
Short Note: The Macqueen Relief Church, Inverness, 1938–1980

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The following account is based mainly on information supplied by Miss Eona Macqueen, a granddaughter of Rev. Ewen Macqueen, to whom we are grateful.

The Macqueen Free Presbyterian Relief church was formed in 1938 when a separation occurred between Rev. Ewen Macqueen and the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Mr Macqueen had been minister of the Inverness congregation of the Free Presbyterian Church since 1919, but the upshot of the ‘Dornoch Dance case’ and the second ‘Jeanie Grant case’ in the 1930s was that Mr Macqueen and the Church parted company in June 1938. Mr Macqueen’s view was that he had been put out of the Church, but the Church’s position was that he had separated.¹ The purpose of this paper is not to enter into any details of the separation² but simply to give a brief account of the subsequent history of the new congregation that was formed at that time.³

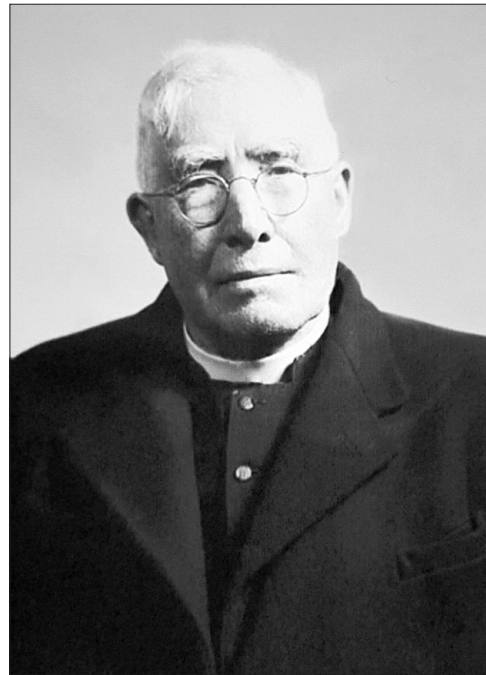
¹ Mr Macqueen tabled a protest against a decision of the Synod in June 1938 which had gone against him, and the Church took the position that this protest had the effect of separating him from the Church.

² For accounts of various aspects of the case, see *History of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1873–1970* (Inverness, [1974]), pp. 175-176; *The Free Presbyterian Church Dispute, reprinted from the Northern Chronicle of November 27, 1935* ([1935]); R. R. Sinclair *et al.*, *Case of Rev. E. Macqueen versus Northern Presbytery* ([Wick], [1936]); *A Review of Events in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1925–1945* (Glasgow, 1948), pp. 4-5; *The Right of Protest* (Glasgow, 1975), pp. 61-69; *One Hundred Years of Witness* (Glasgow, 1993), pp. 92-94.

³ Mr Macqueen’s followers were humorously called ‘the Split Peas’, in distinction to ‘the FPs’ from whom they were separated, and the nickname was subsequently extended to the followers of Rev. Roderick Mackenzie.

I. Rev. Ewen Macqueen, 1938–1949

Mr Macqueen protested at the Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church on Wednesday 29th June 1938, and was declared to be no longer a minister of the Church. On Friday 1st July he placed a notice in the *Inverness Courier* announcing his intention of continuing to hold services in the Free Presbyterian church at North Church Place. Presumably he conducted such services on the following Sabbath.⁴ The next Tuesday, 5th July, the Northern Presbytery met in Dingwall, and among other decisions it was agreed to demand the key of the Inverness church from one of the elders, John Ross. On the same day, Mr Macqueen held a congregational meeting, again presumably in the Inverness church, at which ‘he and some 200 members and adherents of the congregation signed a document in which they professed their adherence to the Creed and Constitution of the Free Presbyterian Church as formed in 1893.’⁵



Rev. Ewen Macqueen.

Mr Macqueen was subsequently unable to access the church,⁶ and thereafter separate services were held in the Old High Church Hall, on Academy Street with Mr Macqueen continuing to conduct them until within three weeks of his death in November 1949. The congregation must have numbered about 200 to start with and apparently included the majority of Mr Macqueen’s former Free Presbyterian congregation.⁷ The ongoing Free Presbyterian congregation remained relatively small until the early 1960s. The *Free Presbyterian History* states that ‘a considerable number of persons supported him in his action and left the Church. The numbers of several congregations were much reduced by this exodus.’⁸

⁴ *The Right of Protest*, p. 87.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁶ Opinion of Lord Carmont, p. 10. The Opinions of Lords Carmont, Cooper, Guthrie, Keith, and Russell in the 1951–52 Inverness Manse case, some of which are cited below, have never been published; the page-numbering is based on the original court documents.

⁷ Lord Carmont, p. 6.

⁸ *Free Presbyterian History*, p. 176.

One significant member of the Macqueen congregation was Baillie Angus Fraser who was a wealthy and important figure in the town. The congregation had a Kirk Session and a Deacons' Court, although no records are known to have survived.⁹ Baptisms and communion seasons continued as before, except that Mr Macqueen took all the services. A very attractive



Communion cup.

communion set was purchased or donated to the congregation. Cottage meetings were held in Stratherrick and Tomatin, and there were also services in Torrison, Skye, and at least one on Raasay. Mr Macqueen enjoyed considerable support on the west coast.¹⁰

In 1945, Rev. Roderick Mackenzie, the Free Presbyterian minister of the Glasgow congregation, also separated from the Free Presbyterian Church on the matter of Protest, and his followers organised a congregation in Glasgow known as the Glasgow Free Presbyterian Relief congregation. Although he entirely sympathised with Mr Macqueen's views on Protest, Mr Mackenzie was reluctant to engage in ministerial activities other than preaching, and he never became the minister of the Glasgow congregation. There is no record of any contact between him and Mr Macqueen, and there was no formal connection between the two congregations. Inevitably, however, there was informal contact, although perhaps less than one might have expected. Furthermore, two of the Glasgow elders, Neil MacSwan and Malcolm Macphee, were elected as elders (or perhaps 'assessor elders') in the Inverness congregation in June 1946,¹¹ and it was they, along with Rev. A. D. Macleod and Alexander Murray, Balloan (near Dornoch),¹² who comprised the Kirk Session when the legal case over the manse was fought.¹³

⁹ Lord Keith, p. 3. For the benefit of any future researchers, it might be mentioned that when Miss Macqueen cleared the manse after her father's death, she gave many of the papers to Ian MacDiarmid, Waternish. Mr MacDiarmid was the Secretary of the Glasgow Free Presbyterian Relief Congregation Contingency Committee, and presumably also had papers from that congregation. He died in 2014; see J. M. Brentnall, *Free Presbyterian Reminiscences* (revised edn, privately printed), pp. 224, 227. Efforts to locate his papers have been unavailing.

¹⁰ The *Free Presbyterian History* states that Mr Macqueen held services in 'many other places' in addition to Inverness, p. 176.

¹¹ *The Right of Protest*, p. 88.

¹² Alexander Murray was presumably connected with Provost John Murray, Balloan who was at the centre of the Free Presbyterian 'Dornoch Dance case' in 1935. Alexander Murray was elected and ordained an elder in the Relief congregation in 1947; see Lord Cooper, p. 11.

¹³ Lord Russell, p. 10.

At the separation from the Free Presbyterian Church, Mr Macqueen had remained in occupation of the manse at 30 Broadstone Park, and after his death in 1949 the Church endeavoured to recover the property through the courts. The result, in January 1952, was an effective victory for Macqueen's followers in that they and the Church were appointed to divide the property – both church and manse – half-and-half. The Free Presbyterian Church, therefore, kept the church at North Church Place, while the Macqueen followers retained the manse until 1980.

II. Rev. A. D. Macleod, 1950–1955

Mr Macqueen's successor as minister of the congregation was Rev. Alexander D. Macleod. Mr Macleod had been born at Pringles Court, Kenneth Street, Stornoway in 1910. The family attended St Columba's parish church, but at some point Mr Macleod joined the Free Presbyterian Church. He graduated M.A. at Glasgow University in 1937, trained for the ministry, and on 26th October 1939 was ordained and inducted as minister of the joint congregation of Shieldaig and Lochcarron. He resigned as a Free Presbyterian minister on 15th November 1945, in sympathy with Rev. Roderick Mackenzie of Glasgow,¹⁴ and he appears thereafter to have moved to Glasgow where he helped to conduct services in the Glasgow Free Presbyterian Relief congregation. In 1949 he became the first editor of the *Free Presbyterian Witness*, the organ of the breakaway group in Glasgow. He was also employed in this period as the Scottish Secretary for the Lord's Day Observance Society.

In 1950, Mr Macleod became the 'honorary pastor and interim moderator' of the Macqueen Relief congregation, although no induction was possible in the circumstances.¹⁵ Services continued in the Old High Church Hall, with communions and baptisms as before. Shortly afterwards, the congregation was left £8,000 by a Miss Forbes and was able to purchase St Mary's Gaelic Chapel which had come on the market.¹⁶ The building was briefly renamed the 'Macqueen Memorial Church', and was in possession of the congregation by the spring of 1953 when two of the members, Charles MacQueen, Dalmagarry and Eva Davidson were married there. With church, manse, and minister, the congregation seemed to be in a settled state, but in 1955 Rev. A.D. Macleod dropped the bombshell that he was departing to the Church of Scotland.

¹⁴ Lord Keith, p. 3.

¹⁵ Lord Cooper, p. 11.

¹⁶ This is now Leakey's Bookshop on Church Street.

III. Without a minister, 1955–1980

Mr Macleod's announcement and departure caused consternation and uncertainty regarding the future of the Macqueen congregation.¹⁷ At that time, there was a division in the congregation of Rev. Donald Campbell, minister of the Free North Church, and it was proposed that those unhappy with his ministry might amalgamate with the Macqueen congregation to form a new Free Church congregation. The majority of adherents and one deacon in the Macqueen congregation supported this proposal, but the rest of the office-bearers and the majority of communicant members did not. The



Ewen Macqueen junior and family.

upshot was a split in the Macqueen congregation. The section that amalgamated with people from the Free Church retained the church building and was received into the Free Church in 1958, adopting the name 'Greyfriars Free Church',¹⁸ and calling as its minister Rev. Donald Macdonald, Urray who was inducted on 18th September 1958.

The other section of the Macqueen congregation continued as before and was obliged from 1956 to meet in the beautiful Parish Council Hall near Ness Bridge. The

numbers dwindled to 20-25 and there were no communions. Nevertheless, this period of the congregation's history seems to have borne considerable spiritual fruit. The services were largely taken by Mr Macqueen's son Ewen who was an itinerant technical teacher.¹⁹ There were twelve children in

¹⁷ Rev. A. D. MacLeod became Church of Scotland minister in Musselburgh in 1956. In 1960 he moved to Airdrie and in 1972 to Benholme and Johnshaven. He retired in 1979 and died on 18th October 1993, being buried in Johnshaven. He was married to Georgina Macrae, Baniskirk, Caithness, and they had one son, George, who became a dentist in England. See tribute in *Stornoway Gazette*, October 1993.

¹⁸ The 'Greyfriars Free Church' was very near the site of the ruined friary of the Blackfriars (Dominicans). There never were Greyfriars (Franciscans) in Inverness.

¹⁹ One member of the congregation at that time remembered Ewen Macqueen, junior, as follows: 'His influence for good extended beyond the congregation. As based in the YMCA he occasionally took their evening service at 8pm called "After Church Rally". This was after preaching twice that day. In his day job, he was a witness for the Saviour amongst the young and old in the area. He was a regular letter-writer to local newspapers, taking issue with anything that undermined the glory of God. Annually he gave a book to each child in

the congregation, some of whom were baptised by Mr Craig, a retired Church of Scotland minister from Fortrose who had been Eva Davidson's minister when she was young. The services were sometimes conducted by Neil MacSwan and by Christopher Mackenzie, another prominent supporter of Rev. Roderick Mackenzie, who often supplied at the time of the communion in North Church Place.²⁰ Christopher Mackenzie continued to supply occasionally into the 1970s.

The manse in Broadstone Park lay empty from 1956 to 1959, and in 1959 the neighbours sent lawyer's letters regarding the state of the garden. Ewen Macqueen and his family, who had been living in the village of Balloch, moved into the manse



Christopher Mackenzie.

in 1959. The Parish Council Hall was torn down in the 1960s and the congregation worshipped in the YMCA building in Bank Lane. In due time the YMCA moved to the riverside, and the congregation worshipped in the Salvation Army Clothing Store while the new YMCA was being built.

By 1980, the congregation had dwindled to six and it was decided to call a halt. Mr Macqueen's family returned to the Free Presbyterian Church on 6th April 1980, and Ewen Macqueen was granted the use of the manse until his death in 1983. He was often called on to pray by Rev. A. F. Mackay, the Free Presbyterian minister. Other members of the Macqueen congregation chose to join the Greyfriars Free Church congregation. Thus the split of nearly forty-two years, which had been exceedingly bitter at times, came to an amicable conclusion.

the congregation, relative to their age, and the last I can remember receiving was *Adolphe Monod's Farewell*. We looked forward to his regular visits to our home. To myself and my four brothers he was "Mr Valiant for the Truth". When asked why he remained separate, Mr Macqueen, junior, always replied that he 'was standing up for law and order in the church.'

²⁰ Neil MacSwan died in 1963 aged 87. Christopher Mackenzie was a butcher in Tighnabruaich. He died aged 92 in 1986. He is remembered as a small, round man and a bright, cheerful Christian.