

Mission and Service Committee

Report to Presbytery September 2020

In making this report I am very aware that not a lot of progress in the committee's work has been made over the summer due to the pandemic and our inability to meet. Most of this report, therefore, centres on World Mission as that is where most of the work is happening.

Graeme Donald, the previous convener of this committee did an enormous amount of good work setting up a comprehensive training programme for the next year or so but unfortunately that has been suspended until we are allowed to gather in person again. On the local mission side, I'm sure a huge amount of work is being done at church level to reach out to our local communities in these difficult times but I've yet to find a way to access this information. Most churches are doing some form of online service be it zoom, pre recorded, on paper or other novel ways. The experience from my church and those from other churches I have spoken to is that this form of worship seems to be reaching a wider audience than normally attends on a Sunday morning. Can we learn from this? Can our experiences shape how we tackle local mission in the future? We need to collate and analyse this information before it is forgotten or out of date.

One of the reasons why World Mission carries on and can be reported upon is that it is set up as a sub committee of the Mission and service committee. We have half a dozen people, some but not all members of Presbytery, with an interest and expertise in the areas that our remit covers. Unfortunately we don't have the same structure to deal with the rest of Mission and Service remit. I'm therefore proposing that we set up sub committees to deal with a) local mission and b) training. All of these groups, like World Mission, would report to Presbytery through the Mission and Service Convener. In addition we can set up additional sub committees to be responsible for other areas of the remit if required. I'm therefore looking for volunteers to come onto these sub committees and carry on the vital work of Mission and Service in our Presbytery. If you or anyone in your congregation would like to volunteer, please get in touch. Just like World Mission, I'm looking for a mix of people who are members of presbytery but also people from congregations within our Presbytery. And be warned, if I don't get volunteers, I'll be phoning round to twist arms!

Onto World Mission, firstly Zomba Presbytery. Like the rest of the world, Zomba has not escaped the problems from Covid but from the reports I have ben sent, they are managing to cope fairly well and churches services are continuing, with numbers being limited to 100 per service and limited to an hours duration!. Thanks mainly to Carlops church, who raised money for Zomba over Easter, we managed to send money to buy buckets with taps and then ink to make posters to graphically remind people to wash their hands and keep safe distances. This has been very much appreciated by the congregations in Zomba. The Rev Picklen Chalfumira, who is well known to us through his visit to Innerleithen in 2017, his ministry in Thondwe and his involvement with planning the visit in 2018, has now been elected as Moderator of Zomba Presbytery and we congratulate him on his new job. Unlike Scotland, the post is for 4 years.

On the midwife front, there is not a lot to report. Geoffrey Matias is still working for Malaria Alert whilst we negotiate a midwife place for him, hopefully at Mulanje District hospital. This has had to take a back seat as the hospital deals with the pandemic. Thank you to all who have contributed to this appeal, when we have further information, we'll pass it on. Limbikani Poolokera, our midwife in training has had a difficult year. He started his final year late due to strikes and closures last year then it has been suspended due to the pandemic. He has been volunteering at his local clinic and a

few of us have been helping with his living expenses but to date, there is no word of when his course will restart.

Picklen has send a short video to be shown at the Presbytery meeting and he has suggested that he might join us via zoom at a future meeting.

Our links to Lebanon are not as strong as those to Malawi but we are still keeping contacts with them. Earlston church are continuing to keep in touch with Tripoli and Rev Pamela Strachan is keeping contacts with the Near East School of Theology (NEST) in Beirut where she spent 3 months study leave in 2018. We had the visit of Rev Rola Sleiman to our Presbytery in 2018 and later in the year Marina Altounian as part of the young person's visit later in the year. It therefore felt a lot closer to home when we saw the reports of the explosion in Beirut harbour on 4th August. Some of Pamela's fellow students at NEST have sent her a video of the damage, produced by Jhony Azeir, a film maker, who asks for it to be shared to show the extent of the damage. It is worth noting that Christian Aid have set up an appeal for money to help Lebanon and more information can be found on their website. Marina has also sent us a short prayer and a reminder to keep our friends in Lebanon in our prayers as they go through a very period in their country.

Dr Fiona Burnett
Convener Mission and Service Committee

Deliverance:

- 1) Presbytery receives the report.
- 2) Presbytery encourages its members and members of congregations to serve on Mission and Service sub committees.
- 3) Presbytery congratulates Rev Picklen Chalfumera on his four year appointment as Moderator of Zomba Presbytery.
- 4) Presbytery encourages congregations to support our links with our friends in Zomba and Lebanon through prayer and action.
- 5) Presbytery notes that donations towards the Beirut disaster appeal can be given through Christian Aid.