

Evangelical Presbyterian Church



Annual Presbytery Reports 2017

Presented at
Belfast Bible College
28 April 2018

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Presbytery Arrangements Committee

Wallace Thompson (Moderator), Harold Gibson, Mervyn Langtry, Rev Robert Johnston

1 Presbytery Composition and Meetings

	Serving Ministers	Retired Ministers	Non-Voting Ministers	Commissioners	Total
01/01/17	8	4	1	18	31
31/12/17	7	4	1	16	28

- ◆ Presbytery met 8 times, (a special Presbytery met in November), with an average attendance of 19.

2 Annual Presbytery Day Conference and Presentation of Presbytery Reports

- ◆ Belfast Bible College: Saturday 22 April 2017.
- ◆ Moderator Mr Mervyn Langtry, presided.
- ◆ Opening Devotions.
- ◆ Dr Bob Akroyd, Edinburgh Theological Seminary, *The Whole Church and the Whole Gospel*—2 Corinthians 5:10-6:2.
- ◆ *Noon*: Moderator convened the Annual General meeting, reviewed his year in office and welcomed the incoming Moderator, Mr Wallace Thompson who preached from 2 John.
- ◆ Rev Robert Johnston announced the winners of the SS projects.
- ◆ Revs Evert Everts and Arjan Hilbers, CRC Netherlands and Mr Stephen Johnston, EPCEW, brought greetings from their respective churches.
- ◆ *Afternoon*: Dr Bob Akroyd, The Whole World, Isaiah 45:14-23
- ◆ Concluding praise and prayer.

3 Moderatorial Duties

The Moderator, Mr. Wallace Thompson presided at meetings of Presbytery and PAC and represented the church at:

- ◆ General Assembly, Free Church of Scotland.
- ◆ General Assembly, Free Church of Scotland (Continuing).

4 Delegates and Representatives

- ◆ Rev Andrew Lucas represented EPC at ICRC, Canada, 12-18 July 2017.
- ◆ The Moderator attended the ordination of Mr Trevor Kane at Dumfries Free Church on 30 June and brought greeting on behalf of the church.

5 Personnel and Appointments

- ◆ Rev W E Elliott resigned as a minister of the EPC on 3 July 2017.

6 Commissions of Presbytery

- ◆ PAC acted as a Commission of Presbytery over the summer and winter recesses.

- ◆ Rev Stephen Roger (Convener), Mr Mervyn Kelly and Mr Trevor Gilliland were appointed as a visitation commission to Omagh, to report June 2018.

7 Committees

- ◆ All Standing and Special Committees met as required by the Code or business in hand.

8 Other

- ◆ Ministers and Office Bearers Conference: 3-4 March 2017, at Finaghy. Rev Prof John Angus Macleod, ETS, was the speaker on both occasions.
- ◆ The Office Bearers' Half Day of Prayer was held at Knock on 18 November 2017. Mr Stephen Johnston, Rev Joshua Rieger and Mr Peter Leverton (EPCEW) were present.
- ◆ Due to declining attendances and other issues Presbytery suspended services in Richhill 9 July - 9 September inclusive. Services were further suspended from September 2017 with consideration of the work in Richhill to be revisited at March 2018 Presbytery.
- ◆ A special Presbytery met in November to consider the work at Hope Fellowship with a view to appointing a Church Planter/Evangelist.
- ◆ The 500th Anniversary of the Reformation was marked with a special 40-page issue of the *Evangelical Presbyterian* magazine.
- ◆ The Evangelical Bookshop and Presbytery organized a special Anniversary Autumn Lecture marking the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and the 90th anniversary of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church on Monday 6 November at Knock. Prof Crawford Gribben gave a lecture on *The Legacy of the Reformation* and Mr Ernest Brown on *The Legacy of 1927*.

Recommendations

- 1 We give thanks to God for his gracious provision and enabling us to continue in the work of the Gospel during 2017.
- 2 We thank the Moderator for his diligence in attending to all the duties of his office throughout the year.
- 3 We thank all those who have represented the church during the year in various spheres and capacities.
- 4 We thank the editor of *The Evangelical Presbyterian*, Rev Andy Hambleton, Mr Derek Johnston (layout and design) and the editorial team for all their diligence and commitment in producing the magazine.
- 5 We thank all interim Moderators, Commission and Committee members, Assessor Elders for all their diligent commitment to the work of the church.
- 6 We ask for prayer that Presbytery may be guided concerning the future of our witness in Richhill. We thank the interim Session for their oversight of the work in such difficult circumstances.
- 7 We call upon the church to pray that we might know much blessing and encouragement in the days ahead.

Congregational Statistics

<i>Membership</i>	BC	CRO	CRU	FI	GR	HF	KN	OM	RH	ST	Total
Jan 2017	59	11	27	32	27	4	31	34	14	90	329
Dec 2017	63	10	27	29	29	4	29	34	5	95	325
New Members	4	1	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	11	20
Deaths	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	5
Disjunctions/ Resignations	0	2	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	4	10
Baptisms	2	0	3	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	9
Marriages	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	2	6

<i>Average Attendance</i>	BC	CRO	CRU	FI	GR	HF	KN	OM	RH	ST	Total
Sunday AM	80	18	54	35	35	16	34	67	16	120	475
Sunday PM	60	19	35	22	28	-	28	40	11	75	318
Prayer Meeting	21	8	17	15	18	6	10	12	5	29	141
Communicants	48	11	32	23	20	12	21	39	11	69	286
Sunday School	20	-	7	26	-	-	24	19	-	47	143
Mothers & Toddlers	19	-	27	8	25	-	-	-	-	24	103
Other Youth Groups	61	16	23	0	30	-	38	20	-	40	228

BC Ballyclare
 CRO Crosscollyer Street
 CRU Crumlin
 FI Finaghy
 GR Groomsport

HF Hope Fellowship
 KN Knock
 OM Omagh
 RH Richhill
 ST Stranmillis

Church Development Committee

*Rev Gareth N Burke, Mervyn Langtry, Rev Andrew Lucas, David Watson.
John Grier is co-opted for advice and input on Hope Fellowship*

1 General

The CDC exists for the purpose of overseeing church planting work and considering the whole area of church extension and evangelism. While we can make plans and devise strategies we are entirely dependent upon the blessing of God and much need the prayers of the whole church. The words of Zechariah 4.6 are in a sense our motto text: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord'."

2 Hope Fellowship

Throughout most of 2017 the committee's time and energy was focussed upon the work of Hope Fellowship, North Belfast, which began as a church plant in 2013 and was formally constituted as a Mission Church in January 2017. CDC essentially became the Hope Fellowship Session and endeavoured to give support to the core group and to the work of the congregation. We made several attempts to find a church planter/evangelist for the work. Two of these efforts looked very promising with candidates visiting the Fellowship and preaching there. Sadly, however, the folks concerned decided it was not for them. We respect that these decisions were taken after prayerful consideration but regret our inability to find a suitable leader for the work.

There is no doubt that the Lord has blessed the witness of Hope Fellowship over the past four years. People have been converted and many good contacts were made in the local community. Many lessons have been learned and there is much to give thanks for. However, due to the smallness of the core group and the mounting pressure coming to bear upon those who were leading the work services and congregational activities ceased on 31 December 2017.

CDC wish to place on record our thanks to Presbytery for convening a Special Meeting in November to consider the future direction of the work and rejoice in the unanimity which ultimately characterised that meeting. We wish to place on record our sincere thanks to all those who served so faithfully over the years in the work of Hope Fellowship. We particularly note the contribution made to the work of the Fellowship by David Burke and John and Julia Grier. John and Julia have been associated with the work of the Somerton Road/Hope Fellowship congregation since 1985 and have worked tirelessly and faithfully throughout all those years. We recognise their labours and thank them warmly 'in the Lord'

Please pray for the committee in our ongoing responsibility for the Somerton Road building and associated issues

3 North West Church Plant

The Committee has been active in trying to bring forward the possibility of an EPC Church Plant in the North West. We have made contact with several folks

who might be suitable candidates in terms of bringing this work forward and while no one has, as yet, been identified as being 'the person' to lead the work other issues have clarified over the past few months. We are now clear that Londonderry should be the focus for the Church Plant with the Waterside district being the preferred location. Discussions have taken place with ministers of the Reformed Presbyterian Church to ensure that we are not encroaching unhelpfully upon the Gospel work being done by others and plans are currently being laid to hold a regular Bible Study under the care of the Omagh session. Please pray for the development of this work and that by this time next year we will be in a position to report on a developing work in the Maiden City.

Recommendations

- 1 We give thanks to God for the financial resources that are available to the Church to enable us to consider the work of Church planting and evangelism.
- 2 We recognise the sense of disappointment and hurt felt by those actively involved in the work of Hope Fellowship now that the work no longer exists and pray that all involved will know something of the Lord's help as they seek to integrate in to the life of other evangelical churches
- 3 We give thanks to God for His evident blessing upon the work of Hope Fellowship over the past four years and pray that wisdom will be given to CDC and others regarding the future use of the Somerton Road building.
- 4 We note the developments that have occurred regarding the North West Church Plant and pray that this project will know the blessing of God throughout the incoming year.

Training for the Ministry and Admissions Committee

Rev Dr S J Garland, Rev Dr R C Beckett, Rev A Hambleton, M Langtry, K MacDonald

As we look back over 2017, we can once again give thanks for the way in which the Lord has guided and provided.

John Roger

Our main focus has of course been upon John Roger, whose training for the ministry is ongoing. During 2017 John completed his second year of studies at the Reformed Theological College to a very high standard. We are thankful to God for the College and for the faculty, who are so diligent in their teaching, encouragement and care for their students, John included.

The summer months were busy for John. After completing his exams at the College John sat three further Presbytery examinations, and also completed a summer placement in our Stranmillis congregation. This was a key time for all at Stranmillis EPC, as they prepared for the building project getting underway. The Stranmillis session, and the congregation as a whole, was extremely thankful for John's preaching ministry and pastoral giftedness throughout the summer as he served in a number of ways. Between his college exams and summer placement, John and Claire also welcomed the arrival of their son, Ezra, a little brother for Meredith. In the autumn, John began his third and final year of studies, which will culminate in April 2018.

As well as our encouragements concerning John and his training, the committee is also aware of the need for more men to be coming forward to train for the ministry. We seek your prayers that God would raise up labourers for this part of the harvest field, and that we would be granted God's wisdom as we consider any applications for training or admission to EPC ministry.

Recommendations

- 1 Give thanks for the good progress in John Roger's studies, and pray that he and his family would know God's provision for this time, and his guidance for the future.
- 2 Pray, and give thanks, for the faculty of the Reformed Theological College in all their labours as they teach John and others.
- 3 Pray for and encourage donations to the TOMA fund.
- 4 Pray that the Lord would raise up men from within (or without) our denomination who are gifted and called to the ministry, and that the TOMA committee would have wisdom as they seek to encourage and mentor those in training or considering God's call on their lives.

International Missions

Rev Dr Sidney J Garland, Rev Marcus Hobson, Sam Francey

1 Encouraging Missionary Interest

We are happy for the prayerful interest in particular missions and missionaries connected in one way or another to our congregations. In addition to our regular midweek prayer meetings, several congregations have provided time for missionary news in after-church meetings or special prayer meetings. We are still requesting the assistance of some interested EPC member or members who would be willing and able to help circulate up-to-date missionary prayer information to all our congregations.

Prayer is requested for the following members who are serving in mission:

Rev Dr SJ Garland, a minister and missionary of the EPC, is based in Belfast but still in full-time employment with Mission Africa. He is involved on a day-to-day basis in the work of Africa Christian Textbooks (ACTS), the literature ministry which he initiated during 23 years in Nigeria. In 2017 Sid's wife, Jean faced a difficult health situation and the prayerful Interest and support of our congregations were greatly appreciated. (At the time of writing the Garlands are praising God for answered prayers regarding Jean's health). Sid's annual report is appended (below) with appreciation to our congregations and Presbytery for their continued financial support and prayers for this strategic ministry which contributes to the strengthening of the church in Africa.

Pamela and Musa Gaiya are continuing to serve under Mission Africa in Jos, Nigeria. Musa lectures in church history at the University of Jos. Pamela serves in various administrative capacities for ACTS as well as Mission Africa and their daughter Gracie is enjoying her studies at Hillcrest School, Jos.

Andrew and Eunice Moody are serving under Crosslinks in Goli, Uganda. Andrew is involved in literature ministry as well as assisting with the training of ministers for the Church of Uganda. He also has opportunities to reach and teach those ministering among the many who have been displaced by the ongoing conflict in South Sudan. Eunice is involved in church-related medical work and their daughter Joy is studying at Rift Valley Academy, Kenya.

Ed and Kate Underwood are based in Northern Ireland serving under UFM with the growing 100fold ministry which is using information technology to communicate the Word of God across many barriers, reaching into many countries in many languages.

Peter Grier continues to serve under Christian Unions Ireland in student ministry, (evangelism and training) mainly in Munster in the Republic of Ireland.

Prayer is also requested for connected Missionaries such as:

Catherine Grier has been serving in Chad. In July 2017 she was wedded to

Aphia Tuwi, a WEC missionary from Vanuatu. Catherine concluded her period of service with AIM and at the end of 2017 and the couple travelled together to Vanuatu. They are planning to return to Chad to continue in missionary service under WEC.

Christian Witness to Israel has been in our prayers for many years and we particularly remember Rev Stephen Atkinson who is promoting the work of CWI in the USA.

2 Giving to Missions

Although we no longer have missionaries working with the Free Church of Scotland, Presbytery continues to channel financial support through the FCoS Mission Board. Our contributions included £5,002 to assist the Board (for the work in India, South Africa and Peru). Our annual Help the Needy offerings £4,329 also went through the Free Church directed to needy children and students in India, South Africa and Peru. Our largest missions contribution as a denomination is directed towards the support of Rev Dr Sid Garland through Mission Africa: £8,742. Our missionary giving as a small denomination is commendable, especially when we take into account how much goes out at the congregational level as well as through the General Treasurer.

3 Encouraging others to answer God's call into Missionary Work

We consider it part of the remit of our Committee to mentor and encourage others to take up the challenge of missionary service. We are glad to know of several of our members who believe God is calling them. Please pray for all such and pray that from the earliest stage both the senders and the sent will have one heart and mind for the advancement of Christ's kingdom among the nations. Pray also for the IM Committee as we seek fresh ways to encourage us all to keep missions in our hearts and above all our prayers.

Appendix: Mission Report, Rev Dr S J Garland, (Mission Africa)

The year 2017 will live long in our memory. We are grateful for all who prayed us through this remarkable year that was several things at the same time:

1 A year of Testing

Literally the year began with Jean having tests in January 2017. The results led the Consultant Neurologist (together with the Neurophysiologist) to the conclusion that Jean had Motor Neuron Disease (MND). This dreaded diagnosis was delivered on 2 February. It was difficult physically (with weakness and pain) and it was difficult emotionally. We are very thankful for the many all over the world who prayed and sent comforting words. We are grateful especially to the Stranmillis congregation who gave us a lot of sympathy and practical support. We called for the elders of the church (as advised by James 5.14) and they came and prayed for Jean.

God gave Jean the grace to come to terms with her situation, bowing to his sovereign will over our lives and trusting him for the journey ahead. We received a lot of support and advice from various health professionals as well as the MND Association. In some cases, MND can progress very slowly - and that was the path we thought we were on. But by the end of the year another Neurologist had put a question mark over the diagnosis and after a repeat of the (unpleasant) tests at the end of 2017, the diagnosis was withdrawn by 25 January 2018. What an answer to prayer! More prayer is still requested for Jean's full recovery from continuing pain and weakness.

2 A Year of Leadership Transition

One of the hardest things in missionary work is to make sure that trustworthy indigenous leaders are found and trained to take over the work. I am thankful for God's provision of Rev Luka Vandi who was my student and then first helper and colleague in the formation of Africa Christian Textbooks (ACTS). Jean's MND diagnosis confirmed to me and the ACTS Board that this was right time to step aside in order to give the full responsibility of the work to Rev Luka. He is now the Managing Director of ACTS while I continue with a background (non-executive) role as International Director at Large. Rev Luka is commended to our prayers as he adjusts to his added responsibilities.

3 A Year of Celebration

2017 gave us the opportunity to look back with thankfulness on 30 years' service with Mission Africa. We count it a great privilege to still be part of the Mission Africa family and involved in the continuing growth of the church in Nigeria. Both of us were able to speak in the Mission Africa conference held to celebrate the 130 years since Samuel Bill went out from Belfast to start the Qua Iboe Mission in 1887. For us the icing on the cake was being able to have Rev Luka Vandi as one of the delegates from Africa. The year saw the African Writers Retreat Centre getting into regular service and ended with another cause for celebration - the opening of our Lagos Warehouse and Book Distribution Depot in partnership with Revival Movement Association.

4 A Year of Continued Service

In spite of passing the 65 year milestone, with prayer and advice from all sides, I am happy to be able to continue in the employment of Mission Africa. That means reporting, praying, engaging in deputation and partnering with the Mission in various ways. Eager to encourage prayer and support for what God is doing, I have continued to share news by means of regular prayer letters, the monthly ACTS eNews, monthly items for the Mission Africa prayer cycle and also articles for the Mission Africa Dispatch magazine. Writing proposals, meeting with donors and reporting to partners are important aspects of my work.

Mentoring Rev Luka and others in the Management of ACTS is still welcomed and appreciated. Alongside daily contact with my ACTS colleagues, and keeping in touch with former students in Africa, I also delight in being able to mentor and encourage young people in Ireland who are considering ministry or missionary service. This fits in with my role as convenor of two Presbytery committees - Training for the Ministry and Admissions (TOMA) and International Missions (IM). I also play a role in editing and preparing books to be published.

But my biggest task is to work with the staff of the ACTS bookshops in Nigeria and Kenya to help them decide what books to order. Preparing book orders requires keeping abreast of the latest publications as well as making sure ACTS still have "the best books" in stock. With the bookshops in Nigeria selling over £30,000 worth of books and Bibles each month (at heavily discounted prices), it means that ordering and re-ordering, printing and re-printing are a constant challenge. ACTS handle about six shipping containers of literature each year through Revival Movement (NI). We work with about 30 evangelical and reformed publishers both in UK and USA. Many among these have become personal friends who are not only generous in their discounts but also encouraging in their prayers for ACTS.

Conclusion

For all that God did for us in this past year we are truly grateful. My heartfelt thanks also go to the Presbytery and members of the EPC for their faithful prayers and financial support over the past year(s).

Finance Committee

Rev Stephen Roger, Mervyn Kelly, Mervyn Langtry, Roger McMullan

The Finance Committee is pleased to present the Accounts for 2017.

The key points to note are -

- Income to Central Fund from Congregations amounted to £278,950. Most congregational targets were met. There was again an increased contribution from Groomsport.
- The Committee acknowledges and expresses thanks for two bequests which became payable to the Church in 2017. These, together, amounted to £100,500 and will doubtless be of great usefulness into the future.
- Bank interest returns have improved slightly in 2017 though rates continue to be under pressure.
- The Church's investment portfolio has had a reasonable year with dividend income up slightly though showing a reduction in gross yield to 3.51% because of the increase in share valuations by the end of 2016. The total income for 2017 with further rises in stock values amounted to £33,534.
- There was a reduction in Presbytery's guaranteed commitment on giving to Free Church Missions in 2017 and this was slightly exceeded by Congregational givings with no need of any transfer from the Central Fund. Giving to Mission Africa on behalf of the Garlands rose in 2017 though still remains short of the commitment made by Presbytery, leaving a deficit to be made up from the General Fund of £2,812.
- The Committee continues to implement changes required with the emergence of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland and has offered and given assistance to Congregations in seeking to report their accounts to the Charity regulator.
- During 2017 the Committee has also implemented changes to Ministers' Pensions necessitated by Government legislation aimed at ensuring that every employee makes a personal provision for retirement. This transition is now complete though the requirements of the legislation mean that further adjustments will be necessary in 2018 and 2019.
- One further issue has come into the Committee's purview and will need to be dealt with in the early part of 2018. This relates to the holding of information and the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation, a substantially enhanced form of the Data Protection Act.
- The Committee records its thanks to all who have helped them administer the Church's finances under Presbytery's direction, and specifically to Congregational Treasurers and Deacons' Boards on which much of the day to day work devolves. Thanks too are due to our Auditors, Dalypark. We further wish to express our thanks to the Lord for meeting the needs of the work and to his people for their generous giving.

Central Fund - Income & Expenditure Account

For the year ended 31 December 2017

Restricted

	2017	2016
	£	£
INCOME		
Contributions - congregations	278,950	278,700
Contributions - miscellaneous	500	1,379
Bank Interest	13,997	11,823
Sale of "Evangelical Presbyterian"	2,734	2,684
Total Income	296,181	294,586
EXPENDITURE		
Ministers in Service		
Salaries & related Services	254,679	245,573
Travelling & other allowances	18,188	18,270
	272,867	263,843
Ministers in retirement		
Pensions	4,552	4,449
	4,552	4,449
Other Expenses		
Production of "Evangelical Presbyterian"	2,661	2,336
Printing & Stationery	355	341
Miscellaneous	3,122	4,380
Transfer to Home & Foreign Missions	0	1,383
Transfer to McDowell Memorial Fund	90	90
Transfer to Special Needs Reserve	1	1
Transfer to General Fund	0	106
	6,229	8,637
Total Expenditure	283,648	276,929
Surplus/(Deficit) for year	12,533	17,657

General Fund - Income & Expenditure Account
For the year ended 31 December 2017

Unrestricted

	2017	2016
	£	£
INCOME		
Contributions - congregations	13,310	
Contributions - Presbytery Day	1,452	1,657
Contributions - Misc	100,000	
Transfer from Central Fund		106
Total Income	114,762	1,762
EXPENDITURE		
Misc Expenditure	4,956	6,593
Insurance	1,628	1,687
Stranmillis Ministry Associate	4,705	
Ballyclare - MB Bank Tfr	9,000	
Sub-Total Expenditure	20,289	8,280
OTHER EXPENDITURE		
Transfer to Home & Foreign Missions	2,812	3,049
Sub-Total Other Expenditure	2,812	3,049
Total Expenditure	23,101	11,329
Surplus/(Deficit) for year	91,661	(9,567)

Home & Foreign Missions Income & Expenditure

For the year ended 31 December 2017

Restricted

	2017	2016
	£	£
INCOME		
General Income		
Contributions - congregations	4,228	6,017
	<u>4,228</u>	<u>6,017</u>
Special Income		
Help the Needy Appeal	4,328	3,486
Christian Witness to Israel	1,018	1,593
<i>Specified offerings and donations</i>		
- Mission Africa	5,930	5,445
India - Lakhnadon Hospital	54	90
- Dumisani	774	600
	<u>12,104</u>	<u>11,214</u>
TOTAL INCOME	<u><u>16,332</u></u>	<u><u>17,231</u></u>
EXPENDITURE		
General Expenses		
Grant - Free church of Scotland	4,228	7,400
Grant - Dumisani Bible School	774	600
Misc Expenses		0
	<u>5,002</u>	<u>8,000</u>
Special Expenses		
Help the Needy distribution		
- Indian mission field	1,443	1,162
- South African Mission Field	1,443	1,162
- Peruvian Mission Field	1,443	1,162
Mission Africa	8,742	8,494
Christian Witness to Israel	1,018	1,593
India - Lakhnadon Hospital	54	90
Total	<u>14,141</u>	<u>13,663</u>
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u><u>19,143</u></u>	<u><u>21,663</u></u>
Deficit met by transfer from Central Fund	0	(1,383)
Deficit met by transfer from General Fund	(2,812)	(3,049)
Total Deficit	<u><u>(2,812)</u></u>	<u><u>(4,432)</u></u>

Capital Investment Fund - Income & Expenditure Account

For the year ended 31 December 2017

Restricted

	2017	2016
INCOME		
Dividends	13,337	13,033
Increase/ (Decrease) in value of investments	22,766	45,436
Total Income for the year	36,103	58,469
EXPENDITURE		
Management Fee	2,140	1,940
Allocation to Training for the Ministry Fund	10,189	16,959
Allocation to Church Extension Fund	23,775	39,570
Total Expenditure for the year	36,103	58,469

Training for the Ministry Fund - Income & Expenditure Account

For the year ended 31 December 2017

Restricted

	2017	2016
INCOME		
Contributions - congregations	235	943
Contributions - misc		90
Allocation from Capital Investment Fund income	10,189	16,959
	10,424	17,991
EXPENDITURE		
Travel & conference expenses	2,868	1,698
Sabbatical	0	1,236
Students	17,816	39,963
	20,684	42,897
(Deficit)/Surplus for the year	(10,259)	(24,906)

Church Extension Fund - Income & Expenditure Account

For the year ended 31 December 2017

Restricted

	2017	2016
INCOME		
Contributions - congregations	335	1,187
Allocation from Capital Investment Fund income	23,775	39,570
	24,109	40,757
EXPENDITURE		
General expenses	0	
	0	0
Surplus for the year	24,109	40,757

Balance Sheet

For the year ended 31 December 2017

	2017 £	2016 £
INVESTMENTS		
Managed Share Portfolio	402,261	379,495
	<u>402,261</u>	<u>379,495</u>
LOANS & ADVANCES		
Assisted House purchase & congregational loans	31,034	35,057
Sundry receivable	2,500	3,100
	<u>33,534</u>	<u>38,157</u>
BANK BALANCES		
Ulster Bank - Current Account	167,413	65,579
Ulster Bank - Deposits	10,049	10,047
Bol - Current Account	25,478	25,478
Various - Fixed Term Accounts	620,847	625,604
	<u>823,788</u>	<u>726,708</u>
LIABILITIES & COMMITMENTS		
Sundry amounts payable & payments in advance	5,258	5,615
Amounts payable re special missionary donations	19,143	21,633
	<u>24,401</u>	<u>27,248</u>
	<u><u>1,235,182</u></u>	<u><u>1,117,112</u></u>
ACCUMULATED FUNDS		
Central Fund - <i>*Restricted Fund*</i>	637,236	624,703
Capital Investment Fund - <i>*Restricted Fund*</i>	81,407	81,408
McDowell Memorial Fund - <i>*Restricted Fund*</i>	9,306	9,216
Special Needs Reserve - <i>*Restricted Fund*</i>	127	128
Training for the Ministry Fund - <i>*Restricted Fund*</i>	116,525	126,784
Church Extension Fund - <i>*Restricted Fund*</i>	258,054	233,945
General Fund	131,680	40,019
YPA Fund - <i>*Restricted Fund*</i>	847	879
	<u>1,235,182</u>	<u>1,117,082</u>



The POCVA Board

David Watson (Lead Signatory)

Karen Langtry, Stephen Logan, Elizabeth Woolsey, Stephen Woolsey

The Presbytery of EPC assumes overall responsibility for the Church's policy for the protection of children and vulnerable adults (POCVA). Presbytery implements its responsibilities through the POCVA Board and appoints its personnel.

1 POCVA Board Constitution

Constitutionally, the POCVA Board consists of six members with arrangements for membership replacement on a rolling basis to spread the work and involvement throughout the congregations. This membership turnover has so far proved unworkable in practice due to the virtual absence of new nominees with the result that the original 2013 Board members continue to serve. The Board hopes that 2018 will see the installation of new Board personnel.

2 AccessNI Audit - August 2017

The Report was generally complementary to EPC but required changes to our Regulated Persons Application Form to make clear on our Application Form certain matters already covered in our Policy:

- ◆ A criminal record will not necessarily be a bar to appointment.
- ◆ Our procedures for the Secure Handling, Use, Storage and Retention of Disclosure information is located in *Committed to Care*
- ◆ Applicants should read the AccessNI Code of Practice

These requirements have been implemented and a Certificate of Compliance issued. The Board also revised the wording of *Committed to Care* to make it even clearer that a criminal record will not necessarily be a bar to appointment.

3 EPC Regulated Body Status

AccessNI requires a minimum of 20 applications in any rolling 12 month period to sustain RB status. During 2017 our 'count' for the previous 12 months, taken at the end of each month, ranged between 44 and 70. Whilst this is well in excess of the minimum requirement, the figures have been temporarily boosted by bringing the backlog of five-year re-checks of existing regulated persons up to date. This means that the number of applications will be less plentiful going forward, but at this point it appears that we will continue to have a sufficient throughput.

4 Training

First Aid training sessions for congregational personnel took place in April-May 2017. The *Committed to Care* training and refresher training sessions, initially planned for 2017, were re-scheduled for early 2018.

5 Audit Programme

The triennial audit programme (when members of the POCVA Board visit the congregations), was substantially completed during 2017. Each report carries recommendations for improved future compliance with *Committed to Care*.

6 Bulletins

The Board has continued to work on a series of update Bulletins, planned for issue in 2017, but deferred to 2018: revision to Bullying Policy, Photography, Manuel Handling and Concussion Awareness. The need to issue bulletins to inform and to implement changes is ongoing.

7 Camp Documentation

The Board introduced a series of Camp Documents for each camp, numbered within the *Committed to Care* form sequence, in time for the 2017 Camps: Application Form, Parents-Camper Letter, Confidential Health Form, Camp Policy Statement and Code of Conduct, Camp Consent Form, Camp Itinerary, Risk Assessment and Camp Leaders' Check List. These are now standard documents which will require minor update annually.

Recommendations

- 1 That Presbytery addresses the matter of POCVA Board personnel - see 1 above
- 2 That Presbytery, Sessions, POCVA Co-ordinators, Leaders-in-Charge, Leaders and Camp Leaders be diligent in implementing our POCVA Policy, *Committed to Care*.
- 3 That the whole church prays for the success of our POCVA policy in the areas to which it applies and for the Lord's watchful care over it all.

Public Morals Committee

Rev Robert Johnston, Wallace Thompson

The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good". (Prov 15.3)

1 Secularism

The year 2017 saw a continuation of Northern Ireland society's steady slippage away from God and His Word. In compiling and presenting this annual Public Morals Committee report, it would be so easy for us to become totally despondent. Not only has the broad base of secular society become extremely intolerant of Christian values of morality and ethics, but too many Christians have seemingly all but given up the fight on the basis that, unless the Lord intervenes, the cause is lost. Indeed, some appear to have actually imbibed the prevailing mood of the age and been taken in by secular propaganda. That secular propaganda will repeatedly assert that Biblical standards of morality are antiquated and intolerant, and therefore intolerable. By contrast, secularism is portrayed as promoting tolerance and civil liberties. Meanwhile, Biblical values are being marginalised and rejected at a quite astonishing speed.

In one sense, it does seem that we are in a Romans 1 scenario, but we must pray that the Lord will intervene in mercy rather than in wrath. God is omnipotent and omnipresent, and the verse at the top of our report should be a source of comfort to believers and a warning to those in rebellion.

2 Same Sex Marriage and Abortion

The two key areas in the past year were, once again, same sex marriage and abortion, but there were few significant developments in either area. This was mainly due to the political instability as a result of the collapse of the devolved institutions. The power-sharing arrangement ended in acrimony in January, and in the subsequent Assembly elections in March, the balance of power shifted. As things stand when this report was being written, the absence of institutions at Stormont means that the balance of power now rests at Westminster, but very much, it seems, on an ad hoc basis.

Although there were no major developments on same sex marriage or abortion in 2017, lobbying continued for change via the media and other avenues. It was clear that pro-same sex marriage and pro-abortion politicians in Westminster would do all in their power to effect change. The UK Government announced that it would be prepared to provide free abortion services in England for women from NI. Late last year, the Government of the Irish Republic announced a referendum on the possible repeal of the Eighth Amendment to the Irish Constitution. The Eighth Amendment, introduced into the Irish Constitution in 1983 after a referendum, gives equal validity to the life of the mother and her unborn child. The referendum will take place in May.

3 Transgender and Transsexual Agendas

One particularly alarming development in 2017 was the speed of the growth of the transgender and transsexual agendas, and the willingness of the public and

private sector to pander to those promoting those agendas. Even by the standards of slippage already witnessed in recent years, these developments mark a new low. Our children and young people will be particularly vulnerable to this madness.

In May, Belfast City Council consulted on a proposal to designate Belfast as a holiday resort, thus enabling large shops to open to open all day on 18 Sundays per year. We responded by expressing our strong opposition to this move on the grounds that it marked a further erosion of the Lord's Day and that it would adversely impact on Christians who worked in the retail sector. We were pleased that the majority of responses were opposed to any change and the Council itself rejected the proposals by 17 votes to 3. Sadly, the Council is consulting again on this matter.

Recommendations

- 1 Please make public morals issues a matter for sustained prayer. We would suggest the following as a broad basis for prayer:
 - ◆ Pray for all our politicians in local government, Assembly and Westminster. Pray that our Christian politicians will be given much grace, wisdom and courage. Pray for the Prime Minister and her Government, and in particular the NI Secretary of State, Karen Bradley.
 - ◆ Pray for all who are involved in lobbying on moral issues and in particular the Christian Institute.
 - ◆ Pray that all efforts to introduce same sex marriage and abortion on demand would fail.
 - ◆ Pray for political stability in Northern Ireland.
 - ◆ Pray that the electorate in the Irish Republic will vote in May against the repeal of the 8th Amendment (which protects the rights of the unborn child).
 - ◆ Pray for the McArthur family as they await the UK Supreme Court hearing on their case in May.
 - ◆ Pray for Christians who are under increasing pressure in their careers.
 - ◆ Pray for teachers and school children who are being exposed to the transgender and associated agendas.
 - ◆ Pray against all efforts to denigrate the Lord's Day.
 - ◆ Pray for the Public Morals Committee as it deals with difficult and often contentious and complex issues.
 - ◆ Pray "O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy." (Hab 3.2)
- 2 We encourage all our members to contact the Committee to offer advice, expertise or views on any issue they feel relevant. We also encourage our members and Sessions to write to newspapers on public morals issues where they feel it appropriate, and to respond to public consultations.

Youth Committee

Rev Robert Johnston

Julie Johnston, Andrew Johnston, Ian Heaney, Rev Marcus Hobson, Mark Thompson

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (Heb 13.8)

We give thanks to the Lord for His unchanging mercy and grace. In a year of much change in the leadership of our camps our overall King and Head remains unchanged and unchanging. Our service as Youth Committee is in Him, through Him and under Him who is always faithful.

Youth Committee exists to help facilitate bringing boys and girls and young people to Jesus. We oversee camps, denominational youth outreach teams, *Ignite*, the Sunday School project and training of those who work with children and young people. We can provide assistance for congregations who desire to run youth outreach events but lack the resources to do so.

1 Junior Camp

We thank God that Junior Camp enjoyed another safe and happy week at Dunluce School, Bushmills at the start of July. We had 15 leaders and 44 campers. We praise God for the spiritual growth among our leaders. Relationships were good, first-time campers fitted in well and there was little homesickness. We are thankful that the children seemed to enjoy all aspects of the programme and the majority of campers took a keen interest in the morning and evening meetings. Feedback from parents was encouraging. One mother spoke of how her son looked forward to the Quiet Times at camp, another of how her children have grown in knowledge and faith through junior camps. A non-Christian mother messaged to say her daughter had not stopped telling her about the talks and singing the songs since arriving home from camp.

2 Inters Camp

Forty campers and 10 leaders came prepared for a week of good fun, good food and good fellowship around God's Word - no one was disappointed! We hadn't long arrived at the Moyallon Centre, Portadown before the ice was well and truly broken, camp friendships were renewed and new ones were being made. Activities included banana boating, mountain biking, archery, frisbee golf, an assault course with aerial zip line, and some hands-on interaction with some farm animals. Newmills Presbyterian gifted us the use of their halls and when it rained we went there for some superb competition. The talks from God's Word were pitched perfectly for the campers, though the leaders also listened intently and were challenged as well. The evening dorm groups also provoked some good discussion.

3 Senior Camp

The summer was cancelled because numbers were too low. Instead after much prayer and planning Seniors held a Saturday day-trip to the North Coast on 19 August. We had 25 campers, a mixture of old and new, and a number of congregations represented. We had great weather and safety in travel and

activities. The young people mixed well and showed enthusiasm throughout the day. Using Ballyclabber RPC as a base we had a superb barbecue, and Andy Hambleton presented a relevant talk on the theme of social media “justification by likes.” Feedback from the young people on the whole day was all very positive.

4 *Ignite*

For another year in *Ignite* we have some very positive feedback to give. We have consistently had good numbers attending (20/25). The format has been much the same as previous years where we stay true to the Word of God and structuring our events to ensure they are something our teenagers want to attend. We often do not know the personal impact we are having on these young lives, but we know that God's Word is being shared with them and they continue to return each month. We have been blessed with both a good group of teenagers and leaders and we are always very grateful to all who speak for us.

5 Sunday School Project

This year Sunday Schools were invited to study the life of either Corrie ten Boom or Dr Barnardo. We encourage every congregation to take part. Some congregations use the children's address slot in their morning service to teach the lessons, others do the teaching during Sunday School. We believe it is worthwhile to study major characters from church history as they have much to teach us. Winners are announced at Presbytery Day Conference, and later listed in the EPC magazine. The age categories are Pre-school - P1, P2 - P4, P5 - P7.

6 Training our Workers.

No formal training events took place in 2017. YC are considering a Saturday training event on the theme of “Being a leader”. Leadership, we feel, is not being taught, but rather people tend to be thrown in at the deep end. We feel such a training event would be very beneficial.

Recommendations

- 1 Give thanks to God for Heather Watson's years of faithful service in Junior Camp.
- 2 Give thanks for the safety and protection of the Lord year after year at each camp.
- 3 Give thanks for our cooks and others who work hard behind the scenes.
- 4 Pray for each of our camp leaders and for their team of helpers.
- 5 Pray for our boys and girls and young people to be saved and grow in grace.
- 6 Pray for the outreach of camps, as many who attend come from outside the church.
- 7 Pray that Inters and Seniors would have sufficient minibuses drivers
- 8 Pray for *Ignite* as it brings our young people from different congregations together.
- 9 Pray that we would better train our young people to serve in the church.
- 10 Pray that our children and young people would have a growing appetite for the Word of God.

Inter-Church Relations Committee

Rev A J Lucas, Rev Dr Robert Beckett, Rev Stephen Roger

Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God. (Psalm 87.3, NASB)

The work of the Inter-Church Relations Committee continued throughout 2017, and we are thankful to God for every opportunity we had to express our wider unity with old friends and new.

1 Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in America

In February, it was our privilege to be visited by Rev Lee Shelnett who is a member of the Inter-Church relations committee of the ARPC. This is the denomination in which both Rev Drs. Derek W H Thomas and Neil Stewart now minister. Rev Shelnett met with members of our own Inter-Church Relations Committee, and preached in two of our congregations on the Lord's Day.

2 Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated)

In early April, Rev Andrew J Lucas attended the Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherland (Liberated). The main item on the agenda was the report recommending that the three offices (Minister, Elder, and Deacon) be opened to women. Regrettably, despite the unified stance of the sister-churches who were all opposed to the report, Synod subsequently approved the report's recommendations. It was with deep regret, that Presbytery decided in June to suspend our sister-church relationship with the RCN.

3 Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands:

Rev Evert Everts and Rev Arjan Hilbers of the CRC attended our Presbytery Day conference in April. During their time with us, the brothers from the CRC visited Londonderry and the North West with members of the Church Development Committee to consider possibilities for church planting.

4 Evangelical Presbyterian of England and Wales (EPCEW):

Again April, Mr. Stephen Johnson brought greetings from the EPCEW to our Presbytery Day Conference. In November, Mr. Johnston returned with Rev Josh Reiger and Mr Peter Leverton. They attended our Office Bearers' Half-Day of Prayer, and also met with our Inter-Church Relations Committee to discuss how the two denominations might be brought closer together.

5 Free Church of Scotland and Free Church of Scotland (Continuing):

In May, our Moderator, Mr Wallace Thompson attended the General Assemblies of the Free Church of Scotland and the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), where he was warmly received, and conveyed our fraternal greetings to both bodies.

6 International Conference of Reformed Churches:

In July, Rev Andrew J Lucas attended the International Conference of Reformed Churches in Canada. During the course of the conference reports were given by the Corresponding Secretary, the Regional Conference Committee, the

Theological Education committee, the Diaconal Committee, the Membership Committee, and the Admissions Committee. Ministry was also received from Rev Drs Derek W H Thomas and Joel Beeke. The conference also considered the decision of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) to ordain women, and with regret, decided to suspend the RCN's membership of the ICRC.

Recommendations:

- 1 That we rejoice in the goodness of God in giving us fellowship with believers and churches throughout the world.
- 2 That we might pray for our sister churches and for the deepening of our relations with them.
- 3 That we pray that for our friends in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. That they would reverse their Synod's decision, and that they would reaffirm their allegiance to the Scriptures and Reformed Confessions.
- 4 That we might pray for all true believers who are persecuted for Christ's sake.

