



## MISSION COUNCIL

*1 - 3 October 1999*

## MINUTES

**FRIDAY, 1<sup>st</sup> OCTOBER 1999**

Worship was led by the Chaplain, the Revd Peter Poulter. This was based on a reading from the first letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians.

The Moderator's Reflection was a powerful series of "Did you know ...?" questions about South Africa.

### **99/45 Welcome**

The Moderator, the Revd Peter McIntosh, welcomed everyone to the meeting, mentioning in particular:- the Moderator-elect, the Revd Bill Mahood; the new Committee Conveners: the Revd Frank Beattie (Life and Witness), the Revd John Proctor (Training), the Revd Graham Cook (Communications and Editorial), the Revd Nanette Lewis Head (Equal Opportunities), Mrs. Daphne Beale (Inter-Faith Relations); the new Synod Representatives: Mrs. Janice Cockcroft, the Revd Sandra Lloydlangston (beginning a second term of membership), Mr. Graham Rolfe, the Revd Margaret Collins, Mr. Keith Webster and the Revd Geoffrey Townsend.

He also welcomed the Theological Reflector for this Mission Council, the Revd Dr. Noel Davies, the Revd Jean Black (Secretary for Continuing Ministerial Education), Mr. Stephen Summers (CRCW Development Worker) and Mrs. Jennifer Shaffery (Minutes Secretary).

Noting that the following people were acting as deputies for absent members the Moderator welcomed Ms Helen Ogilvy (deputising for the Revd Pamela Ward), Mr. Andrew Atkinson (deputising for Mrs. Roberta Wood), the Revd Raymond Singh (deputising for the Revd David Helyar), Ms Clare Hardwick (deputising for Ms Anita Wilkins), and Mrs. Ann Sheldon (deputising for Mrs. Erica Young).

### **99/46 Attendance**

There were 64 members present with 18 staff and others in attendance, the Revd Dr. Noel Davies (Theological Reflector) and Mrs. Jennifer Shaffery (Minutes Secretary).

Apologies for absence were received from the Revd John Arthur (Scottish Congregational Church), Ms Suzanne Adofo (CRCW Development Worker), Mrs. Lillian Covell (Mersey Synod), the Revd Michael Cruchley (Rural Consultant), the Revd David Helyar (Southern Synod), the Revd Marjorie Lewis-Cooper (Multi Racial, Multi Cultural Development Worker) the Revd Rachel Poolman (Thames North Synod) the Revd Dr. Colin Thompson (Doctrine Prayer and Worship), the Revd Pamela Ward (Northern Synod), Ms Anita Wilkins (FURY), Mrs. Roberta Wood (Northern Synod), Mrs. Patricia Young (Scottish Congregational Church) and Mrs. Erica Young (West Midlands Synod).

The General Secretary, the Revd Tony Burnham, was unwell and although he had hoped to be able to join Mission Council later was unable to do so and sent his apologies.

### **99/47 Minutes of Mission Council 19-21 March 1999**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19-21 March 1999, which had been circulated, were presented by the Clerk. They were approved and signed with the following corrections:

99/19 Miss Marjorie King for Mrs. Marjorie King

99/28 2nd paragraph Ms Welch for Mrs. Welch

99/40 3rd paragraph Mr. Simon Rowntree for the Revd Simon Rowntree.

#### 99/48 Matters Arising

99/22 Congregational Union of Scotland (CUS)/United Reformed Church Union

The Moderator reported that the CUS Assembly had voted unanimously for the union.

The Deputy General Secretary reported on the plans for the Unifying Assembly which would be on Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2000. Michael Taylor (former Director of Christian Aid) would preach. A group was working on the structure of the Synod of Scotland.

99/31 Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) Social Exclusion Project (Paper G)

The Revd Duncan Wilson, Convener of the Resource Planning Advisory Group, presented the paper which had been prepared by the Youth and Children's Work Committee. A researcher, Mr. Tim Barnes, was working on a feasibility study. It was hoped that work already developing for 13-19 year olds could be identified and sustained. Sources of funding within the United Reformed Church and outside were being considered.

Anxieties were expressed about the need for consultation with synods and district councils who needed time to plan and think the project through with care, and questions were asked about the possible scale of the project. Mr. Wilson assured Mission Council that once the feasibility study had been completed consultations would take place.

99/41 The Deputy General Secretary reported that the Revd David Jenkins (Convener, Pastoral Committee) had been appointed as the additional Convener to serve on the Special Committee to nominate a General Secretary.

#### 99/49 Agenda

The Deputy General Secretary proposed changes and additions to the printed agenda which were agreed.

He also drew the attention of the Council to new papers, noting that papers F, Q and R would not be discussed, but were for information only.

#### 99/50 Appointment of Tellers

The Deputy General Secretary proposed that the Revd David Jenkins and Mr. Tim Barnes be appointed as Tellers until the end of General Assembly 2000. Mission Council agreed.

#### 99/51 Resource Planning Advisory Group (RPAG) (Paper M)

Details of the current Deployment Policy had been given at the October 1998 meeting of Mission Council and it had been agreed that the figures generated by the application of the policy would be presented to Mission Council annually. Paper M had been produced in response to that request.

The Convener, the Revd Duncan Wilson, who presented this paper, emphasised that the figures in the column headed '2000 fair share of ministers' were the unadjusted figures produced by the formula previously explained to Mission Council. (98/85 'The number of members, the number of churches and the population in each province were taken into account, with these factors appropriately weighted. The formula of 3 parts membership, 2 parts churches and 1 part population ...')

There would be further consultations with Moderators and synod representatives and following this process adjusted figures would be reported to Mission Council.

On behalf of RPAG Mr. Wilson proposed that: Mission Council notes the figures presented in paper M in response to its request (98/85).

The Revd Malcolm Hanson moved and the Revd Glyn Jenkins seconded that the resolution be amended by the addition of the words "and encourages the continuing process of consultation on deployment.". Mr. Wilson indicated his willingness to accept this, Mission Council approved the amendment, and the substantive resolution was presented to Mission Council:

**Mission Council notes the figures presented in Paper M in response to its request (98/85) and encourages the continuing process of consultation on deployment.**

This was agreed.



#### **99/52 Task Group on the grouping of churches (Paper K)**

The Convener of the Group, the Revd Arnold Harrison, introduced this report. He explained that the Group, which had been set up by Mission Council in March 1998, had held seven meetings. Mr. Harrison paid tribute to the significant contribution made by the Revd Dr. Catherine Middleton who had been the first secretary of the Group. Sadly she had had to resign after the first two meetings because of her illness. Her clarity of thinking and theological focus had been profoundly valued.

It had been clear to the Group from the outset that there were many potential areas for consideration and it had been decided to limit the focus to some of the core issues and to leave others to one side for the time being. Those issues raised in paragraphs 2.11 and 2.12 of the report in particular could be set aside, with that in 2.12 being, possibly, referred to the Ecumenical Committee.

It was noted that there was an error in the numbering of the report – on page 16 paragraph 2.6 should be a new paragraph 3 with consequential renumbering.

Members of Mission Council met in groups to discuss questions arising out of the report and its recommendations. This was followed by a plenary session during which each group reported on its discussions.

The Deputy General Secretary suggested that Mission Council should proceed by considering whether groups should be fostered as the answer, an answer, or no answer at all, to the mission of the church. Considerable discussion followed, during which issues of ecumenical co-operation, training, local leadership and different models of group working (including that commonly used by the former Churches of Christ) were considered.

It was felt that the document before Mission Council needed revision. It would be helpful to have clear guidelines for the establishment of groups and some real stories with which members could identify.

It was agreed that the Task Group should be asked to revise the document in the light of the discussion and to report to the March meeting of Mission Council with a view to a report being presented to the General Assembly. The Clerk was asked to join the group for at least one meeting to advise on constitutional matters.

Mr. Harrison asked members to send him their stories of experiences, good or bad, of grouping of churches.

#### **99/53 Taiwan Earthquake Appeal**

The Moderator read extracts from a letter which had been received from Dr. Preman Niles, General Secretary of the Council for World Mission, and asked that details of the appeal be made know as widely as possible within the church.

*Copies of the letter were later made available for members of Mission Council.*

The Chaplain led Mission Council in worship and Mission Council adjourned.

#### **SATURDAY, 2<sup>nd</sup> OCTOBER 1999**

Mission Council joined in worship led by the Chaplain. The Moderator spoke about hope, drawing on his experience of being in South Africa.

#### **99/54 Task Group on Discipline (Paper L)**

In the absence of the Revd Julian Macro, the Convener of the Group, who sent his apologies, this report was presented by the Deputy General Secretary. The Task Group had been asked to consider how Mission Council might respond to Part 1 of the Assembly resolution on discipline (1996: Resolution 54 ). Questions and comments were invited.

The document was generally approved. However, concern was expressed at the list in the first paragraph of page 5, and that the paper lacked clear advice about dealing with extreme cases. It was agreed that the Deputy General

Secretary should report the discussion to the Convener of the Group and that they should be asked to revise the document accordingly.

#### **99/55 Island House Trust (Paper C)**

Mr. Graham Stacy, the Treasurer, introduced the Paper explaining the background to it. He then moved the following resolution:

**Mission Council confirms, on behalf of General Assembly, that control and ownership of Island House rests with the Thames North Synod.**

This was agreed.

#### **99/56 Basic Stipend for 2000 (Paper E)**

The Treasurer, Mr. Graham Stacy, referring to Paper E, proposed that:

**Mission Council sets the basic stipend for 2000 at £16,308.**

Mr. Stacy responded to some questions and comments and the resolution was carried.

#### **99/57 Report of the Mission Council Advisory Group (MCAG) (Paper I)**

The Deputy General Secretary presented the report, noting that paragraphs 1,2,3 and 9 were matters of report. A letter of thanks had been sent to Mrs. Sally Brooks and the search had begun to find a successor as Minutes Secretary. The Deputy General Secretary asked members of Mission Council to give this some thought and to let him have the names of any possible candidates.

Referring to paragraph 4 of the report, the Deputy General Secretary presented the recommendation of MCAG that oversight of the planning of the "Growing Up" mission programme (Resolution 15 of the 1999 General Assembly) should be made the responsibility of the General Secretary, reporting to the Mission Council through the MCAG meeting. It was noted that development of the programme would include the introduction of new elements and that consideration would need to be given to the inclusion of inter-faith relations. Mission Council accepted the recommendation.

Referring to paragraph 5 of the report, the Deputy General Secretary reported on some of the reactions in the church to the debate on Human Sexuality which had taken place at the General Assembly in 1999 and to the resolutions passed. There was clear evidence of division and pain within the church. Both the Deputy General Secretary and the Clerk confirmed that, should the statement contained in Resolution 34 be accepted by the General Assembly in 2000, it would not be a constitutional change, but an interpretative statement made by the General Assembly under its function 2(5)(x). It was agreed that a group should be appointed to prepare a response to the request for further work to be done on the consequences of accepting the statement in Resolution 34 of 1999 (Resolution 37 of 1999). Members of Mission Council met in groups to discuss the appropriate constitution of that group. In the subsequent plenary session, following reports from the groups, it was agreed that a new group should be formed which would include some members of the Core Group which had prepared the Human Sexuality Report 1999. A nominating committee was set up, to be convened by the Revd Glyn Jenkins (Convener of the Assembly Nominations Committee) and comprising one representative of each synod. Members of Mission Council were asked to suggest names to Mr. Jenkins, and the committee was asked to report to a later session of the meeting.

*The nominating committee reported on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> October. See Minute 99/68.*

In answer to a question the Deputy General Secretary reported that MCAG was considering the consequences should the General Assembly in 2000 not accept the statement contained in Resolution 34 of 1999.

*The remainder of Paper I was considered later. See Minutes 99/65 and 99/68.*

#### **99/58 The Future of the Advisory Group on Grants and Loans (AGOGAL) (Paper H)**

The Convener, Mr. Simon Rowntree, presented the report to Mission Council and answered questions.



Each part of the paper was discussed and then Mission Council was asked to make a decision about the future membership, remit and status of the committee. During the discussion reference was made to the contents of Paper F (the report of AGOGAL for the period August 1997 – July 1999), and some detailed questions about that were answered.

Mission Council agreed that the proposals contained in Paper H would take the work forward in the right direction, and indicated that of the three options suggested as to the future status of the committee, the first - to retain the identity at present of 'an advisory group of Mission Council' was preferred. AGOGAL would do further work on the matter and report to a future meeting of Mission Council.

#### **99/59 Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia (Paper O)**

The Deputy General Secretary presented the paper to Mission Council and moved the following resolution:

**In accordance with the powers devolved upon it by the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church and acting on its behalf, Mission Council resolves as follows:**

- 1. to confirm that the United Reformed Church does not claim any right or authority to exercise control over any Malaysian property belonging to Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia and**
- 2. to ratify the actions taken by Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia with regard to the transfer of properties in Malaysia under its control insofar as such ratification is legally necessary and**
- 3. to confirm that from this moment the United Reformed Church relinquishes permanently to Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia all such control and authority as may be vested in it by any enactment or deed in relation to any such Malaysian property so that in future Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia shall be able to act without reference to the United Reformed Church and**
- 4. to authorise the officers of General Assembly to give any future consents or confirmations which may be required in relation to the property and assets of Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia.**

This was agreed.

#### **99/60 Appointment of Director (Paper P)**

The Deputy General Secretary explained the situation to Mission Council and moved the following resolution which was formally approved.

**Mission Council, under authority delegated by the General Assembly (1994 resolution 11) in exercise of the power conferred on the General Assembly by section 7 (2) of the United Reformed Church Act 1972 appoints Mr. Michael Gabb as a director of the Congregational Union of Gloucestershire and Herefordshire Inc.**

#### **99/61 Report on Oversight Ministries (Paper A)**

The Deputy General Secretary introduced the paper noting that this was the fourth document on that subject which had been produced. District councils and synods had been asked to comment on the third, and the responses received were summarised in paragraphs 12 – 14 of the paper.

The Revd Roberta Rominger spoke about pastoral consultants in Thames North and the Revd Elizabeth Caswell spoke about the work of district ministers in the Eastern Synod area. Members of Mission Council met in groups to consider the report and the questions posed on its first page. The Mission Council reconvened in plenary session and the groups reported.

There was considerable discussion concerning the content of the paper and the process which had been followed. It was agreed that the terminology used in the document was not clear and that 'specialist' ministry was confused with 'oversight' ministry. It was felt to be very important that Mission Council should not lose sight of the ecumenical implications and possibilities of Oversight Ministry.

It was agreed that the paper on the subject which had been presented to Mission Council in March 1997 should be circulated to members, and that at the January or March meeting Council would decide how to proceed with the matter.

*Note: The members of the nominating committee appointed in Minute 99/57 were not present for the following items of business.*

#### **99/62 Assembly Arrangements Committee**

The report of the Assembly Arrangements Committee was presented by the Convener, the Revd Alasdair Pratt. Mr. Pratt reported that the Committee would present a major report on future patterns of General Assembly to the March meeting of Mission Council.

The Committee had considered issues related to the timing and presidency of Holy Communion at General Assembly. Noting that future annual meetings of General Assembly would be residential and that from 2002 they would be held over a weekend it was proposed that in 2000 and from 2002 onwards when Assembly celebrated Holy Communion, on the Sunday morning, it should normally be the practice that the new Moderator (or his or her Chaplain) would preside and the retiring Moderator would preach. In the year 2001 the residential Assembly would run from Monday to Friday and Holy Communion would be celebrated during the opening session, with the retiring Moderator presiding and preaching.

Mission Council accepted these proposals.

#### **99/63 Job descriptions: General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary (Paper B)**

The Clerk introduced this item explaining that these papers were offered to Mission Council for a second time as a matter of courtesy. Following the first meeting of the special committee to nominate a General Secretary a sub-committee had updated the job descriptions. They would be presented to the whole committee at its next meeting. Mission Council asked that consideration be given to inclusion of the fact that the General Secretary was a member of the United Reformed Church Trust and that he or she had responsibilities under the Ministerial Disciplinary Process. This would be considered by the committee.

#### **99/64 Staffing Advisory Group (Paper D)**

This report was presented to Mission Council by the convener, Dr. Donald South. After some discussion the following recommendations were put to Mission Council:

**that the post of Editor of REFORM and Media Officer be continued for a further term of five years from July 1st 2000 or until the post holder appointed for the period resigns, whichever is the sooner;**

**that the post of Children's Advocate be continued for a further term of five years from April 1st 2000 or until the post holder appointed for the period resigns, whichever is the sooner.**

Mission Council accepted these recommendations.

It was noted that there was no Person Specification for the post of Children's Advocate; this would be produced before the review of the current post-holder was undertaken.

#### **99/65 Mission Council Advisory Group (MCAG) (Paper D) *Continued from Minute 99/57***

The Deputy General Secretary referred to paragraph 6 of the report which concerned the request of the General Assembly that Mission Council should consider the recommendations of the Working Group on the authority of the General Assembly and other councils of the Church (Resolution 39(ii) of 1999). Mr. Waller introduced the recommendation from MCAG that a task group be appointed for that purpose, consisting of seven persons, with a report to be made in 2001, first to Mission Council in March and then to the Assembly in July. MCAG further recommended that the Nominations Committee should be asked to appoint the group at its next meeting. Following clarification that in this case the Nominations Committee would be working on behalf of the Mission Council, not the General Assembly, and that in no way should this be taken as a precedent, Mission Council agreed to adopt the recommendations. Members of Mission Council were requested to suggest names to the Secretary of the Nominations Committee.



Referring to paragraph 7 of the report, the Deputy General Secretary read a draft resolution. There was some discussion following which Mr. Waller was asked to prepare a revised draft for consideration at a later session.

*This matter was considered further on Sunday, October 3rd. See Minute 99/68.*

Referring to paragraph 8 of the report, the Deputy General Secretary presented the recommendation of MCAG that the pastoral group set up under Resolution 41 of the 1997 General Assembly to be available to anyone who felt in need of particular care as a result of the human sexuality debate should continue in being at least until October 2000. This was agreed and thanks were expressed to the members of the group. It was noted that contact with the group could be made through the General Secretary or Deputy General Secretary.

*The nominating committee appointed under Minute 99/57, having completed their work, joined the meeting.*

The Moderator adjourned the meeting and worship was led by the Chaplain.

### **SUNDAY, 3<sup>rd</sup> OCTOBER 1999**

Mission Council met for worship which included the Sacrament of Holy Communion and was led by the Moderator and the Chaplain

#### **99/66 Training Committee (Paper N)**

The Convener, the Revd John Proctor, reported on the consequences of the decision by General Assembly to retain four centres for initial ministerial training, and then, referring to Paper N, spoke about the particular issues relating to Mansfield College.

Mission Council noted that the Training Committee was doing all in its power to fulfil the decision of the Assembly to continue using Mansfield College for initial ministerial training.

It was also noted with great sadness that the Revd Dr. Catherine Middleton had not been able to continue her work as Acting Director of Ordination Training due to the progress of her cancer. There was a sense of deep admiration and gratitude for all that she had achieved in her work at Mansfield College both academically and personally.

Mission Council formally approved the work of the Training Committee in this matter.

Mr. Proctor brought a second matter to Mission Council concerning Lay Training Programmes.

The heavy burden now being placed on Revd David A.L. Jenkins (non-stipendiary minister) in his work co-ordinating Lay Training Programmes was recognised. He was responsible for nearly 200 students.

The Training Committee asked for permission to advertise a half-time post for the Development and Co-ordination of Additional Lay Training Courses, to run from Spring 2000. This would not necessarily be a London based appointment. There was already a twelve month service contract in place for a half-time Administrator. Finance had been approved previously.

Mission Council agreed that the Training Committee should proceed with this proposal.

#### **99/67 Pilgrim 2000**

The Revd Peter Brain, Secretary for Church and Society, spoke about an opportunity for members of the United Reformed Church to celebrate the Millennium in the Holy Land. It was hoped that there would be participants from every synod and that 10% of them would be young people.

The Pilgrimage Programme, set out in the publicity brochure, would begin on 22<sup>nd</sup> February and end on 2<sup>nd</sup> March. It would include receptions from church representatives and visits to traditional places, as well as visits to projects supported by the churches. There were places available and members of Mission Council were urged to let people know about this pilgrimage. Those interested should contact the Deputy General Secretary.

**99/68 Mission Council Advisory Group (MCAG) (Paper I) Continued from Minute 99/65**

The Revd Glyn Jenkins reported that the nominating committee had concluded that seven people would be the right number to undertake the work in relation to General Assembly Resolution 37 of 1999. The following were proposed.

Revd Malcolm Hanson (Core Group)

Mrs. Val Morrison (Core Group)

Revd John Reardon (Convener)

Revd Ken Chippindale

Mr. John Ellis

Mrs. Barbara Martin

Mrs. Helen Mee (Congregational Church of Scotland)

(The General Secretary to act as secretary to the group.)

A further list of names of people who could be called upon if any of the above were unable to serve had been prepared, and the Deputy General Secretary was given responsibility for drawing on this as necessary. Mission Council agreed that those named be asked to serve. It was agreed that the group should report to Mission Council in March 2000 with an Interim Report in January, and that they should consult with the Clerk and the Legal Advisor concerning possible constitutional issues.

Referring again to Paragraph 7 of the report of MCAG (Paper I), the Deputy General Secretary proposed a revised resolution for Mission Council's approval:

**Mission Council discharges the core group and working groups on human sexuality, recording its deep gratitude for the task that has been completed on behalf of the whole church. It recognises that the work has been done with seriousness and integrity, and that it has involved considerable pain. The result has been widely appreciated – even by those who do not accept the conclusion.**

This was carried.

The Deputy General Secretary was asked to write to all members of the group including these words of thank

**99/69 Nominations Committee (Paper D)**

The report of the Nominations Committee was presented by the Convener, the Revd Glyn Jenkins.

It was noted that the following nominations would come before the General Assembly in 2000 for appointment:

Secretary, Doctrine, Prayer and Worship: Ms Kirsty Thorpe;

Convener, Life and Witness – Stewardship Sub-Committee: Mr. Keith Webster;

Secretary, Inter-Faith Relations: Revd Sally Thomas.

The Convener also brought the names of two YCWT Officer re-appointments for ratification:

Mr. Wallie Warmington (West Midlands) until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2004 and

Mr. Ivan Andrews (South Western) until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2004.

This was agreed.

**99/70 The Ministerial Disciplinary Process**

The Deputy General Secretary reported that that part of the Ministerial Disciplinary Process which would be used in the case of a referral by the General Assembly had been reviewed. It had been discovered that the implementation of certain provisions of Paragraph B.9 would result in any minister who was subject to this procedure being less favourably treated than ministers who were referred by a district council. In order to be prepared should any such case arise, the Legal Advisor recommended that the Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, should make amendments to Paragraph B.9. The Clerk confirmed that, since this paragraph was in Part II (the Rules of Procedure) of the Ministerial Disciplinary Process, it was not subject to the constitutional change procedure. It was within the competence of the Mission Council to make such a change if it was satisfied that it would not be appropriate to wait for the next meeting of the General Assembly. The Legal Advisor explained the proposed amendment fully, and answered questions from members of Mission Council. In particular, in response to a query about the legality of changing conditions of employment without the knowledge of employees, the Legal Advisor explained that ministers were not employees but holders of an office. The following resolution was then put to the Mission Council:



**Acting on behalf of the General Assembly, Mission Council resolves that the existing Paragraph B.9 of Part II of the Process for Ministerial Discipline (the Section O Process) be replaced in its entirety by the following Paragraph B.9:**

**B.9.1**

**To enable them properly to carry out their respective functions under Paragraphs 2(4)(xv) and 2(5)(xxiii) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church, every Synod and the General Assembly shall act through a group of three persons ("the Mandated Group") which shall have mandated authority to act on behalf of the Synod or the General Assembly as the case may be in every matter requiring consideration under those respective functions.**

**B.9.2**

**Any Mandated Group required to act on behalf of a Synod in a particular case shall be appointed by the Synod Moderator and the Synod Clerk (or their duly appointed deputies) from the Provincial Panel for that Synod.**

**B.9.3**

**Any Mandated Group required to act on behalf of the General Assembly in a particular case shall be appointed by the Deputy General Secretary (or, in his/her absence or if for any other reason he/she is unable to act, by another officer of General Assembly not otherwise involved in the Section O Process) from the members of the Provincial Panels other than that of the Synod out of which the case arises.**

**B.9.4**

**Paragraphs B.2, B.4, B.5, B.6, B.7 and B.8 shall apply to cases falling within Paragraph B.9, but with the following changes:**

**In Paragraph B.5 the word 'Standing' shall not apply and, in the case of a Mandated Group appointed in the name of General Assembly, the words 'Deputy General Secretary' shall replace the words 'Provincial Moderator'.**

**In Paragraph B.6.1, in the case of a Mandated Group appointed in the name of General Assembly the words 'in consultation with the Provincial Moderator' shall not apply.**

**In Paragraph B.7.1 the words 'the Minister concerned' shall replace the words 'a Minister under the oversight of the District Council', and the second reference to 'the District Council' shall be replaced by a reference to 'the Synod' or 'General Assembly' as the case may be.**

**In Paragraph B.8 the first reference to 'the District Council' shall be replaced by a reference to the Synod or General Assembly (or Mission Council on its behalf) as the case may be and the appointment of the different Mandated Group shall be made by repeating the procedure set out in Paragraph B.9.2 or B.9.3 as the case may be.**

Mission Council was satisfied that the changes were necessary to secure justice and equality of treatment for all ministers, and the resolution was carried unanimously. The revision would appear in the next edition of The Manual.

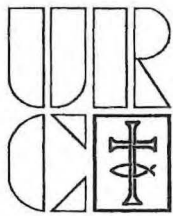
*It should be noted that references to provinces still exist in Part II of the Section O Process. Resolutions to make appropriate amendments to the whole of Part II will be brought before the General Assembly in 2000.*

Special thanks were expressed to Mr. Hartley Oldham (Legal Advisor), the Revd Keith Forecast and the Clerk for the work done on this matter.

**99/71 Closing Remarks**

The Moderator expressed thanks to all, noting especially the Minutes Secretary who had undertaken the task at short notice, and the Deputy General Secretary, particularly in the light of the fact that his work load had been increased because of the unavoidable absence of the General Secretary.

Closing Worship was led by the Chaplain.

**MISSION COUNCIL***1 - 3 October 1999***PAPERS**

<b>A</b>	yellow	OVERSIGHT MINISTRIES
<b>B</b>	blue	JOB DESCRIPTIONS - GS and DGS
<b>C</b>	pink	ISLAND HOUSE
<b>D</b>	lilac	NOMINATIONS
<b>E</b>	gold	LEVEL OF BASIC STIPEND
<b>F</b>	salmon	AGOGAL
<b>G</b>	bright green	DfEE
<b>H</b>	cream	AGOGAL FUTURE
<b>I</b>	yellow	MCAG
<b>J</b>	blue	STAFFING ADVISORY GROUP
<b>K</b>	pink	TASK GROUP ON THE GROUPING OF CHURCHES
<b>L</b>	lilac	TASK GROUP ON THE DISCIPLINE OF ALL MEMBERS
<b>M</b>	gold	RESOURCE PLANNING ADVISORY GROUP
<b>N</b>	salmon	MANSFIELD COLLEGE, OXFORD
<b>O</b>	bright green	GEREJA PRESBYTERIAN MALAYSIA
<b>P</b>	bright green	APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR
<b>Q</b>	yellow	EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES
<b>R</b>	blue	URC/METHODIST RURAL OFFICER/ARTHUR RANK CONSULTANT
	pink	
	lilac	
	gold	





**MISSION COUNCIL**  
***1 - 3 October 1999***

**A**

The attached paper on Oversight Ministries will be presented to Mission Council. As will be gathered from paragraph 12, this matter has been on the agenda of some previous meetings.

The presentation will include a description of the work of district ministers and of the Thames North pastoral consultants.

Some time will be spent in a group discussion. Whilst it is possible to discuss any part of the paper, groups are encouraged to look specifically at the point being made in paragraphs 15 and 16.

**Is it true that there is a significant increase in personal oversight ministries? If so, why do you think it has happened? Should it be encouraged, structured?**

**Is it true that some or all of the councils of the church are too weak for the responsibilities laid on them? If so, are there positive examples of how weakness can be overcome?**

**Does your discussion suggest any changes that would make the United Reformed Church more effective in its mission?**

## Oversight Ministries

1. Oversight ministry has been a key element in the life of the Christian community from the earliest times. In Acts 6: 1-6 we read how the apostles developed a system of oversight in which they shared responsibility with the deacons. In Acts 15 the Council of Jerusalem takes on a major oversight role and makes a decision which is seen to apply to all the churches. In Ephesians 4: 11-16 the purpose of a variety of oversight ministries is set out in a concise form. There are numerous examples in Acts and Paul's letters of the oversight ministry which he and others exercised.
2. The Ephesians passage makes clear that this is not only a matter of good organisation: the authority for oversight ministry comes from Christ himself (Ephesians 4: 11a). It can be argued that a large part of the early teaching ministry of Jesus was directed to preparing the disciples for oversight ministry after his death.
3. Using the Ephesians model, the task of oversight ministry might be summarised as: the teaching, proclaiming and growth in understanding of the faith; development in Christian life; the equipment of people for their ministry; the maintenance of a healthy and vibrant Christian fellowship in which people help and support one another. All this has the object of bringing glory to God and service to the world.
4. That extremely brief biblical background is followed by an even briefer historical one. The New Testament pattern of oversight is obviously a mixture of the conciliar and the personal, with the personal perhaps being more obvious. The early centuries of the church's life might be depicted in a similar way although the "two track" approach to oversight became ever more open to corruption as the church became a political and civil power in its own right. It is arguable that the English and Scottish Reformations would not have taken the shape they did if political considerations had not overwhelmed ecclesiastical ones.
5. The point is made, not to provoke historical discussion, but to emphasise that our present statements on oversight have their origin in the Reformation in the two nations and the impact of the one on the other. Of course they also have an origin in the Welsh Reformation, where initially the independence of the local church was associated with a Presbyterian form of government within that church. Later, both English Congregationalism and Methodism had an influence. We lay emphasis on conciliar leadership because we have seen how corrupt personal leadership can be. It did not seem to matter whether the personal leader was a monarch, a pope, a bishop or a priest. "All power corrupts".



6. That quotation from Lord Acton serves as a reminder that to speak of oversight, even of the most pastoral kind, is to engage in questions of power. In the struggles of the Reformation that was openly recognised: in these days we are considerably more reticent. We shall not be open in our discussion of oversight ministry unless power is recognised and named. Even though power corrupts, it is still subject to the saving power of Jesus Christ. The power of the Holy Spirit is to be welcomed and celebrated in the life of the church.
7. Also from historical experience some of us believe that the more distant councils are particularly subject to corruption, whether we think of parliaments or assemblies. So part of our tradition is to trust only the most local of councils with the task of oversight. However, another part of our tradition recognises that the local can be subject to faction, inward-looking, and dominance by the powerful individual. Hence in the United Reformed Church the authority for oversight is shared between the councils in a way we see to be balanced and appropriate.
8. The United Reformed Church is a conciliar church by conviction. Yet we admit the value of personal oversight by recognising a small number of oversight ministries and in particular the oversight of moderators of synods. However, this is not a separate order of ministry and it is a ministry shared with others in council, whether district council or synod.  
  
made a point of recognising and measuring the contribution of leading individuals to the well-being of the church. "Personal oversight!" may not have been acceptable language in parts of our tradition but that is almost certainly what such individuals gave - to the glory of God.
10. The question of who speaks for, and represents, the church is one of which the contemporary church links to the question of oversight. It does not appear in the Ephesians model! However, it is important to know who can say - to the media, to sister churches, to conflicting groups in a church - "it is the decision of the Holy Spirit, and our decision" (Acts 15:28a). Our tradition is that councils can make this assertion: the pressures of modern life are such that we suffer if such authority is not something given to individuals. However, societal influences may make us reluctant to give this authority to anyone, council or individual.
11. The current state of the church in Britain is another factor in this discussion. The analysis in "Growing Up" may be summarised as indicating that the United Reformed Church, in common with others, is suffering the effects of long-term weakness and decline. At the same time it is being called, and is responding, to engage in the Five Marks of Mission. If these are difficult times, they are also full of potential. So oversight of the right sort is very important. What is the right sort?

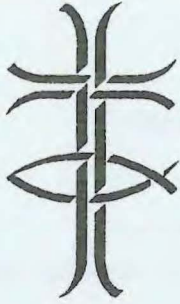


12. The synods were asked to reflect with their district councils on the oversight they share with their moderators. Although the request was made almost 18 months ago, at the date of writing only four had responded. Several others indicated that this was not a subject for which people had any enthusiasm.
13. However, the four who have replied (Mersey, West Midlands Eastern and Thames North) have engaged in the process with enthusiasm and have come up with some valuable insights.
14. It has to be said that many of those who participated came up with oft-repeated comments on the impossible size of a moderator's task or with the statement that moderators are too busy. Yet within the reports the obvious answer to the problem also appeared. The structures of the United Reformed Church are sufficiently flexible to allow the oversight ministry of moderators to be shared with others. Personal assistants, pastoral aides, district ministers, ecumenical officers are some of those who are already colleagues with moderators in oversight ministry. It almost seems as if people sometimes need reassuring that it is all right to use flexibility to meet the needs of a situation.
15. Mission Council is invited to reflect on a deeper issue. **There has been a perceptible, locally developed increase in personal oversight ministries in the United Reformed Church.** There are twelve "district ministers" and one synod has four "pastoral consultants" working with its moderator. Synods and district councils have appointed training officers and mission enablers. People who have roles within our conciliar structures are sometimes being encouraged to develop a personal role as well. This applies, say, to some synod clerks, conveners of district pastoral committees, and others.
16. **The question to be asked is whether this is a reaction to a weakening of the effectiveness of the councils of the church.** The Thames North report in particular instances:
  - Poor attendance at Church Meetings which may render them ineffective in carrying out many of their functions.
  - Difficulty in getting people to represent their churches at district council and synod meetings. This sometimes produces councils not willing or able to accept any significant oversight responsibility.
  - A perception of wider councils as irrelevant and boring which greatly affects interest in communication in either direction.
  - A perception of wider councils as slow and inefficient, leading to "entrepreneurial" churches and ministers ignoring or bypassing them.
  - Weakness in councils resulting from ever-smaller local churches being asked to be represented on an ever-increasing number of councils and other bodies. (The growth in groups, clusters, and areas of ministry have been mentioned.)



- A tendency in some people to want the church to operate hierarchically despite its ecclesiology. (This may result from many members and possibly some ministers not being committed to - or even aware of - the particular ecclesiology of the United Reformed Church).
17. It may be that all this points to the fact that our concern should be directed more at the oversight of councils and less at the oversight of individuals. A conciliar church needs effective councils. It also needs effective leadership. A parody of our present situation is that our councils are not able to be effective and that therefore those with personal oversight are so burdened with extra responsibilities that they cannot give prophetic leadership. If there is any truth in the parody, we need to decide what to do about it.
  18. The Thames North analysis does make the point that efficiency is not the only yardstick by which to judge a council's effectiveness. In the Christian community relationships have value in themselves, there is a richness in pooled wisdom and experience, and sometimes the delay in waiting for a meeting can save us from the consequences of a hasty and inadequately considered proposal.

DRAFT



**MISSION COUNCIL**  
*1 - 3 October 1999*

**B**

**GENERAL SECRETARY**

**Job description**

*Note: This job description has been drawn up in the expectation that responsibilities will be shared with a Deputy General Secretary. It should therefore be read in conjunction with the job description for the Deputy General Secretary.*

The General Secretary is the senior full-time officer of the General Assembly and is responsible to the Assembly, and therefore has a broad responsibility for the well being of the church, its unity, its public witness and its relation with other churches. The Assembly expects that, as a minister of the church, the General Secretary will contribute to the theological and pastoral leadership of the church, helping it to reflect on its calling and character.

The major areas of responsibility are set out below. Many of the tasks required to fulfil these responsibilities will be shared with or delegated to others. In particular the General Secretary will work with the Deputy General Secretary to identify how their different gifts and experience can best be used in furthering these responsibilities.

**1. GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

The General Secretary is responsible for ensuring that all business is properly prepared for the Assembly, that members are given the information they need, that facilities are adequate, that the records are properly kept and that the decisions of the Assembly are reported to the church and carried through by the appropriate bodies. The General Secretary is a member of the Assembly Arrangements Committee and in these tasks is assisted by the Secretary of that Committee.

The General Secretary will relate closely to the Moderator of General Assembly, giving support and guidance as appropriate. The General Secretary also relates closely to the Clerk of General Assembly.

**2. MISSION COUNCIL**

The General Secretary is a member of Mission Council and its Advisory Group, and deputises as necessary for the Deputy General Secretary in the latter's responsibilities to these bodies.



### 3. STAFF CO-ORDINATION

- i) The General Secretary has a responsibility for enabling the Assembly-appointed staff of the church to work as a team.
- ii) The General Secretary has a responsibility within the team for the co-ordination and implementation of policy and strategy as agreed by the General Assembly.
- iii) The General Secretary has a pastoral responsibility for the well being of all who work on the staff at United Reformed Church House, and will seek to encourage their corporate spiritual life.
- iv) The General Secretary is responsible for the appointment, oversight and termination of service of staff other than those appointed by General Assembly.
- v) The General Secretary is responsible for the oversight of staff development.

### 4. SYNOD MODERATORS

The General Secretary will be expected to represent the United Reformed Church on a number of national and international ecumenical bodies and to work closely with the Secretary for Ecumenical Relations on matters relating to sister churches and the UK ecumenical instruments. The General Secretary is expected to develop relationships with senior officers of other churches and to be alert to opportunities for collaborative work.

### 6. PUBLIC RELATIONS

The General Secretary may be called upon to speak publicly on behalf of the church, in consultation with the Moderator of General Assembly and with the Press Officer, and with others as necessary.

### 7. VISITS

The General Secretary is encouraged to accept, as may be appropriate and practicable, invitations from local churches, district councils, synods and others.

### 8. ADMINISTRATION

The General Secretary will

- oversee the effective administration of the church's daily business;
- be the budget holder for the Central Secretariat;
- service review and nomination groups for synod moderators;



- act as consultant to review and nomination groups for Assembly-appointed staff;
- ensure personal and staff compliance with health and safety at work provisions;
- oversee the management of United Reformed Church House.

In some of these tasks, the General Secretary is assisted by the Office and Personnel Manager who cares for the technical aspects of management. There are also staff groups to advise on office systems.

## 9. COMMITTEES

The General Secretary is an ex-officio member of the standing committees of Assembly. It is recognised that attendance at all of them is impossible. However, attendance at Assembly Arrangements, Ecumenical and Nominations committees, and other committees or task groups working on major policy proposals is advisable.

## 10 PERSONAL

- i) The General Secretary will participate in the Church House staff development programme by means of an annual meeting conducted by the Assembly Moderator and Moderator-Elect.
- ii) The General Secretary is a member of the Mission Council Advisory Group which may be regarded as a support group, but the General Secretary may seek other forms of support.
- iii) The General Secretary will be encouraged to develop any particular interests or gifts to bring a 'personal dimension' to the period of office.
- iv) The General Secretary will be expected to remain open to new styles of work and new responsibilities as required by the decisions of the General Assembly or the Mission Council.

## **DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY**

### **Job description**

*Note: This job description should be read in conjunction with the job description for the General Secretary. This is, however, only a provisional draft, intended to complement that job description.*

The Deputy General Secretary will work in collaboration with the General Secretary, deputising during the latter's absence, assisting at other times and together making provision for the oversight, support and pastoral care of Assembly appointed staff. The Deputy General Secretary will, in addition, have particular responsibilities in relation to the Mission Council and the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee. The Deputy General Secretary is accountable to the General Secretary and the General Assembly.

#### **1. MAIN TASKS**

The Deputy General Secretary will be expected

- i) to work closely with the General Secretary in order to share responsibilities by agreement and to be able to carry out all the duties in the absence of the General Secretary from the office;
- ii) to share with the General Secretary in the oversight and support of Assembly appointed staff and in the provision of their pastoral care;
- iii) to stand in for the General Secretary in ex officio attendance at committees of the Assembly;
- iv) to serve as the staff link person with specific committees and groups as required (currently with Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee).

#### **3. MISSION COUNCIL**

The Deputy General Secretary is a member of Mission Council and its Advisory Group and is responsible for the detailed preparation and implementation of their business. The Deputy General Secretary will share responsibility for other advisory committees associated with Mission Council

#### **4. ASSEMBLY PASTORAL COMMITTEE**

The Deputy General Secretary will be the Secretary of the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee. This may require interviews with ministers, and consultation about their future service. It will entail receiving notification of pastoral problems referred by synod moderators or district councils and for introducing material to the Committee, with appropriate follow-up. This work will be shared with the Convener and other members of that committee, and is confidential.



## 8. VISITS

The Deputy General Secretary is encouraged to accept, as may be appropriate and practicable, invitations from local churches, district councils, synods and others.

## 5. ADMINISTRATION

The Deputy General Secretary will

- be the budget holder for Mission Council and Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee;
  - ensure personal and support staff compliance with health and safety at work provisions.

## 6. PERSONAL

- i) The Deputy General Secretary will participate in the Church House staff development programme by means of an annual meeting conducted by the Assembly Moderator and Moderator-Elect.
- ii) The Deputy General Secretary is a member of the Mission Council Advisory Group which may be regarded as a support group, but the Deputy General Secretary may seek other forms of support.

*Assembly for the Mission Council*

31.8.99  
DGS Job spec 899e



**DRAFT**

## **GENERAL SECRETARY**

### **Person Profile**

The qualities and skills sought in the General Secretary will include -

- Christian commitment expressed in a lively faith coupled with an enthusiasm for personal discipleship
- wide experience and proven ability in ministry
- leadership qualities, as an enabler with vision and realism
- theological competence
- ability to work collaboratively and in committees and councils
- ability as a speaker and preacher
- gifts of management and administration, including the ability to handle a heavy workload
- pastoral and listening skills, including the ability to manage people and situations
- skills in writing, both analytically and inspirationally
- experience in handling conflict and change creatively
- understanding of and respect for the diversity of the United Reformed Church
- social and political awareness
- ability to handle stress

Ideally, the person appointed will have some awareness and experience in the following areas, or will be willing to develop them -

- ecumenical relations, locally, nationally and internationally
- relations with and work in the media
- information technology

The person appointed will have a deep personal faith, patience, adaptability, resilience and a good sense of humour.

31.8.99  
Person spec 899b



MISSION COUNCIL  
*1 - 3 October 1999*

C

**ISLAND HOUSE St. PAUL'S URC CUBITT TOWN  
(10E32)**

RESOLUTION

**Mission Council confirms, on behalf of General Assembly,  
that control and ownership of Island House rests with the  
Thames North Synod**

BACKGROUND

The East London Settlement and Training Centre of the Presbyterian Church of England formerly occupied Poplar House.

The Declaration of Trust dated 31.1.1942 states inter alia "The Management and Control of the premises shall be vested in the Committee of the said Presbyterian Settlement in whom for the time being the management of the said Settlement shall be vested to the intent that the Committee may attend to or provide or arrange for the upkeep, insurance, maintenance and repair of the premises" and also

"The power of appointing a new Trustee or new Trustees of these presents shall be vested in the said Committee. A Corporation aggregate shall be qualified to be appointed and may act as a Trustee or as the sole Trustee".

In 1958 the General Assembly of the P.C. of E. agreed that the whole scheme be under the care of General Assembly.

In 1959, it was reported to General Assembly that the Settlement Committee had handed over its material assets to Assembly. According to a later letter in our hands a ceremony took place at which the deeds of Poplar House were handed over to the Moderator of Assembly.

During the latter part of the 1960's a decision was reached to sell Poplar House and various other properties in East London and purchase a new centre more suitable and better equipped for the work to be undertaken.



In 1969 it was reported to General Assembly that the sale of Poplar House required the consent of

- a. The Home Church Committee of Assembly
- b. The Presbyterian Church of England Trust
- c. The Presbytery of London (North)

All had given their consent and "as the whole idea represents a departure from the original intention" Assembly was asked to back the implementation of the new scheme in full and passed the following resolution.

"Assembly notes with interest the outline of policy for the redevelopment of the East London Scheme, and approves the application for this purpose of the proceeds of the sale of Poplar House".

Poplar House was sold in February 1970 and the site of the future Island House purchased in June the same year.

There were many delays and problems with regard to the building works and the new building was not occupied until about 1972.

Revd Arthur Macarthur wrote on 6.2.1975 "My view of the situation now is that when the East London Committee goes out of existence its assets both free and designated should be handed over to the Province when it takes over responsibility for the future work at Island House"

In 1985 a Sharing Agreement was entered into with the Methodists. This was completed by URC Trust, Thames North Province and the Methodists.

It is with this background that the agreement of Mission Council to place the situation beyond doubt is sought.



**MISSION COUNCIL**  
*1 - 3 October 1999*

**D**

**Nominations Committee - report to Mission Council October 99**

**1. Staff Review Groups.**

These will be convened as follows:

Editor: Reform - Revd Arnold Harrison

Children's Advocate - Mrs Wilma Frew

**2. Synod Moderators Review Groups**

These will be convened in September 2000 as follows:

Mersey - Mr Brian Evans

South Western - Mrs Wilma Frew

Southern - Revd Sandra Lloydlangston

Wales - Revd Christopher White

**3. Secretaries/Conveners of Assembly Committees**

The following have accepted nomination for appointment at General Assembly 2000

Secretary: Doctrine, Prayer and Worship: Ms Kirsty Thorpe  
*vice* Revd Terry Hinks

Convener: Life and Witness - Stewardship Sub-Committee: Mr Keith Webster  
*vice* Revd Julian Macro

We were seeking a nomination for Secretary: Inter-Faith Relations *vice* Revd Brenda Willis; but have just been advised that a meeting between the Officers of the Committee and Church House Staff is to be held on Wednesday 29th September, which may have a proposal to bring to Mission Council.

**4. Synod Appointments**

We have been asked to bring the following to Mission Council for ratification.

YCWT Officer Re-appointments

Mr Wallie Warmington [West Midlands] until 31st March 2004

Mr Ivan Andrews [South Western] until 31st December 2004

Mr Colin Capewell [Wales] until 31st July 2001





MISSION COUNCIL  
*1 - 3 October 1999*

E

**Stipend level for 2000.**

**RESOLUTION.**

**Mission Council sets the basic stipend for 2000 at £\_\_\_\_\_.**

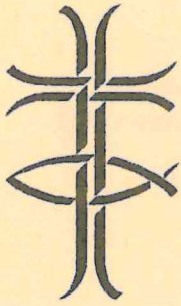
The current basic ministerial stipend is £15,600 per annum

Assembly 1999 received the report of the Maintenance of the Ministry sub-committee, concerning (inter alia) ministerial stipends, and endorsed the programme set out in it.

This programme included a report that the MoM sub-committee considers that the National Average Earnings (NAE) index is the most appropriate index to use for the annual increase in stipend, if we are to avoid falling out of line with remuneration levels in the country as a whole. (Reports to Assembly 1999 page 109, para 2.7)

The Maintenance of the Ministry sub-committee recommends to Mission Council that the basic stipend for 2000 be £15,600 increased by the NAE index published in September 1999 compared with the NAE index for the previous year.

At the time of writing this paper, the NAE index to be published in September is not available, but it is expected that by the time of Mission Council it will have been, and a verbal report will be made at Mission Council.



MISSION COUNCIL  
*1 - 3 October 1999*

F

FOR INFORMATION

ADVISORY GROUP ON GRANTS AND LOANS (AGOGAL)

REPORT FOR PERIOD AUGUST 1997 - JULY 1999

Introduction

I apologise that Mission Council has not had a report from AGOGAL for two years. This is largely due to changes in the secretarial support for the Group. David Lane succeeded Roger Whitehead in 1998, but regrettably had to resign because of ill health in June 1999. During his last six months in office, David was unable to do much, and so certain matters, including this report, did not get done.

Membership

Apart from its Convener and Secretary, AGOGAL's membership is made up of staff members. The current membership is:

Convener (since March 1996): Simon Rowntree (member of Mission Council)  
Secretary: Vacant  
Church and Society: Rev Peter Brain  
Life and Witness: Rev John Steele  
Ecumenical: Rev Sheila Maxey  
Finance: Clem Frank  
International Church Relations: Rev Philip Woods  
Ministries (CRCWs): representation still to be resolved  
Ministries: Rev Christine Craven  
Youth and Children's Work: Lesley Anne Di Marco and Rosemary Johnston (alternates)  
Deputy General Secretary: Rev John Waller

The Group continues to meet three times a year in April, July and December. Any queries and applications should be sent to me in the first instance until a replacement Secretary is found.

Other issues

The Group recognises that the approval by Assembly of "Growing Up" has implications for the way in which might operate in future. Accordingly, it has asked some of its members to discuss the issues and prepare a paper for the Group to consider. Any proposals for changes will, of course, come to Mission Council.

Summary report August 1997 - July 1999

What follows is a brief summary of grants given by AGOGAL from the Combined Grants Fund in this period illustrating the diversity of work supported throughout the URC. Information is given under the categories of funds.



### Ministry in Ecumenical Situations (MES)

*(This is further subdivided into funds to support County Ecumenical Officers (C), Chaplains at Further and Higher Education Colleges (E), Industrial Chaplains (I), Ecumenical Moderators (M), and new Ecumenical Partnerships (P))*

£1,500 pa for the All Lincolnshire CEO (C)

£2,400 pa for five years to the Nottingham University Chaplaincy (E)

£4,165 (75%) of the wider URC's contribution to expenses of the Ecumenical Moderator in Milton Keynes (M)

£3,534 pa for three years to the South Hants Industrial Mission (I)

£1,875 to the Oxford, Berks and Bucks Industrial Mission (I)

£500 to the Race Equality in Employment Project (I)

£2,800 to the Free Church Chaplaincy at Bristol University (E)

### Mission Expenses in the UK (MEUK)

£5,000 pa for five years towards a District Missioner in the East Wales District Council

£1,600 pa for five years to Hatley Central Church towards the cost of a worker to identify and work with the under 40s in the church and locality

£5,000 pa for five years towards a District Missioner in the East Wales District Council

£4,890 to the expenses of the CRCW, The Ortons, Peterborough

£3000 pa for three years to the expenses of a CRCW at St Mark's, Wythenshawe, Manchester

£3,000 to the expenses of a CRCW at Grindon, Sunderland

£1,800 pa for three years to ministerial expenses in an ecumenical project near Braintree, Essex

£1,800 pa for three years to housing expenses for a SCM at Wolverton, Milton Keynes

£1,500 pa for three years to a Youth and Children's Pastor, Lindfield, West Sussex

### New Enterprises in Mission (NEM)

£3,000 to the Birmingham Inner City Mission Council (part of a £8,000 grant in total – see MEUK above)

£4,000 pa for three years to a URC Mission and Outreach Pastoral Worker in Liverpool

£3,000 to furnishings at the Kendal Ecumenical Centre

£3,000 to the Medway Rainbow Project

£600 pa, possibly for three years subject to review, to the Brooklands Avenue Medical Centre, Cambridge (chaplaincy to medical practice)

£3,000 for 1999, £2,000 for 2000 and £1,500 for 2001 to the Holy Island Project

£1,000 pa for two years to a volunteer at Penrhys

£3,000 for equipping the kitchen at Harrold, Bedfordshire

£3,000 to a Pastoral Assistant at Plume Avenue, Colchester

£3,000 pa for three years to Bethel Arts and Community Centre, Cardiff

£3,000 pa for three years to a Youth Leader, The Vines, Rochester, Kent

#### Social Action (SA)

£3,000 pa for three years to the Grassroots Project, an ecumenical mission and development education programme in Luton

£300 to the Dover Asylum Seekers Support group

£3,000 to Shiregreen Children and Families Project, Sheffield

£2,500 to the Old Trafford Community Development Project, Manchester

£2,500 pa for two years to a lay Family and Youth Worker in the Matlock Circuit, Derbyshire

£2,500 pa for three years to the Breakthrough Centre, and £2,500 for one year to the Latin-American Project, Newham Group of Churches (subject to review, the latter may be continued for a further two years)

£3,000 pa for three years to a co-ordinator for work with children and young people in the PJ's Youth Project, Gorton, Manchester

Simon Rowntree  
Convener





**MISSION COUNCIL**  
*1 - 3 October 1999*

**G**

**Progress Report on DfEE Social Exclusion Project**

**Introduction**

The purpose of the feasibility study is to provide information and ideas which will enable local congregations to play their part in combatting social exclusion as it affects young people. While priority groups have been identified it is important that local congregations are fully involved in the development of the programmes for the 11 pilot projects. It is also important to ensure that decisions about action are taken on the basis of evidence, and that they add to, or complement existing provision. The project takes place within the context of Growing Up - a Mission Programme for the URC. Within the **Five Marks of Mission** two will have particular emphasis:

- to respond to human need by loving service;
- to seek to transform unjust structures of society.

**Priority Groups**

1. The disadvantaged (inner city, run down housing estates, rural areas)
2. The disaffected and disappointed (truancy, exclusion, at risk of offending, under-achieving)
3. Minority ethnic communities
4. Those with disabilities

**Objective of the Study**

To explore new ways of working with local churches to engage in projects with priority groups in order to combat social exclusion, and to provide the foundation for developing 11 pilot projects which will take place in the two subsequent years.

**Aims**

During the period 1 September 1999 to 31 March 2000 the project will:

1. carry out a feasibility study, to include travel around the country mapping and evaluating local church projects, and contact with other local and national organisations
2. provide written draft and final reports
3. assist in setting up networking between projects
4. prepare agree and disseminate plans
5. provide training for staff and members
6. assist in the negotiation and development of contracts relating to the pilot projects.

**Action**

By the time Mission Council meets the following work will have been undertaken:

Planning meetings;

Initial consultations will have taken place with key workers, such as YCWT/YLTO's, Centre Minister at Yardley Hastings;

Meetings with other organisations, both at the DfEE and other locations;

Agreement reached with other organisations to share databases relating to study support and youth sport;

Research and networking undertaken in the identified priority areas.





MISSION COUNCIL  
*1 - 3 October 1999*

H

**The Future of Advisory Group On Grants And Loans**  
*Grants and loans to local churches*

**History**

AGOGAL was established in 1992 initially as an inter-committee clearing house in which grant applications were considered in the light of the established policies of Assembly committees. It had the further advantage of preventing a church making a number of applications for a project to different committees. The original membership of AGOGAL was the General Secretary as convener, a secretary, and one representative of each of the following committees - Finance, World Church and Mission, Ministries, Faith and Life, and Church and Society.

In time the committees all came to be represented by their staff secretaries.

When the work of AGOGAL was reviewed by Mission Council in 1996 this latter change was accepted and a staff secretary for Youth and Children's Work added to the membership. However, to avoid this becoming a completely "in-house" group, it was agreed that both the convener and secretary should be appointed by Mission Council. The General Secretary (later Deputy General Secretary) was made a member of the group. It was also agreed that an annual report should be made to Mission Council.

AGOGAL has dealt with grant applications of two kinds. **Specific** grants are available for projects which have the development of the church's outreach at heart. **General** grants offer support under four broad headings - community ministry, educational chaplaincy, ecumenical, and local ministries - and in many cases represent the URC's ongoing commitment to particular pieces of work. It is felt that some of these, notably grants to ecumenical officers and higher education chaplaincies, could be dealt with separately by their appropriate committees. It would be expected that the new body would adhere to AGOGAL's practice of not considering retrospective applications.

**The Proposal**

That a new committee or group be established to:

- continue the work of AGOGAL, other than grants for ecumenical officers and higher education chaplaincies, which will be remitted to the Ecumenical and Ministries committees respectively.
- be the clearing house for grant applications to the CWM Self-Support Fund.
- take over the consideration of applications for grants and loans from the Church Buildings Fund, presently a function of the Finance committee.
- stimulate reflection on the theology and practice of mission, in the light of its experience.



The committee would thus be the one point through which grants and loans to local churches are considered and approved.

### Membership of the committee

- A convener
- Secretary, perhaps a voluntary half-day a week position, suited to an early retiree with administrative/financial ability, and living close to London. Responsibilities would include liaison (with Finance Office) monitoring and payment in respect of applications, and servicing and general oversight of the committee.
- One person from each synod, who would be responsible for seeing that applications came in the correct form and according to agreed principles.
- The present staff secretaries who are members of AGOGAL would continue to receive the papers for the meeting and have the right to attend, but the assumption would be that most would not do so.

The intention would be to involve the synods, both in monitoring projects in their own region and in collectively making decisions. Out of that collective experience should grow an

At present, in round terms, £100k is paid in grants through AGOGAL, and a similar sum through the Church Buildings Fund. In the present three-year period CWM is willing to make over £300k available to the URC.

### Status of the committee

Three options have been identified. They are set out here in order of preference, but Mission Council is asked to make a judgement between them. It is necessary to think carefully about accountability because of the scale and significance of this work.

1. To retain the identity at present of 'an advisory group of Mission Council'.

(As well as connecting with the 'Growing Up' proposals in relation to the practice and theology of mission, this would maintain links between committees, and keep accountability where it is; however in practice, it would be more than an advisory group).

2. To create a sub-committee of the Life and Witness Committee.

(Most, [but not all] grant applications may link directly with this committee in terms of the mission of the local church and this could imply exclusivity. Having agreed an extended remit which keeps its sub-committees to a minimum, a further addition may be inappropriate at this time.)

3. To create a separate freestanding Assembly committee.

(This would be a committee for the whole church, and subject to comments and questions by Assembly. However this option does not naturally stand on its own, and runs counter to our policy decision on limiting the number of Assembly committees.)

### **Conclusion**

The proposal has only been set out in an outline form, and matters of detail would need to be addressed before AGOGAL could hand over to the new body.

Mission Council is therefore asked whether or not it supports the principle of this proposal, as it stands or in an amended form.

September 1999





MISSION COUNCIL  
*1 - 3 October 1999*

I

## MISSION COUNCIL ADVISORY GROUP

1. Since the last Mission Council, the Group has met on two occasions on 29 April and 8 September.
2. The following people have agreed to be at Mission Council meetings as theological reflectors: October 1999, the Revd Dr Noel Davies; March 2000, Professor Mary Grey; October 2000, Revd Dr Christina le Moignan.
3. The Group considered a letter from Simon Rowntree, clerk to the West Midlands synod, who suggested that the January meetings of Mission Council should be abolished and the March meetings extended to a third day. This was because of recent experience, when the January agenda was very light and the March one overcrowded. The Group sympathised with the reasons behind the suggestion but did not support the proposal. It seemed unlikely that a January agenda will again be as light as it was in 1999. It was also felt that a day added to a heavy agenda was not an attractive proposition.
4. The General Assembly has asked Mission Council to oversee the planning of the "Growing Up" mission programme (resolution 15). **MCAG recommends that this should be made the responsibility of the General Secretary, reporting to Mission Council through the MCAG meeting.** In its agenda-planning role, MCAG could advise when a report should be made to Mission Council.
5. The General Assembly has asked Mission Council to do further work on the consequences of accepting the statement in resolution 34 and to report to the next Annual Meeting of the Assembly (resolution 37). Before Mission Council considers how to respond, MCAG will ask that the General Secretary be invited to give some background information. **MCAG recommends that the response to resolution 37 should be prepared either by the existing core group OR by a group established at this Mission Council.** Whichever group is chosen MCAG further recommends that a draft report should be presented to the January meeting, to allow time for considered amendment (if necessary) before the March meeting. Owing to the importance and sensitivity of this matter it is suggested that, having heard the reasons for MCAG's recommendations, Mission Council discusses them first in groups and then in plenary session. It may be necessary at this point to think of possible names, and to identify any possible consequences not included in 8.7 of the human sexuality report.

6. The General Assembly has asked Mission Council to consider the recommendations of the Working Group on the authority of the General Assembly and other councils and to report to a future Assembly [resolution 39(ii)] **MCAG recommends that a task group be appointed for this purpose, consisting of seven persons, with a report to be made in 2001, first to Mission Council in March and then to Assembly in July. It further recommends that the Nominations Committee should be asked to nominate the group at its next meeting. MCAG has in mind that the group will need to include those with knowledge of local churches, district councils, synods and the Assembly.**
  
7. The General Assembly has thanked the core group and working groups on human sexuality for their work (resolution 40). However these groups were set up by Mission Council in October 1997 and therefore **Mission Council will be asked to approve an appropriate resolution at this meeting.**
  
8. In response to a General Assembly resolution in 1997 (resolution 41) Mission Council established a pastoral group to be available to anyone who felt in need of particular care as a result of the human sexuality debate. The life of this group was extended until October 1999. **MCAG recommends that it be further extended, at least until October 2000.** The present members of the group are: Elizabeth Caswell, Malcolm Hanson, Jim Hollyman, Glyn Jenkins, Lis Mullen and John Waller.

9. Sally Brooks has recently submitted her resignation as Minutes Secretary at General Assembly and will be replaced by [name] at the next meeting.

John Waller  
10 September 1999





**MISSION COUNCIL**  
*1 - 3 October 1999*

**J**

**Staffing Advisory Group Report**

**Editor of REFORM and Media Officer**

In 1994, it was agreed that the post of Editor of REFORM be combined with that of MEDIA OFFICER. This was implemented in 1995 when David Lawrence took up the post. The United Reformed Church has greatly benefited by the fact that, for him, this work has been a real vocation. His present appointment comes to an end in June 2000. This is an application to continue the post.

***Does the United Reformed Church need REFORM and therefore an Editor?***

The Communications and Editorial Committee give an unequivocal 'Yes!' for the following reasons:

- it is already, and is likely to become more so, the main means of communication throughout all levels of the United Reformed Church
- there is no longer an information service, and REFORM is the chief means of replacing it
- it has a circulation of 12,500 and an estimated readership of 40,000
- we seem to have arrested the decline in circulation
- it is clear from debates and discussions in Assembly and Synods that REFORM is a major source of information
- the liveliness of the correspondence columns reveal it to be the foremost forum for exchange of views on current issues
- there is a good response to competitions (over 30 congregations applied for the Community Award) revealing REFORM to be a means of encouraging new forms of mission amongst the churches
- it is a tool for churches to learn good practice from each other
- advertising revenue is increasing and coming from a broader spectrum of advertisers
- it is a model for, and is being copied by, other denominations
- it is widely praised by both church people and professional journalists
- the Editor is working together with FURY to consider how communication resources can be commonly used.

***Does the United Reformed Church need a MEDIA OFFICER?***

We believe that we do:

- we need a person with an objective journalistic viewpoint to guide spokespersons for the church in their response in potentially media-sensitive situations
- we need to raise the profile of the church by ensuring the free flow of accurate and relevant information to the media
- we need someone with appropriate skills to give help and encouragement to all levels of the church in using the media effectively

***Does the United Reformed Church need to have a WEB SITE and someone to oversee it?***

We believe that we do:

- the Web is likely to become the chief means by which the church will be able to speak to those beyond its walls
- appropriate advice needs to be given to people at all levels of our church's life in learning to use this 'new' means of communication, both in design and content

In terms of the categories adopted by Mission Council in 1992 for the consideration of staff posts, we make the following observations:

**MISSION PRIORITIES:**

REFORM is a vital part of the United Reformed Church and is one of the means by which it remains united and is a major tool in enabling its mission. Through its pages, churches learn good practice from each other and members of widely divergent views and theologies can speak to each other. It is the chief means by which current policies of the General Assembly e.g. 'Growing Up', can be advocated.

**ECONOMY:**

No new money is being requested for the continuation of this post. No request is being made for further staff, even though a case could be made out for the separation

Part of the Media Officer's role is damage limitation and crisis management. Crises, by their nature, are totally inflexible. They arrive when they arrive, and have no regard as to whether it is print day for REFORM or not. All this leads to the conclusion that, in an ideal world, the Media Officer should be a separate role from that of Editor. But it is recognised that this would be unrealistic in the present circumstances of the United Reformed Church and that for the foreseeable future the two roles should be combined in the same post.

The costs of printing have been carefully monitored. The printing of REFORM costs no more than four years ago.

**ECUMENICAL POSSIBILITIES:**

As long as the United Reformed Church remains a denomination with its own identity, thereby representing the Reformed Tradition to the whole Church, REFORM remains as one of the key factors in maintaining that identity. It is a means of representing our tradition to other denominations and a means by which our people hear about the hopes, dreams, aspirations, understandings and practices of other Christian bodies. It is thus an important ecumenical instrument.

**DECENTRALISATION:**

The decision was taken in 1994/5 to bring REFORM 'in' house. The evidence is that this was the right decision, greatly assisting the high degree of close consultation and communication with Assembly Officers and Committee Secretaries which is required



for an effective denominational magazine. It has also made it possible to have a recognised central point for media contact. Such is the nature of currently required technology for the origination of the magazine each month that it could not be done at home.

**READINESS TO CHANGE:**

REFORM has amply demonstrated its readiness to change. There are constant changes in its appearance and content. It is currently changing to take into account the absence of a separate information service. The Editor has also had to respond to changes taking place in the world of intermediate technology. He has instituted and overseen the provision of a Web Site on the Internet. The importance of this as a means of communication within the church and beyond it is likely to grow over the next few years.

We therefore submit that the post of EDITOR of REFORM and MEDIA OFFICER be continued, with the following objectives.

In the light of experience, we suggest that the Job Description and Person Specification be more detailed. For the purposes of comparison we set out the original Job Description and the suggested new one.

During the next period, the main objectives should be:

- to continue to publish a monthly denominational magazine which reflects and stimulates the life of the church
- to go on seeking new contributors and topics for articles and discussion and to record and encourage participation in ecumenical and other events involving the United Reformed Church.
- to give attention to REFORM's growing role as the only general means of distributing information throughout all levels of the church's life
- to continue co-operation with FURY about appropriate ways of communicating with young people in the churches
- to give particular attention to the development of the Web Site as the 'shop window' of the United Reformed Church to the world
- to continue to report the work of Mission Council and General Assembly in an appropriate manner and to liaise with both national and local media before and during General Assembly
- to build on the links already established with the media, providing information on the life of the United Reformed Church, and to be a contact point for the media, able to provide accurate information or the names of spokespersons
- to strengthen links with Synod, Districts and local churches who have responsibility for dealing with the media and to assist wherever possible

## EXISTING JOB DESCRIPTION

### Purpose of Job:

- i. to edit REFORM (please see list of objectives), liaising with the printer in order to provide camera ready copy, or material on disk
- ii. to work with Communication and Editorial Committee
- iii. to choose and co-ordinate the reporting team at General Assembly
- iv. to report on Mission Council in a manner acceptable to local churches
- v. to consolidate links with the media and to be a contact point for all queries
- vi. to undertake the preparation of information for media both before, and during, General Assembly
- vii. to work with the Media Council to assist all levels of the church in using the media

### SKILLS:

Journalistic skills and media experience are particularly important together with a good knowledge and interest in the work of the United Reformed Church.



## PROPOSED NEW JOB DESCRIPTION

1. The postholder is responsible to the General Assembly through the General Secretary and the Convener of the Communications and Editorial Committee and for day to day matters to the Secretary for Communication and Editorial.
2. To work with Assembly Communication and Editorial Committee
3. To edit REFORM
  - ◆ to commission, edit and originate suitable written material together with the selection and preparation of photographic, graphic and other illustrative material, liaising with the printer in order to provide camera ready copy or material on disk
  - ◆ to maintain close and frequent links with a wide range of people within and without the church, who contribute to the shaping of its agenda
  - ◆ to report on Mission Council
  - ◆ to choose and co-ordinate the reporting team at General Assembly
  - ◆ to produce 'Hotline' as an immediate report on General Assembly to the churches

### To act as MEDIA OFFICER

- ◆ to advise Assembly Officers, Committee Conveners, and Synod Moderators on potentially media-sensitive situations
  - ◆ to maintain links with the media and to be a contact point for all queries
  - ◆ to help raise the profile of the church by ensuring the free flow of accurate and relevant information to the media
  - ◆ to undertake the preparation of information for the media both before, during and after General Assembly
  - ◆ to give help and encouragement to all levels of the church in using the media effectively
4. To oversee the WEB SITE
    - ◆ to advise and assist Assembly Committees in their use of the Web Site and, when time allows, advise Synods, Districts and local churches on their use of the Web
  5. To ensure personal compliance and that of support staff with the Health and Safety at Work provisions.
  6. To remain open to new patterns of work and to new responsibilities should the General Assembly, or its appointed committees, so decide.

## PERSON SPECIFICATION

A man or woman who:

- ◆ has an interest in, and knowledge of, the United Reformed Church
- ◆ has proven journalistic skills
- ◆ has media experience
- ◆ has skills in layout, graphics and other illustrative material
- ◆ has appropriate technical and diplomatic skills to oversee the Web Site
- ◆ has the ability to share skills with media officers at all levels of church life

**Graham Cook**  
**Convener, Communications and Editorial**



## Children's Advocate

**Introduction:** In response to a letter from the General Secretary, dated 7th June 1999, the Youth & Children's Work Committee, at its meeting held at Nettle Hill, Coventry between 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> June, gave consideration to whether or not it wished to ask Mission Council to continue the position. Concern was expressed at the lateness of the procedure being requested. Nevertheless, the Committee thought seriously about whether or not it wished for the position to be continued and unanimously felt that it should.

In seeking to make a case for the continuation of the position the Committee sought to address the areas highlighted in the paper **Guidelines for Applicants** prepared by the **Mission Council Staffing Advisory Group**. In so doing it felt that implicitly it would be clear what has already been achieved by having the position.

**Mission priorities:** Mission Council has recently identified youth and children's work as one of its priorities (in **Growing Up** which was overwhelmingly endorsed by the General Assembly). The Committee felt that it would be foolish, and would send the wrong message out to the denomination, if the position were discontinued at this time. Indeed, it felt that the role of Children's Advocate is an essential one in the church's armoury of mission at the present time.

The arguments made at the time for the introduction of the position still stand. In the Children's Work Committee Report to General Assembly 1992 the following Children's Advocate job description was given:

Aims:

1. To promote the work of the United Reformed Church with children
2. To encourage the development of communication and networking between those working with children within the United Reformed Church to be aware of current concerns and act for the nurture and well-being of children

Objectives:

- To advocate the rights of children in the Church, to stimulate discussion and action to meet the needs of children and enable children to play their full part in the life of the Church.
- To support the work of the Children's Work Committee and the Provincial and District Children's Work Secretaries, in partnership with the YCWTs and NYCTO.
- To encourage children's workers to offer the best quality service to children.
- To help develop a training programme for those working with children and for tutors of trainers, in collaboration with ecumenical partners and colleagues.
- To liaise with children's organisations and agencies both within the statutory and voluntary sectors.

In addition we have now identified the five marks of mission, **tell, teach, tend, transform and treasure**. The Children's Advocate role is one which is concerned with each of these, for each of them is of fundamental importance to children. The Advocate ever holds before the church the importance of children, seeks to help it understand them and reminds it of its responsibilities in the light of these five marks of mission. The Committee also felt that it is necessary to keep the position to enable it to respond effectively to the emphasis on mission being promoted by the United Reformed Church.

The Committee would argue that much already has been achieved through having a Children's Advocate, that needs to be maintained and built upon. Since the appointment in April 1995, working alongside many others, the following are in place and continue developing:



**Office in Church House** – efficient helpful service to all callers  
Database of key Children's Work support in districts and Provinces  
FAQ – Frequently Asked Questions – substantial files of information – regularly used/updated  
Resource shelves – wide selection of material relevant to children's ministry  
Sharing of information via  
Regular mailings to key people  
URCHIN – United Reformed Children's Information Network (thrice yearly)  
Website

#### **Around the country –**

Regular meetings with committees and key workers  
Events in Synods, Districts, local churches for those concerned with children  
Encouraging thinking, sharing ideas, finding support  
Training  
Involvement at the Windermere Centre, in Ministerial Training courses (colleges and NSM) and with lay preachers, Elders, church members, Post Ordination Training

#### **Ecumenical, World Church, other agencies and secular groups –**

Links established and maintained

#### **Publications**

Contributions to thinking via periodicals, worship and learning material and books.

The effect of having this position is now being felt. The church's responsibility for children is accepted and established but it is still "growing up" in the way it reacts and responds to the needs of children. The Children's Advocate has a role to play in keeping us aware of issues with regard to children. There is a very real sense in which the Children's Advocate has become the guardian of the rights and responsibilities of children and children's workers. The post holder represents children to the Church, and the Church to children. An example of the latter has been the development of the "Commitment for Life" pack developed by the present incumbent. The Children's Advocate has a crucial global view. The role is one in which the incumbent keeps us aware of the changing world for children and those who work with them and care for them. It is one in which there is time to reflect on what is happening to them and how we can respond. The global view is important and is informed by networking. The Advocate brings together what is happening in synods, in districts and other denominations in terms of different experiences and models and through networking and publications such as URCHIN makes others aware of them. The Advocate has times to do this in a proactive thinking way. The role is one in which a "dreamer of dreams" has the time and information to develop a vision of the Church's mission concerning children.

Possible additions to the current work might be:

- Extending the emphasis on thinking about the ministry children offer to provoke more widespread practice
- More solid ways of involving children in decision making
- More opportunities for theological reflection on the place of children in the church
- Continuing ministerial education with children's ministry naturally included
- Data on resources to website
- Developing interactive website



- Wider variety of models for support of Children's work in Districts
- Ecumenically produced materials – assessed, reconsidered, renewed
- Belonging to the world church – deepening links made internationally
- New ways of working in liaison of Youth and Children's Work Assembly appointed staff, Youth and Children's Work Trainers, Assembly committees, Synods
- Highlighting and practising the involvement of children in all parts of the 'five marks of mission'
- Responding to changing patterns of work with children – developing mid-week, after school, holiday activities
- Readiness to deal responsibly with the appointment of paid local workers
- Engage in consultation with the Home Office over "Good Practice" issues
- Be ready to help churches respond to new legislation regarding children
- E mail etc widespread development of electronic communication
- Constantly updating material to assist churches in their work with children
- Being aware of and pointing to helpful resources on current issues eg "children are unbeatable"
- Enriching changing patterns of worship – Sunday/during the week

The Committee felt that, given the recent emphasis on mission by the United Reformed Church, the role of Children's Advocate is crucial. In addition, given the traumatic time that the church has gone through in terms of youth and children's work staff, it would be a real shame to lose the post, just as a good team is developing. To take away one of the four posts at this time would drastically change the perspective of the other three posts. The Committee spoke on this issue with some passion for it has just lived through a period without full and adequate staffing. The structure of four posts has been developed to meet the particular mission requirements of the church at this time.

**Economy:** The Committee is advocating continuation of this position so there are no new budgetary implications concerning it. The post is already in the budget of the church.

**Ecumenical Possibilities:** It is in the view of the Committee, confirmed by its Methodist representative, that our ecumenical partners are all seeking to maintain similar posts and are emphasising co-operation and collaboration. There is no desire at the moment to "blend these posts" because it is recognised that children's work is too important for that.

The Advocate is needed to enable the United Reformed Church to be aware of what is happening in the experience of our ecumenical partners, and to make them aware of our experience. It has been stated that our "Children's Charter" is one of our best ecumenical gifts within the area of children's work.

It is important ecumenically that the church has one identifiable person to maintain ecumenical links in the children's work area.

It should also be noted that there is an international dimension to the role. The present incumbent has recently been to New Zealand and Sweden. Insights from those visits have already and will continue to enrich the deliberations of the Youth and Children's Work Committee.

**Decentralisation:** The Committee strongly felt that the position could not be decentralised. Of its nature it needs to be centralised. It is a post which needs to relate to other central posts. It also serves as a focus for people working in the



synods and districts. It was noted that there is good practice in synods and districts but it is not uniform. The role is one which serves to remind the denomination as a whole of consistent good practice. The post is a travelling one anyway, and work is done all over the country.

**Readiness to Change:** The job description was updated in June 1998. There is a process of ongoing review and change in the work of the committee. Emphasis within it will inevitably change as the church changes. The committee sees its role as helping the church to change, and the role of the post-holder to help it in this. There will be different emphasis in the post from time to time and change needs to be incorporated without losing direction. The post-holder needs to be proactive. The present incumbent has been and change has come about as a result.

The importance of children's ministry is the same today, as it was yesterday and will be tomorrow but the methods and ideas employed may change in order to help us be more effective and as we grow in our understanding. A developing understanding of what children's ministry means is part of the ecumenical scene as well. The post was created because of a ground-swell of opinion from the grassroots. There was no real need to justify the post. Children needed an advocate at central level, in the position created they got one. More people now know about why children should be part of the church. The next stage is in helping the church realise that.

**What has been achieved?** The committee believes that the place of children in the church has moved on significantly in the five years of the post. Now people have to take children seriously. We are moving on to the next stage. Too often churches consider their needs but not the needs of children. Sadly still some churches argue that "we need children in our church" not "what can we do for the children in our church?" (Children are not the children of the future they are here for the church today.

Five years ago Mission Council did not have the priority of youth and children's work. Now it does. All churches know that it should also be theirs. The role now is to equip and enable all strands of the church to own this, to love this and to act upon this. The position of Children's Advocate has enabled the church to reflect theologically on children. It has enabled many to move on in their thinking and practice. Much has been achieved, much more needs to be achieved.

Derek Lindfield  
Convener, Youth and Children's Work Committee  
August 1999

## **Youth & Children's Work Committee – June 1998**

### **Children's Advocate – Job Description**

#### **Accountability**

The Children's Advocate will be responsible to the General Assembly through the General Secretary and the Convener of the Youth and Children's Work Committee.

#### **Purpose of the Job**

1. To speak up for children in the life of the United Reformed Church, and to help create opportunities for the voices of children to be heard.
2. To promote the work of the United Reformed Church with children.
3. To encourage the development of communication and networking between those working with children within the United Reformed Church, and to promote awareness of current concerns relating to the nurture and well being of children.

#### **Main Duties**

1. To be a member of the Youth & Children's Work team, along with the Secretary for Youth Work, the Pilots Development Officer and the Centre Minister of the National Youth Resource Centre.
2. As part of the team, to plan, initiate and advocate programmes, projects and events within appropriate structures, which will enable children and their workers to respond to the challenge of the gospel.
3. To enable children's workers, ministers and the whole church to see the wider needs and expectations of children within the Church and without, and to make a positive response.
4. To encourage the fostering of good relations between the United Reformed Church at every level with uniformed and other organisations for children.
5. To advocate the rights of children, to stimulate discussion and action to meet the needs of children and enable them to play their full part in the life of the Church.
6. To promote theological reflection on current children's work issues.
7. To promote a programme of training for those working with children and for trainers of tutors in collaboration with ecumenical partners and United Reformed Church colleagues.
8. To be responsible for the management and personal development of staff as detailed by the Youth and Children's Work Committee.
9. To meet with the Youth and Children's Work Training Team, and to identify and respond to current issues and training needs in the area of children's work.
10. To share in the work of the Youth and Children's Work Committee.
11. To give support, advice and encouragement to the Provincial and district Children's work Secretaries, and provide a forum for the sharing of information and experience.



12. To be in touch with local churches to listen, suggest and encourage work with children and to contribute and exchange ideas via URCHIN\* and provincial networks.
13. To liaise with children's organisation and agencies both within the statutory and voluntary sectors.
14. To liaise and work ecumenically at every opportunity with those working with children and to encourage local ecumenical co-operation.
15. To ensure personal compliance and that of support staff with the health and safety at work provisions.
16. To keep abreast of current practices in children's work and be committed to his/her own on-going training and development.
17. To fulfil any other duties as agreed and specified by the Youth and Children's Work Committee.
18. To remain open to new patterns of work and to new responsibilities should the General Assembly or its appointed committees, so decide.

#### **Staff Development**

To be prepared by appraisal and review to accept the responsibility of being the Youth and Children's Work team co-ordinator and/or budget holder as required.

URCHIN – United Returned Children's Information Network

## **Youth & Children's Work Committee – June 1998**

### **Children's Advocate – Job Description**

#### **Accountability**

The Children's Advocate will be responsible to the General Assembly through the General Secretary and the Convener of the Youth and Children's Work Committee.

#### **Purpose of the Job**

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6. To promote theological reflection on current children's work issues.
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15. To ensure personal compliance and that of support staff with the health and safety at work provisions.
16. To keep abreast of current practices in children's work and be committed to his/her own on-going training and development.
17. To fulfil any other duties as agreed and specified by the Youth and Children's Work Committee.
18. To remain open to new patterns of work and to new responsibilities should the General Assembly or its appointed committees, so decide.

#### **Staff Development**

To be prepared by appraisal and review to accept the responsibility of being the Youth and Children's Work team co-ordinator and/or budget holder as required.

\* URCHIN – United Reformed Children's Information Network



MISSION COUNCIL  
*1 - 3 October 1999*

K

**Task Group**  
**on the**  
**Grouping of Churches**



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- B Definitions**
- C Groups as a focus for Mission**
- D Teams as a resource for Mission**
- E Guidelines for Groups**
- F Conclusions**
- G Recommendations**
- Appendix Resources**

## Members of the Task Group

Revd Arnold Harrison	Moderator Yorkshire Synod (Convener)
Revd Dr Catherine Middleton	Assoc. Director, Education and Training, Mansfield College Secretary (until February 1999)
Mrs Jean Bull	Church Secretary, Heath URC, Halifax Group
Mr Simon Loveitt	CRCW Linthorpe URC Middlesborough
Revd Brenda Stephenson	Minister, Mid Somerset Group Secretary (from February 1999)
Mrs Mary Wetherall	Representative of the Methodist Church
Revd Christopher White	Synod Clerk East Midlands Local Minister Clifton URC



# A - Introduction

## **The Group**

*This report has been prepared by the Task Group on the Grouping of Churches at the request of Mission Council. It was commissioned to ensure that the broader mission of the United Reformed Church took full advantage of the opportunities offered by the recent developments in the practice of grouping churches.*

## **Our brief –**

*To consider all aspects of the topic (i.e. the wider issues of the grouping of churches) as a positive contribution to the church's mission strategy..... explore the reasons for creating groups, different models of groups and their advantages, the relationships between groups and shared ministry, as well as possible changes in the structure of the church which might be needed for the creative development of groups.....*

## **Presuppositions**

It is quite clear that very often our perception of the world and the world as it really is do not always agree. That is no less true for the church. It is clear that many churches, and not a few ministers, still live with the assumption that the ideal pastoral arrangement is that of 'one church one minister'. It is reinforced by many candidates leaving our colleges, who express the view that such an arrangement, for their first pastorate, would be the ideal.

## **The Reality**

This assumption is surprising given the fact that in reality many churches are not single minister pastorates. At present 356 of our churches are in LEP's or United Churches, there are 101 recognised Groups made up of 335 churches<sup>1</sup>. Many of the LEP's involve the Methodist Church and therefore also require Circuit involvement. It is slightly more difficult to determine the exact numbers of truly single pastorates but there is some evidence that only between 10 and 15%<sup>2</sup> of our 1700 churches can be defined in that way.

## **Not for expediency**

However that is not to imply that all such groupings and teams are based simply on expediency. They are not always created merely to accommodate the deployment of ordained ministry. Many groups have been formed out of the recognition that grouping has positive value and can contribute to the wellbeing of the churches involved.

## **Grouping is seen as an opportunity**

- for mission and outreach
- for sharing resources – ministerial, lay, financial etc
- for the sharing of support in the task of ministry and outreach
- and to explore and develop an ecumenical dimension

What follows assumes that the creation of Groups needs to be seen not as an aberration of the norm, but as a positive expression of the life of the local church.

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<sup>1</sup> These figures are based on statistics held by the Ministries Committee. (July 1999)

<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to calculate this figure accurately as there are various determining factors but it is clear that the numbers are within the range given.

We will seek to address these and other issues in the following way -

- Section C - addresses the case for Groups, with mission as the focus
- Section D - examines the case for teams as a resource
- Section E - sets out Guidelines for the establishment and running of Groups
- Section F - lists the Conclusions
- Section G - recommends changes to our structures to make Groups more effective
- Appendix 1 lists useful resources for Groups and Teams



## **B – Definitions**

<b>Definitions</b>	within this report the following definitions will apply
<b>Groups</b>	two or more churches that have a structured relationship and a constitution governing the way in which they relate to each other.
<b>Joint Pastorate</b>	two or more churches that share ordained ministry and whose structural relationship relates only to the support of ministry.
<b>Clusters</b>	two or more churches that have an informal relationship, relating to each other for mission and ministry.
<b>Teams</b>	two or more ordained ministers, Church Related Community Workers, local church leaders or other recognised church workers who work together to offer ministry and leadership to one or more churches.

# C

## Groups as a focus for Mission

### 1. The case for Groups as a focus for mission

Working together with other churches can be a great source of strength. The grouping of churches has, in many places, provided support and encouragement, which can be the springboard for reaching out into the community. This is particularly true for a church working in an area of urban and rural deprivation, or struggling with its own purpose and identity. This philosophy is the opposite of the recipe for decline in which churches group together simply to continue as they are, making the best of not being able to have their own full time minister. The grouping of churches should not be seen as a last resort. Instead it can make possible something new and positive in the life of the churches concerned, not least in the experience of the local church member. It can help members to discover what it is to be part of the wider church family and engage in mission alongside others. The grouping of churches makes possible greater flexibility in the use of resources, the valuing of diversity in size, theology and social context.. It is therefore good when Groups evolve, responding to changing needs and circumstances.

### 2. Sharing resources

Grouping offers enrichment to the individual congregations concerned. Resources of leadership, skills and finance, in one congregation can be shared with the others in the group. The pooling of such resources makes possible a variety of ministry, training courses, all of which can be shared with the others in the group. All opportunities of this kind have to be made available to all members.

### 3. Groups for everyone?

There may be very good reasons to argue that all churches might be in some sort of Group Cluster. If the merits of Groups and Clusters can be argued as right in themselves then maybe there ought to be a universal application. Such a move would bring to all churches the variety of ministry, skill and leadership a Group experiences. One way of effecting such a change would be for a District to declare, as policy, that only in exceptional circumstances will a church be scoped for ministry at 100%, thereby ensuring some link with at least one other pastorate.

### 4. Different Models

#### 4.1. Minister Based Groups

These are primarily formed to make the best use of ministerial resources, in particular Stipendiary Ministers, as membership and ministerial numbers have declined. Churches grouped together around the deployment of ministers often have no corporate identity and one should not be forced upon them. It is better for these churches to be thought of as a Joint Pastorate rather than a Group.

#### 4.2. Geographically Based Groups

Here churches, in a defined geographical area, group together to carry out their mission more effectively. Though the congregations may be very different from each other, they have a sense of serving a particular



area and can share resources to do so. They may celebrate and take risks together, which they may not do on their own.

#### **4.3. Other links**

It is sometimes right to link the pastoral care of local congregations with a District or Synod appointment, or with a chaplaincy post. Here the local church has the opportunity to reach out not only into the local community but also into a wider area of the church. It is important that connections are made between these various tasks of ministry and the local congregation, and where appropriate, that the local congregation owns them as part of its mission.

#### **4.4. Clusters**

These may comprise groups, joint pastorates and single pastorates in a defined geographical area. It may make sense if this is the area of a particular civil authority or a religious grouping such as a deanery or circuit. Their first purpose is to re-explore the mission of the churches and to bring them together to share their vision of mission, to share some of the domestic tasks common to any organisation and to find resources for genuine mission and service.

Clusters may have an increasingly important role if we can see their mission potential. The challenge is to find ways of defining them so that they fit within our present church order, yet at the same time freeing them from unrealistic constraints to enable them in their mission.

#### **4.5. The Ecumenical dimension**

Our commitment to ecumenism leads us to take seriously a local congregation's present ecumenical partnerships when plans for grouping are proposed. Ecumenical groups will be right in some areas, rather than denominational ones. When URC groupings are being considered it is vital that this does not cut across mission already taking place with the other Christian denominations.

#### **4.6. New ecumenical initiatives**

Some groups are set up ecumenically, whether in a covenanted relationship or including united congregations. The procedures of different denominations will need to be followed but many of the principles set out in this report will apply.



# D

## Teams as a resource for Mission

### 1. Ministry

#### 1.1. How Ministers relate to Churches at present

The church already has in place a pattern and structure for the introduction, call, support and discipline of Ministers. The present pattern works well enough given our present structures, although no one would claim that it is perfect. However, elements of that structure may need to be reviewed in the light of this paper. The principal and 'official' route for the introduction of Ministers to churches is through the corporate leadership of the Synod Moderators.

The responsibility for issuing the Call remains firmly with the local church meeting. In the case of a pastorate of more than one local church, separate meetings have to be held, with votes being taken at each meeting. Only if local congregations have agreed to join together with one church meeting, one eldership and a single members roll (see Manual - Structures para 1(1)) can a single meeting be held.

#### 1.2. Teams

Ministers are not called to work in isolation. Indeed the essential picture of the church is that of the people of God working together and sharing the infinite variety of gifts available to them.

All Ministers are called to work in Teams with Elders and members.

Leaders being recognised, accredited and acknowledged by the Local Church and District. They are also called to work with colleagues including SMs, NSMs, CRCWs, Youth and Social Workers. Clearly this is found most commonly in Teams of SMs and NSMs, but nothing in this paper is intended to suggest that Teams are limited in that way.

### 2. How Team Ministries relate to Groups and Pastorates

Teams are almost always found in Groups or clusters of churches, although there are instances where single pastorates do have a Team operating.

Where the Team relates to a Group of churches, to a joint pastorate or to a clustering of churches, then the relationship is more complex. At present there is no single recommended pattern, and ways of working have to be established for each Group and Team.

Working agreements will include areas and division of responsibility, to whom the Team members are answerable, and what provisions exist for the building up of the Team. The latter includes both additional Team members, and the ongoing development of personal skills and training. At the heart of this policy must lie a flexibility which enables the Group and Team to grow and develop. Such flexibility needs to be built into the group and to be a recognised part of its life and work. The ability to respond to changing circumstances is a prerequisite of all ministry, not least that expressed in Group and Team work.



It is impossible to enumerate such arrangements, because of the variety. However what is essential is that such arrangements are made so that the Group and Team know what is expected and what can be delivered.

### **3. Issues of Leadership**

The United Reformed Church has never seen Ministers in any hierarchical structure. At the same time it is recognised that organisations need leadership, even if that leadership is shared and moveable. Good government requires knowing who is in leadership roles, what those roles are and how the members of the Team relate to one another.

Leadership is not about superiority but are about responsibility and efficiency.

#### **3.1. SM/NSM/CRCW**

Leadership in Teams tends to lie with the Ministers of Word and Sacraments and often with SMs, rather than with others. This may be due to the assumption that they have been trained against a broader background and therefore are assumed to have the necessary skills and insights.

There is no justification for that as a defining principle. Leadership needs to emerge from the local situation, reflecting the skills that are actually present. Local Church Leaders may be identified for that purpose, relieving ordained Ministers from such work. Provision already exists for such Local Church Leaders to Chair Church and Elders Meetings (or their Group or Ecumenical equivalent).

#### **3.2. Leadership roles**

Teams need to acknowledge leadership roles, and address this issue in their own way. Team members need to understand and agree how leadership will be exercised, for there are many different styles and ways of exercising leadership. No one way is right or best. Discovering what is right and best for any given situation is, however, a key element in establishing any Team. When this matter is not addressed teams can be less effective. When no one is clear where responsibility for leadership lies, there is a loss of efficiency and a risk of disintegration.

### **4. Equal Opportunities Policy (EOP)**

The URC has an EOP. It is clear that much work still has to be done to ensure that it is effective throughout the whole of our church, not least in domestic and ecumenical teams. Attitudes to and questions about race, gender, sexuality, disability, age (and other issues) need to be continually addressed. It is, however, one thing to claim such a policy, it is another thing to make it a reality. There is anecdotal evidence that church members and other Ministers assume that age and length of service will determine leadership roles, that male leaders will be chosen above female, and that SMs will be regarded as preferable to NSMs.

If our EOP is to mean anything those assumptions must be challenged.

### **5. Sharing Opportunities and Resources**

Teams offer a particular opportunity for the sharing of many features of ministry. Skills are allowed to be complementary and members of the Team can be recruited for particular gifts.

**5.1. Initial Ministerial Training**

It is essential that all candidates for ordination are made aware of the situation in the United Reformed Church, i.e. that most pastorates are shared in some form or another. It is also essential that they learn how Groups work and how they may be expected to work in a collaborative way with colleagues. The many advantages of Groups, such as sharing responsibility and dividing the work to suit each individuals talents, should also be emphasised. If possible all students should spend some time in a Group situation during their training.

**5.2. Continuing Ministerial Education**

Continuing Ministerial Education (CME) is intended (among other things) to develop the skills needed to augment those already available. In this way a Team can be seen as a genuine resource across the whole spectrum of the life of a pastorate, enabling it to have available a far greater range of expertise.



# E

## GUIDELINES

### 1. Guidelines

The following guidelines are only intended to provide those setting up Groups or Teams with a checklist. They can do no more than offer a framework against which to check local experience. All situations are unique and any guidance will have to be modified according to local needs. There are however some fundamental issues that need to be considered.

#### 1.1. Role of District Councils and Synods

The Structures of the United Reformed Church provide for Synods to "receive and decide upon recommendations from the district councils on all matters regarding the grouping.... of local churches..." [Manual 2.4.A.iv. p..B9 (1998)]. This assumes that the rationale for any Grouping will be worked out both locally and within the District.

#### 1.2. Structure and Mission

The present Basis of Union, although much modified since the 1970's, remains a structure for a settled church in a settled community.

With

- the appointment of Mission Enablers,
- the recognition of Mission Projects,
- the creation of Mission Council,
- the re-designation of the British Isles as a mission area by the Council for World Mission,
- the union with the Congregational Union of Scotland
- and the increase in Ecumenical Areas,

the time may be right to review the Basis of Union as a whole. This would not only recognise Groups as normative, rather than exceptional, but try to provide a bias towards mission, innovation and new development, rather than settled patterns. Our proposals are intended as a step in this direction, but we draw attention to this wider issue.

#### 1.3. Why a Group?

Any Grouping of Churches must arise out of the local needs to engage in Mission. Even if we start from the premise that a Group or Team is needed in order that the local church(es) may simply survive, behind that lies the question "To survive for what?" Unless the ultimate objective is to engage in more effective Mission then not only is the establishment of the Group questionable, so is the continuation of the church(es) involved. The attitude of "Sufficient for my time O Lord", in which members simply want to ensure the church survives to see out their lifetime, can never be a successful or justified basis for creating a group.

Local churches may be led to make the decision to form a Group for themselves. But District Councils also have a role in that process. To them falls the need to have a strategic view of the mission and ministry of the District. Often it is for the District to initiate the



challenge to the churches to think in new ways about their relationships and their mission.

#### **1.4. Consultation – Consultation - Consultation**

The process may begin with a local church initiative. It may arise out of a District strategy. It may begin in an ecumenical context. Wherever it begins there are three essential elements to it – Consultation – Consultation and finally Consultation!

That process must begin and end with the local church members, who need to know and understand what is happening, and why it is being considered. “Owning the decision” is a crucial element. Without that understanding the seeds of failure are built in from the beginning.

The District Pastoral Committee (or its equivalent) has a crucial role to play, as it exercises its responsibility for an overview of church life and an overall strategy for Ministry and Mission in the District. It also has a primary responsibility to consult and be seen to consult. To move very far without the knowledge of the churches is to threaten its credibility as a servant of the churches and to foster an “us and them” mentality.

#### **1.5. Ecumenical Involvement**

If there is to be an ecumenical involvement then the Moderator of the Synod also needs to be consulted early in the process. It will be necessary to bring in other Ecumenical Church Leaders and intermediate Ecumenical Bodies at an early stage.

First that openness and trust between the possible ecumenical partners is established from the beginning. Secondly that any planned Group can benefit from the wealth of experience available. It is all too easy to spend unnecessary time “reinventing the wheel”, when many of the issues to be addressed have already been encountered and advice and guidance is readily available. (e.g. “How to Make it Work” [Meth/URC]).

Our own national Ecumenical Committee and Secretary for Ecumenical Relations are available for consultation, as are Synod Committees and Secretaries and local ecumenical officers.

The use of ecumenical experience, however, should not be limited to those situations where there is to be a specific and formal ecumenical involvement. Ecumenical experience can be a useful insight into the structuring and organising of Groups and Groupings, and should not be neglected.

#### **1.6. What sort of Group?**

Groups, like people, come in all shapes and sizes. It is crucial that the type of Group meets the local needs. Consulting with and visiting other Groups is one way of trying to determine what might or might not work. Those already working in such situations can speak of both the strengths and weaknesses of their form of Grouping. Learning from others is a constructive way forward.



### **1.7. What needs to be included in a constitution?**

A constitution must be drawn up. It is essential this be done before a Group comes into being. Such a document is designed to help a Group be clear about how it will operate, not least at times of disagreement. Such occasions can emerge early on, as new and unforeseen circumstances occur. They are the moments to have a Constitution already available, not to be seeking to write one!

It is not our task here to set out possible Constitutions. Many are available and Synod Offices will have copies of those operating in their Synod Area. Likewise draft constitutions are available for most ecumenical situations.

The Constitution must cover some essential elements

- basic principles
- membership of the Group,
- decision making
- how Churches join or leave.
- how the Group is to be funded.
- how Leaders are to be called
- the provision and upkeep of buildings.
- how grievances are to be handled
- review procedures

Only when all the essential are in place should arrangements be made for the Group to come into being.

## **2. The Calling of leaders**

This section is meant to deal with the Calling of Leaders from outside the Group and does not relate to the appointment of Group Officers (Secretary/Treasurer etc).

### **2.1. A Vacancy Committee**

A vacancy committee is almost always the best way to deal with the selection and introduction of a candidate. A combined meeting of all the Elders (or their equivalent) will almost always prove too large. The procedure for meeting, interviewing and recommending a candidate to the church needs to be agreed and laid out in advance. It should then be for the Vacancy Committee to determine whether a candidate should visit with a view.

### **2.2. Role of the Church Meeting(s)**

Under our present constitution the calling of a minister rests in the hands of the local church meeting(s). Only if churches worshipping at different locations have constituted themselves with one Membership, one Elders meeting and one Church Meeting which governs all church life, (as already provided for in the Manual – Structures para.1.1) can they meet and vote as a single body. This limitation has not always been realised and therefore is not practised

In every other situation each and every member church in a Group MUST (according to the Manual) hold its own meeting, cast and count its own votes, and reach the required majority in order for the call to be issued. In such circumstances it is NOT possible, at present, to hold one joint church meeting and have a single



combined vote. That does NOT constitute a call, and a District Council would not be able to concur with a call that was based on that procedure.

**2.3. Voting Procedures**

It is perfectly in order to hold a combined Church Meeting of all the Group Churches, on the same day, at the same time and in the same place. But when the voting takes place it MUST be church by church and each of the churches must achieve the agreed percentage. That may be achieved by a show of hands, church by church, or by dividing into separate meetings, or by using identifiable ballot papers.

The voting must be recorded and declared church by church and the District advised of the figures. The candidate should also be made aware of the voting figures.

**2.4. Percentages Required**

The percentage required for a call to be issued is not laid down in the Manual and already varies from pastorate to pastorate. It must be for the Group to determine what that figure shall be for them. The only common and essential factor is that such a percentage MUST be agreed before the vacancy procedure is begun so that all concerned know, at the outset of the process, what will be required for a successful call to be issued. It is essential that is NOT left until a candidate is before the pastorate.

*The call is accepted by the minister then the decision is referred to both the receiving and sending District Councils for concurrence.*

**2.5. Balance between member churches of the Group in respect of their membership numbers**

One of the problems that such separate voting raises is that it gives equal weight to the voting of each church irrespective of the membership. This means that in issuing a call the voting of a Church of 20 members has the same impact as a church of 200 members in the same Group.

There will be different views on the wisdom of this situation.

The matter may be academic if a call is being issued with the support of all the Group churches. However, if a call is not issued, then it may lead to dissatisfaction and even resentment, particularly if the failure to call rests on one or two votes. If, for example, the issuing of a call requires the support of 90% of those present and voting, and a church of 20 members only has 10 members present and voting, it only requires 2 members to vote against for the call to be withheld. In effect one member has thwarted the will of the rest of the whole group however large the group may be, and even if the rest of the Group was unanimous.

It can be hoped that a combined meeting prior to voting will help produce a consensus in each of the votes. However it cannot eliminate altogether the possibility of such a situation occurring.



On the other hand we could change our Basis of Union to allow church members within a Group to meet together as a single Church Meeting for the purpose of issuing a Call. That system, however, contains within it the weakness that the smaller church(es) can simply be outvoted by the greater numbers from the larger church(es).

Safeguards can be provided by ensuring that the percentage required is such that it can only be achieved by some of the smaller church(es) having to be in favour. Such a provision does not, however, eliminate the possibility of a single member thwarting the wishes of the majority.

On balance we believe that such a change is necessary and that the benefits outweigh the disadvantages. Such a provision would not be mandatory, but would offer the option of such a procedure to a group that wished to constitute itself in that way. This provision may be extended to other group decisions if it is deemed necessary. If so, such provisions would need to be built into the constitution.

**2.6. How to restructure or dissolve**

Groups have to be created to permit change. They must have built into them the mechanisms for change so that they may respond to the changing circumstances of the member churches, the wider District, the ecumenical scene and the needs of the community.

Any constitution must provide for a process of change in the structure, and membership of the Group, as well as the dissolution of the Group when it no longer serves the mission of the church.

**2.7. Regular review**

Regular reviews are already a part of much of church life and Groups should not be an exception. The constitution must provide for this process. This should include internally and externally held reviews.

**2.8. Support Groups**

Support Groups also have a useful role to play, both for the ministers and other staff members and for the Groups themselves. They provide an opportunity for reflection and appraisal.

**2.9. Relating to other councils**

The second major area of concern for Groups is the added burden that comes when another tier of organisation is inserted between local church structures and those of the District and Synod. This problem is compounded when the Group has an ecumenical component and more than one denomination is requiring participation in wider Councils.

Because Groups are not recognised as units within the church structure they cannot be represented, for themselves, at District Councils or Synods. The time has come to address this issue.

**2.10. Representation at District Council and Synod**

Churches within a Group should not be required to be represented individually at District and Synod, but should be allowed Group representation. Group representation has the advantage of releasing



some members from additional meetings. This has only a notional disadvantage of reducing the number of District Council and Synod members and depriving the councils of working members, or the breadth of consultation, because experience indicates that some churches do not send representatives anyway.

If Group Representation were to be allowed it would place greater responsibilities, on those so appointed, for reporting back to Group Churches.

We do not send delegates, but representatives to the councils of the church. The District Council and Synod have to function in their own right, fulfilling the functions laid down by the Basis of Union. However the District Council and Synod are there to serve the Church and the pressure on all active church members is felt at all levels.

In considering making special provisions for Group representation, in is necessary to consider whether or not a new ratio of representation ought not to be introduced for all churches. A ratio of one representative to 100 members could improve membership and attendance at both District Council and Synod.

#### **2.11. Groups as Councils of the Church**

The Working Party did consider whether or not Groups should be encouraged to take over some District Council functions. However, it was felt that the thrust of this Report was based on the assumption that one of the main objectives was that by sharing the work load they would relieve the local churches of some burdens. This could only be achieved if the local churches were relieved of administrative burdens. It is felt that by taking on District Council functions this add too, rather than relieve them of administrative burdens.

If this issues needs further consideration then it may need to be addressed by a different Working Party looking at the wider issue of the Basis of Union and the future structure and functions of both District Councils and Synods.

#### **2.12. Ecumenical Considerations**

All the denominations have their legitimate needs for representatives at their various council meetings. Such is essential lest an ecumenical Group runs the risk of becoming a quasi denomination on its own. However Group and Team structures need to free us for mission, not draw us into greater administrative burdens.

It may be that we need clearer national guidelines on the expectation of representations from ecumenical groupings to all the denominational church councils.



# **F**

## **Conclusions**

1. The value and place of Groups in the life of the United Reformed Church is amply demonstrated in the diversity and breadth of opportunity and experience they offer.
2. There is merit in considering every church being part of a Group or a cluster.
3. The value of working as a Team is an inescapable consequence of such a conclusion.
4. Training for such work is essential for both ministers and churches.
5. The time has come for constitutional change to recognise the place of Groups within the United Reformed Church structures.
6. The burden of representation on denominational church councils in an ecumenical situation needs to be addressed urgently.

# G

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. General

- 1.1. That Districts be encouraged to look at ways in which all churches can be part of a group or cluster
- 1.2. That training programmes (IMT, CME, and lay training) make particular provision for developing the skills necessary for group and team work.
- 1.3. That District Councils ensure that in future Constitutions are in place and signed before Groups are allowed to begin their life.
- 1.4. That District Councils make provision for the regular review of Groups, possibly alongside the Quinquennial visitations.
- 1.5. That the Ecumenical Committee consult partner churches to agree realistic expectations in respect of attendance at church councils.

### 2. Required changes to the Basis of Union

- 2.1. To recognise Groups as a constituent part of the United Reformed Church
- 2.2. To give Groups membership of District Councils and Synods
- 2.3. To allow the representation of lay members on District Councils and Synods to be based on the membership of the Group
- 2.4. To reduce the lay representative/membership ratio from 1 for the first 200 members to 1 for the first 100 and 1 for every 100 (or part) thereafter
- 2.5. To give Groups the option of representation as in 2.4 above but with a minimum of 2 representatives
- 2.6. To enable Groups to have the option to meet as a single joint church meeting in all matters relating to the calling of a minister. Such an option to be included in the constitution at the setting up of the group and to include the agreed percentage for a successful call to be issued.



# APPENDIX

## RESOURCES

The Basis of Union	The United Reformed Church	
How to Make it work	A pack of advice for locally united Methodist and United Reformed Churches	Meth/URC Liaison Comm.
This Growing Unity Roger Nunn	Handbook on ecumenical developments	CTE
Under the same roof	Guidelines to the Sharing Of Church Buildings Act 1969	CTE
Travelling together Welch & Winfield	A Handbook on Local Ecumenical Partnerships	CTE
Getting to know you Meth/URC	Information pack for local Methodist & UR Churches	
Together Locally		CTE
Constitutional Guidelines for LEPs		CTE
Constitution of a United Area in Wiltshire and of an Oversight Group		



MISSION COUNCIL  
*1 - 3 October 1999*

L

## **URC TASK GROUP ON DISCIPLINE**

**A REPORT TO MISSION COUNCIL**



THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

URC Task Group on Discipline: a report to Mission Council

Task Group Members

Revd Ken Graham  
Revd Julian Macro (Convener)  
Mrs Dorothy Spencer (Secretary)  
Miss Rosemary Wright

Terms of Reference

The task group is asked to consider how the Mission Council might respond to Part 1 of the Assembly resolution on discipline (1996: resolution 54 Record p23).

Resolution 54

Assembly commends Mission Council for the work done on the disciplinary procedures for ordained ministers of word and sacrament and asks Mission Council to continue this work by reviewing:

1. all the procedures for disciplinary action for all members of the URC whether they be ordained or not,
2. and also its procedures for when pastoral difficulties or breakdown occur.

doing so in a form intended to be helpful to local churches and district councils. The particular reason for this form is that the Structures give local churches, through their elders' and church meetings, responsibility for maintaining standards of membership.

It is asked to widen the brief to include people who are part of the fellowship of a local church but not church members, and officers of district councils who are not ministers.

The group should consider work already done, in particular by ecumenical partners and within the reformed tradition, and including the publication on discipline produced by the Doctrine and Worship Committee some years ago.

The group should consider theological issues. These will include the relationship of discipleship and discipline, the doctrine of forgiveness and reconciliation, as well as questions of justice.

Among other issues that may be included are:

- \* possible guidance on standards of membership
- \* with whom should the procedure start
- \* criteria for making judgements
- \* issues of confidentiality
- \* discipline and pastoral care
- \* procedures and processes: good practice
- \* the keeping of records
- \* the roles of elders' meetings and church meetings
- \* discipline and civil or criminal litigation
- \* discipline and its effect on fellowship
- \* discipline and publicity
- \* appeals procedure

The group should have in mind the existing Section O process for the discipline of ministers, recognising that ministers fall outside its brief but wanting to give advice which is consistent with that process.



## Introduction

Noting this last point about the Section O Process, we feel that it is relevant to note the following excerpts from it:

### "1. Why Discipline?"

1.1. The words 'disciple' and 'discipline' have obvious common roots. A Christian disciple is one who follows Jesus and whose desire is to learn from Him the meaning of life and to put that meaning into practice. Disciples learn in a variety of ways and grow as they learn. From time to time they err and require discipline to remind them of the standards they have espoused, to correct them and bring them into renewed commitment.

1.2. Those who are appointed to leadership within the community of disciples have particular responsibilities in learning, teaching and living. Their living affects and conditions their leadership. By virtue of their office, they also stand in a particular relationship to the Church which appoints them. Therefore, when they err, the Church has a responsibility to exercise discipline out of concern both for them and for the well-being of the Church."

Further reference was made to Schedule E, paragraph 2:

"Ministers must conduct themselves and exercise all aspects of their ministries in a manner which is compatible with the unity and peace of the United Reformed Church and the affirmation made by ministers at ordination and induction (Schedule C) and the Statement concerning the nature, faith and order of the United Reformed Church (Schedule D) in accordance with which ministers undertake to exercise their ministry."

We note that the disciplinary process for ministers is not specifically "offence based" but is judged against the touchstone of "the unity and peace of the United Reformed Church." We therefore feel that for the sake of consistency any process affecting those who are not ministers should also not be offence based but rather be related to experience of the unity and peace of the church. Nevertheless we also recognise that many prophets of both the Bible and Christian History, not least the Reformers, disturbed the peace and unity of the church that had nurtured them. This leads us to be cautious about using "the unity and peace of the church" as the sole criterion by which Christians should be judged.

We found the following Bible passages helpful.

"If your brother sins against you, go to him and show him his fault. But do it privately, just between yourselves. If he listens to you, you have won your brother back. But if he will not listen to you, take one or two other persons with you, so that 'every accusation may be upheld by the testimony of two or more witnesses', as the scripture says. And if he will not listen to them, then tell the whole thing to the church. Finally, if he will not listen to the church, treat him as though he were a pagan or a tax collector." Matthew 18. 15-17

".... please, I beg you, try to agree as sisters in the Lord. And you too, my faithful partner, I want you to help these women; for they have worked hard with me to spread the gospel...." Philippians 4. 2-4



## Some Biblical and Theological insights and perspectives

Notwithstanding our Terms of Reference we question whether "Discipline" is the right initial response when difficulties arise. We feel that conflict resolution and conciliation should be addressed first. A framework and general guidelines would be helpful in dealing with tensions and problems in church life. Such a framework requires a theological perspective to increase our awareness of what it means to belong to Christ. In devising such a framework, it is important to consider what sort of church we wish to belong to, therefore the following biblical perspectives may be considered.

1. First of all by what criteria are standards of behaviour and practice to be considered?

Some examples might include:

Isaiah 1. 16-17: "Cease to do evil, learn to do good: seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow."

Hosea 6.8: "He has told you, O mortal, what is good: and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God."

Mark 10.23 observes "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God."

These examples (and there are others of a similar nature) might cause us to ask, are we not all under judgement?

2. This also raises for us the issue of judgement itself.

Here we have the word of Matthew 7.1ff: "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgement you make you will be judged."

With this in mind we have to be careful in framing criteria for discipline lest we lay ourselves open to hypocrisy and self-righteousness.

3. Is it possible therefore to formulate criteria that are compatible with the gospel?

It is worth considering, in this context, whether we are members of an institution with its own code of practice or more akin to a community of friends. As a consequence how are we to view membership?

In Mark 2. 15-17 we find Jesus accused of eating with "sinners and tax collectors." We also read that those invited to be among the first followers and friends of Jesus were flawed people guilty of betrayal, denial and the pursuit of ambition.

These are the people with whom Jesus is engaged. As Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 1.15: "The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Jesus came into the world to save sinners - of whom I am the foremost." This suggests that humility is a more than appropriate response to the gospel.

4. Bearing all this in mind we are forced to consider what the local church is, and who it is for, and how the community of Christians can sensitively be held together in a creative and loving way.

In Ephesians 4.1-16 reference is made to "building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ." And then goes on to speak of promoting "the body's growth in building itself up in love."

These insights suggest a model of the Church more appropriate for the needs of our time. The gospel points us towards a community whose characteristics are openness, humility, loving respect of others and their story, the provision of space to grow and mature as Christians, as well as tolerance, rather than the rigid application of disciplinary standards, standards that in fact might be impossible to apply.



Referring to some of the points listed in our brief, we can report that we consulted sister churches and an Appendix gives our summary of the information that they helpfully provided. It will be seen that the Presbyterian Church in Ireland has developed a structured Conciliation Service in recent years. This has been a costly exercise which has proved helpful when invoked at an early stage in a problem. We understand that the Thames North has something comparable and in practice District Pastoral committees often need to provide such a service on an ad hoc basis.

We considered the booklet on Church Discipline published by the United Reformed Church in 1983 and feel that its style is more authoritarian than would be found either helpful or acceptable today.

Situations do arise which require conflict resolution. To whom should local congregations refer if they feel out of their depth? What help can be given by District Council or Synod? What support, guidance and training is given to Synod Moderators and other officers in dealing with such matters?

The fact that sister churches have not got legislation may be a helpful pointer for us, and the fact that they have minimal guidelines may also be a pointer!

As regards other issues listed in our brief, we make these observations:

\* possible guidance on standards of membership: this would be a major piece of work that is beyond our brief and is probably part of the remit of the Life and Witness Committee. What are the criteria for Church Membership? What help should be available to people to discover and live out what it means to be Christian? What ethical standards should influence the way Church Members reach their personal decisions and adopt a lifestyle? As already noted we prefer to look to conciliation and conflict resolution rather than discipline when problems arise. It would be more helpful for people to be given guidance in finding the right way, rather than being confronted with a code of discipline when it is alleged that they are at fault. Furthermore, a code of discipline implies the availability of sanctions for misconduct and as the local church is in practice a voluntary association, sanctions are not a serious option, at least in our current understanding and practice.

\* with whom should the procedure start: it begins with the local congregation of the church and the District Council.

\* criteria for making judgements: these should follow the pattern of the Section O process and Schedule E, paragraph 2.

\* issues of confidentiality and discipline and pastoral care: it is a pastoral task to deal effectively with these concerns.

\* the keeping of records: by what means, by whom and for what purpose?

\* the roles of elders' meetings and church meetings: The URC Basis of Union sets these out. Reflections on the twelve functions of the elders' meeting as laid down in our manual are contained in the 1998 URC publication, "Refreshing the Elders Meeting", compiled by Revd Peter McIntosh and Revd Graham Robson.



\* discipline and civil or criminal litigation, discipline and its effect on the fellowship, discipline and publicity, appeals procedure: are all linked together and will be influenced by the differing facts of each case and the nature and seriousness of the allegations. The possibility of people being intimidated by those who are more forceful must be recognised but we do not know of any simple guidelines to deal with any and all situations! But we note that the following situations can occur within Christian Fellowships:

Dominant personalities using power games  
Offensive and disruptive behaviour  
Broken marriages, when ex-partners are in same congregation  
Homosexual partnerships within the congregation  
Abuse of spouse  
Abuse of a child  
Criminal offences against people and property  
Financial irregularities and mismanagement  
Litigious complaints e.g. advice, racism  
Doctrinal disagreements

All may need skilled help in conciliation and conflict resolution. We think that it would be most helpful if "conciliation persons" were identified and recognised within each District and Province so that those in local congregations would know to whom they could turn.

#### Our conclusions

The members of the Task Group do not feel that a formal disciplinary process is required to be established for those who are not ministers but do feel that such congregations should know where to find help for a conciliation process.

It would be helpful if guidelines were produced to help people work out for themselves what it means to be a Church Member.

Preparation and training are essential to equip people in the church for their roles, which can have increasingly diverse responsibilities, reflecting the complex changes in our society. Conflict resolution needs confidentiality, maturity and sensitivity to achieve a positive outcome.

A formal conciliation procedure (as developed by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland) would be an expensive agency whose likely use might not be thought to justify the cost. We think that consideration should be given to the support, guidance and training available to Synod Moderators and other officers in dealing with such matters so that conciliators can be identified and recognised within each District and Synod, having received such training as is necessary. While conflict resolution is a local matter where issues enter the public domain the recognised conciliator, or some other previously identified by District or Synod, should guide and advise those concerned.

We accept that this report does not provide any code of discipline but we suggest to Mission Council that the areas of further work we have identified would be of greater value to our Church.



THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH IN THE UNITED KINGDOM  
TASK GROUP ON DISCIPLINE OF NON-MINISTERS  
Consulting with other denominations

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland

There is provision for a formal trial of any accused person but in practice this is only invoked for ministers, and even then quite rarely. The prospect of such trial is usually enough to precipitate, for example, a voluntary resignation. A conviction in a civil court for a serious offence usually results in the resignation of, for example, elders, youth leaders etc., but these matters always seem to be dealt with informally.

"The Church cannot administer a censure simply on the basis of proceedings in a civil court (including a criminal court) but must conduct its own trial." (Weatherhead, the Constitution and Laws of the Church of Scotland p.73).

A Conciliation Service has been developed in the last few years. This has proved helpful when invoked at an early stage in a problem.

There is an "administrative" (i.e. non-judicial) process for dealing with a minister whose "usefulness has been seriously impaired". If an office-bearer or church member is found to have contributed to that situation, they can now be dealt with and removed from office in the congregation, or other appropriate action may be taken.

There is room for diversity of opinion within a congregation. It is not always the case that only the opinion of one person or one group should prevail. Open discussion and decision-making need opportunities to be provided within the system of church government.

A shift in emphasis in 1995 is reflected in the change of name from Panel on the Resolution of Conflict to Conciliation Panel.

The Church of Scotland

The discipline of elders and other non-ministers has not been the subject of major legislation during this Church's modern era. The only legislation commonly invoked in a situation where non-ministers are creating havoc is the Act Anent Congregations in an Unsatisfactory State, an Act of 1988. This was an attempt to provide Presbyteries with a mechanism whereby the pastoral tie of a minister could be dissolved in a situation of irretrievable difficulty in a congregation but without the attribution of blame and without any presumption that the blame must lie with the minister. The weakness of that approach in our experience is that the Church has no legislated method for declaring fault where it lies with those who are not ministers.

In terms of common law in the Church, elders and ordinary members are subject to the discipline of the Kirk Session whereas ministers, licentiates and deacons are subject to the discipline of the Presbytery. Predictably, difficulties arise in a situation of conflict where the parties are subject to different authorities. The Presbytery is the superior court while the Kirk Session is the inferior court. At worst, a Presbytery may have to exercise formal superintendence of a Kirk Session reluctant to discipline one of its members. The final resort in these difficult situations is the 1988 Act mentioned earlier, and beginning proceedings under the Act is often more of a threat than a reality.



While it may seem strange that this is such an unlegislated area in law, it is a field of practice in which the want of written law leaves scope for the most flexible and wise application of pastoral and supervisory assistance, and so perhaps this openness has its merits.

#### The Baptist Union of Great Britain

Most churches have their own disciplinary procedures with members which will probably tend to go along with the Matthew 18 principle, but given the diversity of this denomination with each church being free to act according to its own conscience, there is a wide experience of disciplinary procedures. David Coffey's book, 'Build that Bridge' has a chapter entitled, 'Discipline is Discipleship' and was written in 1985 for the Baptist community.

"So why bother with Church discipline?"

.... Because the people of God are likened to sheep, not pigeons. The average believer has an instinct to stray, not to make for home. Sheep need shepherds."

#### The Methodist Council

Detailed papers cover health issues, disciplinary questions with a disciplinary process outlined, sexual harassment and abuse including the European Commission definition and a response to the issues.

In the 1998 Conference Agenda, the section on 'Disciplinary and Related Issues' contains proposals for dealing with 'Complaints and Discipline'.

"A/ These proposals are intended to cover all types of complaint.

A8/ There can be no exhaustive catalogue of possible complaints. Some examples must suffice to illustrate their variety. There may be:

- \* a clash of strong personalities leading to deepening estrangement
- \* inconsiderate or foolish behaviour causing hurt to another
- \* behaviour misunderstood and perceived to be intended to cause hurt or harm
- \* prejudice leading to derogatory remarks and discriminatory behaviour on the basis of race or gender
- \* failure, through oversight or otherwise, to consult others before decisions are taken
- \* abuse of power by those in a position to exercise it
- \* ablatant intimidation in public
- \* sexual harassment and abuse
- \* neglect of the duties of office
- \* other behaviour which the church has long recognised as incompatible with office in the church, such as adultery or drunkenness
- \* expression of doctrinal views incompatible with the teaching of the Methodist Church

A9 Some of these warrant formal disciplinary action. Others are best dealt with in other ways. There can be no catch-all system to deal with such variety which avoids relying on the exercise of judgement as to how serious the complaint is."



MISSION COUNCIL  
*1 - 3 October 1999*

M

## Resource Planning Advisory Group

### Deployment Update

Over the last year and a half RPAG has helped the URC develop a strategy for deployment. A full presentation was given at the October 1998 Mission Council. After discussion Mission Council adopted the following policy for deployment.

Numbers of stipendiary ministers will track membership as at present. This means that as membership grows, provision of stipendiary ministry will grow at approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  the rate; similarly if membership declines further provision of stipendiary ministry will fall at about  $\frac{1}{2}$  that in the decline of membership.

1999 General Assembly accepted this as part of the budget report and presentation for 2000.

RPAG, therefore considers its substantive work relating to this subject to be at an end. The policy has been determined and responsibility for its implementation has been transferred to (and been accepted by) Ministries Committee. However RPAG recognises that it would be helpful to provide a review of the current status as a proper tidying up. This can be found on the attached table dated 30 March 1999 which was produced by Ministries following discussion with Synod Moderators. An updated table will be available from Ministries in a couple of months.

RPAG stands ready to assist in case of difficulty in any future deployment issues but would express the hope that the Moderators and Ministries Committee will be able to work harmoniously to ensure the smooth implementation of the agreed policy.



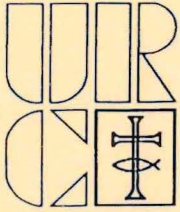
FIGURES FROM DISCUSSION ON DEPLOYMENT TARGETS - 30TH MARCH 1999

Province	1996 fair share of ministers	1996 agreed target	Deployed March 1999	Declared Vacancies March 99	Expected vacancies before summer	2000 fair share of ministers	2000 target including vacancy rate
1	49	55	48.25	5	2	44	48
2	65	64	54.5	13.5	0	61	67
3	42	48	46	9.5	4	40	46
4	49	53	45	6.6	3.5	46	53
5	51	53	53.4	10	3	49	60
6	62	64	54.5	14		58	64
7	54	54	47.15	12.5	1	49	54
8	47	49	46.42	4.3	1	44	50
9	65	66	61.25	3	10	62	68
10	66	79	67.97	13	2	62	71
11	83	88	81.92	6.6	6	77	89
12	42	42	34.58	3	8	39	43
Totals	675	715	640.94	101	40.5	631	713

Please note that these figures were produced following a discussion with the Moderators

It is important to realise that the final column, '2000 target including vacancy rate', relates to pastorates not ministers





MISSION COUNCIL  
*1 – 3 October 1999*

N

**Training Committee**

**A. Mansfield College, Oxford**

The Training Committee has given careful thought to how it can fulfil the General Assembly's desire to retain four centres for ministerial training. This is both a Mansfield matter and a wider issue. For the moment we refer to Mansfield.

- (i) We were very sad to learn that Catherine Middleton has been unable to continue her work as Acting Director of Ordination Training, due to the progress of her cancer. Dale Rominger, who has assisted Catherine for a year, is willing to plan and oversee the programme in the coming year, subject to suitable arrangements being agreed by the College.
- (ii) No new students entered the ordination programme in 1999, by agreement (some months ago) between the Training Committee and the College, in the light of the uncertainties that then attended future planning. There are, however, some financial costs to the College of running the ordination programme with a missing year-group, and these will need to be met.
- (iii) The Principal of the College (not himself a theologian, just as the College is not predominantly a theological college) has written to urge that we take proper account of the needs of the College, if we want them to resume admitting our students for ordination training. He asks if we can provide a guaranteed minimum of five entrants per annum, and that these be academically able students equipped to benefit from the very close relationship between the College and Oxford University.
- (iv) Our short answer is that we can try, but we cannot guarantee, for our policy is to treat all our students according to need (needs which are not narrowly academic) and our colleges even-handedly. No guarantee is given to any other college and (as John Waller said at Assembly) the total number of URC ordinands in college is presently below the aggregate viable minimum number for the colleges we use. The Training Committee does not recommend giving any institution guarantees that might impair the work of another, or might restrict our ability to train students according to need.
- (iv) Nonetheless we understand some of the reasons for Mansfield's concern, and believe that we should go some distance to meet these. Were the church not to take the Principal's letter seriously, the climate would be uncongenial to creative thinking about alternative ways of retaining a worthwhile Reformed presence in Oxford University. So we have conferred with Congregational colleagues, and made three suggestions to Mansfield.
- (v) The first is a plea for time. We have asked that the College extend until the autumn of 2002 the period when the ordination programme is served by an Acting Director.
- (v) The second matter is financial. We have offered to ask Mission Council to underwrite the training costs of an agreed minimum number of students at Mansfield in these three years. That will allow the College to provide proper training as the empty year-group, the entry class of 1999, moves through the programme, without binding us to finding a fixed number of entrants for 2000 and 2001. More detail about the likely sums involved will be given at Mission Council.



- (vi) The third is a request for creative discussion in the coming two years, of how best the College can help the churches in the long run, in ways which respect both the College's place in Oxford University and the changing training needs of the churches.
- (vii) The Principal is evidently willing to explore these proposals, and we look forward to some constructive discussion in the coming weeks.

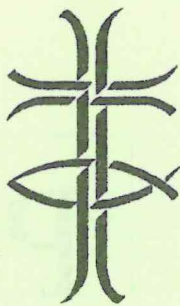
## **B. Wider Concerns**

Assembly took its decision in the knowledge that we have an over-provision of college places - there are not at present enough ordinands to meet the viable student numbers for the colleges we use -, and that there would have been savings in reducing from four colleges to three. Assembly knew it was not voting for the cheapest option available.

The Committee reckons that we must now try to establish a climate of security and sustainability in which all four colleges can work. Morale, strategic planning, the attraction of quality staff, and ecumenical relationships all depend on our colleges knowing that they have the confidence of the church and that they will be realistically and lastingly resourced for the work asked of them. If there is a financial cost to the church in this, that is a consequence for which Assembly voted.

The Committee will need to be in touch with all four colleges in the coming months, and will expect to report to Mission Council, not only about Mansfield, but also on this wider situation.

*John Proctor, 27th September 1999*



**MISSION COUNCIL**  
*1 - 3 October 1999*



**GEREJA PRESBYTERIAN MALAYSIA**  
**(THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN MALAYSIA)**

In the course of transferring title to its land and property in Malaysia a new trustees, Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia (GPM) has requested the assistance of the United Reformed Church (the URC) in perfecting these transfers of title.

To understand this request, some background is necessary. Prior to 1972 the Presbyterian Church of England (the PC of E) undertook missionary work in Malaysia through its Foreign Missions Committee (FMC). The PC of E and its General Assembly and committees were dissolved by the United Reformed Church Act in 1972, their functions in future being carried out by the General Assembly and the corresponding councils/committees of the URC.

Also in the 1970's it was realised that traditional missionary activity was unsatisfactory because "it perpetuated the relationship of donor and recipient and failed to give adequate place to the talents, gifts and resources of every church in the one co-operative mission enterprise". The Council for World Mission (CWM) therefore came into being and the URC became a member church as did many of the new churches which were formerly foreign missions of their parent denominations (including GPM), having the status of member churches of CWM in their own right.

However, although GPM has now been managing its own affairs for the last twenty years, the following problem has arisen. Because various enactments passed before 1972 had vested the control of certain property in the FMC, the consent of its successor body to such transfers is required. The General Assembly of the URC is the appropriate authority for this purpose, and Mission Council in its executive capacity can act on its behalf. Accordingly Mission Council is asked to pass the resolutions set out below:

In accordance with the powers devolved upon it by the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church and acting on its behalf, Mission Council resolves as follows:

1. to confirm that the United Reformed Church does not claim any right or authority to exercise control over any Malaysian property belonging to Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia and
2. to ratify the actions taken by Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia with regard to the transfer of properties in Malaysia under its control insofar as such ratification is legally necessary and
3. to confirm that from this moment the United Reformed Church relinquishes permanently to Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia all such control and authority as may be vested in it by any enactment or deed in relation to any such Malaysian property so that in future Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia shall be able to act without reference to the United Reformed Church.
4. to authorise the officers of General Assembly to give any future consents or confirmations which may be required in relations to the property and assets of Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia.





MISSION COUNCIL  
*1 - 3 October 1999*

P

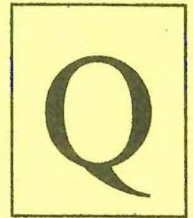
*Appointment of Director*

At some appropriate moment the General Secretary will move the following

**Mission Council, under authority delegated by the General Assembly (1994 resolution 11) in exercise of the power conferred on the General Assembly by section 7(2) of the United Reformed Church Act 1972 appoints Mr Michael Gabb as a director of the Congregational Union of Gloucestershire and Herefordshire Inc.**



MISSION COUNCIL  
*1 - 3 October 1999*



FOR INFORMATION ONLY

**EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE**

**Data from Equal Ops questionnaire from General Assembly:**

Men	233		
Women	178		
		<b>Ages for men</b>	<b>Ages for women</b>
Under 25	27	12	15
25-59	240	138	101
60-65	74	45	27
65+	72	37	34
		<b>Ethnic men</b>	<b>Ethnic women</b>
Ethnic			
White	402	224	174
Black	3	1	2
Caribbean			
Black African	5	3	2
Black other	1	1	0
Irish	3	3	0
Other	1	0	0
		<b>Disabled Men</b>	<b>Disabled Women</b>
Not Disabled	368	20	17
Disabled	38	209	156

PLEASE LOOK AT THE PIE CHARTS DISPLAYED DURING THE MEETING OF MISSION COUNCIL.





MISSION COUNCIL  
*1 - 3 October 1999*

R

For Information

URC/Methodist Rural Officer/Consultant and the Arthur Rank Centre

The Arthur Rank Centre has been the churches' witness to the rural community at the National Agriculture Centre for approaching 30 years. It is backed by the Royal Agricultural Society, the Rank Trust, and the churches (Church of England, Methodist, United Reformed Church).

A couple of years ago there were discussions about the management and staffing of ARC. It was agreed in regard to staffing that the management committee would appoint the Director, the Church of England would appoint one staff member (its rural consultant) and the Methodists and URC make a joint appointment of a further staff member (our rural consultant).

Michael Cruchley's full-time post as Rural Consultant serving both the United Reformed and Methodist Churches finishes at the end of this year.

For some little time now, both churches have been in discussion, and it was agreed early on that a new joint appointment would be sought with the churches working collaboratively. The Secretary for Life and Witness together with the Methodist Church's Co-ordinating Secretary for Church and Society have carried those discussions forward and broad agreement has been reached on the job description/person specification, and the commitment of both churches to share equally all the costs of the new post.

It has been agreed that the appointment will be the responsibility of a joint interviewing panel comprised of three people from each church. As the Rural Consultant's work comes under the remit of Life and Witness, two people will represent that committee's interests, together with a further person who will represent the wider constituency of the United Reformed Church.

The conclusion of Michael's contract will also bring to an end the work of our Rural Strategy Group which has given personal support to him and oversight of the work of rural mission. This is expected to be replaced by a newly constituted joint URC/Methodist group with a similar remit.

Currently discussions are centring around the terms and conditions of appointment, housing provision, and management of the post-holder. It is expected that an advertisement will appear in the church press by the middle/end of October, with interviews to be concluded by early December, and an appointment announced before Christmas.