites you to come humbly to Jesus Christ today. We would exhort you to repent and to believe the Gospel. It is a call to faith in Jesus Christ alone for all your righteousness. We know that if you come to Him, He will in no wise cast you away. He will receive you to Himself, and He will bless you with the blessings of salvation.

We would finally say to you, true marriage typifies the relationship between Christ and His church. It shows the wondrous love of Christ who gave Himself for the church. We pray that you may come to personally know this wondrous love of Christ in your own lives. We today commend it to you, with the exhortation, 'Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon' (Isaiah 55:6).



General Assembly 2012

Rev Andrew Allan (Aultbea)

Commissioners from all over Scotland and from abroad gathered at Liberton Kirk, Edinburgh, on Monday 21st May 2012 for the annual General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing). The retiring Moderator, Rev Graeme Craig, Stornoway, got the proceedings under way by calling the Assembly to worship and preaching from Song of Solomon 6:10, focusing on the words, 'terrible as an army with banners'. The sermon appears elsewhere in the magazine.

Then the Moderator called for the election of a new Moderator. Edinburgh elder, Mr Maurice Grant, proposed Rev James I Gracie, Edinburgh. He made mention of Mr Gracie's extensive experience in church life and courts during his 18 years in the pastoral ministry. Having being duly seconded, and unanimously agreed, the Clerks and past Moderators conveyed the decision of the house to Mr Gracie in the time-honoured fashion.

Donald John Morrison

Assembly Arrangements

The Assembly Arrangements & Nominations Committee Report (A) was presented by Inverness elder Mr Donald John Morrison, Convener, with remarkable brevity. The Report was adopted.

Mr Donald Robertson, Strath, and Mr Colin Crichton, Stornoway, were appointed as Assembly precentors.

Moderator's Reception

All present were then invited to the nearby Anderson Halls for the Moderator's Reception where Rev William Macleod said grace. Following the refreshments the Moderator asked some friends to speak.

Rev Bill Scott highlighted Mr Gracie's commitment to evangelism and spoke of all the places used by the Edinburgh congregation for worship during the time that Mr Gracie has been the minister. He was glad that the congregation had their own building now and this, he said, was due in no small measure to Mr Gracie's drive and enthusiasm.

In bringing greetings, Reformed Baptist Pastor David Kay, Barnstaple, spoke of the common bond he has with Mr Gracie centred around the doctrines of grace. He encouraged the new Moderator to be strong and faithful.

Rev David Blunt reflected on his long association with the Moderator which began when they were both students in the Free Church College. He told the gathering that he found Mr Gracie to be a friend, robust, forthright, kindly, fair minded and independent.

Edinburgh elder, Mr Maurice Grant reflected on what he shares with Mr Gracie – an ancestral home in Skye and a common interest in Snizort. He also acknowledged that he was an admirer of Mr Gracie's debating skills in former General Assemblies.

Ladies in attendance at the Assembly; Visiting delegates: J Van Laar (Canadian Reformed Churches); D Watson (EPC of Ireland)

Last to speak was Skye elder, Mr Alasdair Nicolson who contributed some personal reflections as the Moderator's father-in-law..

The Moderator then brought the reception to a close with prayer after the singing of Psalm 133.

Tuesday Morning

Following worship, Mr Gracie addressed the Assembly on the subject of the Scottish Government's current proposals to introduce same-sex marriage.

The retiring Moderator took the chair and Mr Gracie read the 'Loyal and dutiful address to Her Majesty the Queen'.

Ecumenical Relations

The Report of the Committee on Ecumenical Relations was presented by Rev Murdo A N MacLeod, Convener. In his presentation he reminded the house that all Christians were part of the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mr MacLeod highlighted several organisations and churches with which we have relations.

Ecumenical Bodies

International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) – Such is the speed with which our lives are passing that the next meeting of the ICRC is now drawing near, being scheduled for 28 August to 4 September 2013 in Cardiff. On this occasion it will be hosted by the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England & Wales.

Affinity – We are grateful to Rev Timothy McGlynn who continues as the representative of our Church on the Affinity Council. Mr McGlynn is firmly of the opinion that we can continue to fulfil a very important role within this organisation, presenting and promoting the rich heritage of experimental Calvinism.

Churches

The Associated Presbyterian Churches, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England & Wales, the Church of England (Continuing), the Free Church of England (Evangelical Connexion), the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (vrijgemaakt) (GKNV), the Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika, the Hersteld Hervormde Kerk, the Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC), the Free Reformed Churches of North America, the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Reformed Presbyterian Churches of North America (RPCNA), the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the United Reformed Churches of North America, the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia, the Free Church of Australia, and the Southern Presbyterian Church of Australia expressed their sisterly relationship with us by either sending representatives to our Assembly or by sending letters of greeting.

Rev Maurice Roberts spoke of the encouraging time he had visiting the Synod of the HRC as a delegate of our Church. There is a warm relationship between the two bodies.Rev Bill Scott spoke of the interesting, enjoyable and profitable time he had when he attended the European Conference of Reformed Churches in Kiev.

Sad Scottish situation

Rev John J Murray highlighted that there are seven Presbyterian churches in Scotland, yet one church. He urged closer unity among the denominations and exhorted the brethren to come together when suitable opportunities present themselves.

Delegates

Mr Jake Van Laar, of the Canadian Reformed Churches , spoke of how the sisterly relationship between our two churches had been re-established.

Mr David Watson, Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland, mentioned that his brother would be well known to many of us as Rev Sam Watson is a regular at the annual School in Theology. Mr Watson asked the question, What does it mean to bring greetings? He answered it by saying surely it means talking with each other and praying for each other. He stirred the Assembly with his encouraging words.

Committee on Finance & Sustentation

The Report of the Committee on Finance & Sustentation was presented by the Convener Mr John MacKenzie, Assynt. Mr MacKenzie paid tribute to the General Treasurer Mr Angus Macmillan, the Financial Administrator Mrs Muriel Smith and the Clerk to the Committee Mr Cameron MacLeay.

Total income for the year to end December 2011 was £697,448, showing an increase over the previous year of £45,335 (+6.9%). Included in this figure was a legacy of £18,153 received from the estate of the late Kenneth MacPherson, Kilmuir and allocated to foreign missions at the specific instruction of the donor. The Committee is extremely grateful to those who remember the needs of the Church when putting their affairs in order. Total expenditure for the year was £685,133, a reduction over the previous year of £59,441 (8%). In 2010 there was an operating deficit of

Finance Convenor John Mackenzie (Assynt);

Rev Timothy J McGlynn (Aberdeen);

Precentor Colin Crichton (Stornoway)

£92,461. We are glad to be able to report that in 2011 there was a surplus of £12,315. Payroll costs amounted to £457,296 and represented almost 67% of total income for last year excluding costs for administrative staff.

To address the potential future need for places of worship and accommodation for ministers in our congregations a Central Building Fund has been set up. A Special Committee is being set up to oversee this important task.

When the Committee convened in March there was considerable debate over this issue. Although the stipend has been unchanged for a number of years, the Committee again recommended to the General Assembly that there be no increase in the current year.

The following congregations were placed on the equal dividend platform under the provisions of Special Arrangements: Aberdeen, Leverburgh, Knock & Point, North Uist & Grimsay, Poolewe & Aultbea.

Mr Donald Robertson continues to diligently serve the Church in preaching and pastoral roles. Mr Robertson supplies on a rotating basis at two-week intervals the congregations of Assynt & Eddrachillis, and Bracadale and Duirinish. The Committee warmly commend Mr Robertson to the prayers of the Church.

Amendments

Rev M A N MacLeod presented the first amendment to the Report, proposing that paragraph 12 of the deliverance be amended to read: 'The General Assembly enact that Act IV 1994 be amended by the insertion of the following words as a new clause 1.6 "In instances of ministerial sickness the Deacons' Court of the charge shall be deemed to be responsible for meeting the costs of pulpit supply for the first 4 weeks and the expenses of an interim-moderator if appointed by Presbytery; thereafter the Deacons' Court may apply to the General Treasurer to have Pulpit Supply costs met from Central Funds"'. Mr Macleod believed that paragraph 12 which required Deacons' Courts to pay supply costs indefinitely during a minister's illness was unfair on small congregations, unpresbyterian and unwise.

Rev Timothy McGlynn, Aberdeen, presented the second amendment proposing that the deliverance paragraph 17 be amended to read: 'The General Assembly direct that the Congregation of Aberdeen be placed on the Equal Dividend Platform under Special Arrangements in accordance with Act XVIII 1998 for a further period of five years from the rising of this Assembly, subject to the Congregation promising to remit to central funds at least £16,000 annually'. The deliverance had required that the congregation contribute £18,000. Mr McGlynn felt his congregation were being treated differently from others and would be discouraged by what was required. He reminded the house that the Aberdeen congregation had year on year been increasing their remittances to Central Funds and that he did expect them to remit more than £16,000 annually.

Rev Harry Woods seconded the amendment stating that he would not like to be a member of the Committee as in this economic climate difficult decisions had to be made, but he felt on this occasion the Committee were somewhat hard. He cited a previous occasion when Beauly's late treasurer received a rather stiff letter from the Committee.

The Convener then asked for permission for the General Treasurer to address the house. Mr Macmillan made reference to the improvements made to the denomination's financial position compared to last year and stressed the importance of each congregation contributing 75% of ordinary income to central funds. He personally regretted that the Committee were not able to propose an increase in the stipend.

Rev William Macleod stated that he believed some congregations may have genuine difficulty in reaching the 75% target as they have large local expenses. He requested that attention be given to drawing up a trust deed which would allow congregations to hold their property locally so that if the denomination departed from the faith a sound congregation could continue to retain their property. Received wisdom in the past was that denominations were more likely to remain faithful and therefore property was held centrally under a Model Trust Deed. But recent history had shown that denominations can depart from their constitutional position.

After a vote was taken both amendments were accepted by the house.

Tuesday Evening
Welfare of Youth & Education

The Welfare of Youth & Education Committee Report was presented by the Convener Rev Kenneth Macdonald. In presenting his report he recognised that much of what he had to say was negative. Modern day life and living is dangerous for our young folk as God is marginalised. He cited

a recent example when he took an English pastor to share his testimony at a local school assembly. His friend, who was a converted Roman Catholic, was speaking to the pupils of 'When I became a Christian'. This infuriated a visiting Roman Catholic supply teacher. The outcome was that Mr Macdonald received a telephone call from the authorities. Mr Macdonald warned the church that substance abuse is something that could affect our children and that social networking needs to be monitored carefully.

Mr Macdonald spoke of the need to encourage our children to sit the Sabbath School Exams. He spoke positively of the Youth Camp in Badaguish, near Aviemore. The theme last year tied in with the anniversary of the King James Version, and was 'The Bible in your hand: how it got there and how to use it'. The talks, led by Rev Greg MacDonald, were well reinforced by the afternoon projects, run by Miss Flora MacLeod. It was the best attended yet. A special thank you is expressed to the various Deacons' Courts who subsidise some campers, and to Stornoway Congregation for making the major contribution to the hire of a mini-bus. The same venue is booked once again for this summer. He asked that we make these camps a matter of prayer.

In seconding the Report, Rev Gavin Beers acknowledged that he did not have much to say as the Report has said all he would wish to say. He thanked the Convener noting, from his time in the Snizort congregation, when Mr Macdonald was minister there, that it was evident that the Convener had a love for children and that the children loved him also. He believed that as a denomination we should be encouraged with the 200+ children we have.

An order of the day was taken at 6.15pm when Bible Class Grade prizewinner Isla G MacDonald, and Sabbath School Grade winner Emma Craig, both Stornoway, were presented with their awards by the Moderator.

In speaking to the Report, Rev Maurice J Roberts encouraged the teaching of the biblical account of Creation to our children to counteract evolution. He made mention of the *Genesis Flood* by Whitcomb and Morris and a DVD *Set In Stone* as useful resources.

Rev Greg MacDonald spoke of this year's Youth Camp. No more places are available for the girls' camp, but some are still available for the boys. He will be assisted by Rev James MacInnes and the theme is Pilgrim's Progress. He also spoke of the good work being done by the Lewis Independent Christian School, and reiterated the dangers of our young people from social networks.

Prizewinners: Isla MacDonald and Emma Craig (Stornoway)

Rev Warren Gardner spoke of his experience of successfully home schooling his children and said he would encourage more within the Free Church (Continuing) to do likewise.

Rev David Fraser asked if more basic Sabbath School material could be produced for children from non-church backgrounds.

Two young people present, William Irvine, Greenville, USA, and his friend Christopher from England were introduced to the Moderator who presented them with gifts in acknowledgment of the distance they had travelled to be there.

Delegates

Rev Alasdair MacLeod-Mair, from the Protestant Truth Society, spoke of his time in the Free Church College. He encouraged us to remain true to Reformation principles. He began his Wycliffe ministry with the Society at the beginning of the year and is available for ministry.

Rev Maarten Kuivenhoven, Heritage Reformed Churches, then addressed the house and read three verses from John 17. He emphasised unity among the brethren and reminded the house that Christ seeks our unity.

Wim Wullschleger, Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland CGKN, then was invited to address the gathering. He admitted that this was his first time in Scotland. He drew to our attention how essential prayer is and how it is a

Delegates: A MacLeod-Mair (PTS); *M Kuivenhoven (HRC);* *W Wullschleger (CGKN)*

fundamental part of the work of the ministry. 'Pray with the Spirit in the Spirit'.

Psalmody

The Report of the Psalmody Committee was presented by the Convener Rev William B Scott, who said, 'It is an increasing joy to serve on the Psalmody Committee which means I am sure that I ought to be relieved!' He thanked the Gillies family, Stornoway, for the development of a website to sell the Psalmody CDs – www.sing-the-psalms.webs.com. It was begun as a home-school project, and is reaching far and wide and selling CDs. Esther Semmens, Edinburgh, was singled out for her art work on the inserts. The group who do the hard work of practice and recording are a fine bunch of committed Christians. There is an increasing number who are sitting the Psalmody Tests. We would recommend these tests to all our people to improve the singing and learn new tunes. Special reference was made to Mrs Betty Murray of Portmahomack who at the youthful age of 86 has again passed grade 6. She was given a special book prize and promised another should she return next year. If we are ever looking for a recipe for old age it is simple – learn new tunes and sing the Psalms! The Committee have purchased a good supply of solfa Psalters but the staff ones are out of print. We are looking into finding a way to print them. One speaker asked about an update on the project to record the metrical Psalms in spoken mode. Psalms 1 to 32 were available last year and he wondered if any more had been recorded. The Convener replied that no more are available but that he intends to resume the project.

Rev Greg MacDonald spoke of the Gaelic Psalm project. Our effort to prepare a Gaelic words-only edition of the Psalms has been overtaken by the Scottish Bible Society who hope to produce one in November. While our own version has been proof-read and made ready to print, it was deemed best to step back from this project, mostly for economic reasons, until we see what the Bible Society will produce this year. Sincere and heartfelt thanks are due to those who gave themselves to preparing the Gaelic version. Even if it is not being used at present, their labour of love is not forgotten.

Rev John W Keddie, Vice-convener, seconded the Report by thanking Mr and Mrs Scott and the Psalm-singers for the excellent new CD produced. He highlighted the principle of Psalm-singing, asking and answering the question, Why Psalms? He also stressed the need to practise our Psalm singing and to encourage and enthuse our people.

Rev Graeme Craig thanked the Committee for the CDs produced and was encouraged that 43 had taken the psalmody test. He reminded the Committee to make sure that the prize winners received their prizes! Rev David S Fraser asked for more opportunities to come together for psalmody workshops. He was assured if he organised the time and place Mr Scott would conduct a workshop. Rev Andrew Allan told of the Committee's intention to supply free copies of the *Worthy to be Praised* CDs to local radio stations in the hope that selections from the CDs may be played at appropriate times.

Other business

The General Assembly then took up consideration of a Petition from the Free Presbytery of the United States of America anent Church Planter / Evangelist. They authorised the reappointment of the position of Church Planter & Evangelist to work within the bounds of the Presbytery of the United States of America and that he be given a seat on that Presbytery.

The General Assembly then took up consideration of an Overture from the Free Presbytery of Inverness with regard to the use of the word 'censure'. The Assembly directed courts of the church to use the term 'censure' only in the sense in which it is used in the laws of the Church and in the *Practice of the Free Church of Scotland*. They directed Church Courts to review any recent findings where the word 'censure' may not have been used appropriately.

Wednesday

The General Assembly began on Wednesday with devotional exercises, and at the Moderator's request Maurice J Roberts, Charles Greenwald, John W Keddie, Peter Thurlow, Kenneth M Macdonald, W John Urquhart, Gavin Beers and David Broyles led in prayer and the Assembly Clerks read portions of Scripture.

Rev David Blunt (North Uist)

Public Questions, Religion & Morals

The Report of the Committee on Public Questions, Religion & Morals was presented by Rev David M Blunt, Convener. In his delivery Mr Blunt said that the main subject of the Report this year was the establishment principle. He felt he would like to say something further concerning same-sex marriage in the UK.

'Marriage between two people of the same-sex is prohibited in England and Wales by the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973 which declares that a marriage is void if the parties are not respectively male and female. The Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977 states that there is a legal impediment to marriage if the parties are of the samesex.

'In 2004 the UK Government passed the Civil Partnership Act which has effect in Scotland. It allows two people of the samesex to create a civil partnership in which they have the same rights and responsibilities as in a civil marriage. The partnership can only be dissolved by a formal process similar

to a divorce. To form a partnership the two individuals must be outwith the degrees of relationship which prohibit marriage, meaning that siblings or other blood relatives cannot form civil partnerships, however long they may have lived together: amendments to extend the scope of the Act to include such people were rejected. In Scotland civil partnerships, just like marriage, can take place from the age of 16 with no need for parental consent. It is not surprising that people refer to these partnerships as 'gay marriage' although the Government insists they are not.

'Any decision on whether to remove the restrictions on civil partnerships and marriage in Scotland belongs to the Scottish Parliament. In January 2009 a petition was drawn up by the LGBT Network calling on the Scottish Parliament 'to urge the Scottish Government to amend the Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977 to allow two persons of the same-sex to register a civil marriage and a religious marriage if the relevant religious body consents'. Currently when a civil partnership is registered it must be done in a non-religious manner: the law makes no provision for any kind of ceremony. The petition gathered 1007 signatures, including politicians and clergy. In March 2009 the NUS Scotland LGBT Campaign launched an Equal Marriage Campaign with a similar petition but demanding also 'mixed-sex civil partnership'. This petition gathered 1,317 signatures.

'The Scottish Government rejected both petitions as legalising same-sex marriage in Scotland would require changes in non-devolved areas such as immigration, pensions and inheritance law, which Westminster must make. It was a hint to the UK Government to consider legalising same-sex marriage south of the border.

'Subsequently the Scottish Government held a consultation on the registration of civil partnerships and same-sex marriage, beginning on 2nd September 2011 and closing on 9th December. The Government indicated that they tended towards the view that religious ceremonies for civil partnerships should no longer be prohibited and that same-sex marriage should be introduced so that same-sex couples can have the option of getting married.

'On 17th September 2011 the Minister for Equalities in the UK Government announced that the Government would consult on how to implement equal civil marriage for same-sex couples in England and Wales with the aim of changing the law by the next general election. The Prime Minister's Office let it be known that he favoured legalising same-sex unions. The consultation began on 12th March. The Government's proposals would enable same-sex couples to have a civil marriage but unlike the Scottish proposals they would make no change to religious marriages; these would continue to be legally possible only between a man and a woman. The registration of civil partnerships on religious premises but without a religious content is already permitted.

'What is the timetable now? The Scottish Government received over 50,000 responses to its consultation which they are currently analysing. Beginning in June they hope to publish their analysis and also the individual responses, except where confidentiality was requested. If Ministers decide to proceed with legislation there would be a further consultation on a draft Bill. Such a consultation might take place towards the end of this year with any Bill being introduced to Parliament after the responses have been analysed.

'At Westminster the Queen's Speech at the State Opening of Parliament earlier this month did not mention same-sex marriage. Perhaps the UK Government is having second thoughts about legislation because of concern expressed by voters and Conservative MPs? The Equalities Minister has insisted that there will be no U-turn and that same-sex marriage will be introduced before 2015. Man proposes but God disposes. The Queen's Speech ends: "My Lords and members of the House of Commons, I pray that the blessing of Almighty God may rest upon your counsels". We too pray that it may and if it does we may be sure that the UK Government will abandon its wicked plans, as will the Scottish Government.

The Opposition to Same-sex Marriage

'We might have thought that opposing same-sex marriage would be a very straightforward matter for the church. Though divided on many things Christians are united in their belief that marriage is the voluntary union of one man and one woman for life. We ought therefore to be able to work together to resist any change to the current law. However different strategies have emerged which indicate a divide on how Christians are to witness to government. There have been various petitions against same-sex marriage.

The Christian and Same-sex Marriage

'How should a Christian approach this and other moral issues on which we ought to raise our voice? A concerned member of the public might sign any petition which opposes what he believes to be wrong. But a Christian can never act merely in

Psalmody Convener Rev Bill Scott;

Rev A Allan with M MacKay;

Assembly Secretary Mrs Janet Mackenzie

that way. His chief end is to glorify God, whether he eats or drinks or whatever he does (1Cor.10:31). The Word of God is the only rule for his belief and behaviour and the key point for him is that marriage was instituted by God and neither church nor state has any right to redefine it.

'I believe that a Christian cannot with consistency sign the Scotland for Marriage petition. The organisation has an ecumenical outlook with Cardinal O'Brien occupying a leading role. We do not believe that this is accidental or that his involvement is simply as a private individual! He leads the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland and is asserting her claims. He is no friend of the Bible or of Christians. Then because secular organisations like the Family Education Trust are also involved in Scotland for Marriage the petition does not refer to marriage as a divine institution, only as a beneficial tradition. Finally and most importantly there is the call for a referendum on a matter the Word of God addresses clearly, replacing the authority of God with the authority of the people.

'The other petitions the Christian may sign with varying degrees of enthusiasm: some of them don't 'do' the Bible; some of them don't even 'do' God. We believe that in everything the Christian does he is called to be a witness for the Lord, who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light (1Pet.2:9). We can only be the Lord's witnesses if we confess His Name and hold forth His Word. Yet Christian bodies like the Christian Institute, Care and the Evangelical Alliance seem prepared to make common cause with the world in their work. To the extent to which they do so they are hiding their light under a bushel.

Free Speech

'There has been a parallel move in another area of concern. Last week the Christian Institute announced that it was part of a new campaign group set up to reform Section 5 of the UK-wide Public Order Act 1986 because of the threat it poses to free speech. The Section states: 'A person is guilty of an offence if he uses threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour, or disorderly behaviour, or displays any writing, sign or other visible representation which is threatening, abusive or insulting, within the hearing or sight of a person likely to be caused harassment, alarm or distress thereby'. It means that it is an offence to use words which a member of the public within earshot or eyeshot might find insulting. This Section was little-noticed at the time but has come to attention because the police have begun investigating people under it and have made some controversial arrests.

'The campaign group which the Christian Institute is part of includes, among others, the National Secular Society and the Peter Tatchell Foundation. While we agree that Section 5 is an infringement upon the freedom of expression we have long enjoyed in our country these are strange bedfellows indeed for a Christian organisation. Do Christians and secularists really have the same view on freedom of speech? By no means.

'The National Secular Society campaigns for a secular state where 'freedom of expression is not restricted by religious considerations'. In other words blasphemy is fine. The Society was to the fore in the campaign to get the blasphemy laws in England and Wales abolished.

'In 2002 Peter Tatchell was behind a public reading of a blasphemous poem which suggested that Jesus was a homosexual. When no-one was arrested Tatchell declared, 'The blasphemy law is now a dead letter'. He said: 'The blasphemy law gives the Christian religion privileged protection against criticism and dissent. No other institution enjoys such sweeping powers to suppress the expression of opinions and ideas.'

As Christians we oppose this version of freedom of speech. Taking our view from the Bible we say that there can be no freedom to blaspheme because God's Name is holy. 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.' To insult God is a far worse thing than to insult our fellow men, and governments should recognise this in their legislation. Indeed if men had more respect for God they would have more respect for each other. In any witness to government on freedom of speech we need to state these things. But the Christian Institute, although it worked in Parliament to oppose the repeal of the blasphemy laws, cannot do so in this new campaign.

'This is the problem when the church and the world hold hands. The path the church then travels is not the one required by God's law. We realise that the Christian Institute is not a church but as a Christian Institute the Word of God should govern everything it does. Where does the Bible encourage the righteous to co-operate with the wicked in Christian work? It may be said that the Institute's work lies not in preaching the gospel but in seeking an influence in society: can there really be a Christian influence in society if no witness is made to Christ as the Saviour from sin and Lord of all?

'We may be tempted to think that by standing alone we will have little influence with government but our first need is to have influence with God: 'them that honour me I will honour' (1Sam.2:30). We recognise that God in His sovereignty may use ungodly men to accomplish His ends but that is His business; it does not give us a warrant to associate with the ungodly. Our witness must be without hindrance and without compromise.

The Significance of Same-sex Marriage

'The campaign for same-sex marriage is part of a more general attack on marriage which has been going on for decades. Ultimately it is an attack on God. What is really under attack is not marriage but the sanctity of marriage. Homosexuals are bound to resist the truth that marriage is a divine institution because if they allow that it is then they must also allow that God sets the rules for marriage, which they cannot allow.

'Homosexuals are fond of citing 'equality' and 'rights'. They say that when it comes to marriage there is one law for heterosexual couples and another for homosexual couples. They try to compare the treatment they receive with racial prejudice, maintaining that to discriminate against them is the same as to discriminate against someone on the basis of their skin colour. But it is not a sin to have a black skin, or a brown skin or a white skin. It is a sin to practise a homosexual lifestyle. The Word of God says so. There is no right to same-sex marriage and there never will be, because God has not given that right.

'Homosexuals say that same-sex marriage is about celebrating love and will not hurt anyone; traditional marriage will remain and will be the choice of the vast majority of the population.

Delegates: Rev Bill Schweitzer (EPCEW);

Rev R Schipper (GKNV);

H Mackenzie (APC)

Why then are we so concerned? Because same-sex marriage if ever allowed will hurt. It will hurt the individuals themselves, their families and society. Sin always hurts. And same-sex marriage is not about love; it is about unnatural lust and vile affections. The Word of God says so. Homosexuals know this and so they attack the Bible and those who believe it and live by it.

'One day people will say that we were mad as a nation to even think about introducing same-sex marriage. As God helps us we will proclaim the Word of God to our nation, praying that the Lord in His grace will change men's hearts so that they will believe the truth and trust in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

'In the Report we state that though the Committee wrote to Mr Colin Hart, Director of the Christian Institute, expressing their unhappiness at the Institute's involvement in the Scotland for Marriage campaign there had been no response to this letter. A response was received last Friday which the Committee will need to consider carefully'.

Speakers

Rev Maurice J Roberts asked if the house could be informed of the letter sent by the Christian Institute. He stated that the Christian Institute does valuable work. In reply Mr Blunt said it would be improper to respond until the Committee have examined the letter. He also stated that the Committee appreciated the good work done by the Institute and recommended continuing to send a substantial annual donation to the Institute.

Rev David Fraser questioned if it was necessarily wrong to co-operate with the ungodly in issues that we have a common interest in.

Rev John J Murray cautioned against criticising organisations like the Christian Institute. He paid tribute to their work in the public arena in presenting a Christian response and reiterated that they need our support. They have been successful in many areas and do operate as a powerful voice for good although we might not agree with everything they do.

Rev Allan Murray acknowledged his love for Great Britain and was alarmed at the role of the media in our country. He believed that the media were the true rulers of the country in our age. He spoke of his frustration in sending letters for publication to the press only for them not to be published.

Rev James I Gracie endorsed all that Allan Murray articulated and mentioned his involvement in the recent United Christian Witness held outside the Scottish Parliament when he and others gathered to protest against the Scottish Government's proposal to redefine marriage. He was saddened to see so many young people there taking an opposite view to him and was concerned about the tactics they used. The support he received from far and wide did however encourage him.

Brora Elder, John Urquhart, was concerned that equalities minister Lynne Featherstone had stated it is not a question of 'if' same-sex-marriages are to be introduced but 'when'.

Delegates

In bringing greetings Dr Bill Schweitzer of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England & Wales thanked us for taking an interest in the church he represents. He highlighted three items as a cause for thankfulness: a new mission work in Stockholm, Sweden, their third church plant in Cardiff, and the fact that a former Church of England vicar has joined them and is involved in a work in Chelmsford. He asked that the denomination be remembered in prayer.

Rev Roland Schipper, from the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (vrijgemaakt) encouraged the brethren by bringing greetings and reminding us that Christ will maintain His cause and church until He returns in glory.

Mr Hugh Mackenzie, from the Associated Presbyterian Churches, himself a farmer, likened the gospel work to farming. He stressed the need to sow and expect a harvest and the need for the shepherd to watch over and care for his sheep.

Publications

The Report of the Committee on Publications was presented by the Convener, Rev William B Scott. This was his first report as Convener and he acknowledged that he was still finding his way. He paid tribute to the clerk Rev David Blunt. He thanked the editors of the Witness and Explorer for their diligent work. He asked the brethren to consider submitting articles for publication.

For a number of years the June issue of the Witness has been designed for use in the purpose of evangelism. Last year 13000 extra copies were printed and made use of throughout our Church and it is expected that a similar number will be printed again this year. We pray that the Lord will bless the distribution of these magazines to the eternal good of many.

New Publications – An edition of the Shorter Catechism with a new layout devised for learning by Rev Harry Woods has been produced. The 'Finding out about...' series is designed

to set out our position on important issues where there seems to be confusion in our day and age. Work is in progress on material dealing with the subjects of Baptism, Funerals, Presbyterianism and the Sabbath.

The Spring Conference was held on 6th April and once again it made use of the modern facilities of the Culduthel Christian Centre, Inverness. The theme this year was 'Family Worship' and the speakers were Rev John J. Murray and Rev Graeme Craig (who kindly stood in for Rev John MacLeod, Tarbat, who had taken unwell some weeks before). The total attendance was slightly down on the previous year with fewer adults at just over 60 but more children at around 30. The Committee's thanks are due to each one of the many individuals who helped with the Conference.

In seconding the report Kiltearn elder Mr Lindsay MacCallum outlined the progress made on a book dealing with the Division of 2000. He highlighted concerns that some might have about confidentiality.

Rev Harry J T Woods thanked all who submitted articles and requested that more people consider contributing to the magazines. As it is there is only a tiny amount of contributors. He thanked the proof readers.

David Blunt asked that more time be made available for the Committee to handle their volume of work. He thanked Greg MacDonald for his work on the website and mentioned that despite Mr MacDonald wishing to be relieved of his responsibility he still undertakes work on the site. It was hoped that new website operators would be in place by the Assembly but that had not happened for a number of reasons. The Committee hoped to address the matter at their June meeting. Mentioning the Spring Conference Mr Blunt thanked Glenn and Myra Fraser for the change in catering arrangements which have resulted in savings. However, more people need to attend.

Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee

The Report of the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee was presented by Rev Timothy J McGlynn, Convener. At the outset he acknowledged an omission in the report. He was happy to report that Mr Matthew Fraser had been accepted as a Free Church divinity student, something that should have been recorded in the Report.

Rev Ian Budgen and Mr Murdo Maciver have commenced their studies at the Seminary. Mr Calum Smith is nearing the end of his second year of a four-year course. Mr Alasdair Macleod is nearing the end of his three-year course of studies. Mr Jonathan Mattull, America, is nearing the end of his course of studies. Mr Davide Ratti, formerly a private student, applied for recognition as a student of the denomination, was accepted and is currently nearing the end of his studies.

During the time for questions Rev Kenneth M Macdonald asked about the resident lay preachers' training programme and was told that it was proving to be useful to the individual concerned. Mr Macdonald then asked about the Right of Continued Protest document and wanted to know what happened if a student did not pass an examination on the document. Rev Harry Woods questioned whether the document was to be the subject of an organised Training of the Ministry Committee examination, or if it was to be used by the Presbytery when examining the student. Rev John Keddie and Rev Gavin Beers were concerned as to the status of the document fearing that it was being elevated to constitutional status. Mr Lindsay MacCallum wanted to see the document used to test the students' knowledge of the events that led up to the division of 2000 and of their commitment to the FCC position. Others expressed concern that a hurriedly-prepared document was already being used in examining students, although it had not been approved by the Assembly. The outcome of the debate was that the document will be referred to Presbyteries for comment and the Legal Advice & Property Committee will report to the next General Assembly.

Rev William Macleod presented the Seminary Report. The work in the Seminary is progressing and there is good harmony and unity among lecturers and students. He paid tribute to Maurice Roberts on his retirement and remarked on his contribution since the Seminary's inception. The possibility of the Seminary lecturers being involved in training Chinese pastors was mentioned as an exciting development.

In his reply Mr McGlynn thanked all the speakers for their contributions and expressed appreciation to Mr Roberts for his sterling work as the New Testament & Greek lecturer in the Seminary.

New Testament Lecturer

Mr McGlynn then presented his Committee's supplementary report highlighting the retiral of Mr Roberts and the need to find a replacement. The following were nominated by Presbyteries: James Clark – 5 Presbyteries, David Blunt

K MacDonald, A Nicholson, L MacCallum;

Rev and Mrs J Miller (Ayr);

New Lecturer Rev J Clark

– 1 Presbytery and Greg MacDonald – 1 Presbytery. Whilst thanking the Presbytery which had nominated them, Rev David Blunt and Rev Greg MacDonald indicated their desire to withdraw their names. Rev Harry J T Woods then proposed Mr Clark to fill the vacant post. He spoke of him as one eminently qualified to fill the post. Mr Peter Thurlow paid tribute to Mr Clark during his time when he was associated with the Edinburgh congregation. Mr Clark was unanimously elected and, when asked by the Moderator, he accepted the appointment. Rev John Angus Gillies was then called upon by the Moderator to lead in prayer, seeking God's blessing upon Mr Clark and his new work.

Delegate

Mr Paul Rowland, Trinitarian Bible Society, thanked the denomination for their continued support and prayers. He brought the Assembly up to date on the Society's current work of translation and distribution of the Word of God. He stated that we live in solemn and difficult days but we are to be encouraged because Christ did say 'I will build my church', therefore we are to go forward in confidence in the Word of God for it will not return to Him void. He presented the Moderator with a copy of the Authorised Version of the Bible. The Moderator expressed his thanks.

Strategy Committee

The Report of the Strategy Committee was presented by the Convener, Rev David S Fraser. Various technical matters were dealt with.

Committee to Review Recent Acts

The Report of the Committee to Review Recent Acts and Findings of the General Assembly was presented by Mr Maurice Grant. Subsequent to the 2001 Assembly some initial work was done and the Committee reviewed some 100 pieces of legislation and reached preliminary conclusions on their continued usefulness or need for amendment. Because of ongoing legal action, and taking account of other priorities facing the Church at this time, the work has not been taken further forward over the past year. In the prospect, however, that the way will eventually become clearer for the work to proceed the Assembly were invited, as before, to renew the remit of the Committee for a further year. Rev John Keddie in speaking on the matter expressed his desire to see the 1995 Blue Book revised.

Committee anent Building Projects

The Report of the Special Committee anent Building Projects was presented to by the Convener, Mr John MacKenzie. The remit of the Committee is to receive reports from Deacons' Courts in consultation with relevant Presbyteries in which they were to fully detail their potential future property needs and the difficulties currently facing their congregations. The Special Committee was instructed to take account of the information submitted to them by Deacons' Courts and to devise a detailed strategy, including the commissioning of concept plans as deemed by them to be appropriate, for the construction of a modular church building (or buildings). To date the only report to hand had been received from the Presbytery of the Outer Hebrides. The work would continue.

Nominations Committee

The Report of the Assembly Arrangements & Nominations Committee (B) was presented by the Convener, Mr Donald J Morrison. One change was proposed in Group 3 Committees: Mr Peter Thurlow was nominated in place of Mr Donald MacKay who has been unwell for some time. The Principal Clerk reminded those serving on Committees that to be on email is a great advantage as correspondence can come quickly and demand an almost immediate response.

Rev Gavin Beers (Ayr)

Wednesday Evening
Home & Foreign Missions

The Report of the Committee on Home & Foreign Missions was presented by the Convener, Rev Gavin Beers. He expressed appreciation for the Home Mission Worker, Mr Donald John Morrison who assisted in planned gospel outreach endeavours in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Stornoway and Ayr. Other mission campaigns included the Black Isle Show, Hebridean Celtic Festival, Monster Science Festival, Jesus Christ Superstar: Rock Opera, Rockness and the Army Base at Fort George, where 500 soldiers are stationed.

The Committee were thankful to Rev Greg MacDonald for his work as representing the Free Church (Continuing) on Covenant College Trust for the last three years. Rev Andrew Allan has now been appointed for the next three years. Rev David Lachman's appointment to Covenant College had come at a time when it had been announced that the Principal, Rev Cees Molenaar, was leaving. Rev Heinrich Zwemstra took over as Principal but later in 2011 Mr Zwemstra received a call to pastor a church in his native South Africa and left. The Lachmans, now on their own, were thus under a great deal of pressure with the added workload.

Due to financial constraints in our own denomination it was not possible for us to send another full time missionary to Zambia. Instead the Committee agreed to send one lecturer to teach a module in each semester. This would help the College to function in 2012 while giving the Trust time to search for a new lecturer(s) for the 2013 Academic year. We are thankful that Rev John Macleod (Duthil-Dores, rtd) and

Rev Harry Woods agreed to help in Zambia. Together with his wife, Mr Macleod spent four weeks from the end of March 2012 and taught a course in Old Testament Introduction. His teaching experience mixed with years in the pastoral ministry made him well suited to the College work and his labours proved a great success in communicating the truth of God to the students. Mr Woods and his wife are set to visit Zambia in the summer months when he will teach a course in Practical Theology & Homiletics.

Presbytery of the United States

The Presbytery are thankful to Mr Jonathan Mattull for his work in the congregations of St Louis and Columbia (Missouri) and it is hoped that they can move toward the ordination of Mr Mattull later in 2012. A door of opportunity has opened to the Presbytery in the last year in North Carolina. A group of around six families in the town of Mebane appealed to come under the care of the Presbytery and a preaching station has been opened where the prospects appear very promising. With such opportunities the Presbytery is in a state of real encouragement. Their biggest challenge and need is for more ministers, elders, deacons and students and their prayer is to the Lord of the harvest to provide.

Adelaide

The sad events in Adelaide left only a few people associated with the Free Church (Continuing) congregation. The situation was compounded by the fact that these people were scattered throughout different parts of Australia with only one family resident in the Adelaide area. For this reason the Kirk Session, in consultation with the Committee, came to the conclusion that at present the FCC could have no meaningful future in Australia and requested the General Assembly that the congregation be dissolved.

Sri Lanka

Another door which opened to the Free Church (Continuing) in 2011 was the opportunity to serve the Lord in Sri Lanka. Rev Partheepan Shanmugam, who had been a student in our Seminary, became convinced of the testimony of our Church and applied for licence and ordination in our denomination. He was ordained and inducted to the work as Missionary to Sri Lanka. In December he was married to Dinogee who is proving an excellent encouragement and support to him in the work. They lived for the first months of their married life in Jaffna in the north of the Island and while there they sought the Lord's guidance as to where to start a work. They feel led to Vavuniya in North Central Sri Lanka. This town of around 100,000 people is quite underdeveloped as a result of the recent civil war and the people live in relative poverty and without much education. There are no Reformed or conservative evangelical churches in the area and the plan is for them to move into the area and rent a house which can also be used for worship services. Work has also begun on the translation of a metrical version of the Psalms in Tamil. Progress is slow but steady and much prayer is requested for ability to accomplish such a specialised task.

In the Lord's providence, a legacy to the sum of £18,000 was left to the Church for the work of foreign missions and this money was able to be channelled to support the work in Sri Lanka for the next three years. The Committee are also setting up a specific Sri Lanka Mission Fund to which donations can be given which will enable the work to be supported in the years after the funds from the legacy are used up.

In seconding the report Rev Murdo A N MacLeod mentioned that he had been in contact with Rev John Macleod, who indicated he had enjoyed his time in Zambia and would not have missed it for anything.

Rev William Macleod spoke of an encouraging opportunity to serve the church in China. As the result of a contact made with Maurice Roberts the Seminary are being asked to help in the training of pastors.. The arrangement will not cost the denomination financially as the Hudson Taylor Ministries (based in the Netherlands and North America), who have asked for our help, will meet the cost. There are around 100 million Christians in China. Some are in the State-controlled Three Self Church but many more are in the underground house churches. Mr Macleod intends to travel to China later in the year.

Missionary Delegates

Mr Mike Moore, Christian Witness to Israel, brought greetings and thanked the Assembly for gifts and donations. He reminded us of the aims of CWI, one of which is to put the Bible into the hands of Jews in a language they can read. The Old Testament is being translated into modern Hebrew. They intend to use the forthcoming London Olympics to reach out to many Jews who will attend the sporting fixtures. They are continuing to make contact with Jews attending an annual New Age fair and to build on their outreach work done in Wales last year among the ultra-orthodox Jews who go each

Seminary Principal Rev W Macleod;

Rev R McCurley (Greenville);

Delegate Rev P Ratcliffe (C of E Continuing)

Delegate Mike Moore (CWI); *Rev W Gardner (Atlanta);* *Paul Rowland (TBS).*

year in the summer to Aberystwyth.

Rev James I Gracie recently visited Kenya and lectured and preached there. He spoke about his visit and the sixteen, 90 minute, lectures on the canon of Scripture which he was required to give over a four-day period. He enjoyed the preparation for the trip and was encouraged by the enthusiasm shown by the students and hopes to return next year.

Mr Donald John Morrison, Home Mission Worker, spoke of the Great Commission Christ gave to His church. His address appears elsewhere in the magazine.

Rev William Macleod spoke of the encouraging time that he had in Sri Lanka when he conducted the marriage of Partheepan and Dinogee. He spent 14 days there preaching in various places and lecturing at the Logos College in Vavunya. Partheepan was making progress, having translated 13 of the Psalms into a suitable form for singing. He had now found suitable premises to live in, including a hall which would seat 40 people. He expected to begin conducting an afternoon service on Sabbaths at 4pm from 3rd June. The churches in Vavunya have no evening services. He hopes that interested people will come to receive solid teaching of which there is little in the area. Also he intends to start a morning service in one of the outlying villages which has no church and to do some children's work there.

North American Churches

Rev Bert Pohl spoke of his work in Smiths Falls. Last year outreach was conducted and precious seed was sown. It is hard work. They have changed the timing of the evening services which is proving beneficial. A new couple have arrived who are dedicated to helping in the ministry in Smiths Falls.

Warren Gardner spoke of discouragements and blessings. His own congregation in Atlanta has had a difficult time. The Greenville congregation is enjoying a time of blessing at the moment with around 130 worshippers regularly gathering. Services were no longer being conducted in Washington as Rev Sherman Isbell had resigned due to ill-health.

David Blunt asked if the HFMC would consider collating a monthly prayer letter that could be distributed around the churches for prayer and information.

David Fraser thanked the Home Mission Worker for his work around Shettleston. Also he mentioned the 10th anniversary celebration of the first graduation ceremony of Covenant College, Zambia, which is scheduled to take place in October. He and his wife hope to attend.

In closing Mr Beers said he was challenged and encouraged by what he had heard and he thanked all who contributed.

Thursday

After the General Assembly was constituted Dr Robert Thomas, Presbyterian Church of Australia, brought greetings from the Presbyterian Church of Australia and preached on *Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Seven Churches of Asia*. He spoke of the need to be faithful in these decadent days. Furthermore three things present themselves from the early chapters about the Lord Jesus Christ, 1. He is Risen, 2. He is ruling, and 3. He is returning.

The General Assembly were informed that Rev Adrian Sieunarine from the Presbyterian Church of Trinidad & Tobago was present at the Assembly. The Moderator welcomed Mr Sieunarine and invited him to bring greetings to the Assembly. He spoke thrillingly of a Canadian Presbyterian minister who came to Trinidad for his health and saw the need that was there. When slavery ended, workers were brought from India to work the plantations but they had no one caring for their souls. When he returned to Canada he laid the need before his church and they sent him back as a missionary. He learned their languages and over the next 50 years saw God's blessing, founding the Presbyterian Church.

Legal Advice & Property

Rev David Fraser the Convener presented the Report of the Legal Advice and Property Committee. For the last 12 years our Church has sought to maintain a principled stand for the testimony of the Free Church of Scotland in the face of much opposition. Our claim to be the rightful successors of the Free Church of Scotland is based on our adhering to its fundamental principles – purity of doctrine, purity of discipline and purity of worship. The 2010 Plenary Assembly of the residual Free Church rescinded previous Acts of Assembly which upheld the Regulative Principle of worship. The effect of this decision is to now permit the use of instruments to accompany the praise and to allow the use of non-inspired hymns. It was argued in the Committee that this new position disqualified the residual body from the right to sue for Free Church properties on the grounds that they were no longer the body which held to the fundamental principles as historically maintained hitherto in the Free Church of Scotland. It has, from the start, been the policy of our Church to seek a negotiated settlement. Defences at law have become

necessary only on account of the aggression on the part of the residual Church against our held properties.

Rev Greg MacDonald presented the first amendment which was that 'Paragraph 5 of the proposed Deliverance be amended to read: 'The General Assembly commend the Partick Congregation to the prayerful support of the wider Church and encourage the Congregation to seek the advice of the Committee in bringing their negotiations and legal defences to a conclusion'.

He also presented the second amendment, that 'Paragraph 12 of the proposed Deliverance be amended by deleting the word 'denomination' in the first line and replacing it with 'congregation of Partick'. The effect of this would be to state that it was not the denomination as a whole but rather Partick congregation who were defending the Partick property.

John Keddie presented the third amendment, that Paragraph 3 of the proposed Deliverance (regarding the Right of Continued Protest document) be amended as follows: 'After "Seminary" delete "to ensure that all students of the Denomination are versed in the principles expounded therein before being licensed" and substitute "for general interest and guidance of Presbyteries, Ministers, Elders, Probationers and Seminary Students on the historical precedents and possible applications of protest and dissent, recognising that the document is not a binding constitutional statement'". In presenting his amendment Mr Keddie maintained that the document should be used for guidelines only and he pointed out that the document did not assert that the right of continued protest was a biblical principle. There were no biblical references in the document.

Lindsay MacCallum proposed a fourth amendment instructing Presbyteries to give careful consideration to the Right of Continued Protest document and to submit representations to the Committee by a prescribed date.

The third and fourth amendments were subsequently withdrawn in favour of an amendment that Paragraph 3 of the proposed Deliverance be deleted and replaced with the following: 'The General Assembly thank those who prepared the document entitled *The Right of Continued Protest* and instruct Presbyteries to give careful consideration to it, any representations thereanent to be submitted to the Legal Advice & Property Committee not later than the 16th day of November 2012, the Committee to report thereanent to the next General Assembly'. This was accepted by the Convener. On a vote, the first two amendments failed to carry.

Dr. Andrew Naylor, Leverburgh informed the Assembly that he has been appointed as lead signatory for Disclosure Scotland purposes. He will be working in conjunction with the former signatory Mr Andrew Murray to ensure a smooth changeover. Signatories in each Presbytery will have to be appointed.

After lunch

After lunch Miss Kaori Simpson and her catering team who were providing catering services at the General Assembly were presented to the Moderator and thanked by him.

The General Assembly being informed that the father of the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland had suddenly taken unwell, at the call of the Moderator Rev Kenneth Macdonald led the Assembly in prayer for him.

The Catering Team thanked by the Moderator

Delegate

Rev Peter Ratcliff, Church of England (Continuing), was introduced to the Moderator and invited to address the Assembly. He mentioned that the Church of England (Continuing) came into existence in 1994 following the ordination of women in the Church of England.

Allegations of Conspiracy

Rev William Scott presented the Report of the Committee concerning Allegations of Conspiracy. Rev John MacLeod, Tarbat, mentioned that some people have been waiting 17 years with a cloud over them. It may be necessary in the end of the day simply to publish the truth, even if there be a theoretical legal risk in doing so. It was moved, seconded and agreed that the General Assembly receive and note the Report of the Committee anent Allegations of Conspiracy, note the Appendix to the Report and instruct the Committee to consult with others, as necessary, including the Law Agent, in order *inter alia* to verify all the details of the Appendix; and report to the next General Assembly.

Mrs Agnes MacKenzie

The General Assembly were informed of the ill health of Mrs Agnes MacKenzie, who had been Chairperson of *Concern for Justice*. It was moved, seconded and agreed that 'The General Assembly instruct the Clerk to express to Mrs MacKenzie their thanks for all the work she did regarding *Concern for Justice* and their prayerful concern for her at this time'.

Thursday Evening

Rev Kenneth Macdonald presented the Report of the Committee to Prepare a Minute on Deceased Ministers and Elders. It was noted with sadness that the following ministers and elders had passed on to the general assembly above: Rev Kenneth Smith, Rev Roderick MacLeod, Rev Bryan Baxter, Mr Alexander Campbell (Knightswood), Mr Norman Campbell (Inverness), and Mr John MacPherson (Kilmuir & Stenscholl).

Rev Warren Gardner delivered a comprehensive vote of thanks. The next General Assembly was appointed to meet in Edinburgh on Monday 20th May 2013 at 6pm. The Assembly was dissolved with prayer, the singing of Psalm 122 and the Benediction.

The Loyal and Dutiful Address

Read by the Mode*rator, 22 May 2012*.

TO THE QUEEN'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY

The Loyal and Dutiful Address of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)

We, the Ministers and Elders of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) met in General Assembly this 22nd day of May 2012, humbly desire to express to your Majesty our continuing loyalty to your Majesty's person and throne.

In this, your Majesty's Diamond Jubilee year, we join with others throughout the nation and commonwealth in giving thanks to God for your Majesty's reign and for your dedication and devotion to duty in the manifold responsibilities to which your Majesty has been called. It gives us much satisfaction to recall that your Majesty publicly committed your way to God at the beginning of your reign and that your Majesty has not hesitated to express your continuing sense of your accountability to him. May the God who has upheld your Majesty to this moment continue to be your strength in the days ahead.

We congratulate His Royal Highness Prince Philip on attaining his ninetieth birthday and we wish him continuing good health. We are mindful that later this year, in the Providence of God, your Majesty and His Royal Highness will complete sixty-five years of married life. We firmly believe that marriage is a gift from God and finds its only true Biblical expression in a life-long commitment between one man and one woman.

As a branch of the Christian church we continue to value the stability of the British constitution, based as it is upon those Christian principles which form the bedrock of our national life. We value in particular the liberties we have long enjoyed for the propagation of the Gospel. These were dearly bought and we cherish the hope that they will be carefully safeguarded. In particular, we hope that in seeking to redress perceived inequalities in our modern society the Christian heritage of our land will find due recognition and respect.

We recall with gratitude the blessings secured for our land by the Reformation which delivered our people from the bondage of ignorance and superstition. We rejoice that your Majesty's throne is firmly founded on Reformation principles and we pray that by God's grace your Majesty may continue mindful of your Coronation Oath to maintain to the utmost of your power in the United Kingdom the Protestant Reformed religion established by law.

We deplore the continuing level of violence and lawlessness throughout the world and from which our own land has not been free. We admire the heroism of your Majesty's troops in Afghanistan as they seek to confront the forces of terrorism and oppression. We are particularly thankful to note that the Black Watch, for which our denomination has a special interest, returned from six month's duty without loss of life. We pray that in God's Providence all our forces may be preserved from harm. We also remember the families who have been bereaved and those wounded in action. We commend them to him who is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.

We pray that your Majesty may be upheld in the extra duties which fall to your lot in this Jubilee year. As your Majesty visits towns and cities up and down the land we pray that the bond of affection which unites your Majesty to your people may be very evident and that this may continue to be a source of strength to your Majesty in the days ahead. We are glad that in carrying out the duties of state your Majesty is increasingly supported by the younger members of the Royal household and we pray that as they represent your Majesty overseas in the course of this year they may gain a sense of the respect and affection in which your Majesty is held throughout the commonwealth and beyond.

May the blessing of Almighty God rest upon your Majesty, His Royal Highness Prince Philip, and all the members of the Royal House. So pray your Majesty's most loyal subjects, the Ministers and Elders of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) in General Assembly convened.

Obituary

Alex Campbell (1936-2012)

The death of Alex Campbell (12 April 2012) has left a great blank in Knightswood Free Church (Continuing). He was a fine, gifted man with a friendly and loyal personality. He was everyone's friend and was constantly helping people. He never stopped even after cancer had greatly weakened him.

Alex was born in Bragar in the Island of Lewis on the 27th of November 1936, the youngest of four (two sisters and a brother). When he was just a year old his mother died. His father did well in bringing them up. Probably Alex's ability to cook well was as a result of this. At the age of 16 he left school and joined the merchant navy. In 1961 he joined British Telecom, working initially on a cable-ship which maintained the transatlantic cables. He married Joan Macarthur from Stornoway in 1964. Their friendship began while Joan was still at school. They had three sons Iain, Norman and Gary and in 1969 he came ashore, continuing to work with British Telecom till he retired in 1996. The death of his godly father-in-law, John Macarthur (Jonah) who was an elder in Stornoway, appears to have been a turning point in his life. He became a member in 1982 in Dumbarton, shortly afterwards becoming a deacon and then an elder.

The church was his second home and when dry rot was discovered in the Dumbarton church he was the leader in its eradication. He spent many hours in tireless labour. A man of great physical strength and capable of turning his hand to many trades he saved the church much money.

At the division of 2000 he associated with the congregation which worshipped in Thornwood Primary School. It was a great joy to him when the congregation were granted the Knightswood church building. Again he spent many hours caring for and maintaining the property.

As an elder he took a full part in the work of the church at large. He was an assessor elder for Ayr and was still a member of Group II Committees (TOM, Publications and PQRM) at the time of his death. He loved to sing the Psalms and often led the singing. Just a week before he died I held family worship with him in his home. Though frail he asked if we could sing and led beautifully in the singing of Psalm 100. He was fresh in prayer and I well remember how moved I was at his final prayer in the prayer meeting a few weeks before he died. He preached acceptably, when required to help out, both in Knightswood and also in the other congregations especially Ayr and Arran. His preaching was always interesting and edifying and commanded attention.

He bore his illness with a fighting spirit that kept him mobile and active till almost the end. His last time in church was just four weeks before he died. My final visit to him was on the Tuesday before he died (early Thursday). I asked him was his faith still strong. He nodded. As I left, I said to him, 'You know where you are going'. He summoned his strength and said with a clear voice, 'I know where I am going'. What an example and challenge to us all! He leaves behind fragrant memories. The huge crowds at his funeral services both in Knightswood and Stornoway bore testimony to the many friends on whose lives he had a positive impact.

We warmly commend his beloved wife, Joan, and their children, Iain, Norman, and Gary and the grandchildren; also his two sisters and brother, to the God of all comfort.

'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them' (Rev.14:13).

Rev William Macleod

Obituary

Rev Bryan Henry Baxter (1926-2012)

Bryan Baxter was born in Swindon on 27 September 1926. He was educated at Lethbridge Road School, Swindon. He attended an Evangelical Church and was converted at the age of 14. On leaving school he worked for the Swindon Gas Company. In 1944 he was called up to the army and served with the RASC in the UK, Palestine and Egypt. It was while in Egypt that he became involved with the Missions to Mediterranean Garrisons. Feeling called to work in that country he went to All Nations Bible College in Taplow from 1949 to 1952. After serving with the Friends Evangelistic Band he sailed for Egypt in 1953 with the Egypt General Mission. While there he attended the American University in Cairo where he specialised in Arabic and Islamic Studies.

In 1956 he married Violet Hills from Scotland, a fellow missionary. While on their honeymoon in Port Said, the Suez Canal was seized by Nasser and four months later the Baxters were expelled from Egypt with all other British citizens. The following eighteen months were spent in deputation work all over the UK. With Egypt closed to them, the Mission sent the Baxters to Eritrea. They sailed there in the summer of 1958 with their four month old child. Conditions were very primitive and after three years the child became very ill and the Baxters were advised to take an early furlough and to work for the Mission in the UK.

While resident in Edinburgh Mr Baxter went to hear Rev Professor G N M Collins, whose writings he had come to know, preach in Buccleuch and Greyfriars Free Church. Soon after that Lord's Day, the Baxters had a visit from Rev James Fraser, the minister of Buccleuch, and this led to them joining the congregation. Mr Fraser had a part in persuading Mr Baxter to apply for the Free Church ministry and he did three years study at the Free Church College. A call came from the Kilwinning congregation (formerly an Original Secession congregation) and he was inducted there on 13 July 1965. 'May I be a faithful minister and may I depend upon Him alone for strength for the work', he wrote in his diary that day. His first sermon was on 'Great is thy faithfulness' (Lam.3.23). It was faithfulness that characterised his ministry, being a diligent visitor of his flock. His final sermon before retiring after twenty six years was on the text with which he had begun.

During his time in Kilwinning Mr Baxter maintained his interest in Missions in general but also in those of the Free Church and he served on the Foreign Missions Board from 1974 to 1980. He was also for a time Convener of the Welfare of Youth Committee. His knowledge of the Biblical languages involved him in tutoring and he was an examiner in Hebrew for the Training of the Ministry Committee. He was a regular attender at the Free Church School in Theology and served as Secretary from 1984 to 1997. Mr Baxter was an avid reader and came to love the reprints of the works of the Reformers and Puritans that began to appear in the 1950s. He was a great supporter of the Banner of Truth work and a regular attender at the Leicester Ministers' Conference.

In retirement Mr Baxter went to reside in East Kilbride where he became an elder in the Free Church congregation. In the Division of 2000 he identified himself with the Free Church (Continuing) and joined the number from five congregations that formed themselves into the Thornwood congregation under Rev Harry Woods. He continued to do supply preaching and was a great help in particular to the Ayr congregation in its early development. Hip surgery in 2006 curtailed his activities and his final two years were spent in a Nursing Home. He maintained his love of reading and his interest in the wider Reformed cause. He passed away in the Hairmyres Hospital, East Kilbride on 24 February 2012.

Our deepest sympathy is extended to his beloved wife, Violet, and to their children, Sheila, James, and Carolyn and to the grandchildren; also to his sister and her husband in Swindon. 'The memory of the just is blessed'.

Rev John J Murray

News

Spring Conference 2012

Rev John MacLeod, Tarbat

This year's Spring Conference, chaired by Rev Harry Woods, centred on the very relevant but much ignored subject of family worship. In keeping with the subject, it was good to see many parents with young families present.

In the morning session Rev John J Murray ably spelled out why family worship is both a biblical and a historical necessity. In the course of his address he made clear its relationship to covenant theology. He also gave an overview of how family worship operated in the Scriptures, how it worked out in history and how vitally necessary it is.

The afternoon address by Rev Graeme Craig dealt with the practicalities of family worship and the question and answer

Desk

session which followed was lively and helpful, covering areas such as the differences between family worship and public worship, the question of whether and to what extent young people themselves should be involved, and how to handle situations in which unchurched individuals might be present in the home at the time of family worship.

The spiritual food provided for the adults was good and the recipients were conscious that their souls and minds had been well-fed. A full programme for the many children present was being run concurrently, so the young people also had a happy day of learning.

The provision extended much further, however, with a very extensive bookstall provided by Glenn and Myra Fraser. The material food provided to meet our physical needs was of a quality to match the spiritual provision, and eating times provided a welcome opportunity for fellowship.

All in all, an excellent conference with a relevant subject, warm fellowship and spiritual feeding in a happy atmosphere.

New Church Opening *(Miriam Clark)*

The official opening of the Knock & Point new church building was held at 7.30 pm on Tuesday 17th April. This occasion was presided over by the Moderator of the last Assembly, Rev Graeme Craig who preached a highly appropriate sermon on verses 10-12 of Isaiah 11. The congregation was reminded that as members of the body of Christ we are to rally to the 'ensign' and prepare to fight for the Lord's cause – not sit back comfortably in the pew, new or otherwise.

After the service, a reception was held in the neighbouring 'Ionad Stoodie' hall where there was an opportunity to meet with friends who had travelled far to rejoice with the congregation over the goodness of the Lord in providing a building. We were reminded again that the building is only a mark of God's goodness and not a mark of grace. Mr Craig spoke of the building as being a witness in the community and a base from where work could be done. Mr Clark agreed and gave thanks for the generosity of those who had supported the congregation financially and also those who had supported the congregation before the throne of grace. A reminder was given that now is not the time to stop both these kinds of support, with various branches of the Church still needing encouragement from the main body of the Kirk. During these speeches, a fair bit of appreciative eating was taking place and the seemingly never-ending supply of baking provided by both the wonderful ladies of the congregation and the ladies of the wider denomination was soon demolished. The night ended with thanks being given again to God for His gracious provision to the congregation.

Legacies

We are thankful for those who leave legacies to the Church. It is a great encouragement in time of financial difficulty. Two legacies were received recently. One of £15,000 was from the estate of the late Murdo Macpherson (Knightswood) of which £5,000 was designated for Covenant College Zambia, £5,000 to The Christian Institute, and £5,000 to the Knightswood Free Church (Continuing).

The other legacy of £3,000 was from the estate of the late Miss Isabella Macleod of Kirk Care, Stornoway for Central Funds which will be used for the support of ministers' stipends.

New Lecturer

Rev James Clark has been appointed by the General Assembly to succeed Rev Maurice Roberts as Lecturer in Greek and New Testament at the Free Church Seminary. Mr Clark studied classics at Edinburgh University, psychology through the Open University and divinity at the Reformed Presbyterian Seminary in Belfast. He worked as a teacher for twenty years and was a part-time lecturer in Educational

New Free Church (Continuing) Building, Knock & Point

and Clinical Psychology at Edinburgh University. He has been minister in Knock and Point Free Church (Continuing) since 2006. We wish him well in his new appointment.

Free Church Assembly

Dr Bob Akroyd has been appointed to succeed Rev Donald Macleod as Professor of Systematic Theology at the Free Church College. Two ministers, who left the Church of Scotland over the 'Gay' ministers issue, have been received by the Free Church into its ministry, Rev Ivor Macdonald (Staffin) and Rev Andrew Coghill (Lochs).

Salisbury Conference

The sixteenth Salisbury Conference at Emmanuel Church, Wilton Road, Salisbury is due to take place on Friday 28th and Saturday 29th September 2012. The theme is 'The Biblical Doctrine of Conversion' and the guest speaker Dr Gerald M Bilkes, Professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, USA. All are welcome. Further details are available at the church website www.salisburyemmanuel.org.uk.

Davide Ratti

When the Free Presbytery of Inverness (Continuing) met on Tuesday 29th May they licensed Davide Ratti to preach the gospel. He is now open to call. Mr Ratti comes from Cremona in Northern Italy and is married to Deborah. They have three daughters Giulia, Linda and Anita. The older two have recently professed faith and been baptized. Mr Ratti was of Baptist convictions when he came to study at the Seminary in 2007. Over the years since then, he has come to understand the covenant of grace and the place children have in it and therefore the right which they have to the sign of the covenant. We pray that the Lord will lead him to an area of service in His kingdom and use him mightily.

Alasdair Macleod

When the Free Presbytery of Inverness (Continuing) met on Tuesday 19th June 2012 they licensed Mr Alasdair Johnston Macleod, Divinity Student, to be a preacher of the gospel. He is now open to the receiving of a call. Alasdair was born in Glasgow and began his schooling there. Moving to Skye when he was six he grew up there. He studied History and English Literature at Glasgow University (MA, MLitt). He is married to Esther and they have a little boy James William born on 13th June.

Sri Lanka *(Partheepan)*

Our first worship service in Vavuniya, by the grace of God, went well. We had a house warming on Saturday the 2nd of June and there were 30 people there. It was a really nice meeting. We had worship together and invited the folk for the worship service on the Sunday. Most of those present

Rev S N Partheepan

were family and friends from Jaffna, but two local families also attended. On Sunday morning our family members and some friends who had stayed with us overnight wanted a morning service. We had around 20 people present, and two visitors who came from Trincomalee church were also in attendance. The Trinco visitors took me to see some of their relatives and one family promised to come to the evening service but they did not turn up. We had the evening service at 4.30pm. Some friends from the Reformed Baptist Church in Baticaloa came. There were 12 to 15 people present and it was a very blessed meeting. The following Sabbath we also had a good meeting though the numbers were very small. One widow and her daughter came for the first time. Thank you for your prayers.

Tour of Israel

Rev Kenneth Macdonald, Scalpay is hoping to organise a trip to Israel in April next year, 2013. This is open to anyone with an interest in the land of the Bible. If you would like more information please get in touch with Mr Macdonald at revkmacd@googlemail.com or telephone 01859540430.

Bilison Resignation *(Phil Bailey)*

On Tuesday 22nd May, Bilison resigned as farm manger of Covenant College Farm. This was due to ill-health which has dogged him for some time. He had given three months notice but due to his latest sickness Bilison came to a decision with his wife that he wanted to leave immediately. He and his family have left us and moved to their family home in Petauke. I know Bilison well enough to know that he does not make decisions like this lightly and without prayer so with this in mind and out of respect to him we have not tried to alter his decision. His reasoning throughout is that his continuing sickness for over a year now has meant he has been unable to fulfil his complete duties as Farm Manager. He takes this responsibility seriously and although we have encouraged and allowed him to rest he says he is unable to do this peacefully knowing that he cannot fully participate in the work that is carrying on outside. His family home is just a short distance from his and our Pastor's house (Lovemore) and we hope that there he will be able to rest better and receive more pastoral care.

After 8 years of working with Bilison this is not easy. He has been totally faithful and with the help of God we have built

the farm together starting from fresh bush land to what it is now. I respect him very much for this decision and it shows his faithfulness to his family and to himself and I believe even in this decision his faithfulness to the farm. It's never easy, and takes courage, to know the best time to hand over your work to younger more able men! He and his family moved into the farmhouse on 28th March 2005 and the 25th May 2012 is the day they have moved out. Both days were appointed by God and these are days that 'the Lord hath made' (Psalm 118:24). In our sadness at his departure we do 'rejoice and be glad in it'. Not for his going but in thankfulness for the time the Lord has given Bilison to us. I'm sure we pray together for his future and that, if it is the Lord's will he will recover from this latest sickness. However he is very unwell; when we took him to the hospital he was weighing 66 kgs but some days later when Marjanne took her scales over he was 57kgs. He cannot last long if he continues to lose weight at this rate so he desperately needs to recover his appetite. Let us also be thankful at this time to God for providing us with Jackson and Samuel who are more than able to carry on faithfully the work and ministry of CC Farm.

Call for Reform of Free Speech Law
(Christian Institute)

The Christian Institute is joining with the National Secular Society, the Peter Tatchell Foundation, and others to call for reform of free speech laws. The new campaign group – Reform Section 5 – wants the word 'insulting' to be stripped out of Section 5 of the Public Order Act 1986. Currently, Section 5 of the Act outlaws 'insulting words or behaviour', but what exactly constitutes 'insulting' is unclear and has resulted in many controversial police arrests. In 2008 a sixteen-year old boy was arrested for peacefully holding a placard saying that Scientology 'is a dangerous cult'. A teenager from Newcastle was arrested and fined for saying 'woof' to a dog. The prosecution cost the taxpayer £8,000. A new poll conducted by ComRes shows that 62 per cent of MPs believe it should not be the business of Government to outlaw 'insults'. Only 17 per cent of MPs believe that removing the contentious 'insult' clause would undermine the ability of the police to protect the public. David Davis MP, a strong supporter of civil liberties, is leading a cross-party effort in Parliament to reform the law. He said: 'Freedom of speech includes the right to criticise, to ridicule and to offend'. He added: 'So why can we not simply ask police officers to distinguish between unacceptable behaviour on the one hand, and a legitimate expression of opinion or protest on the other?' Simon Calvert of The Christian Institute said: 'Churches around the world find themselves in constant friction with aspects of the cultures in which they live, so free speech is vital to us all. Britain's historic civil liberties were often hammered out amidst controversy over freedom to preach without state interference. Christians know first hand why free speech is precious and this is why The Christian Institute is pleased to join people across the political and philosophical spectrum to help bring about this simple but important change. By bringing together an unlikely alliance of groups, this campaign demonstrates that speaking out plainly for principle, and firm – even energetic – disagreement, are not inconsistent with civil discourse and democracy. Actually they are the lifeblood of it'.

As churches and preachers we value freedom of speech. However we believe there should be limits – blasphemy and mocking the Christian religion should not be allowed.

Blocking access to Porn *(Christian Institute)*

One of the country's largest internet service providers is to ask all of its four million customers if they wish to block access to pornographic websites. In March TalkTalk started asking new customers whether they wished to install a filter that blocks adult websites. The company has now revealed that it is planning to make its existing 4.2 million customers choose whether or not to install the filter. The move has been welcomed by those seeking to protect children from internet porn. However the system falls short of the sought-after 'opt-in' system which would automatically block all pornography unless access was formally requested. TalkTalk's filter, HomeSafe, blocks websites deemed unsuitable for under 18s including those relating to pornography, gambling and suicide.

We are thankful for this step in the right direction by TalkTalk and hope other providers will follow their lead.

Syria Persecution *(Barnabas Fund)*

Ten Christian families were expelled from their village in Syria by a group of armed militants who seized control of Qastal al-Burg village, 30 miles north-west of Hama, on 10 May. The fighters ordered the families to leave empty-handed and took over their homes. They also occupied the local church building, turning it into their command control centre. As the uprising against the regime of President Bashar Assad continues, armed groups have taken control of a number of Christian suburbs in Homs, establishing their own police centres and monitoring people's movements. Christian buildings, including a church-run orphanage, have been damaged, and many people have not been paid for months or are without work altogether. Christians have been forced to flee, leaving everything behind, and some are struggling to pay the rent or even to feed their children far from home.

Let us remember the many across the world who are suffering because they stand on the side of Christ.

Young People's Weekend *(Nathan Roberts)*

The next Young People's Weekend will take place DV 19th-22nd October 2012 in Arbroath. The speaker will be the Rev Timothy McGlynn (Aberdeen), and the topic 'Knowing God'. Costs are:

Booking before 11th Sept: Waged £60 / Unwaged £55
Booking after 6th Sept: Waged £65 / Unwaged £60
Part weekend: Arrive Friday leave Saturday £25 / Arriving Saturday £45
Day Visitors £7.50

The weekend is for those aged 16 and over. For booking form, online booking and further details, see oct.bible-sermons.com, or email arbroath@bible-sermons.org.uk or Nathan Roberts, 26 Philip Avenue, Linlithgow, EH49 7BH. Tel 01506 668162.

SRS Glasgow and West of Scotland Branch
(Hamish Campbell)

There will be a public meeting of the Scottish Reformation Society (DV) on Friday 31 August 2012 at the Reformed Baptist Church, Herschell Street, Anniesland, commencing at 7.30pm. The speaker will be Rev Kenneth Stewart who will give an address on 'Scotland: A Covenanted Land?'

Congregational Remittances - May 2011

Central Building Fund	2012	2012 June	2012 Total	2011 YTD
Presbytery of Inverness				
Aberdeen	0	1,000	8,068	7,374
Duthil-Dores	0	938	9,371	11,368
Inverness	0	2,000	12,000	14,000
Kilmorack	0	1,400	7,710	9,350
Total Inverness	**0**	**5,338**	**37,149**	**42,093**
Northern Presbytery				
Assynt & Scourie	270	0	631	700
Brora	520	2,400	11,136	10,444
Kilteam	280	500	4,057	5,780
Tarbat	0	1,000	7,940	6,284
Total Northern	**1,070**	**3,900**	**23,764**	**23,208**
Southern Presbytery				
Arran	385	342	4,590	4,599
Ayr	5,000	440	5,190	1,359
Dumfries	0	0	0	0
Edinburgh	0	4,300	14,926	16,005
Glasgow - Partick	1,300	2,500	17,000	17,000
Glasgow - Shettleston	601	3,100	12,218	12,975
Glasgow - Knightswood	554	2,410	13,564	12,324
Rothesay	0	0	130	0
Total Southern	**7,840**	**13,092**	**67,618**	**64,262**
Outer Hebrides Presbytery				
Cross	0	1,730	12,343	11,752
Harris - Leverburgh	185	1,300	8,521	8,444
Harris - Scalpay	0	1,800	13,132	13,148
Knock & Point	0	0	6,373	8,365
North Uist	950	2,000	7,219	7,501
Stornoway	2,145	11,023	43,178	46,892
Total Hebrides	**3,280**	**17,853**	**90,766**	**96,102**
Presbytery of Skye & Lochcarron				
Bracadale	25	1,500	6,861	6,112
Duirinish (Waternish)	55	1,000	3,500	2,715
Kilmuir & Stenscholl	555	0	7,539	6,500
Lochalsh	260	950	5,999	5,559
Poolewe & Aultbea	235	879	6,271	5,562
Ullapool	0	0	51	48
Portree	0	1,400	11,541	7,200
Snizort	0	1,200	10,088	10,287
Strath	35	800	3,470	348
Total Skye	**1,165**	**7,729**	**55,319**	**44,331**
Total Congregations	**13,355**	**47,912**	**274,616**	**269,995**
Other Donations	2,967	418	16,340	18,193
Legacy			8,000	18,153
TOTAL	**16,322**	**48,330**	**298,957**	**306,341**
Including Gift Aid			45,171	46,890

Letter from Zambia

Greetings from Covenant College Zambia! The dry season has arrived, the winds have come, and harvest has begun. We have less than two weeks left in this semester, which ends on 11th May. At this juncture it is easy to feel somewhat 'burnt out' from the pace that has been maintained over the past few months. We appreciate your prayers as we press on!

Family News

Life has been hectic in the past couple of months but also enjoyable! David has been trying to manage the workload of at least three people on his own and in particular keep up with the details of College administration. Katie has been kept busy on the hospitality front, making arrangements for guest lecturers and other visitors. As well as hosting a houseful of guests, we have also continued our tradition of inviting a group of students for dinner every week during the semester so that we get to know them better. This has been a blessing for our whole family. David & Katie have also begun weekly Chinyanja/Chichewa language lessons with one of our students as our tutor. Elijah, at almost 22 months old, is already becoming bilingual! His vocabulary (in English and Nyanja) is expanding rapidly. Elijah has a growing circle of friends and you can tell that he genuinely loves living here in Zambia. Ketzia is four months old and a real 'mommy's girl'. She is now rolling over, scooting herself along the floor using her feet, and exploring the house in the baby walker (yes, walking at 4 months!).

College News

The Lord has blessed us with the opportunity to welcome several guest lecturers to the College during this semester. First, from 19th February till 10th March we welcomed Rev Charles Zulu (who, as you will read below, has just been appointed to be the new full-time lecturer at the College) to teach African Church History. Then Mr Johannes Aucamp from TOPIA (Training of Pastors in Africa) based in South Africa lectured on Worldview from 12th-23rd March. After this we had the pleasure of welcoming Rev John Macleod (retired minister in the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)) and his wife Mary into our home from 23rd March till 18th April and greatly enjoyed their friendship and fellowship as John was lecturing on the Old Testament for three weeks. At the end of March we also hosted the DeVries family from Mukhanyo Theological College in South Africa as they visited for ten days at the time of the Trust meeting. Dr DeVries, the Principal of Mukhanyo, taught a class on Covenant Theology to our certificate students for one week. Currently Rev George Kalengo and his wife Bridget, from Malawi, are staying from 23rd April to 4th May while George teaches Apologetics. The presence of these guest lecturers is a special treat for our students who always appreciate people who are willing to come from afar to devote their time and energy to labour here. It has also assisted David greatly with the lecturing responsibilities so that he is free to direct his attention to the College management and administration, while also keeping

up with the classes he is teaching (Worship, and Practice Preaching).

AGM Report

The Covenant College Zambia Trust gathered from 29-31st March for their Annual General Meeting. This year was unusual in that a few of the usual Trustees were unable to attend and sent representatives in their place. The Trust is responsible for making decisions related to the management of the College, the Farm, and the Christian Education Ministry which all operate under the Trust. This year was a particularly important year as a new Principal needed to be appointed to replace Rev Heinrich Zwemstra who accepted a call to South Africa last year. The Trust appointed Pastor Lovemore Banda, a graduate of Covenant College who pastors the local Reformed Baptist Church and lectures at the College part-time, as Acting Principal until the Annual General Meeting of the Trust in 2013. The Trust also accepted Rev Charles Zulu's application to become the new full-time lecturer at the College. We are very thankful to the Lord for expanding our team and pray that this would be of lasting benefit to the College.

Farewell to the Zwemstras

We were thankful that the Zwemstra family was able to travel from South Africa to join us for the Trust meeting. Since they accepted the call to the congregation in Pretoria during the winter break, this was our only opportunity to properly say goodbye and thank them for their years of service here. The Trust gave them a farewell dinner on 30th March and we commended them to the Lord's keeping in their new calling. We also enjoyed one last Food & Fellowship gathering with the whole team as an affectionate send-off.

Women's Conference

Katie was very busy with all the logistical arrangements and preparations for our twice-annual Women's Conference which was held from 12-14th April. We welcomed 20 ladies, all wives of our students, who joined us for a three-day programme of extended Bible study, discussion, health classes, crafts, and singing. The conference began with a combined session for our students to attend along with their wives. The first speaker, Pastor Lovemore Banda, encouraged the students to pass along the Biblical principles that they are learning at the College to their wives. David then spoke about the marriage relationship being a picture of Christ's relationship with the church, from Genesis 2. After this session, the students returned to their homes for the weekend and the ladies began their programme. Katie taught a Bible study about the faith of Adam and Eve, based on the book 'Portraits of Faith' by Dr Joel Beeke. Marjanne Hendriksen taught a Bible study about trusting the Lord to provide for our needs – a topic which the ladies had requested, as many of their husbands are struggling to make ends meet and are not well supported by their churches. Our guest speaker was Mrs. Mary Macleod, who was here visiting from Scotland. Mary taught on the life of Joseph. It was an enjoyable and encouraging conference and we hope to hold another in August.

Upcoming Events

We look forward to the arrival of Rev Charles Zulu and his wife Rhoda who will be moving here next week to join our team. After the College closes on 11th May, our students will return to their homes to harvest and sell their crops during

this six-week break. At the end of May, our family will be going on a camping holiday to visit Livingstone and Victoria Falls in southern Zambia for some rest and recuperation. In June we will welcome Rev Harry Woods and his wife Mairi who will be joining us from Scotland for about eight weeks. Mr Woods will be the guest speaker at our Graduates' Conference during the last week of June and then will be lecturing for five weeks during the next semester which will begin on Wednesday 4th July.

Thanksgiving

Thank the Lord with us for his provision of guest lecturers to sustain and benefit the lecturing schedule this year; for his provision of a new Acting Principal and another full-time lecturer for the College; for a profitable and edifying Trust meeting; for protecting and sustaining us; for happy, healthy children; for the Lord's mercy as Marjanne has completely recovered from the cobra snakebite of 29th February with no lasting ill effects; for the encouragement of many visitors.

Prayer Requests

Please pray for the Lord to continue to give us wisdom in all our decisions related to the management and administration of the College; for unity and harmony to prevail amongst our team; for the Zulus as they move here and settle into their new position at the College; for a good harvest; for continued good health, strength, and protection day by day; for our students as they return home for a short time; for profitable use of time during the six-week break as we prepare for the remainder of the academic year; and most of all for the Holy Spirit to come in power here at the College and transform the students' ministries and bring all the glory to Christ.

We stand firm on the promise of God's Word, 'Let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not' (Galatians 6:9).

In Christ's Love,

David, Katie, Elijah, and Ketzia Lachman

General Assembly 2012 outside Liberton Kirk
(Courtesy of Rev Bert Pohl)

I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.
Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

Job 42:5-6

Published by the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)