

**MINUTES OF THE MISSION COUNCIL OF THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH, MEETING
AT THE HAYES CONFERENCE CENTRE, SWANWICK
NOVEMBER 25TH – 27TH 2011**

The Council Meeting was constituted with worship led by Revd Rachel Poolman and Revd Dr James Coleman, chaplains to the Moderators, Mrs Val Morrison and Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe.

Friday November 25th

SESSION 1

Moderator, Mrs Val Morrison took the chair.

Apologies:

Apologies were received from:

Ms Michelle Marcano, Head of HR; Mrs Adella Pritchard, W Midlands rep; Mrs Rhona Dunn, Northern rep; Rev Dr Roger Paul, Church of England observer; Miss Emma Pugh, Mersey Rep; Mr Robert Jones, Northern Rep; Mr Bill Robson, W Midlands rep; Mr Simon Loveitt, JPI Team; Revd Alistair Smeaton, North Western rep; and Mr Steve Summers, CRCW Development Worker.

Welcome: new members/representatives/invitees

The moderator offered welcome to:

Rev Sue Macbeth, Yorkshire rep; Rev Peter Meek, East Midlands Moderator; Rev Dougie Burnett, South Western rep; Mr George Faris, South Western rep; Rev Michael Hopkins, Wessex rep; Mr Alistair Wilson, Southern rep; Mrs Ruth Henriksen, Wales rep; Rev Gethin Rhys, Wales rep; Rev Connie Bonner, Scotland rep; Rev Stephen Brown, Scotland rep; Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith, Clerk Elect to Assembly; Mr John Smith, Convener Education & Learning Committee; Miss Becky Harrington, staff member, Audio/visuals.

Alternate representatives

Rev Jenny Mills, E. Midlands alternate rep ; Mrs Margaret Marshall, West Midlands alternate rep;; Mr John Grundy, Mersey alternate rep; Mr Danny Pigeon, Northern alternate rep.

Visitors / Presenters / Speakers in attendance

Rev Ashley Evans, Thames North, Saturday 26th, Speaking re Olympics; Rev Dr Stephen Orchard, Friday 25th, Speaking re role of Synod Moderators; Rev John Waller, Saturday 26th, Speaking on behalf of the Human Sexuality Task Group.

Communications Protocol

The moderator proposed that for this and future meetings of Mission Council:

“We ask those present to agree to abide by a protocol that we will not circulate information from, or opinions about, Mission Council on social networking sites, or by any other means which has potential for widespread dissemination, until after reports have been communicated by the Communications team.”

Resolved by consensus.

Time for Introduction of reports.

The Moderator announced some reports had been allocated extra presentation time; otherwise presentations should not exceed five minutes.

11/28 MINUTES (see also p. 2)

Minutes of the meeting held at High Leigh Conference Centre May 17 – 19th 2011.

John Ellis asked for deferment until he had spoken with the Deputy General Secretary.

11/29 MATTER ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

ZI. The General Secretary, Rev Roberta Rominger, spoke to paper A. The Mission Council Independent Review Group meeting over the summer had agreed that the campaign should go forward on the condition that certain requirements were fulfilled. These included an "Internal Launch +1" which would be synod based with members of the Steering Group available to attend and take a lead. 471 churches were currently exploring. The launch date of the ZI campaign would be May 9th 2012. She reported with sadness that Denese Chikwendu had resigned from her post as campaign co-ordinator. She paid tribute to Denese's passion and energy.

She also reported the recent resignation of Michelle Marcano as director of Human Resources. There was concern that two black women should both resign from posts at Church House within a short period and an investigation group had been appointed to address this.

The General Secretary responded to questions relating to timescale, costs likely to be incurred by local churches, the number of churches currently 'exploring', the shortage of 'companions', and the role of Mission Committee in ongoing oversight of the work of the Steering Group.

The Report of the Independent Review Group, circulated in September, was received by Mission Council. The Moderator thanked the members of the group for the work they had undertaken in a short space of time. Revd Roy Lowes paid tribute to the difficult work of the General Secretary during the past months. Mission Council affirmed his comments with applause.

11/30 REVIEW OF THE ROLE OF THE SYNOD MODERATOR.

Revd Dr Stephen Orchard, convener of the review group, presented a progress report, Paper C. Responses to the review group's survey indicated that there was much support for the role of Moderator in the URC. The group was seeking a way forward to enable more efficient working within the existing structures of the church. They would welcome further comments, to be sent either to Dr. Orchard or Sue Bush. The moderator thanked the group for the work to date.

SESSION 2.

Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe took the chair.

11/28 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Mr John Ellis offered amendments to 11/18, 11/25; 11/08 i and ii.

11/18, 4th line onwards: change rest of the paragraph to read, **"benefits and pensionable age. Although the church's policy on retirement processes will not change and ministers will remain able to retire at various ages, the calculation of pension entitlements will gradually move from being based on age 65 to being based on age 68"**.

11/25 change to begin: "Revd Paul Whittle, moderator of Eastern synod, proposed a resolution from his Synod which, after an agreed amendment **from the URC treasurer, read as follows:**

Mission Council asks that decisions being made by Assembly Committees be made with greater openness and clarity; and in consultation with Synods and local churches; as well as with attention to agreed budgets."

Resolved by consensus.

Session 9; 11/08

- i. Replace line 4 by **"It was agreed this resolution be not put"**
- ii. Replace line 6, having deleted "such" and "in the National Synods" by **"A System of underpinning Synod finances from the Assembly budget might work in practice."**

The amendments were accepted and the minutes then confirmed as a correct record

11/31 MISSION COMMITTEE

1. Nestle.

Revd Ed Cox introduced Papers B4 and B5.

In line with the resolution at the 2010 Assembly, as Nestle had attained listing on the FTSE4Good Index and was now considered to be meeting the criteria, the boycott of Nestle products should be rescinded.

He proposed:

Mission Council, in accordance with the instructions of the General Assembly 2010, rescinds the boycott on Nestle products adopted by General Assembly in 1992 but instructs Mission Committee to continue to monitor Nestlé's response to the issues raised in the Price Waterhouse Cooper Assessment Report and its compliance with the FTSE's BMS criteria in higher risk countries and to report any changes.

Following some queries to which Frank Kantor responded, **the resolution was resolved by agreement.**

2. Ecumenical Review

Revd Ed Cox and Revd David Tatem introduced the report in Paper B as a basis for discussion around the tables. They asked for three or four responses from each table group to the questions:

What is our current understanding of 'organic unity' and how should this be expressed?

How should our ecumenical vision be articulated in programme activity, representation and resource allocation?

Mission Council discussed these questions in small groups around the tables.

3. Vision2020

Revd Ed Cox introduced Papers B1 and B2. He reiterated that Vision2020 was a framework, not a programme, which all could use in their own contexts. He thanked those who had made the framework their own and made pledges for their future mission, as well as the Assembly departments and Mission Team for the ways in which they had engaged with the process.

Each synod had reported its progress on Vision2020 in writing (Paper B2). Rowena Francis (Northern Synod), John Humphreys (Synod of Scotland), and Roy Lowes (West Midlands) spoke to give varied examples of how Vision2020 was being implemented within their Synods. Mr Cox thanked the moderators for their presentations.

The Moderator thanked Mr Cox and all who had contributed to the presentations. The General Secretary added her own thanks to the synods for their submissions which she felt had been a successful experiment in a new mode of synod accountability to the Assembly.

4. Council for World Mission

Revd Ed Cox introduced Paper B3. Revd Jane Rowell gave further information on the CWM Global Assembly and Trustees. Mission Committee was asked to nominate four representatives to the CWM Global Assembly and to the regional meetings, one of whom would become the URC's global CWM trustee.

Mission Council approves the names recommended by Mission Committee as representatives to the 2012 CWM Global Assembly: Jane Rowell (female ordained), David Coleman (male ordained), Zaidie Orr (female lay) and Phillip Timson (under 30 male lay).

Resolved by consensus.

5. Presbyterian Church in Ghana

Jane Rowell apologised for the late arrival of Paper B6. This was due to the timing of a reply from Ghana. The Moderator suggested time for all to read the paper, which indicated that the Presbyterian Church of

Ghana had taken a resolution to its Assembly to '*sever partnerships with churches that ordain homosexuals*'. After representations from the United Reformed Church and others, the Assembly Council had amended the resolution to read, '*The General Assembly Council has agreed that instead of severing relations with partner denominations it should be restricted only to congregations which allow for same sex marriage or tolerate homosexuality*'.

No decisions needed to be taken by Mission Council, but questions and comments were invited. Revd Peter Meek thanked the General Secretary for the wise letter she had sent to the church in Ghana, which stated the URC position clearly and made a plea for continuing partnership. It was recognised that living with diversity was a reality for Christians in every country and that conversations would continue. The World Communion of Reformed Churches was monitoring developments and had shown interest in the URC Commitment to live together with diversity. The Chaplain led in prayer for all concerned.

11/32 REVIEW OF CHURCH HOUSE MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

Revd Rowena Francis, convener of the Staffing Advisory Group, reported that the Staffing Advisory Group had reviewed the job descriptions of the Director of the Windermere Centre and Director of Communications. She spoke to Paper R. and proposed the resolution:

- 1. Mission Council receives the report entitled "Remit for a Church House Management Review Group", approves the Terms of Reference and Review Process outlined therein and instructs the Staffing Advisory Group to carry out the review and report to the November 2012 Meeting of Mission Council.
Resolved by consensus**
- 2. Mission Council further authorises the Staffing Advisory Group to co-opt as appropriate in setting up and carrying out this review.**

It was felt to be important that there should be management experience within the General Secretariat, which possibly indicated a departure from the current position in which both the General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary were ministers of Word and Sacraments. Mrs Francis further indicated that the Staffing Advisory Group would make interim provision for human resources management during 2012 whilst management arrangements at Church House were under scrutiny.

Resolved by consensus.

SESSION 3

Moderator Mrs Val Morrison took the Chair.

Mr Lawrence Moore, moderator elect, gave notice of two workshops to be held at the Windermere Centre (Jan 25 – 27th, May 8 -10th) to develop and explore models of Consensus Decision Making prior to General Assembly 2012.

11/ 33 MODERATORS' THINK TANK

The Moderators introduced their Paper D with a conversation reminding Mission Council that we live in changed and changing times faced with shrinking resources, both inside and outside the church. They encouraged members of Mission Council to discuss the question their paper posed:

What does the local church need from the centre (whether 86 Tavistock Place or Synods) to enable and advance its mission?

Following discussions in groups, members of Mission Council reassembled. Closing worship was led by the chaplain Revd Rachel Poolman. Music was provided by Revd John Marsh and a select group of musicians.

Saturday Nov 26th

SESSION 4

Morning worship was led by the chaplains.

Moderator Mrs Val Morrison took the chair. She thanked those who had responded to the Friday evening discussion question and reported that some groups had asked for time for further discussion. If time allowed, this would be arranged.

11/34 LONDON 2012 – OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES

Ms Frances Brienen, Secretary for Mission, updated Mission Council on preparations for the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The URC belonged to the “More than Gold” partnership which sought to link sport with faith through outreach, hospitality and service. She introduced Revd Dougie Burnett from Bristol and Revd Ashley Evans from Newham who explained what their churches had planned in response to Olympic themes and to support residents in the area around the main Olympic site. There was still time for local churches to consider how they could use the Olympic season to engage with their communities. The Moderator thanked Dougie and Ashley for their presentations and encouraged people to think how they could be involved.

11/35 MINISTRIES

1. Timescale regarding papers for Assessment.

Revd Craig Bowman, Secretary for Ministries, reported a change in the timescale for the receipt of papers for candidates to the Assessment conferences. Papers would be required two and a half months prior to the conference date, to allow time for closer scrutiny of papers and, if necessary, for investigations to be made before a candidate was accepted for training.

2. Funding ministry Differently

Revd Ruth Whitehead, Convener of Ministries, introduced Paper E. Ministries Committee had been considering possibilities for altering the manner in which ministry in its widest sense was funded within the church. Three possible scenarios were put forward and Mission Council was asked to discuss these and offer their responses to the Ministries Committee. Discussion took place in groups.

SESSION 5

Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe took the chair.

Revd Martin Hazell presented three URC publications available for purchase at the Council meeting.

11/36 MINISTRIES/ EDUCATION AND LEARNING

Rev John Smith, Convener of Education and Learning, presented Paper F and introduced the resolution.

1. The place of requirement in Education for Ministry Phase 2

All entrants to public ministry as ordained Ministers of Word and Sacraments or commissioned Church Related Community Workers in the United Reformed Church are required to engage actively in the Education for Ministry Phase 2 programme for three years after ordination or commissioning. At the end of this period the synod will decide whether to issue a Certificate of Completion or to extend the period of EM2 training. This requirement will be stated at the time of entry to Education for Ministry Phase 1.

Revd Fiona Thomas, Secretary for Education and Learning, responded to questions. She explained that EM2 was rigorous, bespoke and flexible. Non-completion of EM2 would mean that a minister/CRCW would not be

eligible for EM3 funding. A suggestion was made that the Disciplinary Process should be the sanction for a person who was unwilling to take up the required training. Ms Thomas said that this had not been considered by the Committee.

The resolution was resolved by consensus.

2. Requirement in Education for Ministry Phase 3

Revd John Smith presented Paper F1. Due to the public expectations that church ministry elicited and the authority which came from holding public office, the Education & Learning committee and the Ministries committee wished to propose the following resolution to General Assembly.

There will be occasions on which it is right for General Assembly to make certain training mandatory for particular groups of Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers. It will be for Mission Council to agree the nature, duration, and monitoring of such training.

A number of questions were put and comments made which would be taken into account in the final wording of the resolution to be brought to General Assembly.

Resolved by consensus.

11/37 NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Revd John Durell, Convener, presented Paper G.

1. Nominating Group Convener

The Revd Roz Harrison had agreed to convene the Nominating Group for the Moderator of the Synod of Wales.

2. Communications and Editorial Convener

Revd John Humphreys was appointed with immediate effect, until 20 June 2015.

3. Officers of Committees

The following names would be taken to General Assembly 2012 for appointment:

- 2.1.3 Methodist/URC Interfaith Reference Group (Co-Convener elect) Revd Clare Downing
- 3.1.1 Ministries – Accreditation Sub-Committee (Convener elect) Revd Fran Ruthven
- 3.1.3 Ministries – Maintenance of Ministry Sub-Committee (Convener elect) Revd Catey Morrison
- 3.3 Youth and Children’s Work Committee (Convener elect) Revd Tim Meachin
- 4.1 Assembly Arrangements Committee (Convener elect) Revd Michael Hopkins
- 4.3 Equal Opportunities Committee (Secretary elect) Revd Adrian Bulley
- 4.5.1 Stewardship Sub-Committee (Convener elect) Mr Keith Berry

Minutes Secretary for General Assembly/Mission Council (reappointment from 1 January 2012)

Mrs Irene Wren

11/38 MIND ADVISORY GROUP

The clerk presented paper M. He proposed the changes as listed (see appendix 1).

Resolved by majority vote.

Paper M1 Mind Advisory Group

The Clerk paid tribute to the work done by Mr Hartley Oldham over the years in this area of the Church’s work. Mr Oldham was willing to continue to share his expertise with this group in a limited capacity. Mission Council was pleased to accept this offer and supported his co-option to the Mind Advisory Group.

11/39 JOINT WORK WITH THE METHODIST CHURCH.

Revd Richard Mortimer, Deputy General Secretary, commended Revd Rob Weston and Revd Doug Swanney for their work towards bringing a paper on the joint working of the URC and Methodists in youth work to this Council. He explained that this had not been possible due to the differing time scales of Methodist Conference and URC Assembly and the possible repercussions of the weekend's discussion on resources.

11/40 FURY REPRESENTATION AT GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND MISSION COUNCIL

Revd Rob Weston, Convener of Youth and Children's Work Committee, introduced Paper N requesting an extra place at both General Assembly and Mission Council to enable the FURY Moderator Elect to attend. The current Moderator Victoria Paulding explained that as FURY still operated an annual appointment system, some FURY Moderators did not have the opportunity to attend General Assembly. The clerk suggested a wording for the resolution:

Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly resolves to increase places allocated for FURY members at General Assembly from two to three.

Resolved by agreement.

The resolution pertaining to Mission Council membership was remaindered.

SESSION 6

Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe took the chair

She invited Revd David Tatem, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations, to make some announcements.

Mr Tatem told of the Covenant between the Church of England, Methodist Church and United Reformed Church in Cumbria, to be celebrated on November 27th in Ambleside. He, Revd Richard Church and Revd Rachel Poolman would be attending.

He also drew attention to the planned service in Westminster Abbey on February 7th at 6.15pm at which the Church of England and the United Reformed Church would seek to draw closer together and leave behind the distressing history of 1662. Tickets should be requested from the Ecumenical Office at Church House.

11/41 HUMAN SEXUALITY TALK GROUP

The moderator welcomed the Revd John Waller and invited him to present Paper H. A Consultation had been held at Westminster College where people with diverse views had spent valuable time together. Papers from the Consultation would soon be available. Mr Waller commended the Guidelines offered for 'Good Conversations' (Paper H2) and said that they had been used to good effect at the Consultation. He noted that as people tired or talked in larger groups they had found it more difficult to adhere to the guidelines. The Commitment (General Assembly 2007) had been the background to the discussion.

He then spoke of the Government's publication of regulations to bring section 202 of the Equality Act 2010 into force. These allowed for religious buildings to be registered for the conduct of civil partnership ceremonies with the approval of the appropriate authority. It would be necessary for the General Assembly to come to a decision on behalf of the United Reformed Church.

The resolution was proposed:

Mission Council, in recognising that any discussion and resolution by General Assembly responding to the Government's regulations which allow religious authorities to apply for approval for the registration of civil partnerships to be registered on their premises will require careful advance preparation:

- a) **Requests the HSTG to prepare materials for local churches which will promote wider knowledge and understanding of the 2007 G A Commitment on human sexuality.**
- b) **Requests Synods to create opportunities for preparation that are appropriate to their situation;**
- c) **Asks the Assembly Arrangements Committee to consult widely in deciding how best to present this particular matter in the Assembly agenda.**

There was lengthy discussion. Many thought that materials provided in advance of Assembly would be useful to aid meaningful discussion. Mr Waller proposed that both a leaflet and a DVD should be available. Discussions could be held in Synod meetings or in more local gatherings, with a particular plea that representatives to Assembly should be well informed about the 2007 Commitment.

Resolved by agreement (1 blue card)

Mr Waller indicated that The Human Sexuality Task group would have fulfilled its role at the close of Assembly 2012. Most of the group wished to relinquish the task. He added that there would be ongoing work for future years and that thought should be given in advance to how this might be accomplished.

MC asks its Advisory Group to consider in what form the work of the HSTG should continue beyond Assembly 2010, and to report to the March meeting of the Mission Council.

Resolved by consensus

The moderator thanked Mr Waller for his presence and the Task Group for its work. Mission Council responded with applause.

11/42 THE REGISTRATION OF CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS IN RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS

Procedural Motion for General Assembly

The Clerk presented Paper Q.

He outlined the legal background and suggested that the unity of the United Reformed Church remained of paramount importance. He believed it appropriate to offer three alternative resolutions with the necessary supporting papers to the members of Assembly to reflect the position of the Commitment of 2007.

No URC church within England or Wales should seek to register before the decision of Assembly in July.

The three resolutions which may be presented to General Assembly are:

- A.** General Assembly grants its consent for Church Meetings within the United Reformed Church to direct the trustees of their church's premises (or to request the trustees of other premises, the use of which their church shares) to apply for the approval of those premises for the registration of Civil Partnerships.
- B.** General Assembly does not grant its consent for Church Meetings within the United Reformed Church to direct the trustees of their church's premises (or to request the trustees of other premises, the use of which their church shares) to apply for the approval of those premises for the registration of civil partnerships.
- C.** General Assembly, recognising that the polity of the United Reformed Church is such that such questions are more appropriately a question for Local Churches, resolves and declares that its consent is not required by Church Meetings which wish to direct the trustees of their church's

premises (or to request the trustees of other premises, the use of which their church shares) to apply for the approval of those premises for the registration of Civil Partnerships.

The debate centred on the procedure to be followed and the wisdom of offering three resolutions to Assembly, two of which contradicted resolutions made in 2007. It would be necessary to count votes although there was no reason why consensus procedures could not be used for the discussion session. It would be helpful to see the final wording of Government legislation before coming to a decision regarding exactly what should be put to Assembly.

The clerk proposed withdrawal of the proposed resolutions. Mission Council agreed by consensus.

11/43 ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE

Dr David Robinson presented Paper J. Four options were proposed for the circulation of the Assembly Reports and Record, and he invited Mission Council to come to a mind. A number of strong views were expressed: the importance of accessibility to the information to be discussed in a user friendly format; the proposal of an invitation to opt in for the receipt of hard copies; a plea that Ministers as well as church secretaries needed access to the Reports; the difficulty in preparing material for an earlier publication date; and the need for a sense of common belonging, wider than that of a single congregation. A facilitation group was appointed to return with new wording later during the Council meeting: Mary Thomas (Convener), Linda Harrison, Alan Small, John Ellis and Martin Hazell.

SESSION 7

Moderator Mrs Val Morrison took the chair.

Mrs Morrison clarified the status of Mission Council papers – they were confidential prior to the Meeting, but were for public consumption after the meeting unless specifically stated.

11/44 FINANCE COMMITTEE

1. Support for Lay Pension Scheme K2

Mr John Ellis, Treasurer, presented paper K2. He proposed the resolution:

Mission Council, acting with the authority of General Assembly and being representative of Local Churches, Synods and the whole Church, reaffirms its commitment to the lay staff pension scheme with the Pensions Trust and undertakes to make arrangements to meet any deficits in the funding arrangements which may arise from time to time.

Following comments and questions to which Mr Ellis responded the resolution was put.

2. Treasurer's report

Mr Ellis advised that the Westminster College £7m Appeal so far had pledges and gifts totalling £3.1m, £2m of which had been donated by Synods, in addition to the £1m from Assembly funds.

The Ethical Investment Advisory Group had been in existence since 1992, and it is now considered that a different pattern of working is advisable. The Investment Committee is where most of the work is now done and so the Ethical Investment Advisory Group can be disbanded. A Standing Group could be set up and called together by the Deputy General Secretary when considered necessary. If this proves agreeable to various interested parties, a formal proposal would be brought to the next Mission Council.

By a show of orange cards Mission Council showed it was “broadly happy” with Mr Ellis’s plan.

4. Budget 2012 and Implications PAPERS K & K1

Mr Ellis presented the financial report. Against declining income but relatively static expenditure, he presented the budget for 2012 showing a proposed deficit of £1m.

Mission Council accepts the budget for 2012 set out in Paper K1, noting a substantial projected deficit and the need to reduce this in 2013.

Resolved by majority vote.

Many constructive comments were received: concern over minister numbers; stipends; the costs of the Church’s central programmes and governance; and the need to make large cuts in the budget for 2013.

4. Synod contributions to support the Ministers Pension Fund.

Mr Ellis thanked the Synods for the way they had agreed to make generous payments into the Ministers Pension Fund for the triennium 2010-12. It had been proposed as a temporary measure but the likelihood remained that high contribution rates would be required in future years after the Actuarial Valuation due for 1 January 2012.

In setting future budgets, Mission Council will seek to phase out not later than 2016 the current request for special pensions support from the Synods and requests the Finance Committee, in the light of the 2012 Valuation of the Ministers’ Pension Fund, to discuss with the Synods the ways in which they contribute in the interim.

Discussion reflected the difficulty of our being one Church in thirteen Synods with varying but not insignificant amounts of money. Resource sharing over the years had proved indispensable to a number of synods and now other ways of sharing the costs of the whole Church needed to be found.

Resolved by consensus

5. Minister numbers.

Mission Council asks for a proposal to be brought to the 2012 General Assembly to amend the policy on stipendiary minister numbers so that it links trends in the overall costs falling on the Assembly budget, rather than trends in the number of ministers, to trends in overall Church membership.

Discussion noted the expectations placed upon Stipendiary ministers; the need for new styles of ministry; the greater involvement of lay leaders; the need to plan for growth, not decline. Mr Ellis responded to the Clerk confirming that the Finance Committee would continue to work with Ministries Committee on this matter.

Resolved by agreement. The rest of the Finance Committee business was remaindered.

11/45 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

Revd Elizabeth Nash introduced Paper L, guidelines to deal with incidents of bullying in the United Reformed Church. It was a work in progress still to be seen by Ministries Committee. She proposed to offer it to General Assembly to sit alongside other Equal Opportunities guidelines.

A number of helpful comments were made: a request for a clear definition of harassment; the need for theological underpinning; links with the Safe church material; and the need for training those who would need to administer the procedures. Elizabeth thanked all who had contributed and undertook to liaise with the Sexual Ethics Advisory Group to ensure clarity regarding safe church issues.

She introduced Paper L1 in which the Equal Opportunities Committee requested an additional two members to assist in the managing of their work load. After discussion no agreement was reached and the question was remaindered.

SESSION 8.

Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe took the chair.

Questions were offered to the groups for discussion. (Appendix 2). Mission Council discussed in groups.

Evening worship was conducted by the chaplains.

Sunday November 27th

SESSION 9

Mission Council celebrated Holy Communion, led by the Moderators and their chaplains. Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe preached the sermon.

11/46 RESOLUTION FROM MERSEY SYNOD

Revd Howard Sharpe spoke to Paper P. He suggested that many churches felt a sense of overload as they learned about the various programmes and initiatives underway within the church. On behalf of his Synod, he proposed:

Mission Council agrees to take time to reflect on the number of denominational initiatives it is authorising and the way these are rolled out to Synods and local churches.

Following some supportive comments, the General Secretary agreed that MCAG would give the matter further thought.

11/47 PROCEDURAL RESOLUTION

Revd David Tatem, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations, spoke briefly to the resolution which would enable work already in progress, to continue:

Mission Council delegates to the Methodist/URC Liaison Group the authority to approve the final wording of the Model Constitution for Methodist/URC United Areas.

Resolved by Consensus

SESSION 10

Moderator Mrs Val Morrison took the chair.

She clarified that Staff Secretaries were free to speak at Mission Council but not to vote.

11/48 SYNOD RESOLUTION FROM WESSEX SYNOD

The resolution on Paper P was presented by Revd Clare Downing. It was instigated by the Wessex Youth & Children's Committee believing that secure ID should be available and would be an asset.

In order to ensure a high standard of safeguarding, Mission Council, on behalf of General Assembly, resolves, as a matter of urgency, to request Ministries Committee to identify means by which we can provide secure photo identification, together with a means for identity to be verified, for Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers and be available to Accredited Lay Preachers and Elders (both serving and non-serving) and other employees and volunteers who have a current Criminal Records Bureau certificate..

The resolution was withdrawn in light of comments from the Ministries and Youth & Children's Work Committees, who felt that it would not be possible to issue or monitor ID cards within their current resources. However they agreed that further discussions would take place between the committees.

11/40 FURY REPRESENTATION AT MISSION COUNCIL (REMAINDERED)

Revd Richard Mortimer, Deputy General Secretary proposed:

Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly grants a third place on Mission Council to FURY.

Resolved by consensus.

11/45 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE (REMAINDERED)

Revd Elizabeth Nash proposed:

Mission Council approves the request of the Equal Opportunities Committee for an increase in its membership from eight to ten and refers the matter to Nominations Committee for action

Resolved by agreement.

11/43 ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE (REMAINDERED)

On behalf of the Facilitation Group, Revd Mary Thomas presented a further option for Assembly 2012 materials to be circulated to the churches.

As in 2010, a hard copy of the Book of Reports is sent to all Assembly members with the contents posted on the URC website. A CD rom is sent to all churches. A user-friendly booklet outlining the major themes coming for Assembly decision is prepared and sent to every church as a discussion tool for Church Meetings and Synods.

The cost would be £19,500 for the Book of Reports plus the production, packing and postage of the booklet. Discussion centred around whether the booklet could be produced in time for circulation. This recommendation would be followed in 2012 and reviewed thereafter.

Resolved by consensus

11/44 FINANCE (REMAINDERED)

Treasurer Mr John Ellis shared the responses of the group discussions and as a result brought a newly worded version of Resolution 4.

Mission Council:

- 1. Requests Assembly Committees and the General Secretariat each to offer to the treasurer by 9 March 2012 an outline of how they would deploy their committee budget within the Vision2020 framework if from 2013 onwards their budget was reduced, in real terms relative to 2012, by (a) 25% or (b)50%**

2. **Requests Mission Council Advisory Group to develop an appropriate process for Mission Council to bring recommendations to the 2012 Assembly for the shape of the 2013 budget in the light of these outlines and other relevant factors.**

Resolved by consensus.

The business was concluded.

Announcements

Revd Fiona Thomas gave notice of a conference at Mansfield College March 14th – 16th 2012.

Revd Kevin Watson thanked Moderators, conveners and all concerned for the way in which potentially divisive business has been led and executed. The Holy Spirit had moved.

Mrs Morrison thanked all who had completed their service on Mission Council

Ms Michelle Marcano, Head of HR; Revd Peter Noble, Wales Synod Moderator; Mrs Adella Pritchard, West Midlands Rep; Mr Bill Robson, West Midlands rep; Revd Kay Alberg, Yorkshire rep; Revd Peter Crutchley-Jones, Wales rep; Victoria Paulding, FURY Moderator. Revd Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor thanked Revd John Marsh and his musical team for their contribution to the worship; Mission Council responded with applause.

Closing Worship was led by Revd Dr James Coleman.

Mission Council meets next on March 21st – 23rd 2012 at High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon.

APPENDIX 1

MIND Advisory Group (11/38)

Changes to Part II of the Disciplinary Process

- A.5.22** Replace the existing wording with: " **'Joint Panel' shall mean the Panel referred to in Paragraph B.2.2 which shall serve the purposes set out in that Paragraph.**"
- AA.1.5.1** Replace the words "Each Synod is required to appoint from its Synod Panel two persons ..." with "Acting in accordance with Paragraph AA.1.5.2, each Synod shall appoint two persons (known as "the Synod Appointees") ...". The words "from its own Synod Panel" do not appear in the replacement wording.
- AA.1.5.2** Replace the existing paragraph in its entirety with the following:-
- "The Moderator of the Synod in consultation with such officers of the Synod as s/he considers appropriate shall forthwith appoint persons to act as the Synod Appointees (and reserves) in any particular case in the following manner:-**
- (i) s/he shall appoint the first of the Synod Appointees from the Joint Panel (with another from the Joint Panel to act as reserve) and;**
 - (ii) s/he shall appoint as the second Synod Appointee one of the following, that is:-**
 - (a) one person from its own Synod Panel or**
 - (b) one person from the Synod Panel(s) of another Synod with the consent of the Moderator of that Synod, or**

- (c) one person who, although not a member of any Synod Panel, is a member of the United Reformed Church with legal, tribunal or other appropriate professional experience.

S/he shall also appoint in the same manner one person to act as reserve to the second Synod Appointee."

AA.1.5.3 No change required.

AA.1.5.4 Delete the current paragraph (now covered at AA.1.5.1) and substitute the following:-

"In the event that one of the Synod Appointees is obliged to withdraw during the Caution Stage, the reserve appointed from the same Panel may, subject to the approval of the Moderator of the Synod following consultation with such officers of the Synod as s/he considers appropriate, take over his/her position and, jointly with the other Synod Appointee, continue with the enquiry, join in issuing Cautions (if considered necessary) and bring the Caution Stage to its conclusion. Should the Moderator of the Synod, following such consultation as stated above, consider that this would not be appropriate in any particular case, s/he will discharge the Synod Appointees and appoint two new ones in accordance with the above procedure."

AA.2.3 Delete the current paragraph in its entirety and substitute the following:-

"AA.2.3.1 Should both the principal and reserve Appointees under Paragraph AA.1.5.2(i) be unable to act in a particular case, the Moderator of the Synod shall, following such consultation as stated above, appoint two other members of the Joint Panel to act as Synod Appointee and reserve Synod Appointee respectively."

AA.2.3.2 Should both the principal and reserve Appointees appointed under paragraph AA.1.5.2(ii) be unable to act in a particular case, the Moderator of the Synod shall, following such consultation as stated above, appoint two other persons to act as the other principal and reserve Synod Appointee respectively in accordance with the provisions of that Paragraph.

B.2.1.1 After the words "and (ii) the appointment of," replace the words "two persons in accordance with Paragraph AA.1.5 to act as" with "one person in accordance with Paragraph AA.1.5.2(ii) to act as one of".

B.2.2 Replace the words "assuming a role as part of a Mandated Group" with "(i) appointment in accordance with Paragraph B.3 as a member of a Mandated Group or (ii) appointment in accordance with Paragraph AA.1.5(i) to act as one of the Synod Appointees during the Caution Stage if initiated. The same persons shall not act as Synod Appointees and members of a Mandated Group in the same case." The final sentence of Paragraph B.2.2 remains unchanged.

B.3.1 Replace the words at the beginning of the paragraph up to "....under the authority of that Synod," with the following:-

"In cases arising under Paragraph 2(4)(A)(xvii) of the Structure (Synods) in respect of any Minister in membership or under the authority of the Synod in question, if the Moderator of that Synod either (i) believes that there is or may be a disciplinary issue involving Gross Misconduct or (ii) resolves (where the case has already passed through the Caution Stage) to act upon a recommendation from the Synod Appointees to call in a Mandated Group,...."

- B.3.2** Replace the words "**believes that there is or may be a disciplinary issue in respect of any Minister**" with "**(i) believes that there is or may be a disciplinary issue involving Gross Misconduct in respect of any Minister or (ii) resolves (where a case has already passed through the Caution Stage) to act on a recommendation from the Synod Appointees to call in a Mandated Group,....**"
- B.3.4** After the words "**justify the calling in of**" insert the words "**the Synod Appointees under the provisions of Section AA or**".

APPENDIX 2

Questions for Group Discussion (11/44)

1. Do you agree that the URC 2013 expenditure must be reduced?
2. What information do you need from un to explain the situation to congregations where you are to help them to respond to this challenge?
3. What advice do you have for the committees as they review their future budget, including how they may work together on this?
4. What advice do you have for MCAG as it develops this process?
5. Are there any other options we can explore for reducing the gap between income and expenditure?