

**MISSION COUNCIL**  
**13 - 15 March 1998**

**MINUTES**

*Minutes of the Mission Council held at All Saints Pastoral Centre, St. Albans from 13 – 15 March 1998.*

**FRIDAY, 13TH MARCH**

The Reverend Vladimir Felzmann, Director of the Pastoral Centre, welcomed Mission Council to All Saints and gave a brief overview of the Centre's history and current work.

The Moderator, the Reverend David Jenkins, constituted the Meeting. The Chaplain, the Revd Stephen Thornton, led worship and the Moderator introduced a time of Bible listening and prayer.

**98/21 Welcome**

The Moderator welcomed members to the meeting, particularly the following who were attending for the first time: the Revd Michael Burrell (Eastern Province), Mrs. Wilma Prentice (Northern Province) and Mrs. Delyth Rees (Wales Province). He also welcomed the Revds Ken and Meriel Chippindale who were present as the Chaplains to the incoming Moderator.

**98/22 Attendance**

There were 67 members present with 11 members of staff in attendance, the Revds Ken and Meriel Chippindale and Mrs. Sally Brooks (Minute Secretary).

Apologies for absence were received from the Revds Michael Cruchley and Keith Forecast and Mr. Chris Wright. The Revd Sandra Lloydlangston was alternate for Mrs. Mary Eden.

**98/23 Minutes of Mission Council 24 January 1998**

The Minutes of the Mission Council held on 24 January 1998, which had been circulated, were approved and signed with the following corrections:

- 98/16 Reference to "Mrs. Gabrielle Cox" should read "Ms Gabrielle Cox"  
Reference to "the Revd Susan Flint" should read "the Revd Susan Flynn"

**98/24 Agenda**

The Deputy General Secretary detailed the extra items of business that would be included in the Agenda. He also drew the attention of the Council to a number of new papers that were available.

**98/25 Matters Arising**

**98/10 The Grouping of Churches**

The Deputy General Secretary introduced a report on the Grouping of Churches, which had been produced as a result of the discussion at the January 1998 meeting of the Mission Council, together with another paper detailing changes to the report suggested by the Clerk and the Legal Adviser. He suggested that the paper should be included in the Assembly Report.

The Revd Malcolm Hanson proposed that the report, together with the proposed amendments, be referred back for further work so that the wider issues could be considered and included within a single document.

After much discussion, Mission Council agreed to ask the Mission Council Advisory Group (MCAG) to establish a working group to consider all aspects of the grouping of churches and to report again to Mission Council. It was also agreed that Mission Council should report to General Assembly on the actions that had been taken following the Toller Commission and the further work that was to be done.

98/13 Management of the National Youth Resource Centre (NYRC), Yardley Hastings  
The Revd Graham Cook reported that, in accordance with the decision of the January meeting of Mission Council to establish a small group to listen to all views and opinions regarding the management of the NYRC, the group had met on 27 February at Yardley Hastings. They had had five meetings with different interest groups: the local church; the District Council; the Youth and Children's Work Committee; current staff members; and the Centre Management Committee. All groups shared a common concern: to give effective leadership to both the Yardley Hastings Centre and the local church without imposing undue and improper stress on anyone involved in giving that leadership.

Following these meetings the group now recommended to Mission Council:

- a) **that there should be an Assembly appointment of a Centre Minister who would be both minister of the local church (25%) and director of the Centre (75%) and that the Centre Management Committee should appoint a full time Centre Manager to be responsible to the Minister;**
- b) **that the Centre Manager should**
  - **have the competence to carry all the roles assigned to the post**
  - **be of sufficient standing to ensure that the Minister does not take to him/herself roles that properly belong to the Manager;**
- c) **that, recognising that the role of Centre Manager will carry greater responsibility than in the past, the salary should be in the range £17,000 - £21,000;**
- d) **that both the Minister and the Manager be committed to, and capable of, working together as a team.**

Mission Council agreed with the recommendations and authorised the appointments. The Moderator thanked the Group for their work, noted that advertisements for the two appointments would appear in the April issue of REFORM and asked Council members to encourage those they thought suitable for

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*The meeting took place on Monday morning and the Minutes are entered in Minutes 98-10 and 98-11 on pages 9 & 10.*

#### 98/27 General Secretary Review Group

The Moderator asked the members of staff to leave the meeting. He then explained that the Revd Tony Burnham would complete his 7 year appointment on 31 July 1999 and that he would be eligible for re-appointment. He reported that at its recent meeting the Mission Council Advisory Group realised that a resolution concerning this re-appointment or otherwise needs to be brought to the General Assembly in July 1998, rather than 1999, if sensible forward planning is to be possible. It had therefore taken certain steps that it hoped Mission Council would endorse.

The procedure for nominating and reviewing a General Secretary is as follows:

The General Assembly shall constitute a special committee consisting of two representatives appointed by each provincial synod, the Moderator of the General Assembly, the Convener of the Nominations Committee and nine persons selected by the Mission Council, five of whom shall be Conveners of Assembly Standing Committees, with authority to make a nomination for appointment as Clerk of Assembly and General Secretary to the Assembly. In any emergency the Mission Council shall be empowered to set up this committee.

The Moderator reported that, in the light of this procedure, MCAG had taken the following steps:

- (a) Synods had been asked to appoint their representatives to a review group, noting that the first meeting would be held at 9.30pm on Saturday, 14 March, at All Saints Pastoral Centre.
- (b) The Moderator had written to staff secretaries and invited them to send comments to him.
- (c) The Clerk had been appointed to act as secretary at meetings of the Review Group and the Deputy General Secretary had been asked to administer the arrangements before and after the meetings.

**Mission Council agreed to set up a General Secretary Review Group with a view to a recommendation being made to the 1998 General Assembly.**

**Mission Council endorsed the arrangements already made by the Mission Council Advisory Group in preparation for the first meeting of the Review Group.**

The Moderator reported that each of the Synods had appointed representatives to the Review Group and explained that it was necessary for Mission Council to appoint 9 people to the Group, five of whom should be Conveners of Assembly standing committees. The Clerk asked that nominations should be submitted by 7pm that evening.

*The Election to the Review Group took place on Friday evening and the results are detailed in Minute 98/35 on page 5.*

#### **98/28 Resource Planning Advisory Group**

The Revd Duncan Wilson reported that, following the January meeting of Mission Council, three actions were either under way or proposed.

1. The Convener and Secretary of RPAG were producing a "member-friendly" report to stimulate interest in the issues raised in the document entitled "The Ministry and Mission Fund 1998".
2. The General Secretary would be preparing two articles for publication in REFORM connecting and contrasting the portrayal of decline presented to RPAG by the Secretary for Ministries with the encouraging letter from Preman Niles of CWM and its hope of new impetus in home based mission in the URC.
3. RPAG would be convening a gathering of interested parties to delegate and work up specific programmes in response to the general principles presented to and commented upon by the January meeting of the Mission Council.

Mr. Wilson then introduced the draft 1999 Budget, explaining that there were some notable changes, especially in the area of training, where a budget allowance had been made to cover the possible extension of in-service training for stipendiary ministers. The budget for lay training had also been increased, as had the sum allowed for Yardley Hastings and Communications and Editorial. There were three other major considerations:

1. The legal costs associated with the proposed union with the Congregational Union of Scotland.
2. The proposed level of increase in salaries and stipends for 1999.
3. The considerable funds which have been identified as being for the direct benefit of Westminster College and which will be used accordingly in 1999 instead of drawing on the Ministry and Mission Fund.

Mr. Wilson reported that RPAG had approved the recommendation received from the Ecumenical Committee that in response to the CWM initiative the URC's contribution to CWM should be reduced to £100,000 in both 1998 and 1999.

Mr. Graham Stacy detailed the 1997 budget surplus and explained that it was proposed to transfer this surplus to the Retired Ministers' Fund which would enable pensions of ex-Congregational and ex-Churches of Christ Ministers to be raised to 95% of those of ex-Presbyterian Ministers. He also explained the background to the proposal to maintain the 1999 M&M contributions at the 1998 level, rather than increase them by £300,000 to £17,000,000 as had originally been planned.

A detailed discussion followed on the RPAG's forecast of 678 Stipendiary Ministers in 1998 and 670 in 1999. Professor Malcolm Johnson and the Revds Marjorie Lewis-Cooper and Graham Cook expressed concern that the Church appeared to be accepting the decline in the number of ministers when it should be looking for opportunities for growth and mission.

The Revd Malcolm Hanson proposed that Mission Council should resolve that the basis for the budget in 1999 should be 678 ministers (i.e. the same number as in 1998). The Revd Janet Sowerbutts seconded this. He also proposed that a group of three people should be appointed to consider deployment of these Ministers. However, after some discussion these resolutions were withdrawn and the following resolution was put to Mission Council:

**Mission Council requests the Ministries Committee to seek to do all in its power to maintain the number of ministers in 1999 at at least the 1998 level.**

Having received an assurance from the Treasurer that any such additional ministers could be paid for, this was carried.

The General Secretary proposed that **Mission Council should ask the Ministries Committee and RPAG to consult with the Provinces and prepare papers on the number of ministers required, their recruitment and their deployment which would form the basis for further detailed discussion at the October meeting of the Mission Council.**

This was carried unanimously.

The Revd Stephen Thornton drew the attention of the Council to a recent publication entitled "Gone but not forgotten" which detailed the results of research carried out into why people leave the church.

Mission Council received the report of the Resource Planning Advisory Group and the draft budget for 1999 noting the amendment of the M&M contribution from the proposed £17,000,000 to £16,712,000 and affirmed the imaginative proposed use of some of the 1998 excess in funding the full-time Pilots Development Officer.

#### **98/29 Equal Opportunities Committee**

The Moderator welcomed Mrs. Daphne Beale to the meeting and Mrs. Susan Rand explained the background to the draft Equal Opportunities Policy for Local Churches, which had been circulated before the January meeting of Mission Council. Mrs. Beale then introduced the document in detail, suggesting that every church should be made aware of the policy and should use the checklist in Section 2 when employing new staff.

Dr. David Thompson suggested that the definition of membership should reflect that detailed in Schedule A of the Basis of Union. A number of other suggestions and comments were made and Mrs. Beale responded to the points made.

Mission Council received the document and commended it to the General Assembly, noting that the Committee would be making a number of amendments in light of the comments made by members of the Council.

The Moderator thanked the members of the Equal Opportunities Committee for their contribution to the meeting.

The Revd William Pitt introduced the report from the Assembly Arrangements Committee which detailed its arrangements for and invited the proposal to amend the time: within making correct adjustments to the 1998 proposals. The Moderator suggested that the report be read with the option open to the Moderator to reduce this to three minutes.

After some discussion, **Mission Council decided not to recommend any change to the General Assembly.**

#### **98/31 Mission Council Advisory Group (MCAG)**

The Deputy General Secretary introduced the Report from the Mission Council Advisory Group noting the change in venues for some of the Mission Council meetings in 2000 and 2001. Mission Council received the report.

#### **98/32 Assembly resolution on the discipline of all members**

The Deputy General Secretary introduced the report detailing work done in response to the Resolution of the 1996 General Assembly which had been discussed at the October 1997 meeting of the Mission Council and amended in light of comments made at that meeting.

It was suggested that the guidelines on the discipline of local church officers should be broadened to include the officers of District Councils. The Revd Janet Sowerbutts, whose province was producing the guidelines, agreed that this was possible.

**Mission Council agreed that this report should be its response to Resolution 54 of General Assembly 1996.**

#### **98/33 The future of SPIN**

The Revd Elizabeth Caswell explained that SPIN had been set up 10 years ago in connection with the Decade of Solidarity with Women. She reported that the members of SPIN wanted to continue to meet, despite the fact that their initial period of appointment was coming to an end, as they felt that there was still more work to be done.

Two possible options had been suggested: that SPIN should become a sub-committee of the Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee or that they should be appointed as a Task Group for 2 years by General Assembly. The Revd Bob Day reported that the name of the corresponding European organisation had been changed to "Communities of women and men together".

It was agreed that the Group should adopt that name and continue for a further year, linked informally to the Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee. The position would then be reviewed, taking into account any relevant implications of the proposed union with the Congregational Union of Scotland.

#### 98/34 Nominations

The Revd Mrs Jessie Clare reported that the Nominations Committee had agreed the following nominations:

Lay Preaching Commissioner - Revd Sandy Mailer

Provincial Moderators – Review Group Conveners

Northern – Revd John Johansen-Berg  
North Western – Revd Angus Duncan  
East Midlands – Mrs. Ruth Clarke  
Southern – Revd Sandra Lloydlangston

Assembly Staff – Review/Appointment Group Conveners

Director of the Windermere Centre – Revd Dr. Jack McKelvey  
CRCW Development Officer – Revd Graham Cook  
Yardley Hastings Centre Minister – Mr. Simon Rowntree

The Nominations Committee has appointed Tellers for the Election of Assembly Moderator:

General Assembly 1998 – Revd Angus Duncan (Convener)  
Mr. Brian Evans and Revd Geoff Tolley  
General Assembly 1999 – Revd Geoff Tolley (Convener)  
Mrs. Christine Meekison and Revd Adrian Bulley

Mrs. Clare also reported that invitations had been sent out for members of the Staff Appointment / Review Groups including Secretary for Training and Pilots Development Officer.

Mr. Simon Rowntree asked for confirmation that the local church at Yardley Hastings would be consulted about the appointment of the Centre Minister. The Revd Malcolm Hanson replied that it would be necessary for the local church to issue a call in the normal way.

Mission Council received the report.

#### 98/35 General Secretary Review Group (Continued from Minute 98/27)

The Clerk reported that the following nominations of Committee Conveners for election to the General Secretary Review Group had been received:

Revd Bill Mahood	Proposer: Mrs. Erica Young	Seconder: Revd Tom Bayliss
Revd Graham Long	Proposer: Mr. Brian Evans	Seconder: Mr. Simon Rowntree
Prof. Malcolm Johnson	Proposer: Revd Elizabeth Welch	Seconder: Revd Peter Poulter
Revd John Sutcliffe	Proposer: Revd John Rees	Seconder: Revd Sandra Lloydlangston
Mr. Graham Stacy	Proposer: Revd Julian Macro	Seconder: Revd Bill Mahood

The Clerk reported that the following nominations of members of Mission Council for election to the General Secretary Review Group had been received:

Dr. David Thompson	Proposer: Revd Ray Adams	Seconder: Mr. Geoff Lunt
Mrs. Erica Young	Proposer: Revd Tom Bayliss	Seconder: Revd Arnold Harrison
Revd Bob Day	Proposer: Mrs. Ann Sutcliffe	Seconder: Mr. Gordon Ollerenshaw
Revd John Edwards	Proposer: Revd Graham Long	Seconder: Revd Tom Bayliss

The Clerk then moved the following Resolution:

**Mission Council appoints the nine people named to membership of the General Secretary Review Group.**

The Resolution was carried unanimously.

The Chaplain led the Council in prayers, a period of reflection and the singing of a hymn.

## SATURDAY, 14TH MARCH

Mission Council joined in worship, led by the Chaplain, giving thanks to God and celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the adoption of the Leuenberg Agreement. Mission Council learnt that it was on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1973 that representatives of the Lutheran, Reformed and United churches and two churches of pre-Reformation in Europe gathered together at Leuenberg near Basle and adopted a declaration opening the door to a full church fellowship between them. To date, 98 churches, including 5 South American churches and European Methodist churches, grant one another pulpit-and-table fellowship based on their agreement in the understanding of the Gospel.

The Moderator reflected on the importance of the celebration of the Lord's Supper and led Mission Council in a time of prayerful reflection on ways in which we can ensure that all feel welcome to be fed by Jesus when we share in the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Following worship, Mission Council split into groups to consider a number of reports and prepare responses and recommendations on behalf of Mission Council.

*The groups reported later. See Minutes 98/38, 98/39, 98/40 and 98/41 on Pages 7 & 8.*

**98/36 Proposals for the Union of the Congregational Union of Scotland & the United Reformed Church**  
The Moderator welcomed the Revd Dr. Stephen Orchard, Co-Convener of the Joint Negotiating Group, to the meeting and then led Mission Council in prayer.

The Revd Dr. Orchard detailed the background to the proposal for union and reported that the negotiations had revealed no fundamental differences in doctrine or ecclesiology. He noted the distinction between the National Council of Wales and its proposed Ecumenical Council of Wales and the 14th General Assembly of England.

Mr Geoff Lunt asked for clarification of the "Confidentiality" of the Proposals. The General Secretary explained that the document was to be considered as "confidential" until such time as that Mission Council had decided that the proposal, together with the necessary amendments, was acceptable.

**Mission Council agreed without dissent that the Proposals for the Union of the Congregational Union of Scotland and the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom should be taken to the 1998 General Assembly.**

The General Secretary then reported that the Congregational Union of Scotland (CUS) had also agreed to take the Proposals to their Assembly, and this was greeted with applause.

The Moderator thanked the Revd Dr. Stephen Orchard and the other members of the Joint Negotiating Group for their work, noting that the Church had responded to the request of the 1997 CUS Assembly Resolution to "act with urgency" in a sensitive and efficient way while maintaining pastoral care for all those involved.

### **98/37 Use of Colleges Review Group**

The Revd Derek Wales introduced the report and explained that the group had met with each of the colleges to discuss the future of training for the Stipendiary Ministry. Due to the fact that the number of students accepted to train for the Ministry had declined it was necessary to consider the future of the four colleges and it had been decided that the church should cease sending students to one of the colleges. Mr. Wales explained that, though difficult and painful, the group had finally decided that the Church should continue to send students to Northern College, Westminster College and Queens College but cease sending students to Mansfield College, Oxford.

Concern was expressed at the apparent haste of the decision and the Revd John Sutcliffe, Convener of the Training Committee, detailed the events that had led to the Group being asked to carry out its task and the

resulting decision. It was felt that there had been a degree of uncertainty for long enough and that, therefore, it was right to bring a resolution to the 1998 General Assembly.

Further concerns were expressed by a number of members of Mission Council, including the Revds Dr. Colin Thompson, Julian Macro, Rachel Poolman and Prof. Malcolm Johnson. The Revd Graham Long suggested that the Church should have a coherent policy on training and until this had been clarified, it was inappropriate to cease sending students to any one of the colleges, because by doing so we would be severing our links with that college. There was some discussion regarding the financial implications and the Revd Derek Wales confirmed that the matter of finance had not been the driving force behind the recommendations made by the Group.

After further discussion the Moderator suggested that the meeting should adjourn and that, in order to help find a way forward, he would meet with the Deputy General Secretary and the Conveners of the Training and Ministries Committees to prepare a Resolution for Mission Council to consider later.

*Further consideration was given to this matter and this is detailed in Minute 98/45 on page 8.*

On reconvening, Mission Council met in plenary session to consider the reports that had been reviewed by the groups.

#### **98/38 Mission Council visits to Provinces**

The Synod of the Northern Province had asked Mission Council to

- a) arrange a visit to the Northern Province in 2001
- and b) prepare a programme of visits to all Provinces.

The Mission Council Advisory Group (MCAG) had asked the Synod to indicate the purpose and pattern of the visits it was proposing. Following receipt of the report from the Synod, MCAG were recommending that a visit to the Province should be made in 2001 by a group of three people. It was also proposed that the Synod should arrange to visit each of its District Councils in the intervening period.

The groups which had considered this report and the MCAG proposals made a number of comments; noted that they felt that oversight of the Synods should be by General Assembly rather than Mission Council and expressing some concern about the level of resources that would be required. It was proposed and agreed that the visit to the Northern Province should be seen as a pilot and other Synods could choose to opt in to the proposed scheme, noting the MCAG recommendation that no further visits be planned for the time being.

Mission Council agreed that a recommendation should be made to the 1998 General Assembly.

#### **98/39 Local Church Leadership**

The groups considering the report from the Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee on Local Church Leadership expressed their general agreement with the report, noting a number of suggested amendments to be made prior to the report and guidelines being presented to the 1998 General Assembly. The Resolution to be taken to General Assembly was reworded in light of the comments to read:

**Assembly encourages Synods and District Councils, in consultation with local churches, to identify forms of local church leadership and to explore ways in which these may be recognised, affirmed and developed using the guidelines.**

Mission Council agreed that the Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee should present the report, the guidelines and the Resolution to the 1998 General Assembly.

#### **98/40 Changes to Structures and Rules of Procedure**

The groups and individuals which had considered the issues in this report, made a number of comments on the proposed changes and suggested that the changes should be contextualised to ensure clarity. There was some discussion about the wording of the proposed new Paragraph 1(6) regarding who should be considered as a Member of Assembly between the annual meetings of the Assembly. The Clerk would prepare an amended version in the light of the points made.

Mission Council agreed that the proposed Changes to Structures and Rules of Procedure should be presented to the 1998 General Assembly.

#### **98/41 Former Moderators of General Assembly**

Dr. David Thompson noted that, although former lay Moderators of General Assembly were ex-officio members of General Assembly, they were not automatically members of their local Synod. The General Secretary

confirmed that Synods could co-opt former Moderators of General Assembly and suggested that the matter should be referred to MCAG for consideration. This was agreed.

#### **98/42 Additional items of business**

The General Secretary drew the attention of Mission Council to a further report that was to be received. He also advised Mission Council of the arrangements for the Memorial Service for the Revd Dr. Lesslie Newbigin which would take place on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> March at 3pm (not 3.30pm as in Reform) in Southwark Cathedral.

#### **98/43 General Assembly Moderator: Programme of Visits**

The immediate Past Moderator, David Thompson, had raised with MCAG the possibility of a more structured approach to the visits made by the Assembly Moderator. The intention would be to ensure that, over a period, all parts of the Church received a visit. An initial paper had been prepared and circulated for comment to six former Moderators, five of whom were in favour of the principle.

Mission Council enthusiastically supported the proposal, noting that there would still be sufficient time for other visits to be included in the Moderator's itinerary. The General Secretary confirmed that the arrangements for the visits would be co-ordinated by the District Secretaries and the General Secretary and that therefore there would be no need to employ further members of staff.

#### **98/44 Summary of Provincial Concerns**

At the October 1997 meeting of Mission Council, there had been a session in which representatives of the synods voiced their concerns. A summary of what had been said, together with comments from MCAG was considered. The General Secretary stated that there was no intention for this report to go to any other councils of the Church, but it was felt to be helpful in identifying issues that Mission Council might consider at future meetings. It was suggested that a guide on how to share in the decision making process of the councils of the Church might be produced by the Working Group on the Authority of the General Assembly.

Mission Council received the report.

The General Secretary recommended that the General Secretary recommend concerns about the content of the report for the two committees, Training and Ministers, if further work was to be done.

The Deputy General Secretary agreed with the General Secretary, but noted that, as Mission Council did not wish to proceed with the Report, the question that had to be answered was "What should happen next?"

There followed a lengthy discussion resulting in the following Resolution proposed by the Revd John Sutcliffe and seconded by the Revd Graham Long.

**Being committed to growth and development in the opportunities for training and renewal available to all the people of God within the United Reformed Church, Mission Council asks the Ministries and Training Committees to complete a statement on training strategy.**

This was carried.

A further Resolution was proposed by the General Secretary and seconded by the Revd Elizabeth Caswell:

**Mission Council recommends to General Assembly that the Church uses Northern, Queens and Westminster Colleges for initial ministerial training for the foreseeable future.**

**With regard to the use of Mansfield College for initial ministerial training, Mission Council:**

- (a) agreed that there will be appropriate consultation
- (b) awaits the response of the College to the inspection report of 1997 and
- (c) will consider the matter at its meeting in March 1999.

This Resolution was carried.

The Moderator's Chaplain led Mission Council in a period of reflection and prayer and the singing of a hymn.



## SUNDAY, 14TH MARCH

Mission Council met together to celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion led by the Moderator's Chaplain. The Moderator spoke, in an imaginative way, about the story of the Church.

### **98/46 Elections to Advisory Groups**

The Clerk reported that one nomination had been received for the Mission Council Advisory Group vacancy:

Mrs. Delyth Rees                      Proposer: Mrs. Wilma Frew                      Seconder: Revd Elizabeth Caswell  
Mission Council welcomed the nomination and agreed the appointment.

One nomination had also been received for the Staffing Advisory Group vacancy:

Mrs. Christine Meekison   Proposer: Dr. Graham Campling   Seconder: Revd David Helyar  
Mission Council welcomed the nomination and agreed the appointment.

The Clerk then distributed the ballot papers for the election to fill the two vacancies on the Resource Planning Advisory Group: There were four nominees:

Revd John Edwards	Proposer: Revd David Helyar	Seconder: Dr. Jack Gow
Revd Bill Mahood	Proposer: Revd Rachel Poolman	Seconder: Revd Janet Sowerbutts
Dr. David Thompson	Proposer: Revd Sandra Lloydlangston	Seconder: Mr. Simon Rowntree
Mr. Steve Wood	Proposer: Revd Duncan Wilson	Seconder: Mr. Ken Woods

The tellers, the Revd Dr. Lesley Husselbee and Mr. Graham Stacy collected the ballot papers and retired to count the votes cast.

*The result of the election was reported later and is noted in Minute 98/50 on page 10.*

### **98/47 PCE Overseas Mission Committee Archives**

The General Secretary explained that these archives are currently lodged at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and that almost all the churches to which the records refer are members of CWM. He also noted that the CWM (largely LMS) archives are also housed at SOAS. In light of the church's responsibility to spend some money on the preservation of these records the General Secretary had been able to negotiate that, in the event of the URC making a permanent loan of these archives to the CWM, the necessary work for preservation would be undertaken by SOAS as part of its work on the LMS/CWM Archives. It was noted that the PCE Overseas Mission Committee Archives would remain a separate collection from the LMS/CWM Archives.

The General Secretary proposed that:

**Mission Council agrees to place the archives of the Presbyterian Church of England Overseas Mission Committee and those of the Women's Missionary Association on permanent loan to the Council for World Mission, for as long as they are kept in the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London.**

Mission Council agreed.

### **98/48 Staffing Advisory Group**

The General Secretary explained that the role of the Staffing Advisory Group was to bring recommendations to Mission Council for the Council's decision. He noted that SAG was responsible for considering the position, while the Nominations Committee was responsible for considering suitable individuals for the posts.

The Staffing Advisory Group were about to undertake a review of the post of Director of the Windermere Centre and it was noted that, to enable the Centre to continue to plan its future programme, it would be helpful if SAG could make recommendations to the Assembly Officers prior to the next meeting of Mission Council in October.

The General Secretary proposed the following Resolution:

**Mission Council authorises the Assembly Officers, acting on behalf of Mission Council, to receive the Staffing Advisory Group's report following their review of the post of Director of the Windermere Centre and to act upon the Group's recommendations.**

This was carried.

#### **98/49 General Secretary Review Group**

The Moderator, as Convener, reported on the deliberations of the General Secretary Review Group, which had met the previous evening. Following a detailed discussion, the Group proposed the following Resolution:

**The General Secretary Review Group recommends to Assembly the re-appointment of the Revd A.G. Burnham as General Secretary until July 31<sup>st</sup> 2001.**

**In passing the resolution, the meeting expressed its recognition and appreciation of the leadership, commitment, energy and vision of Tony Burnham and recorded gratitude for his pastoral support throughout the Church.**

Mission Council approved the Resolution and showed its appreciation by applauding.

The General Secretary responded by saying that he believed this to be a call from God, and that trusting in God's strength, support, wisdom and grace, he was pleased to continue to serve the Church in this role. He promised that he would not be "winding down to retirement", but rather would continue to try to "wind us up as a Church".

The Moderator noted that a further review group would be needed to discuss the post of General Secretary for 2001 onwards.

#### **98/50 Election to Resource Planning Advisory Group (Continued from Minute 98/46)**

The Tellers reported that the Revd Bill Mahood and Dr. David Thompson had been elected to serve as members of the Resource Planning Advisory Group.

#### **98/51 Oversight Ministries**

The Deputy General Secretary explained the task proposed for the Oversight group and invited the Synods to discuss the proposal with the District Councils in their Province.

It was agreed that the District Councils and Synods should discuss with the moderators. Synods should be asked to work with the District Councils in their Province to look at the present balance of responsibilities in the light of the task group report and the Deputy General Secretary's paper.

In response to a suggestion from the Revd Graham Cook regarding the process for review, the Clerk suggested that a checklist of questions could be added to the summarised document to assist the Synods and District Councils in their deliberations.

The Moderator suggested that Synods and District Councils could choose the way in which they would tackle the work; either in the formal council or by appointing a small working party. Mr. Simon Rowntree stressed that a realistic agenda should be set and suggested that the Synods should be asked to report back to October 1999 meeting of Mission Council so that, if it was considered necessary, Resolution(s) could be taken to the 2000 General Assembly. This was agreed.

The General Secretary offered to discuss with the Synod Clerks the appointment process for Moderators of Synods and would then make recommendations to Mission Council.

#### **98/52 Assembly Resolutions**

Mission Council then split into groups to consider a number of papers and Resolutions for presentation to the 1998 General Assembly. On returning, the groups reported on their suggested amendments.

##### **Health and Healing Group**

The report and resolution from the Health and Healing Group were accepted for presentation to General Assembly.

##### **Ecumenical Committee**

The report and resolution from the Ecumenical Committee were accepted.

In response to a specific question, the Revd Sheila Maxey reported on the situation concerning the discussions between the Church of England and the Methodist Church, explaining that the URC may be invited to be an ecumenical participant, together with the Baptists, The Roman Catholics and the Moravian Church. The URC could also be involved in informal trilateral talks with the Church of England and the Methodist Church.

#### Youth and Children's Work Committee

It was suggested and agreed that the first resolution from the Youth and Children's Work Committee should not be presented to the General Assembly. A slight rewording of the second resolution was also proposed and agreed.

#### Communications and Editorial Committee

Some rewording of the proposed resolution was suggested by the group and accepted by the Committee.

It was noted with some regret that there was no report on the implication of an IT strategy within the Communications and Editorial Committee Report. The General Secretary confirmed that a report would be included in the General Assembly Book of Reports.

#### Training Committee

The group recommended that the subject of Continual Ministerial Education should be introduced in a careful and imaginative way. This was agreed. A number of minor changes were suggested and agreed by the Committee.

#### Church and Society Committee

Some concern was expressed over the use of the word "instructs" in the Resolution. This was noted and an alternative would be used.

#### Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness

Some rewording of resolutions was suggested and accepted by the Committee.

#### **98/53 Equal Opportunities Committee (Continued from Minute 98/29)**

The Equal Opportunities Committee presented their Resolution to General Assembly:

**Assembly welcomes the report "Equal Opportunities Policy for Local Churches", and encourages local churches to study it and to ensure that appropriate policies are in place throughout their life.**

Mission Council agreed with this Resolution.

#### **98/54 Ministerial Disciplinary Procedures**

The Deputy General Secretary introduced two Resolutions, detailing the background to the proposed changes.

Assembly resolves to increase the size of the Commission Panel established under the ministerial disciplinary procedures from "25 members" to "50 members".

In the light of concerns expressed, the Revd Julian Macro suggested that the Resolution be reworded to read:

Assembly resolves to increase the size of the Commission Panel established under the ministerial disciplinary procedures from "25 members" to "up to a maximum of 50 members".

The proposed amendment was agreed.

The Resolution was then put to Mission Council:

**Assembly resolves to increase the size of the Commission Panel established under the ministerial disciplinary procedures from "25 members" to "up to a maximum of 50 members".**

The Resolution was carried.

The second Resolution was then put to Mission Council:

**Noting that Mission Council has resolved to conduct a review of the Ministerial Discipline process in March 1999, Assembly authorises the General Secretary, Clerk and the Convener of the Ministries Committee to oversee this process on its behalf, at least until such review has been completed.**

This was carried.

**98/55 Membership of United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund for ministers who are 50 or more at the date of commencement of stipendiary service**

The report and Resolutions were accepted and it was noted that it was possible that an amendment to the Resolution might be brought to General Assembly.

**98/56 The URC, the Local Church and the Community**

The General Secretary introduced a paper which had been considered by representatives at Mission Council from the Ministries, Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness, Church and Society and Nominations Committees and the CRCW Review and Resource Planning Advisory Groups. The paper recognised that from the beginning of its existence, the Mission Council had been frustrated because it had not been able to come to grips with mission. The concerns of the synod representatives (Mission Council October 1997) emphasised the need to recognise our decline and consciously look for a way forward. The paper detailed the various initiatives and programmes from committees that had begun to emerge since the last Assembly and it suggested that these could be interpreted as the separate strands of a developing mission strategy.

The Moderator thanked the General Secretary for the report and requested that written comments should be sent to the General Secretary.

**98/57 Belonging to the World Church**

The Revd Bob Andrews introduced the report and welcomed the Revd Philip Woods who had been attending the celebration of the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the adoption of the Leuenberg Agreement. The paper noted that through our membership of Council for World Mission (CWM), the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the

The report included a number of exciting proposals including opportunities for both ministerial and lay training, opportunities for young people and children, research fellowships and scholarship programmes. The report noted that a more serious engagement with the world church would, of course, require considerable financial support. Funds for this are available to the URC. Essentially they lie in three areas

- CWM grants
- the URC's own world church unexpended income fund
- the money traditionally allocated to CWM.

The report was greeted with great enthusiasm and Mission Council commended it to General Assembly.

The General Secretary reported that CWM would be asking the Church to produce a Mission Strategy for the next 3, 4 or 5 years and that the proposals included in this report would form an important part of the overall coherent strategy that RPAG would continue to work on in preparation for the October meeting of Mission Council.

**98/58 Closing Remarks**

The Moderator thanked the Committee Conveners who were coming to the end of their periods of service; Prof. Malcolm Johnson, the Revd Jessie Clare and the Revd Stephen Thornton. He also thanked the Provincial Representatives for whom this would be their last meeting of Mission Council for the time being. The Moderator noted that this was also the last Mission Council for past Moderator, Dr. David Thompson and expressed, on behalf of Mission Council, their gratitude for his commitment and wisdom, noting that this was to be put to good use in his new role as a member of RPAG.

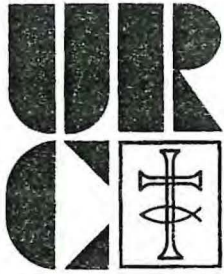
The Moderator also expressed thanks to the Revd Derek Wales and the members of the Use of Colleges Review Group. He expressed gratitude to his Chaplain, the Revd Stephen Thornton for his sensitive leading of worship at last year's General Assembly and the three meetings of Mission Council.

Finally he thanked the Deputy General Secretary for his care and attention in preparing for this meeting of the Council.

The Moderator suggested that members of Mission Council should express their thanks to the individuals personally.

The General Secretary then thanked the Moderator for his service to the Church. He expressed the gratitude of Mission Council for his imagination in preaching, his sense of humour and his sensitivity in the role of pastor, particularly at the 1998 General Assembly, and his wisdom in opening up the scriptures.

The Moderator's Chaplain then led the Council in a period of reflection and prayer and the singing of a hymn.



# The United Reformed Church

86 Tavistock Place London WC1H 9RT  
General Secretary The Revd Anthony G Burnham BA

Telephone 0171 916 2020  
Fax number 0171 916 2021

*Deputy General Secretary*

*The Revd John Waller MA*

Direct line telephone: 0171 916 8646  
Direct line fax: 0171 916 1928

To: Members of Mission Council  
and staff in attendance

2 March 1998

Dear Colleague

**Mission Council 13 - 15 March 1998 - All Saints Pastoral Centre  
London Colney, St Albans, Herts AL2 1AF 01727 822 010**

This letter comes with the second mailing of papers for the Council meeting.

You need to note two changes. Paper S really belongs among the ASS papers. Group G is asked to be sure to look at it. Secondly, the main Resource Planning Advisory Group report has missed this mailing and will be tabled at the meeting. However, Paper T is part of that report and will be considered under the RPAG heading in the agenda.

A list of groups is printed on the reverse side. If you volunteered to be a leader or reporter at some point, please check to see if this is your lucky time! Come prepared if it is.

Two sessions of group work are scheduled on the timetable:

On Saturday morning groups will be detailed to look at certain papers with a view to advising the plenary session on Saturday evening how Mission Council should respond.

Groups A and F to look at Paper C on visits to Provinces  
Groups B and D to look at Paper M on local ministries  
Group C to look at Paper Q on changes to the structures and procedures  
Group E to look at Paper I on Assembly Moderators' diaries  
Groups G and H to look at Paper O on Provincial concerns  
Members of group C in particular could usefully bring a copy of the Manual with them.

Then on Sunday morning all the groups are asked to cast an eye over the batch of papers headed ASS. These are the resolutions which various committees intend to bring to Assembly. They do not need to be **approved** by Mission Council but no doubt in the following plenary session the Conveners will be glad to hear any comments the groups may have.

It may well be that groups will be used on other occasions to help the discussion of some of the major issues before us.

There certainly are major topics on the agenda and once again it looks over-crowded. To be positive, I see this as a sign of a healthy church getting to grips with its mission - provided we make some progress and do not keep talking endlessly about the same things!

To end on a practical note: you need to bring a towel and soap with you, and also a Bible and a copy of Rejoice and Sing.

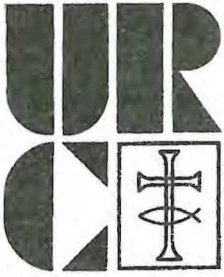
Yours sincerely

Revd John Waller  
Deputy General Secretary

## GROUPS

The first person named is the leader, the second the reporter.

<p><b>A</b></p>	<p><b>Brian Evans</b>  <b>Peter Poulter</b>            Clem Frank            Wilma Frew            Jack Gow            Marjorie Lewis Cooper            Julian Macro            Wilma Prentice            Peter Roche            Ann Sutcliffe</p>	<p><b>B</b></p>	<p><b>Lesley Charlton</b>  <b>Peter Devaney</b>            Peter Brain            Sally Brooks            Elizabeth Caswell            Bob Day            Arnold Harrison            John Humphreys            Stephen Thornton            Duncan Wilson            Ken Woods</p>
<p><b>C</b></p>	<p><b>Val Morrison</b>  <b>Dave Coaker</b>            Peter McIntosh            Bill Mahood            Hartley Oldham            Rachel Poolman            Donald Smith            Derek Wales            John Waller            Philip Woods            Erica Young</p>	<p><b>D</b></p>	<p><b>Graham Maskery</b>  <b>Carol Rogers</b>            Michael Burrell            John Edwards            Graham Long            Geoff Lunt            Georgette Margrett            Sheila Maxey            Christine Meekison            Steve Wood</p>
<p><b>E</b></p>	<p><b>Lesley Husselbee</b>            Tom Bayliss            David Jenkins            Alasdair Pratt            Bill Wright            Janet Sowerbutts            Graham Stacy            Jill Strong            Clive Sutcliffe</p>	<p><b>F</b></p>	<p><b>Malcolm Hanson</b>            Margaret Carrick Smith            Jessie Clare            Christine Craven            Desmond Curry            Hilary Gunn            John Jenkinson            Colin Thompson            Elizabeth Welch            Chris Wright</p>
<p><b>G</b></p>	<p><b>David Helyar</b>  <b>Mary Eden</b>            Bob Andrews            Tony Burnham            David Lawrence            Gordon Ollerenshaw            Susan Rand            Simon Rowntree            Jean Sylvan Evans            David Williams</p>	<p><b>H</b></p>	<p><b>Ray Adams</b>  <b>Rosemary Johnston</b>            Sue Brown            Graham Campling            Graham Cook            Denis Earp            John Rees            John Sutcliffe            David Thompson            Irene Wren</p>



# The United Reformed Church

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*Deputy General Secretary*

*The Revd John Waller MA*

Direct line telephone: 0171 916 8646  
Direct line fax: 0171 916 1928

To: Members of the Mission Council  
and staff in attendance

13 February 1998

Dear Colleague

**Mission Council 13 - 15 March 1998 - All Saints Pastoral Centre  
London Colney, St Albans, Herts AL2 1AF 01727 822 010**

It seems no time since Mission Council met in Stoneleigh, a feeling reinforced by the fact that the minutes are enclosed in this mailing!

However, we are now in the run-up to our pre-Assembly meeting, and I am writing to set the practical arrangements in train and also to give you a bit of early reading.

I enclose:

- ❖ a list of members (to enable those coming by car to consider travelling together)
- ❖ directions for getting to All Saints Pastoral Centre
- ❖ an expense slip
- ❖ a form, which you are asked to complete and return immediately so that necessary arrangements can be made

On this occasion questions are asked about diet and mobility.

Among the papers to be considered are two which have been issued previously: the report on Oversight Ministries (Paper G, March 1997) and the Equal Opportunities Policy for local churches (Paper B, January 1998). In an effort to conserve paper, I am assuming that you already have both papers. If you do not, please mark your form accordingly.

Please remember to bring a Bible and a copy of Rejoice and Sing with you to Mission Council.

It was made clear to us at the January meeting that we are entering a time of significant change and opportunity in the life of the United Reformed Church. That will be apparent when you receive the agenda and remaining papers for our March meeting in about two weeks' time. Do allow time for reflection and prayer.

Yours sincerely

Revd John Waller  
Deputy General Secretary





MISSION COUNCIL  
*13 - 15 March 98*

**AGENDA AND  
TIMETABLE**

*The General Assembly has agreed that every agenda should be headed with the question,  
What are the ecumenical implications of this agenda?*

**FRIDAY**

12.00 Onwards. Check in.

1.00pm LUNCH

2.00pm WORSHIP AND BIBLE LISTENING

Welcome and apologies

Minutes of the meeting on 24 January 1998

Matters arising:

98/10 Toller commission; the grouping of churches (Paper H)

98/13 Centre minister at Yardley Hastings

98/17 Standing Order 4a: length of speeches at Assembly (Paper A)

Arrangements for election to Advisory groups (Paper B)

Mission Council Advisory Group report (Paper G)

Assembly resolution on the discipline of all members (Paper D)

General Secretary review group (Paper E)

4.00pm TEA

4.30pm Any business left over from first session.

Resource Planning Advisory Group, including budget (Paper J)

6.30pm SUPPER

7.30pm Equal Opportunities Committee (Paper B from January 1998)

Nominations Committee (Paper R)

Elections to General Secretary review group.

8.45pm PRAYERS

\*\*\*\*\*

## SATURDAY

- 8.30am BREAKFAST
- 9.15am WORSHIP AND BIBLE LISTENING  
Group work on Papers C, I, M, O and Q.
- 11.00am COFFEE
- 11.30am Result of elections  
Proposals for the union of the Congregational Union of Scotland and the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom (Paper K)
- 1.00pm LUNCH
- 2.00pm Free time
- 3.30pm TEA
- 4.00pm Use of colleges review group (Paper L)  
Oversight Ministries (Paper F and paper G of March 1997)
- 6.30pm SUPPER
- 7.30pm Plenary session on morning group work.
- 8.45pm PRAYERS

\*\*\*\*\*

## SUNDAY

- 7.30am SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION
- 8.30am BREAKFAST
- 9.30am Elections to Advisory Groups  
Groups and plenary session on Assembly resolutions (ASS)
- 11.00am COFFEE
- 11.30am Belonging to the World Church (Paper N)  
Result of elections
- 12.30pm CLOSING WORSHIP

## MISSION COUNCIL 13 - 15 March 1998

The Moderator: Revd David Jenkins  
General Secretary: Revd Tony Burnham  
Clerk: Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith  
Moderator Elect: Mrs Wilma Frew  
Past Moderator: Dr David Thompson  
Treasurer: Mr Graham Stacy  
Deputy General Sec: Revd John Waller  
Legal Adviser: Mr Hartley Oldham

### Assembly Standing Committees

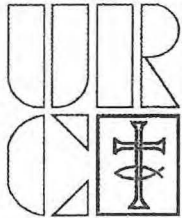
Doctrine Prayer & Worship:	Revd Dr Colin Thompson	
Discipleship Stewardship & Witness:	Revd Elizabeth Caswell	
Church & Society:	Mrs Val Morrison - or- Professor Malcolm Johnson	
Youth & Children's Work:	Revd Stephen Thornton	
Ecumenical:	Revd Bob Andrews	
Ministries:	Revd Graham Long	<u>Fury Council</u>
Training:	Revd John Sutcliffe	Mr Dave Coaker
Finance:	<i>Mr Graham Stacy</i>	Miss Georgette Margrett
Communications & Editorial:	Mr Chris Wright	
Nominations:	Revd Jessie Clare	
Assembly Arrangements:	Revd Alasdair Pratt	
Equal Opportunities:	Mrs Susan Rand	
Inter-Faith Relations:	Revd Bill Mahood	

### 12 Provincial Moderators, plus 3 representatives from each Province

1 <i>Revd David Jenkins</i>	Revd Peter Poulter, Dr Peter Clarke, Mrs Wilma Prentice
2 Revd Keith Forecast	Revd Bob Day, Mrs Ann Sutcliffe, Mr Gordon Ollerenshaw
3 Revd Graham Cook	Mrs Barbara Martin, Dr Donald South, Revd Peter Roche
4 Revd Arnold Harrison	Revd John Jenkinson, Mr Steve Wood, Mr Brian Evans
5 Revd Malcolm Hanson	Mrs Jill Strong, Revd Graham Maskery, Mrs Irene Wren
6 Revd Elizabeth Welch	Mr Simon Rowntree, Mrs Erica Young, Revd Tom Bayliss
7 <i>Revd Elizabeth Caswell</i>	Revd Michael Burrell, Mr Ken Woods, Revd Clive Sutcliffe
8 Revd Ray Adams	Revd John Rees, Mrs Mary Eden, Mr Geoff Lunt
9 Revd Derek Wales	Revd Julian Macro, Revd David Williams, Mrs Sue Brown
10 Revd Janet Sowerbutts	Dr Jack Gow, Revd Rachel Poolman, Revd John Edwards
11 Revd David Helyar	Mrs Christine Meekison, Revd Lesley Charlton, Dr Graham Campling
12 Revd John Humphreys	Dr Jean Sylvan Evans, Mr Denis Earp, Mr Peter Devaney

### In attendance:-

Minute Secretary	Mrs Sally Brooks	Editor, Reform	Revd David Lawrence
Moderator's Chaplain	<i>Revd Stephen Thornton</i>	Training	Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee
Church & Society	Revd Peter Brain	Ecumenical Relations	Revd Sheila Maxey
Intl. Church Relations	Revd Philip Woods	Director, Windermere Centre	Revd Peter McIntosh
Ministries	Revd Christine Craven	Communications	Mrs Carol Rogers
Chief Accountant	Mr Clem Frank	Nominations	Mr Desmond Curry
Youth Work		Childrens Advocate	Mrs Rosemary Johnston
Office & Personnel Mngr.	Mr Hilary Gunn	Multi-racial, multi-cultural	
Discipleship Stewardship		development worker	Revd Marjorie Lewis-Cooper
& Witness	Revd Bill Wright	Convener RPAG	Revd Duncan Wilson
Rural Consultant	Revd Michael Cruchley		



MISSION COUNCIL  
24 January 1998

MINUTES

*Minutes of the Mission Council held at the Arthur Rank Centre, Stoneleigh on 24 January 1998.*

The Meeting was constituted by the Moderator, the Reverend David Jenkins. Worship was led by the Chaplain, the Revd Stephen Thornton, who challenged the Council to consider what was meant by "the ministry of the whole people of God" and "the priesthood of all believers". Three members of Council shared what they believed God was calling them to be and do.

**98/01 Welcome**

The Moderator welcomed members to the meeting, particularly the following who were attending for the first time: Dr. Donald South (Mersey Province), the Revd Clive Sutcliffe (Eastern Province), the Revd David Williams (Wessex Province), Mr. Desmond Curry (Nominations Committee) and Miss Georgette Margrett (FURY Chair). He also welcomed Mr. Dai Hayward and the Revd Pat Nimmo who were present as members of the Resource Planning Advisory Group.

**98/02 Attendance**

There were 68 members present with 10 members of staff in attendance, Mr. Dai Hayward, the Revd Pat Nimmo and Mrs. Sally Brooks (Minute Secretary).

Apologies for absence were received from the Revds Peter McIntosh, Marjorie Lewis-Cooper, Ann Jackson, Bill Wright, David Lawrence and Janet Sowerbutts and Mr. Paul Franklin.

**98/03 Minutes of Mission Council 30 September to 2 October 1997**

The Minutes of the Mission Council held on 30 September – 2 October, which had been circulated, were approved and signed with the following corrections:

- 97/40            Reference to "the Revd Alan Smith" should read "the Revd Allan Smith".
- 97/54            The first sentence should read: "The Revd Bob Andrews explained that the Ecumenical Committee had eight "core" members (i.e. those appointed by Assembly and not by other committees)."  
In the second sentence "propose" should be replaced with "nominate".
- 97/60            "page 9" should read "page 7".

## 98/04 Matters Arising

97/48 Secretary of the Advisory Group on Grants and Loans (AGOGAL). **The Deputy General Secretary proposed that Mr. David Lane, an Elder from Purley, should be appointed as secretary of AGOGAL.**

This was agreed.

97/50 & 97/74 General Assembly 1997 Resolution 18 Groups. The General Secretary introduced a report which detailed the activity that had resulted from the passing of Resolution 18 at the 1997 General Assembly and the decisions of Mission Council in October 1997. He noted that the Core Group had met three times, once with the conveners of the Working Groups. Since these meetings the Core Group had begun work on developing the remits of the Working Groups and would present these to the Groups for consideration. It was hoped that the finalised remits could be communicated to the March 1998 Mission Council.

97/60, 97/68 & 97/75 General Assembly 1997 Resolution 19 The General Secretary reported that fewer letters regarding the passing of Resolution 19 had been received since the last Mission Council. There appeared to be a mis-understanding of Standing Orders that led people to believe that the Moderator, the General Secretary and the Clerk were permitted to bring a Resolution to the 1997 General Assembly.

97/71 General Assembly 1997 Resolution 41

The General Secretary reported that, since the last Mission Council, the Pastoral Group established in response to the General Assembly Resolution 41 had not received any requests for assistance. Mission Council Advisory Group (MCAG) recommended **that the Pastoral Group should remain in existence until the September 1998 meeting of Mission Council.** At that time, consideration should be given to whether or not the Group should continue. This was agreed.

97/64 Provincial Management of YCWT/YLTOs

The Deputy General Secretary reported that Helen Brown, who had been appointed following the January 1997 Mission Council to manage the change to provincial management of the Youth and Children's Work Trainers, had originally recommended that the overall oversight of the programme should be transferred to the Youth and Children's Work Committee from the Training Committee. However, following wide consultation she was now recommending, and he was proposing, **that the responsibility for the overall oversight of the provincial management of the Youth and Children's Work Trainers should remain with the**

**Training Committee.** The Revd John Sutcliffe, convener of the Training Committee, reported that the initial concerns of the Committee had been addressed and therefore the Training Committee had agreed to retain this responsibility. This was agreed.

The Revd Ray Adams asked when the new Staff Development Policy would be available. It was reported that this was being printed and should be available within 10 days.

*Further Matters Arising were noted later and these are recorded in Minute 98/08 on page 3.*

#### **98/05 Correspondence**

The General Secretary read a letter that he had received from Dr. D. Preman Niles, the General Secretary of the Council for World Mission (CWM), explaining that having been the grateful recipients of financial support from the United Reformed Church over many years, the CWM now felt that it was right to offer financial support in return and to encourage the Church not to stop raising money for mission but to review the way that the money raised was being used. The Ecumenical Committee and Resource Planning Advisory Group would consider our response and make an initial report to the March Meeting of Mission Council.

The General Secretary went on to list a number of new and on-going initiatives in which the Church was engaged and stressed that this generous offer from CWM was an exciting development.

#### **98/06 Presentation by the Resource Planning Advisory Group.**

The Revd Duncan Wilson presented a report on "A future shape for Church and Ministry", following which the Council divided into groups to consider the report and questions arising from it.

#### **98/07 Report back from Discussion Groups**

Mission Council reconvened in plenary session and the groups reported on their discussions.

#### **98/08 Matters Arising (Continued from 98/04)**

The Clerk provided clarification on the method by which a Resolution could be brought to the General Assembly, referring to Standing Orders 2b, 2c and 2d.

97/65 URC Holiday Forum

The General Secretary presented **A Memorandum of Understanding between the United Reformed Church and Holiday Forum** which was accepted and agreed by the Council.

97/77 Ministerial Discipline

The Deputy General Secretary explained that, since the last meeting of Mission Council at which the working party on ministerial discipline was

discharged (minute 97/77), certain matters had arisen which needed attention.

He reported that as a result of a seminar held in the autumn it was suggested that certain minor amendments should be made to the procedural guidelines agreed at the last Mission Council. Mr. Hartley Oldham had written these up. It was agreed that the Revd Elizabeth Caswell, Dr. David Thompson and Mr. Graham Stacy would review the amendments on behalf of Mission Council and report back later.

*Their report and the resulting decision is recorded in Minute 98/18 on page 8.*

**Mission Council agreed to ask Mr. Hartley Oldham, the Revd Keith Forecast and Mrs. Margaret Carrick Smith to draft guidelines for use by Provincial Panels.**

**Mission Council agreed that, as it has oversight of the ministerial discipline procedures on behalf of General Assembly and in view of the fact that the procedures are completely new, it would call for a review of the operation of the procedures in March 1999.**

#### **98/09 Agenda**

The Deputy General Secretary drew the attention of the Council to a number of typing errors in the papers and explained that a paper suggesting which

The Deputy General Secretary introduced a paper which had been produced in response to the request from the Reformed Church to prepare clearer guidelines for the creation of a group pastorate where there is already a minister in post, and to give guidance as to when a grouping of churches becomes effective to form the group.

Following a number of suggestions and comments, Mission Council agreed that the paper in its current form was not suitable for presentation to General Assembly, but that the essentials of the report should be summarised for presentation to the Assembly. A document containing guidelines would also be prepared.

#### **98/11 Equal Opportunities Committee**

Mrs. Susan Rand introduced a paper detailing a draft Equal Opportunities Policy for Local Churches. Members of Mission Council were invited to send their comments to the Equal Opportunities Committee.

Permission was sought and granted for one other member of the Committee to attend the March meeting of Mission Council when the Draft Policy would be discussed in detail.

### **98/12 Report of the Mission Council Advisory Group (MCAG)**

The Deputy General Secretary introduced the report from MCAG, noting that Mission Council needed to make decisions relating to future meetings of the Council.

Mission Council agreed that:

- 1) the January meeting of Mission Council should continue to be held at the Arthur Rank Centre in Stoneleigh if possible
- 2) the March meeting of Mission Council should be held after the Provincial Synod meetings
- 3) the meetings of Mission Council should continue to alternate between mid-week and weekends
- 4) the proposed dates were acceptable provided that the chosen locations were available.

Mission Council received the report.

### **98/13 Staffing Advisory Group**

Mr. Geoff Lunt introduced the report of the Staffing Advisory Group and thanked Mr. Denis Earp, who was retiring from the Group. He then explained the background to the proposal relating to the post of Pilots Development Officer.

It was proposed:

- a) that subject to the necessary funding being able to be identified, Mission Council approves the appointment of a full-time Pilots Development Officer, to work to the agreed Job Description, for an initial 5-year period;
- b) that on the assumption that funding is available, a nominating group be established to seek such a Pilots Development Officer, who may be a suitable lay person or an ordained minister, and that a decision about the post location should be made by this nominating group in conjunction with the Pilots' Management Committee;
- c) to instruct the appropriate Advisory Group or Committee to investigate the costing of the proposed post and report to the Spring 1998 meeting on the question of funding availability.

This was agreed.

Mr. Lunt then introduced the proposal relating to the post of Centre Minister, National Youth Resource Centre (NYRC), Yardley Hastings. There was some discussion and concerns were expressed. It was agreed that the proposal should be withdrawn and reconsidered after further consultation with interested parties.

The General Secretary proposed that Mission Council should establish a small group to listen to all the views and opinions and to prepare a revised proposal. It was agreed that the members of the Group should be the Revd Graham Cook (Convener), the Revd Lesley Charlton, the Revd John Waller and



Mr. Geoff Lunt and that the Group should report directly to the March meeting of Mission Council.

*A further report from the Staffing Advisory Group was received later and is recorded in Minute 98/15 on page 6.*

#### **98/14 Resource Planning Advisory Group**

The Revd Duncan Wilson gave a brief summary, highlighting the significant points from the group reports and proposing an outline for further work to be done by RPAG. Members of Mission Council suggested additional matters which should be included, and it was agreed that RPAG would produce another report for a further meeting of Mission Council.

#### **98/15 Staffing Advisory Group (Continued from 98/13)**

Mr. Geoff Lunt introduced the proposal relating to the post of Church-Related Community Work (CRCW) Development Worker. The following was agreed by Mission Council:

**Mission Council authorises the extension of the post of CRCW Development Worker for a further, but final, period of 5 years to August 2003, on the clear understanding that the work thereafter be devolved to the Provinces and Districts.**

Mission Council then discussed the second part of the recommendation from the Staffing Advisory Group:

- (i) responsibility for advocating and fostering Church-Related Community Work within the URC and, where possible and necessary, ecumenically;
- (ii) developing a strategy which will enable the work of the post to be devolved to Provinces and Districts by Summer 2003.
- (iii) develop appropriate local management structures for all authorised CRCW posts as appropriate.

A proposal to amend clause (ii) was agreed:

- (ii) **developing a strategy which will enable the management and oversight of CRCWs to be devolved to Provinces and/or Districts by Summer 2003.**

The amended resolution was then put to Council.

**Mission Council urges the Central Management Committee to revise the Job Description for the post to include the following specific points:**

- (i) **responsibility for advocating and fostering Church-Related Community Work within the URC and, where possible and necessary, ecumenically.**

- (ii) **developing a strategy which will enable the management and oversight of CRCWs to be devolved to Provinces and/or Districts by Summer 2003.**
- (iii) **develop appropriate local management structures for all authorised CRCW posts as appropriate.**

The amended resolution was carried unanimously.

### **98/16 Nominations Committee**

The Revd Jessie Clare presented the report of the Nominations Committee, which included a resolution concerning the Disciplinary Commission:

In the event of the unavailability of the Secretary of the Commission to carry out necessary duties, Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, appoints the Deputy General Secretary to act as Secretary. In the absence of both the Commission Secretary and the Deputy General Secretary, the Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee shall act.

It was noted that, as Secretary to the Pastoral Committee, the Deputy General Secretary could have a conflict of interest and therefore an amended resolution was presented to the Council.

**In the event of the unavailability of the Secretary of the Commission to carry out necessary duties, Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, appoints the Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee to act as Secretary.**

This was agreed.

The Nominations Committee recommended that, **with the agreement of the Staff Secretaries concerned, they should undertake the responsibilities of Secretaries of the following committees: Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness; Ministries and its Accreditations Sub-Committee; Training.**

Mission Council agreed.

The following nominations for Conveners were reported:

Nominations Committee	Revd Glyn Jenkins
Church and Society Committee	Mrs. Gabrielle Cox
Retired Ministers Housing Sub-committee	Revd Simon Swailes
Youth & Children's Work Committee	Revd Derek Lindfield
CRCW Management Sub-committee	Revd Susan Flint

The Nominations Committee also proposed the appointment of Mr. Ray Chambers as a member of the Board of the URC Pension Fund. This was agreed.

Jessie Clare reported that the Officers of Assembly had appointed the Revd Bill Wright as Secretary for Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness for a temporary period until no later than March 1999.

She also reported that, although the Appointment Group for the Secretary for Youth Work was unable to bring a name for appointment by Mission Council, the Group was actively engaged in its task. The Revd Stephen Thornton reported on the interim arrangements which had been made to cover the period after Mr. Paul Franklin's appointment finished on 28 February 1998. The Revd Michael Davies had agreed to work for one or two days each week to provide cover until a permanent appointment could be made.

Mission Council welcomed this and expressed its gratitude to Michael Davies for being willing to take on this responsibility. The Council agreed that the decision taken at its October meeting (Minute 97/69) should remain in force:

Mission Council, noting the importance of the development of Youth Work, agreed to authorise the Officers of the General Assembly to make an appointment on behalf of the Council should an appropriate candidate be found before the next meeting of the Mission Council.

Mrs. Wilma Frew reported on behalf of the Thames North Moderator Appointment Group their proposal that Mission Council should appoint the Revd Robert Rominger as Moderator of the Thames North Province for a

The Revd Aisling Pratt reported that the venue for the next General Assembly would be the Theatre and Floral Hall, Southport in the Wirral Province.

Under Standing Order 4a of General Assembly the time allocated to subsequent speeches in any debate is 5 minutes, but this can be reduced to 3 minutes if deemed appropriate by the Moderator. The Assembly Arrangements Committee had considered proposing that the Standing Order be amended to provide for 3 minute speeches only, but were unable to bring a unanimous recommendation.

Mission Council asked the Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee to produce a report, to be circulated with the Minutes, detailing the arguments for both retaining the present position and changing it so that a decision could be taken at the March meeting of the Council.

#### **98/18 Ministerial Discipline Procedures (continued from Matters Arising (Minute 98/08))**

The Revd Elizabeth Caswell, Dr. David Thompson and Mr. Graham Stacy reported that they had reviewed the amendments to the procedures and confirmed their acceptance of them. Mission Council accepted and agreed with their decision.

### **98/19 Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration**

Mr. Graham Stacy introduced the report from the Pensions Executive and explained the background to the Resolution which was then put to Council.

**Mission Council, acting for the assembly, amends the second paragraph of para 6.1.4 of the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration so that the final sentence reads "From 1 January 1998, this will be the same percentage of basic stipend as that payable as an employer's contribution to the URCMPF in the terms of para 15.1 of the Rules of the URCMPF."**

The Resolution was carried unanimously.

### **98/20 Closing Remarks**

The Moderator thanked the Revd Michael Cruchley for his assistance in making the arrangements for the meeting. He noted that the Council had thanked the staff of the Arthur Rank Centre at lunchtime and he thanked the members of the Council for their involvement in the discussions. He then adjourned the meeting.

The Chaplain led the Council in prayers, a period of reflection and the singing of a hymn.

## FIRST MAILING

Eight papers are included in this mailing:

- A A paper from the Assembly Arrangements Committee. There was not time to consider this matter at the January meeting.
- B Background paper to help you consider nominations to the various Mission Council Advisory Groups. This year's vacancies are listed at the end of the paper.
- C Paper on visits to provinces, detailing the proposal from the northern province and a recommended response from MCAG.
- D Paper on the discipline of all members. This is a summary of a previous discussion, proposed for inclusion in the Assembly report.
- E Paper on the General Secretary Review process. You need to consider the resolutions and also the nominations that will be required. A list of the Synod appointments will be available at the meeting.
- F A paper on Oversight Ministries. This must be read in conjunction with the report of the task group, which was presented to Mission Council in March 1997 as Paper G.
- G The report of the Mission Council Advisory Group.
- H A revised version of the response to the Toller Commission, intended for inclusion in the Assembly report.



**MISSION COUNCIL**  
*13 - 15 March 1998*

**A**

**Shortage of time prevented the following matter being discussed at the January meeting. Mission Council is asked to give its opinion as to whether or not Assembly should be advised to amend standing order 4a.**

**ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE**

The Committee has considered Standing Order 4a and in particular the ruling that in a debate no speech from the floor shall exceed five minutes, with the option open to the Moderator to reduce this to three minutes.

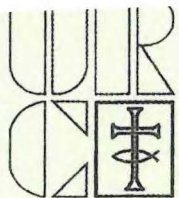
**Arguments in favour of change:**

- ❖ it will allow more contributions, ie. 20 per hour as opposed to 12.
- ❖ it is fairer in that everyone in a debate has an equal amount of time and later speakers are not restricted more than those who spoke earlier.

**Arguments for retaining the present rule:**

- ❖ a three minute rule would restrict the presentation of an argument
- ❖ while a lot can be said in a carefully prepared three minute speech, five minutes allows for the development of a well-argued case, and also allows members to engage in the debating of an issue by responding to other speeches.
- ❖ Assembly debate should not consist only of a series of set speeches.

Alasdair Pratt  
February 1998



# MISSION COUNCIL

13 - 15 March 1998

# B

## Election of Advisory Groups to Mission Council

The groups are listed below. Under each there is a statement of its remit, a list of the current members and the date on which their service ends. There are also details of eligibility and length of service.

### 1. Mission Council Advisory Group

*The group plans the meeting of MC and the follow up necessary. It provides personal support and advice for the Assembly Moderator and the General Secretary.*

Moderator	David Jenkins	
Immediate past Moderator	David Thompson	
Moderator-elect	Wilma Frew	
2 Committee Conveners	John Sutcliffe	1999
	Graham Long	2001
Treasurer	Graham Stacy	
4 members of Mission Council	Peter Poulter	1998
	Julian Macro	2000
	Lesley Charlton	2001
	Barbara Martin	2001
General Secretary	Tony Burnham	

(Deputy General Secretary in attendance).

Conveners serve for 4 years from year of appointment or until they cease to be conveners, whichever is the shorter.

Members serve for 4 years from year of appointment or until they cease to be members of Mission Council, whichever is the shorter.

### 2. Resource Planning Advisory Group

*The Group prepares a rolling five year plan which takes account of possible changes in society and in the life of the church on which the allocation of resources may be based. It is responsible for budgets. It holds one or two consultations with the financial representatives of the synods each year. It also consults with those responsible for human resources. Mission Council makes all recommendations to the Assembly about the use of resources.*

Convener:	Duncan Wilson	2000
Secretary:	Dai Hayward	2000
4 members	James Horton	1998
	Peter Poulter	1998

Pat Nimmo	2000
Derek Wales	2000

General Secretary	Tony Burnham
Treasurer	Graham Stacy
Secretary for Ministries	Christine Craven
Advocacy Secretary	Bill Wright

The Convener must be a member of Mission Council, or be invited to attend. S/he serves for 4 years.

The Secretary may or may not be a member of Mission Council and serves for 4 years. Members must be members of Mission Council at time of appointment, but they then serve for 4 years whether or not they remain members of Council.

### 3. Staffing Advisory Group

*The Group considers any Assembly post due to become vacant, or proposals for new posts and recommends to Mission Council whether this post should continue or be created.*

Convener	Geoff Lunt	1999
3 members	Denis Earp	1998
	Graham Maskery	2000
	Angela Hughes	2001

General Secretary in attendance.

... will serve for 4 years or until s/he

### 4. Advisory Group on Grants and Loans

*The Group is responsible for considering and co-ordinating general grants. It makes an annual report to Mission Council.*

Convener	Simon Rowntree	2000
Secretary	David Lane	2002

Deputy General Secretary	John Waller	
Church and Society Secretary	Peter Brain	
CRCW Development Worker	Graham Ghaleb	
Secretary for Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness	Bill Wright	
Secretary for Ecumenical Relations	Sheila Maxey	
Secretary for International Church Relations	Philip Woods	
Secretary for Ministries	Christine Craven	
Secretary for Youth Work or Childrens Advocate	? or Rosemary Johnston	

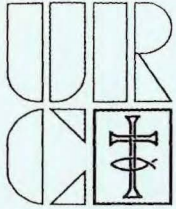
The Convener must be a member of Mission Council or be invited to attend. S/he serves for 4 years. The Secretary may or may not be a member of Mission Council. S/he serves for 4 years.

**At March 1998 Mission Council we need to elect:**

- 1 member of the Mission Council Advisory Group
- 2 members of the Resource planning Advisory Group
- 1 member of the Staffing Advisory Group

Those elected will serve from the date of the 1998 General Assembly.





MISSION COUNCIL  
*13 - 15 March 1998*

C

### **Mission Council visits to Provinces**

The Synod of the Northern Province has asked Mission Council

a) to arrange a visit to the Northern Province in 2001

and b) prepare a programme of visits to all Provinces.

In order to help the discussion of this request MCAG asked the Synod to indicate the purpose and pattern of the visits it was proposing.

The paper produced in response is on the reverse of this sheet.

The recommendation of MCAG is that a visit to the Northern Province should be made in 2001 but that it should be by 3 people and on a simpler basis than that outlined in the paper. The visit would follow visits being made in the intervening years by the Synod to each of its District Councils.

MCAG further recommends that no other such visits are arranged for the time being. The reason behind this recommendation is the belief that the likely value of reviews does not justify such a considerable use of people, time and resources.

The proposal and these recommendations will need to be discussed by Mission Council.

John Waller  
February 1998

## UNITED REFORMED CHURCH - NORTHERN PROVINCE

The Planning Mission and Resources Committee of the Northern Province at its meeting on January 15 1998 agreed the following as indicating the purpose and pattern of the Synod resolutions 97/52 and 97/53

### MISSION COUNCIL VISITS TO PROVINCES

#### **Aim:**

to visit the Provinces at regular intervals for consultation concerning their life and work

#### **Objectives:**

- to encourage each Province to consider its life and work, goals and methods, in the presence of representatives of other Provinces
- to enable affirmation and critique of the Province's structures and patterns of work
- to promote reflection on the operation of Synod in relation to other councils of the Church, ecumenical partner Churches and bodies, and organisations in the wider community of its area

#### **Method:**

Mission Council will invite three neighbouring Provinces to nominate two persons each, who are, or have been, either Synod officers or members of Synod Executive or its equivalent. From these six Mission Council will appoint a Pastoral Commission of four people

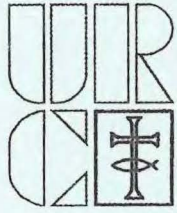
The Province will furnish the Pastoral Commission with a Province Profile containing such information about its life, work and mission within its context as it considers appropriate.

The Pastoral Commission will visit the Province

- attend meetings,
- invite observation from other Churches or community organisations, as they see fit.

After appropriate reflection, they will offer the Province a written comment and critique on the Province's perception of itself, its task and activity. This report and any recommendations will be offered confidentially to the Province Executive or equivalent. The Province and the Commission would decide how to make a report to Mission Council and General Assembly. The expense of the Pastoral Commission will be met by the General Assembly.

Peter I Poulter



**MISSION COUNCIL**  
**13 - 15 March 1998**

**D**

**Assembly resolution on the discipline of all members**

**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:**

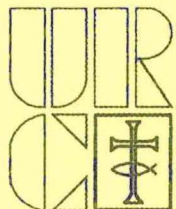
- 1. all the procedures for disciplinary action for all members of the URC whether they be ordained or not.**
- 2. and also its procedures for when pastoral difficulties or break down occur.**

**(Resolution 54 of General Assembly 1996: Record p.23)**

*Mission Council worked on this resolution at the autumn 1997 meeting (Paper E and minute 97/76). The following is offered as a summary for inclusion in the Assembly report.*

1. Mission Council has spent considerable time working on the matters within this resolution. Its report is made in three parts.
2. **Discipline of members.** After some initial work was done on this, it was agreed that there was a prior need for study on the nature and understanding of church membership. This task has been given to the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee.
3. **Discipline of local church officers.** It was recognised that some guidelines on this could be helpful and the Thames North Province has agreed to produce some.
4. **Procedures in the event of pastoral difficulties or breakdown.** This also was looked into with care and Mission Council makes its response as follows:
  - 4.1 Dealing with Pastoral difficulties and breakdown is primarily the responsibility of Elders' and Church Meetings, together with the District Council and Provincial Moderator in certain circumstances. District Councils in particular need to be sure that their procedures are reviewed and publicised at regular intervals, and that available resources of support are also made known.

- 4.2 Provinces are urged to give support and training to those who may be involved in seeking to resolve difficulties. In particular, attention is drawn to the experiment of appointing pastoral consultants in Thames North Province, and the organisation of courses in conflict management and intervention in East Midlands, Thames North and Southern Provinces.



# MISSION COUNCIL

13 - 15 March 1998

# E

## General Secretary Review Group

The Revd Tony Burnham will complete his 7 year appointment on 31 July 1999. He is eligible for re-appointment.

At its recent meeting the Mission Council Advisory Group realised that a resolution concerning this re-appointment or otherwise needs to be brought to the General Assembly in July 1998, rather than 1999, if sensible forward planning is to be possible. It has therefore taken certain steps which it hopes Mission Council will endorse.

The procedure for nominating (and, we must assume, for reviewing) a General Secretary is as follows:

*The General Assembly shall constitute a special committee consisting of two representatives appointed by each provincial synod, the Moderator of the General Assembly, the Convener of the Nominations Committee and nine persons selected by the Mission Council, five of whom shall be Conveners of Assembly Standing Committees, with authority to make a nomination for appointment as Clerk of Assembly and General Secretary to the Assembly. In any emergency the Mission Council shall be empowered to set up this committee.*

The steps taken by MCAG are:

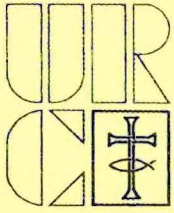
- a. Synods have been asked to appoint their representatives to a review group, noting that the first meeting will be held at 9.30pm on Saturday, 14 March, at All Saints Pastoral Centre.
- b. The Moderator has written to staff secretaries and invited them to send comments to him.
- c. The Clerk has been appointed to act as secretary at meetings of the Review Group and the Deputy General Secretary has been asked to administer the arrangements before and after the meetings.

## Resolutions

1. Mission Council agrees to set up a General Secretary Review Group with a view to a recommendation being made to the 1998 General Assembly.
2. Mission Council endorses the arrangements already made by the Mission Council Advisory Group in preparation for the first meeting of the Review Group.
3. Mission Council appoints (9 names to be elected) to membership of the General Secretary Review Group.

[A list of committee conveners can be found as part of the list of Mission Council members.]

John Waller



MISSION COUNCIL  
*13 - 15 March 1998*

E<sup>1</sup>

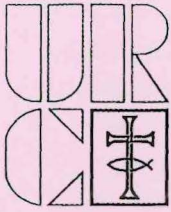
**General Secretary Review Group**

Mission Council must appoint 9 people to the Review Group, five of whom shall be conveners of Assembly standing committees. The names of the conveners can be found in the list of Mission Council members.

Synods have already appointed their representatives to the Review Group and their names are as follows:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Dr Peter Clarke<br>Revd Peter Poulter        | 2. Mrs Ann Sutcliffe                             |
| 3. Revd Graham Cook<br>Mrs Barbara Martin       | 4. Revd John Jenkinson<br>Mr Steve Wood          |
| 5. Revd Malcolm Hanson<br>Mrs Irene Wren        | 6. Revd Tom Bayliss<br>Mr Simon Rowntree         |
| 7. Revd Elizabeth Caswell<br>Mr Ken Woods       | 8. Revd Ray Adams<br>Mr Geoff Lunt               |
| 9. Mr David Butler<br>Revd Julian Macro         | 10. Revd Janet Flawn<br>Mrs Heather Pugsley      |
| 11. Revd David Helyar<br>Mrs Christine Meekison | 12. <i>To be advised</i><br>Dr Jean Sylvan Evans |

John Waller  
11 March 1998



**MISSION COUNCIL**  
**13 - 15 March 1998**

**F**

**A PERSONAL PAPER ON OVERSIGHT MINISTRIES**

**Introduction**

1. Towards the end of 1996 a task group on Oversight Ministries was constituted as the Mission Council response to this resolution of the 1995 General Assembly:

“ Assembly asks Mission Council to carry out a review of our present understanding and practice of oversight, and in particular to consider the work and responsibilities of moderators of provincial synods, keeping the ecumenical context in mind.”

The group had a wide brief but it was given a very tight timetable, being asked to report to Mission Council in March 1997. It is extremely regrettable that, this timetable having been kept, Mission Council was unable to consider the report which was presented to it because of the amount of time needed to frame the human sexuality resolutions.

2. This further paper is a personal attempt to help Mission Council give consideration to, and come to a conclusion on, the task group's report. It assumes the basic thinking of the group, although at one or two points it offers a challenge. Its main purpose is to point Mission Council, and then General Assembly, towards some possible conclusions. Until we are able to reach an end point, the hard work and understandable frustration of the task group will appear to have been in vain.
3. Whilst this is a personal contribution, I have been helped to clarify my thinking, first, by being able to discuss the issues with a meeting of the Synod Clerks and, second, as a result of a critical dialogue with Dr. David Thompson. The insights of these friends were invaluable although the content of this paper is my responsibility.
4. There are many oversight ministries among us. A minister has oversight of a congregation or congregations. An organist may have oversight of the music for worship. A Junior Church leader has oversight of the work among children. An elder has oversight of a group of members. We should not be thinking about hierarchy or status, but about function - a function given to an individual by the church for the building up of the body in faith, love and service.
5. Our present concern is with the oversight ministry of provincial moderators. This is a ministry given to ordained ministers of the Word and Sacraments and therefore we may expect it to involve the leadership of worship, preaching, teaching, pastoral care and leadership in mission.

6. There is an understandable reluctance to compare the role of moderator to that of bishop in an episcopal church. Moderators are ministers who are called to a particular office for a specified time. Their only difference from other ministers is one of function. Bishops are consecrated to a specific order of oversight, in which they remain for the rest of their lives. Theirs is the care of souls in the diocese, a care which they then share with priests. Yet in practice oversight ministers in all traditions have a great deal in common and this may be a converging aspect of our ecumenical life.
7. The obvious difference between Moderators and bishops owe a great deal to history and to the difference in size and state relationship between the United Reformed Church and the Church of England. There is a possibility that in a time of ecumenical convergence we will attend to the obvious differences and miss the underlying difference. This could be serious for us because we might miss a question which has been left unresolved since 1972: what is the relationship between a provincial moderator and the local churches (and their members) in a Province?
8. The structures of the United Reformed Church (Manual page B8) state that the moderator shall, among other things:
  - stimulate and encourage the work of the United Reformed Church within the province.
  - exercise a pastoral office towards the ministers and churches within the province.
  - participate with each district council in the province..... in the discharge of its responsibilities and in particular in the oversight of local churches and ministers.
9. Whereas a bishop has a direct and personal relationship with every confirmed Christian in the diocese, the moderator does not have a similar relationship with local churches and their members. In practice such a relationship develops informally through shared experiences and through the sharing of problems. Are we content to leave this as an informal and undefined relationship?
10. It is the district council which has oversight of local churches. That is the direct relationship in our tradition. However a district council, like a local church, needs a human face in order to relate to others. This leads us to two questions. Is there a conflict between conciliar authority and personal leadership? Who should exercise personal leadership in a district council?
11. Our tradition is, and our experience teaches, that the Lord makes his will clear as people meet together in councils. Yet councils cannot operate unless the people in them each make their contribution. Someone must prepare the agenda. Someone must explain issues and answer questions. Someone must effect decisions. Each of them, in their own way, is exercising a personal leadership which enables the council to



function. Their leadership needs to be affirmed rather than undermined. If that is true of, say, Church Secretaries, District Presidents, Synod Treasurers, committee conveners, is it not also true of provincial moderators? Conciliar government, which remains our guiding principle, requires personal leadership.

12. It is clear from the extract quoted in paragraph 8 above that a moderator should exercise personal leadership in a district council. However s/he is not an officer of the council. Would it be good for the health of the Church and/or our ecumenical relationships, if certain officers of district councils were designated or even separated from other responsibilities to give personal leadership in oversight? Would it be good in these, or other, circumstances to make clearer what is appropriate personal leadership by a provincial moderator in a district council?
13. We should expect a Reformed church always to be changing as it responds to the Word of God in Scripture, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. There is no doubt that the United Reformed Church, like its sister churches in these islands, has changed during the 25 years of its history. By relating some of those changes to the particular tasks of oversight ministry we may gain some insights as well as seeing whether there is need for further change.
14. Since 1972 there has been a reduction in the number of churches, a greater reduction (proportionately) in the number of ministers, and an even greater reduction in the number of members and children. Ours is a much smaller church. Does that mean that more, or less, oversight is needed?
15. Since 1972 there has been an increase in the number of retired ministers and ministers widows/widowers. Who should give oversight and pastoral care to them? Clearly the local church is in the front line but who represents the whole church?
16. Since 1972 travel by road has become easier and faster. This will have reduced the travelling time involved in oversight ministry, although the size of the reduction will vary from province to province.
17. Since 1972 there has been a significant change in the ecumenical scene. In particular there has been a growth in local ecumenical partnerships, regional ecumenical councils and church leaders' meetings. These particular changes have made great demands on the time of those in oversight ministry.
18. Since 1972 the United Reformed Church has been re-formed to include the former Reformed Association of Churches of Christ. This has resulted in new understandings of the nature of local ministry and in particular the development of non-stipendiary ministry. Appropriate patterns of oversight have had to be created for this style of ministry.
19. Since 1972 most Provinces have begun to develop a structure of training and development teams. There is an oversight aspect to the work of those in the teams. Usually the moderator is seen as part of the

team. This offers the chance of her/him sharing some responsibilities with others, an opportunity not available in earlier years.

20. Since 1972 church life has to a degree mirrored life in society at large in that it has become more complex; the decisions of those "in authority" are more frequently and rigorously challenged; there are higher expectations in terms of management of people and pastoral care. These are, of course, generalisations but they do indicate an increased pressure put on anyone in an oversight ministry.
21. Since 1972 the United Reformed Church (like others) has declined in numbers and its missionary task has become less clear in an increasingly secular society. This put a burden on all of us but in a particular way on those we perceive ought to be doing something about it - or who put that pressure on themselves. Leadership is more demanding and more in demand.
22. The previous eight paragraphs make clear that changes in the church have affected the nature of oversight ministry considerably. More changes are already in process. The new disciplinary procedures for ministers will remove some responsibility from those in oversight ministries. The availability of the Churches' Ministerial Counselling Service should take some of the pastoral load from moderators.
23. Change is gradual and continuing. In many ways that makes it easier to adapt to and cope with. It can also lead to confusion, to unreal expectations, and to misunderstandings. In order to avoid that, from time to time it is always going to be necessary to define again our current understanding. Have we reached that point in relation to oversight ministry?

### **Who should Represent Us?**

24. A particular change in the nature of a moderator's service, which is a consequence of several influences, is an increasing demand for her/him to appear in a representational role. The moderator's presence is seen to authenticate or complete the occasion. Without denying the fact that a moderator should often represent the wholeness of the United Reformed Church, the assumption that s/he must do so on every important occasion needs to be challenged. The councils which share oversight with a moderator should be able to agree with her/him when another representative person is appropriate. However, this is not simply a matter of finding someone else in order to make a point: representatives should be competent for whatever function they are being asked to exercise.

### **Appointments**

25. In 1995 Mission Council called for a review of the process by which moderators are appointed and may be re-appointed. At present recommendations are made by an ad-hoc group of 20 people, 10 appointed by the Province concerned and 10 appointed to represent General Assembly, who of course consult very widely. The Synod

Clerks observed that, looked at objectively, the present system has some bizarre features. They also observed that it has succeeded in selecting ministers well able to exercise oversight ministry among us. These two comments come from people who are very closely involved in the system and its consequences.

26. Oversight of the overseers is an important element in the discussion. The most able among us, whoever they are, should not be left in isolation. The development of a full ministerial appraisal system is another important aspect of oversight. The recent practice of visits to Provincial moderators by the General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary - and the revival of a staff development programme with Church House Staff - are to be welcomed as part of an overall strategy of care and support.
27. **Some possible conclusions:**
  - 27.1 The model for ministry for those in oversight ministries is that on page B8 in the Manual. Insofar as the office of provincial moderator is only open to ministers, the model assumes the understanding of ministry in paragraphs 20 and 21 of the Basis of Union.
  - 27.2 There are certain specific issues which need further thought and Mission Council should consider putting these to a committee or a task group. These are the issues raised in paragraphs 7, 9, 12, 23.
  - 27.3 District Councils and Synods share oversight with the moderators. Synods could be asked to work with the District Councils in their Province to look at the present balance of responsibilities in the light of the task group report and this paper, and in particular at the issues raised in paragraphs 10, 12, 15, 24.
  - 27.4 Little is said in this report, deliberately, about the appointment and review of provincial moderators. The issue has been looked at before but there has been no enthusiasm for change. If paragraph 25 is a correct summary of the present situation, Mission Council needs to decide whether or not this is a matter needing review at this time.
28. These conclusions are based on the belief that a more thorough study of oversight ministries is not required at the moment. They therefore propose a modest and continuing examination of the way such ministries are best exercised and supported. If this basic belief is not accepted by Mission Council, then the way forward will be for the existing (or a new) task group to be asked to conduct a rigorous review and to be allowed sufficient time in which to do it.

John Waller



**MISSION COUNCIL**  
*13 - 15 March 1998*

G

**Report of Mission Council Advisory Group**

1. The Group met on 5 February 1998.
2. A number of papers coming to Mission Council were discussed and agreed: the Commission on Toller, Assembly Moderators' diaries, a response to Provincial concerns, the report on Oversight Ministries, the Northern Province's proposal for visits to provinces.
3. It was noted that venues and dates of Mission Council meetings had been booked as follows:

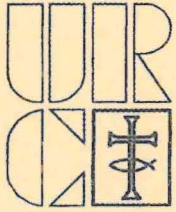
<i>2000</i> Saturday, 22 January	Arthur Rank Centre, Stoneleigh
Tuesday - Thursday, 21-23 March	Swanwick
Friday - Sunday, 29 Sept - 1 October	Ushaw College, Durham
<i>2001</i> Saturday, 20 January	Arthur Rank Centre, Stoneleigh
Friday - Sunday, 23-25 March	Venue to be arranged
Tuesday - Thursday, 2-4 October	Swanwick

High Leigh was not available on either of the dates agreed at the last Mission Council meeting.

4. The Group noted that, due to an oversight, there would be no theological reflector at the March meeting. It was glad to know that people have been booked for both the residential meetings in the following year.

John Waller  
February 1998

( — )



MISSION COUNCIL  
*13 - 15 March 1998*

H

*This is a revised version of paper A, amended and shortened as a result of the discussion at the January 1998 Mission Council. It is suggested for inclusion in the Assembly report.*

*The Clerk and Legal Adviser are being consulted about paragraph 11, which may need further revision.*

### **A response to the Toller commission**

1. In June 1994 a Commission of the General Assembly heard an appeal by the church at Toller against a decision of the East Midlands Synod. The subject of the appeal was an unhappy situation which had arisen in Northamptonshire in the course of creating a new group pastorate. The commission found in favour of the local church. Events have now moved on considerably and are of no further concern to a wider audience.
2. However the last finding of the Commission reads:

“ The Commission has no remit to deal with the implications of these findings. We nevertheless ask the Mission Council to consider the substance of the following requests made by Toller United Reformed Church in their submission, namely that they ask the wider church:

  - i to prepare clearer guidelines for the creation of a group pastorate where there is already a minister in post; and
  - ii to give guidance as to when a grouping of churches becomes effective to form the group’ “.
3. There was some initial delay in taking action on this request. Then Mission Council Advisory Group decided to ask the Moderators’ Meeting to draw up an initial response based on its experience, and then to ask the Cambridge District Council to comment on the response in the light of its own work on grouping.
4. MCAG added a third request to the two from the Toller Commission. It sought comment on paragraph 1(1) of the structure of the United Reformed Church (Manual page B1). This reads:

“ Members of the United Reformed Church associated in a locality for worship witness and service shall together comprise a local church. Since the proper functioning of the local church is so fundamental to the

life of the United Reformed Church, when there is a number of small congregations in proximity to one another unable separately to provide leadership and resources for the work of the church, such congregations shall consult with the district council to formulate an acceptable scheme for joining together with a single membership, a common church meeting and elders' meetings representative of all the constituent congregations, and a shared ministry".

It was felt that this paragraph could have some bearing on the outcome of the discussions.

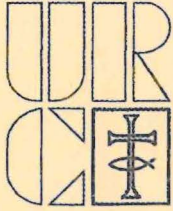
5. The Moderators and the District Council both accepted the request of MCAG but both found the task extremely complex and very time-consuming. Some 21 months elapsed between the request first being made of the Moderators' Meeting and the final response being received from the Cambridge District Council.
6. The conclusion of a great deal of discussion is that it is virtually impossible to produce guidelines or to give general guidance which can be applied to all the varied circumstances which lead to the creation, variation and dissolution of groups. Nor is it desirable to give emphasis to one particular model of grouping, such as that described in paragraph 4. The grouping of churches should be a dynamic response to particular mission needs and opportunities.
7. On a topic necessarily full of detail, our eyes need to remain firmly on our main objectives, what church structures and relationships will best serve our missionary situation now and in the immediate future? How is the resource of ministry best used to serve that mission? How can we achieve those objectives as a community of people committed to loving God and each other for the sake of the world for which Christ lived and died?
8. Nevertheless there is experience to be learned from and good practice to be followed. The comments which follow focus on the three areas of consultation, record-keeping and local church-group relationships.
9. **Consultation** is the way to successful change. The Provincial Moderators have put in writing a series of steps which set out a consultation process for those engaged in seeking to change the shape of a pastorate. District Pastoral Committees are advised to get a copy from their moderator.
10. Misunderstandings sometimes arise because people have different perceptions as to what was agreed, and when. The **careful keeping of minutes and records**, and their confirmation by the relevant parties, is a necessary part of the process of change.
11. In the structures of the United Reformed Church, and in the United Reformed Church Acts, **certain authority is given to the Church Meeting.**

It is very doubtful that it is possible to cede that authority to a group meeting, at least in legal matters. Therefore, whilst paragraph 12 encourages the creation of group meetings for the purpose of effective communication, decision-taking and resource-sharing, it is essential that major decisions are ratified and recorded in the separate Elders' and Church Meeting minutes.

12. 12.1 **The creation of a group pastorate** should only take place after the fullest consultation (see paragraph 9).
- 12.2 There should be a clearly-defined meeting point between the congregations other than the minister(s) or interim moderator(s).
- 12.3 This should not be seen as an extra meeting, to be accepted reluctantly. It will need to deal with matters of shared concern but it also may become a place for the sharing of insights, skills and resources. Flexibility in the light of local circumstances is the key. One possible pattern is that of joint Elders' Meetings and separate Church Meetings. In some groups shared meetings may be more significant and more frequent than the separate meetings.
- 12.4 It needs to be agreed what are the functions of that meeting; who is a member and how are they elected; what is the authority of that meeting in relation to the separate Church and Elders' Meetings, and what are the channels of communication; are there circumstances in which Church meetings and/or Elders' Meetings will meet together and what authority will such meetings have; what is the relationship and what are the channels of communication between the "pastorate meeting" and the District Council.
- 12.5 Critical to any group agreement are the arrangements for calling (a) minister(s) or for changing the pattern of ministry. These should have the agreement in writing of the District Council and of the relevant Synod Committee.
- 12.6 If a minister is to serve in a group pastorate, it is important that, in declaring a vacancy, the District Council should not only be satisfied with the terms and conditions of the call but also with the adequacy of the group structures for acting and making decisions as a pastorate.
- 12.7 It is good practice that whenever a group of churches is inaugurated, or an existing group changed, the District Council organises an act of worship to recognise what has happened. If possible it should include a signing of an agreement by representatives of the churches concerned.
- 12.8 In planning their programme of pastoral visits District Councils should give oversight to the wholeness of groups as well as to the individual needs of churches.







**MISSION COUNCIL**  
*13 - 15 March 1998*

H<sup>1</sup>

**In the light of helpful suggestions and comments received from the Clerk, the Legal Adviser and the Moderator of the East Midlands Province, I propose the following changes to Paper H.**

1. The heading should read "A paper on the grouping of churches".
2. Paragraph 1 should read "In June 1994.....audience."
3. In paragraph 2, line 3, remove "Toller" and replace it with a few dots.
4. In paragraph 4, line 1, replace the words "the Toller Commission" with the words "the 1994 Commission".

**The effect of these changes is to remove all references to the Toller church. It is suggested that at this stage reference to past history would not help locally, and that anyway others could think that a paper with a particular local focus did not apply to them.**

5. Paragraph 11 is deleted and replaced with the following: "In the structure of the United Reformed Church (Section B of The Manual), certain authority is given to both the Church Meeting and the Elders' Meeting of each local church. Also in the United Reformed Church Acts certain authority is given to the Church Meeting. For legal and constitutional reasons, these authorities cannot be ceded to a group meeting. Therefore, whilst paragraph 12 encourages the creation of group meetings for the purpose of effective communication, discussion and resource-sharing, such meetings may only formulate proposals. It is essential that decisions are taken by the separate Elders' and Church Meetings and recorded in their minutes."

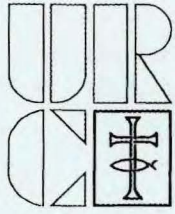
**This change is the significant one. It makes the constitutional and legal position clear.**

6. Paragraph 12.3 is deleted and replaced with the following: "Flexibility in the light of local circumstances is the key, though it must be remembered that the authority of the individual Church and Elders' Meetings must be upheld (see paragraph 11 above). If the local situation would be better served by giving more significance to group meetings then the model defined in Paragraph 1.1 of the Structure and quoted at paragraph 4 of this paper should be adopted."

**This change reflects the guidance given in the revised paragraph 11.**

John Waller  
6 March 1998





## MISSION COUNCIL 13 - 15 March 1998

# I

### ***General Assembly Moderator: Programme of Visits***

*The immediate Past Moderator, David Thompson, raised with MCAG the possibility of a more structured approach to the visits made by the Assembly Moderator. The intention would be to ensure that, over a period, all parts of the Church received a visit. An initial paper was prepared and circulated for comment to six former Moderators, five of whom were in favour of the principle. The following is a summary of MCAG's conclusions.*

- 1. The task of the moderator.** The Structure (2.5) states that *The General Assembly which shall embody the unity of the United Reformed Church and ..... shall elect a moderator .....* Nowhere is it set out what is expected of the moderator. Some minimal requirements are well known: to preside over and address the Assembly; to preside at Mission Council and other committees; and to be an ex-officio member of Assembly Committees. The main task however, is to represent the Assembly, as the embodiment of the unity of the URC, both to local churches, district councils, provincial synods and, ecumenically, on visits to other Churches here and overseas and also to the community and the state. The moderator is free to use her/his own gifts to enhance this ministry. All moderators are different and the church welcomes this variety. Preaching or the giving of addresses are not the only ways by which the moderator may represent the church.
- 2. Present practice.** Shortly after the Assembly the moderator-elect sets a date, usually the end of October the same year, by which invitations have to be received. The moderator and the person she/he appoints to manage the diary plan the diary for the year of office beginning at the next Assembly. Although some moderators take the initiative in offering a set period to a district or province, most of the visits are agreed in response to invitations received. One disadvantage of this method is that some determined councils, and congregations can receive an annual visit from successive moderators while other parts of the church never do. Another disadvantage is that invitations are also received after the due date, throughout the year of office. Moderators often regret missing some of these opportunities or decide to cram them in space reserved for preparation, rest or their own regular duties.

3. **Proposal:** to ensure that over a number of years successive moderators visit the whole church by a more planned approach. The advantages of this are that it will be good for all our districts to share in this ministry; for the Assembly to be honoured everywhere and for the moderator to be guided in her/his planning.
4. **The method:** With 1752 churches, 75 district councils and 12 provincial synods the best way forward is to focus on districts. By visiting 19 each year, all could be visited once every four years.

Most district visits would be over a weekend. Whether the weekend lasted from Friday to Tuesday or for the Sunday only would depend on the circumstances of the moderator.

This would still leave for another 33 weekends for other visits, including overseas, Mission Council and holidays. When the moderator is a minister in local charge, some of these Sundays would need to be devoted to her/his own congregation.

Such a structure would allow for special celebrations in local churches, either as part of the visit to a district, or as a one-off on another Sunday.

5. **Programme.** Based on the experience of past moderators, guidelines could be offered to districts about making the best use of the time. Such suggestions should have the intention of stimulating the imagination rather than being prescriptive. These guidelines could be adapted and improved each year in the light of experience. Each year they should be accompanied by a statement of the moderator's own offers, hopes and limitations.

### **Recommendations**

1. MC recommends that, for an initial four year period, the Assembly Moderator's duties include a visit to one quarter of the districts; the programme to begin in the year 1999-2000 (i.e. by the moderator elected in 1998).
2. The General Secretary is asked to prepare such a programme in consultation with the Assembly Moderators involved.

Tony Burnham

February 1998



MISSION COUNCIL  
*13 - 15 March 1998*

J

**Resource Planning Advisory Group**

**LONG RANGE PLANNING**

Mission Council in January received a presentation from RPAG in which the Group brought forward the work that it had been doing since it left 1997 General Assembly with the question, "*What are Ministers for?*" Since last July the Group has met several times to seek answers to this question along with other related questions. We have shared thoughts with several other committees of the church, with Moderators, Province finance representatives and of course Mission Council, and have been pleased to note that, although questions have been raised about the language and terminology used by RPAG, there is broad consensus in the emerging vision for the URC. There are three elements to this:

1. **STRATEGY** - RPAG has recognised the vital role of the local church in being at the mission forefront. It sees a need for the structure and relationships of the local church to be reassessed, in light of today's circumstances, in relation to mission and the most effective and fair use of the human and financial resources available. This, we perceive, will involve much more team and networking and the wider use of specific "lay" ministries.
2. **ACCOUNTABILITY & QUALITY** - RPAG has watched the development of ministerial accompanied self-appraisal and ongoing professional development with enthusiasm. We believe that a properly resourced and supported stipendiary ministry is key to the prospect of long term growth in the church. This support for, and nurture of, ministers is an expression of the view that they should be more accountable to the church which calls them and holds responsibility for them.
3. **PROCESS** - Serious questions have been raised about the extent to which the various councils of the church facilitate local mission. RPAG has been encouraged to review this aspect of the Church's life.

These matters have been transmitted to every church secretary through the document previously circulated as "*The Ministry & Mission Fund 1998*" (to be provided as an appendix in the Reports to Assembly). An encouraging flow of correspondence has begun.

In January Mission Council encouraged RPAG to;

1. Work up the three above principles into proposals, in consultation and partnership with others.
2. Continue to engage Mission Council in the developments which follow.
3. Provide resources for a wider discussion throughout the Church.

RPAG continues to work to fulfil its mandate.

RPAG has a responsibility for recommending the budget. In assessing the Budget for 1999 RPAG noted & welcomed the substantial increase of £230,000 in the overall Training budget. Also noted were the following changes compared with 1998;-

Support for Westminster College	£nil (from £114,300)
Council for World Mission	£100,000 (from £650,700) - this to apply in '98
Cost of a Pilot Officer	£37,000
Increased contributions to ecumenical bodies	£48,000

There has for some time been considerable discussion about minister numbers. The Finance & Ministries offices are now able fully to reconcile their respective databases in regard to minister numbers. The assumption upon which the 1999 budget is based is that the number of F/T equivalent ministers to be paid at the end of 1998 will be 678, & at the end of 1999 will be 670. This is based on known changes (eg. retirement) & extrapolation of trends based on past experience.

RPAG agreed to recommend an increase in the total M&M contributions required to £17,000,000, being an increase of 1.8% compared with 1998. This is to be achieved by a 1.8% increase in the total M&M contributions to redirect savings from the lowered CWMI contribution into mission at home.

With these observations, RPAG is pleased to support the proposed Budget for 1999.

Last year RPAG declined to provide a detailed financial projection for the following five years. It declines again in 1998 on the grounds that such a projection would again be more misleading than helpful. There remain issues of principle upon which greater clarity and guidance is sought. Development and analysis of numerical projections are relatively simple once the direction is clear. Members of Mission Council and General Assembly should be assured, however, that RPAG adheres firmly to the view that long term coherent planning is vital if the URC is to anticipate the resources required in order to respond to future mission opportunities.

**Resource Planning Advisory Group**  
**FACING THE FUTURE, 1998**  
*(Previously circulated as "The Ministry & Mission Fund 1998")*

### **The Five Year Plan**

The Resource Planning Advisory Group (RPAG) has not felt able to produce a numerical update to the five year plan because several of the assumptions which formed the basis for the plan presented at General Assembly in 1996 have proved to be unreliable. This is partly because we are getting better at understanding what factors give rise to significant variations in the planning process. As we have begun to understand better, we have come to realise that the questions may be easy - the answers certainly aren't. As this document stated last year the plan will change as we discern God's will. It is in the process of just such a change.

### **The Role of RPAG**

RPAG is an advisory group of Mission Council. Comprised of fewer than a dozen people, it is tasked with assessing holistically the way the denomination holds in balance a variety of competing issues. Chief among these is the provision of ministry and the funding of that provision. There are other lesser, but nonetheless important issues which take their place in RPAG's deliberations.

This document attempts to explain how Mission Council, through RPAG, will be invited to view the future. If the denomination can achieve a consensus about the future it will be relatively straightforward to become more detailed about the financial implications. This is not to say that the future can be viewed without an understanding of the financial resources required; rather it is an attempt to say that any financial forecast is of limited value unless the denomination, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has a vision of the future.

If you have any comments arising from this document please send comments to Mr Dai Hayward, RPAG Secretary, 47 Cleveland Avenue, Darlington DL3 7HF. (Fax 01325 365832) Alternatively you can let your Provincial Mission Council representative know.

### **Ministry**

There are three well known major forces at work in the denomination. Over at least the last decade

1. Membership has declined at about 3% per year
2. The number of ministers has declined at about 1 ½ % per year
3. The number of buildings closed is barely noticeable

Today there are 660 stipendiary ministers. The number of ministers is set to decline over the next three years as nearly 100 ministers retire. The number of students expected to be inducted into stipendiary ministry is about 50. Therefore we can expect a decrease in stipendiary ministers of about 50 over the next three years unless we induct some from other churches. This, rather than finance, represents the biggest challenge for the denomination over the next few years.



The URC Year Books show the following membership in URC churches.

1976	175,000
1986	131,000
1996	97,000

If we add all members of Local Ecumenical Projects the 1996 membership is 125,000.

It is not difficult to see that these trends cannot continue. There are some significant implications.

1. The number of stipendiary ministers available will not meet the denomination's current expectations for ministry.
2. The cost *per member* of keeping the local church in good repair will increase at a greater rate than inflation.
3. The cost *per member* of paying for ministers will also become a burden which increases faster than inflation.

Broadly speaking the denomination is facing two options;

1. To challenge itself to be able to continue to provide ministry in the same buildings in the same way as now. This will become an increasingly demanding challenge as membership declines further.
2. To recognise the need to "cut our coat according to the cloth" and thereby accept that there are limits to the available resources of both ministry and finance. The challenge is one of putting those resources to best sustainable use through innovative ways to provide a new kind of ministry.

forward. If there are not going to be enough stipendiary ministers available to provide ministry according to historical patterns and we are reluctant to close churches we will need to find new ways of providing ministry. To this end RPAG is making the following observations and recommendations to Mission Council.

1. We should aspire to the highest quality in all we do.
2. The need for ministry is unlikely to decline, despite falling member/adherent numbers. In the interim, while the denomination assesses the future RPAG suggests that stipendiary ministry continues to be provided on a pro-rata to membership basis that is similar to today.
3. Ministry - especially stipendiary ministry - needs to be re-shaped to meet the needs of today.
4. The URC should move towards coherent clusters of local churches with team ministry.
5. A prime role of the ministry is to identify and encourage the growth of local leaders in ways that are relevant to local needs, thereby ensuring that workloads are shared and vulnerability to personnel change is lowered and the life of the local church is developed.
6. A sustained recruitment campaign aimed at attracting young stipendiary and non stipendiary ministers should be initiated.
7. A key requirement is for a consistent education programme about the change and for congregations to commit themselves to change and its implications.

8. The roles of district and province will also change giving a sharper focus to each.
9. As a first step a supportive programme should be initiated, through which ministers will be required to undertake on-going professional development. Suitable courses need to be identified and costed.
10. Mission Council should oversee the programme to ensure that it is regarded as a priority in our life and that its quality meets our needs.

There is an explicit need for greater training and development of ministers at a cost which has yet to be assessed. It is impossible for RPAG to believe the URC can continue to deliver quality ministry without continuing professional development of ministers. While this will cause discomfort to some RPAG hopes that the denomination, as a whole, will endorse the broad thrust of all these proposals.

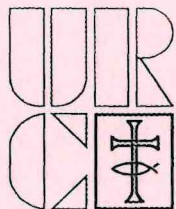
### **Mission**

There is much mission work being carried out by URC people outside the normal life of the average church. This work often engages those in need at their place of need. The URC has, hitherto, not fully recognised these ministries - in reality "para-ministries". A current review of the scope and effectiveness of Church Related Community Worker (CRCW) work may lead to these "para-ministries" assuming a greater role in the life of the denomination. This is also likely to challenge local churches in the role of their mission in their local communities.

### **Funds**

RPAG has recently agreed with provincial Treasurers that the budget timetable will change, starting with the 1999 budget. The major change is that Provinces will now make their final commitments to the M&M Fund one year later than hitherto. This will mean that commitment to payments into the M&M Fund will be made in light of current information rather than having to guess 18 months ahead of the first payment date. The following pages provide the usual financial information about the 1997 outturn and the 1998 budget. It will be noted that, while finance does not appear to be going to provoke difficulties in 1998 and for the next few years, there remains a significant, and as yet uncoded, challenge if Mission Council and the wider denomination accept the challenge of training.





MISSION COUNCIL  
*13 - 15 March 1998*

**K**

**CONFIDENTIAL DRAFT**

**PROPOSALS FOR THE UNION**

**of**

**The Congregational Union of Scotland**

**and**

**The United Reformed Church  
in the United Kingdom**

**prepared by**

**a Joint Negotiating Group**

**for presentation to**

**the two Assemblies**

February 1998

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**This edition omits Appendices A, B, C, D and E. Copies may be obtained from the General Secretaries of the URCUK and the CUS**

## Preamble

Following the failure in 1988 to achieve a sufficient majority to implement the *Proposals for Unification of The Congregational Union of Scotland and The United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom*, the Congregational Union of Scotland sought to maintain and foster relationships with the United Reformed Church, in particular through the sharing of information and resources by means of a Joint Liaison Group, which has met regularly since 1989.

The Congregational Union of Scotland, in association with the Women's Union and the Scottish Congregational College, formed the Scottish Congregational Church in 1993. The structure adopted by the Scottish Congregational Church emphasised a greater degree of interdependence and commitment to a conciliar understanding of the Church, especially through the role of the new Area Councils. A significant number of congregations could not accept the new structure, and about 25% left the Congregational Union of Scotland, and eventually joined the Congregational Federation. A small number of Churches remained in the Congregational Union of Scotland without joining the Scottish Congregational Church.

In 1996, on the initiative of local churches, the Assembly of the Congregational Union of Scotland resolved by 109 votes to 5 to instruct the General Committee "to initiate discussions with the United Reformed Church with a view to effecting the union of our two denominations as soon as possible". The approach of the General Committee met with a welcoming and positive response from the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom's Mission Council, which was subsequently unanimously confirmed by the General Assembly in 1997. It is with this background that the present proposals for union between the congregational Union of Scotland and the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom are offered.

## Part 1

### Introduction

The proposals for the union of the Congregational Union of Scotland and the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom are offered by the Joint Negotiating Group in the context of the commitment of both denominations to seek further unions in England, Scotland and Wales. The union proposed in the following document is seen as a step on our journey towards the realization of the fullness of the unity of Christ's Church; it is intended to stimulate ecumenical progress, and not hinder our search for unity. The proposed Synod of Scotland will be in the forefront of this process.

The Congregational Union of Scotland in 1991 affirmed its commitment "to seek the fullest Christian unity possible through the Church" and its promise "to support progress towards a united and reformed Church in Britain". At its General Assembly in 1996, the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom reaffirmed its commitment to "take, wherever possible and with all speed, further steps towards the unity of all God's people", and to continue to express that commitment through, *inter alia*, "active participation in initiatives leading towards organic union". Currently both bodies are engaged with the Church of Scotland, the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Methodist Church in Scotland in the **Scottish Church Initiative for Union**. It is envisaged that this Initiative will be encouraged and strengthened by the witness and contribution of the Synod of Scotland created by the union of our Churches.

Unity and mission are inseparable aspects of Christian discipleship (John 17:21). Christians are called to unity not simply for the sake of the Church, but primarily for the sake of witnessing to the loving purpose of God for the world. We believe that the proposed union may be a way of demonstrating how the rich diversity of national heritage and identity may be respected and held together for the enrichment of all in the visible unity of God's people, and so be a sign of the grace of God seeking the unity of humankind.

## Part 2

### The Proposal

The proposal is to unite the Congregational Union of Scotland and the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom in a single body to be known as the United Reformed Church. This will be brought into effect by an agreed unifying process and the passage of a private parliamentary bill.

The resulting United Reformed Church will adopt a Basis of Union which is in all essentials the same as that of the present United Reformed (UK). However, the new body will create a Synod of Scotland, made up of those local churches which constitute the Congregational Union of Scotland and the local churches of the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom (UK) which are situated in Scotland, provided that the competent bodies secure the majority votes required by the unifying process and the parliamentary bill.

Taking into account the changing constitutional arrangements within the United Kingdom, the proposal makes provision for the Synods of Scotland and of Wales to carry out certain representative functions in those countries on behalf of the whole United Reformed Church, subject to the final authority of the General Assembly. The proposal provides for future national church unions in England, Scotland and Wales.

Provision is made for a certain flexibility in terminology in the United Reformed Church in Scotland, so long as the fundamental concept of conciliar authority in the church is maintained. The proposal does not modify the understanding of eldership or the role of the district council as hitherto understood by the United Reformed Church (UK) but allows for local option in the use of the title "elder" and for the term "area council" to be used as an alternative to "district council".

The proposal protects the conditions of service for ministers of the Congregational Union of Scotland and the United Reformed Church (UK) and, in some cases, improves them. There will be an exceptional expenditure in order to bring about the union but thereafter the balance of income and expenditure is forecast to be much as it is in the existing bodies.

Exceptional arrangements have been proposed for the appointment of the first moderator of the Synod of Scotland. Thereafter the current practice of the United Reformed Church (UK) will be followed.

The Joint Negotiating Group believe that the proposals set out for final determination represent an effective way of bringing about the desired union without constraining the united church for the future. Some of the provisions will be short-term but the over-riding aim of bringing the Congregational Union of Scotland and the United Reformed Church (UK) into a single body which expresses our conciliar understanding of the church will have been achieved.



## Part 3

### The Uniting Process

#### Definition

#### 1. These Proposals

- (a) define the procedures by means of which and the terms and conditions upon which the United Reformed (UK) and the Congregational Union of Scotland comprising the Evangelical Union and Congregational Union as existing at 1896 would be united so that the Congregational Union of Scotland might end its separate life with its functions carried forward within the one church to be known as the United Reformed Church and
- (b) declare the amendments (see Appendix C ) which would be made to the present Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church (UK) and Structure of the Union of the United Reformed Church (UK) ("the Basis and Structure") if such union were to take place.

#### Procedures and Conditions for Union

2. Provided that the procedures and conditions defined and declared in paragraph 3 of these Proposals are duly performed and observed, the passing of the Unifying Declaration as therein defined shall operate on the date that such Unifying Declaration is passed ("the date of union")

- (a) to bring into immediate effect the amendments to the Basis and Structure (Appendix C)

and

- (b) to effect the immediate dissolutions, reformation and other consequences defined and declared in paragraph 4 of these Proposals

all of which taking place on the date of union are in these Proposals referred to as "the unification".

#### 3. The union shall take effect provided that

- (a) the Annual Assembly of the CUS ("the Annual Assembly") at its meeting in September 1998, by resolution passed by the votes of not less than three-fourths of its members present and voting approves these Proposals for union in the one church to be known as the United Reformed Church.

and

(b) the General Assembly of the Union of the United Reformed Church (UK) ("the General Assembly") at its meeting in July 1998, by resolutions passed by the votes of not less than two-thirds of its members present and voting

(i) approves these Proposals for union in the one church to be known as the United Reformed Church

(ii) approves the proposals for the amendment of the Basis and Structure to become effective on the date of union and refers such proposals to provincial synods and district councils of the Union of the United Reformed Church (UK) in accordance with its due procedure for amendment of the Basis and Structure

and

(c) resolutions to concur as hereinafter defined are passed on or before the thirty first day of December 1998 by not less than two-thirds of the total number at that date of member churches of the Congregational Union of Scotland whose combined membership as shown in the last edition of the Congregational Union of Scotland Year Book to be published before that date is not less than three-fourths of the total membership of all member churches of the Congregational Union of Scotland as shown in the same Year Book

(i) a resolution to concur shall mean a resolution to concur with these Proposals passed on or after the first day of October 1998 but before the thirty first day of December 1998 by not less than three-fourths of the members present and voting at a meeting of any one of the member churches of the Congregational Union of Scotland of which due notice has been given by any person specified in the resolution addressed to the General Secretary of the Congregational Union of Scotland by the twenty second day of January 1999

(ii) a concurring church shall mean a member church of the Congregational Union of Scotland which has passed a resolution to concur of which such written notice has been given and a non-concurring church shall mean one which has not

and

(d) The General Secretary of the United Reformed Church (UK) has not on or before the thirty first day of December 1998 received written notice from more than four provincial synods or from more than twenty four district councils that a motion "that the proposal be not proceeded with" has been passed by a majority of members present and voting at a duly convened meeting of such body

and

(e) the-General Assembly meeting in 1999 by resolution ratifies the amendments to the Basis and Structure (Appendix C) to become effective on the date of Union

and

(f) the Annual Assembly meeting in 1999 by resolution resolves to proceed with these proposals

and

(g) the General Assembly and the Annual Assembly resolve to meet together on a date to be specified or provided for in each such resolution as a Unifying Assembly ("the Unifying Assembly")

and

(h) the Unifying Assembly, being satisfied that all necessary action has been taken for the giving of legal effect to such parts of these Proposals as require legal sanction, by resolution passed by the members of the General Assembly and of the Annual Assembly first voting separately and then as one body declares that the United Reformed Church (UK), the Congregational Union of Scotland and the concurring churches are thereby united in the one church (hereafter to be known as "the United Reformed Church") with the Basis and the Structure amended in accordance with the scheduled amendments and with the amalgamation of membership and ministry provided for in these Proposals.

#### **Effects of the Passing of the Unifying Declaration**

4. The sanction of Parliament so far as that is necessary for the implementation of these consequences will be sought. A draft of the proposed Parliamentary Bill ("the Bill") is to be found in Appendix A.

(a) The Unifying Declaration will effect the dissolution of the Mid-Scotland District Council of the United Reformed Church (UK) and of the bodies listed in Section 5 (2) of the Bill and the extinguishment of all offices held in connection with any of them.

(b) Every member of a concurring church will on the date of unification become a member of the United Reformed Church and the membership roll of a concurring church shall on that date be deemed to be the membership roll of a local church of the United Reformed Church (each such local church being referred to in these Proposals as "the corresponding local church").

- (c) All ordained ministers of the Word and Sacraments of the Congregational Union of Scotland who are in good standing with the Union and who have indicated in writing to the General Secretary of the United Reformed Church (UK) between 1 January 1999 and 31 March 1999 their assent to these proposals will, at the date of union, become ministers of the United Reformed Church.
- (d) All property belonging to a concurring church will belong to the corresponding local church. Such property will remain vested in existing trustees. The existing trust deeds of places of worship, manses and other property covered by Section 6(2)(a) of the Bill will take effect as if their operative provisions were replaced by provisions contained in the appropriate part of the Schedule to the Bill.
- (e) Every non-concurring church will continue in being and retain its property.
- (f) All other property of the Congregational Union of Scotland (except that of the Scottish Congregational Ministers' Central Pension Scheme) will be held for purposes which include purposes of the United Reformed Church. Following the date of union all such property will be divided between the United Reformed Church and non-concurring churches. The proportion to which each non-concurring church shall be entitled will be that proportion which its membership (as shown in the last edition of the Congregational Union of Scotland Year Book to be published before the date of union) bears to the total membership of all member churches of the Congregational Union of Scotland as shown in the same Year Book.
- (g) The Congregational Union of Scotland Nominees Limited will remain in being but under the name of Synod of Scotland Nominees Limited subject to the following provisions:
  - (i) the company will be enabled to act as trustee of URC property including that of local churches in Scotland, but will continue to act as trustee of non-concurring churches until such time as, at the wish of those churches, other trustees are appointed;
  - (ii) membership of the company will consist solely of those persons who at the date of union are members of the Council of Management of the company and such other persons as the Synod of Scotland may appoint.

## Part 4

### Arrangements following Union

This section contains commitments and provisions for particular aspects of the life of the united church which will apply unless there is a further determination by the appropriate council of the church at a later date.

#### A. Local Churches

##### (i) Membership and Baptism

The united church will accept all those who are members of either denomination at the time of union, whether or not they have been baptised. From the date of union the practice of the church will be that baptism is integral to entry into full membership of the United Reformed Church. This is not stated as judgement of other Christian bodies which do not practise baptism, but to indicate the understanding that we have reached, within the fellowship of the universal church, of the mind of Christ. Our understanding of the practice of baptism is set out in Section 14 of the Basis.

##### (ii) Office Bearers

- a At this point of unification, different traditions regarding office bearers come together. In the Congregational Union of Scotland there is a variety of local pastoral leadership, having different titles and following different constitutions, but fulfilling very similar functions to those prescribed for elders in the United Reformed Church (UK). The United Reformed Church (UK) has developed the office of elder (Basis, para.22) and this will be the pattern of corporate pastoral leadership in the united church.
- b However from the time of union those office bearers in Scotland who fulfil the functions of the United Reformed Church eldership will be called elders, or by local church meeting decision, may retain their existing titles.

#### B. District Councils

- (i) In the Synod of Scotland *district councils* will be known as *area councils*. Apart from name they will be identical to *district councils* and constituted according to sections 2(3) of the Structure as the point of co-operation and shared responsibility for each group of churches. In Part 5.3 a possible listing of local churches in areas of the Synod of Scotland is provided. This can only be provisional since it is the Synod which has freedom to decide the boundaries of areas and it will not be until voting is completed that the precise number of local churches in the Synod will be known.

- (ii) The Council known as the Mid-Scotland District Council of the United Reformed Church (UK) will be dissolved at the date of union. Any assets of the council will be distributed to the newly formed area councils in proportion to the number of individual members of the churches in the Mid-Scotland District Council whose church membership is in the new areas.

### **C. The Synod of Scotland**

- (i) The Synod will bring together all the local churches in Scotland. It will be referred to as a national synod. It will therefore address political, educational and cultural matters of particular national significance and on such occasions will act with the delegated authority of the General Assembly. It is anticipated that the Synod will meet residentially once a year so as to maintain the benefits found in the Congregational Union of Scotland Assembly.
- (ii) As accepted throughout the United Reformed Church (UK) the Synod of Scotland will have a moderator. Section 2(4) of the Basis describes the moderator's functions. The moderator will initially be appointed by the Unifying Assembly on the nomination of the Joint Negotiating Group.
- (iii) Before union takes place the Joint Negotiating Group will arrange for a Synod Preparation Working Party to gather the material needed for the first meeting of the Synod. The Working Party will be able to receive a wide range of suggestions and to place detailed proposals before the Synod. In Part 5.2 the Joint Negotiating Group provides a first sketch of how the Synod may operate so that the churches have a reasonable idea of what is involved, but this is only one suggestion and is not imposed by the acceptance of these proposals.
- (iv) The Synod Preparation Working Party, before union, will suggest names to the General Assembly's Nominations Committee for Assembly committees and representatives.

### **D. Ministers and Pastors**

- (i) All ministers of the United Reformed Church will be eligible for service in any part of the church. The church will move as quickly as possible to common terms of ministerial service throughout the church.
- (ii) The Congregational Union of Scotland decided in 1996 that no more pastors would be appointed. Those presently serving as pastors will be authorised to continue in service. They may seek further training with a view to applying for recognition as ministers.

## **E. General Assembly - Scottish Representatives**

The representatives of the area councils will be as detailed in Section 2.5(a) of the Structure. The special representation of the Synod of Scotland is covered by the addition of six persons to the usual three [2.5.(f)]. These nine persons will be appointed by the Synod. This increased representation is to enable the national life of the United Reformed Church in Scotland to be reflected in the General Assembly.

## **F. Representation on Other Bodies**

- (i) The Council for World Mission - the United Reformed Church Nominations Committee should ensure that for at least six years from the date of union one of its places should be filled from the Synod of Scotland.
- (ii) Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland - it is proposed to seek seven places on the Assembly, that is the existing number from the two churches.
- (iii) Scottish ecumenical bodies - it will be for the Synod of Scotland to negotiate the number of representatives appropriate to each body. The Synod will inform the Nominations Committee of its nominations of those representing the United Reformed Church as a whole on bodies in Scotland.
- (iv) Assembly Committees - where committees of the United Reformed Church have a representative from each Synod, the Synod of Scotland will place names before the Assembly Nominations Committee. The Nominations Committee will endeavour to use the opportunity of union to share the skills and experience of the Synod of Scotland.

## **G. Women's Work**

Both the Union of Scotland and the United Reformed Church (UK) have acknowledged with thankfulness the full place taken by women in all the councils and offices of the churches. Both have some separate women's gatherings and activities. But while the United Reformed (UK) has these mainly at the level of the local church and district council, the Congregational Union of Scotland has a Women's Union which touches the life of all the local churches, often takes the lead in ecumenical matters and is parallel to similar movements in other churches. A statement of the aims and structure of the Women's Union forms Appendix D to this document. It is proposed that the life and work of the Women's Union in Scotland should continue in relation to the Synod of Scotland.

In the United Reformed Church (UK) the national Christian Women's Fellowship Conventions, inherited from the Churches of Christ, have continued to be held annually in England and Scotland. Attendance at these

Conventions has widened considerably and these gatherings provide a place where women can gain confidence and affirmation, enabling them to become more active in their local churches.

SPIN (Sharing People in Network) is a network of women and men within the United Reformed Church (UK) set up in response to the WCC Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women. Originally it responded to the needs of a number of small groups of women who were feeling marginalised but it has become conscious that many of the traditional women's groups no longer see a role for themselves in the mission of the Church.

There is a need for the united church to discuss the value of special organisations for women and for men as complementary to the balance of both in all the councils and committees of the church. SPIN, the Women in Ministries Network and the Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee are all considering the ways forward and will need to keep Mission Council alert to these important issues within the United Reformed Church and in the ecumenical programme on the Community of Women and Men in the Church.

#### **H. Youth Work**

The Synod of Scotland will give priority to integrating its youth work with that of the whole Church. Consideration will have to be given as to the structures which would best support its youth work. In reaching these decisions, the Synod will have access to the resources of the whole church.

Young people in Scotland will be given every opportunity and encouragement to participate in the activities of the Fellowship of United Reformed Youth (FURY). There will be a synod youth representative to FURY Council, and there will be places available for two representatives from each area council to FURY Assembly. The FURY Information Service will be available in the Synod of Scotland, while the existing Scottish database will be updated and incorporated into that of the whole church.

Participation in existing ecumenical links for young people will be encouraged. The united church will continue to have a strong commitment to the Youth in Mission Programme of the Council for World Mission.

#### **I. Children's Work**

There is already good co-operation and collaboration between those with children's work responsibility in both churches. Interest is shared in the areas of training, resource materials, local support, pastoral care, awareness raising and theological insight. All this has room to develop.

#### **J. Theological Education**

Both the denominations are committed to the theological education of all their members. Both have systems of committees, personnel and resources at every level for the purpose of providing education for every member, including



children and young people. Both are currently reviewing aspects of the provision and organisation of education, and the united church will be continually seeking ways of improving the education offered to its members.

We believe that the united church will move to an integrated system of choosing, equipping and recognising candidates for ministries while allowing for appropriate differences among the three nations.

Both denominations are also in the process of providing for the continuing professional development of their ministers. We look forward to that provision being made more effective and comprehensive in the united church. This will be done by drawing on the insight and experience of the present two denominations in these areas.

#### **K. Name**

The name of the *United Reformed Church* will become in the title of the church after union. In the union of 1972, *England and Wales* was adopted because it was a union of Congregationalists and Presbyterians in those two nations. In 1981 when there was a further union which also involved the Churches of Christ in Scotland and, potentially, Northern Ireland, this was changed to *in the United Kingdom*. In 1988, recognising the need for a further change which reflected the church's representation only in England, Scotland and Wales, *in Great Britain* was proposed. This title did not find favour with the present negotiating group and so, after taking legal advice, it is proposed that the Unifying Assembly be asked to declare by resolution that the name of the church be the **United Reformed Church**.

## Part 5

### 5.1 National Synods in the United Reformed Church

The United Reformed Church will be a church in three nations. It is in recognition of this fact that the United Reformed Church will have *national* synods for both Scotland and Wales.

The populations of both Scotland and Wales are much smaller than that of England. In England the synod stands between the district council and the General Assembly as a council of the church in which all local churches and ministers have a voice and a vote. Synods play a key role in representing the views of all churches to the General Assembly and in the implementation of policy. In these, and other respects, the national synods of Scotland and Wales, share all the characteristics and duties of English provincial synods. Unlike English synods they comprehend a whole nation within their borders. Certain considerations of size and ease of communication which are taken into account in the arrangements for English synods are set aside in order to reflect national identity and the constitutional arrangements of the United Kingdom. It therefore becomes clear national synods must differ in some respects from English provincial synods in order to acknowledge and take account of this national dimension.

In matters relating to Scottish and Welsh ecclesiastical and public affairs the national synods will speak and act in the name of the United Reformed Church. They will play a full and active part in Scottish and Welsh ecclesiastical and public affairs in relation to organisations, institutions and activities which are indigenous to Scotland and Wales. It is through their continued participation in and commitment to the conciliar structures of the United Reformed Church that the national synods will honour the trust which has been placed in them.

So far as the present union is concerned the National Synod of Scotland will maintain, as far as possible, the existing commitments to ecclesiastical and public bodies in Scotland. It will also enter into any new relationships or commitments to such distinctively Scottish bodies on behalf of the United Reformed Church. There will be close co-operation between officers of a national synod and the General Assembly in connection with these relationships and commitments. In some instances a representative of the United Reformed Church outwith the National Synod of Scotland may be included among its representatives if those officers judge it to be necessary in order to ensure that the wider interests of the denomination are represented. In such a case the officers will refer the question to the Nominations Committee of the United Reformed Church. Experience of determining which matters are distinctively national and which involve the wider interests of the United Reformed Church already exists in Wales.

In setting out these procedures the authority of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church in the management of the affairs of the whole Church is

affirmed but it is recognised that there may be situations in which the General Assembly will need to acknowledge national distinctions.

*Some examples of organisations, institutions and activities which are indigenous to Scotland*

*the Parliament of Scotland, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, the National Trust for Scotland, the Law Society of Scotland, the Scottish Trades Union Congress, the Educational Institute of Scotland, the Children's Hearing System, the Scottish Arts Council, Action of Churches Together in Scotland, the Scottish Church Initiative for Union, the Scottish Churches Committee, the Scottish Joint Committee on Religious and Moral Education.*

## **5.2 Synod of Scotland**

### **1. Staffing**

The Joint Negotiating Group proposes the following staffing arrangements in the Synod of Scotland:

- a moderator supported from the central funds of the united church, whose responsibilities are set out in the Basis and Structure. The first moderator will be nominated by the Joint Negotiating Group for appointment by the Unifying Assembly. Thereafter, moderators will be appointed according to the procedures of the united church. The Joint Negotiating Group has agreed to nominate the current General Secretary of the Congregational Union of Scotland as the first moderator;
- a synod clerk, probably half-time, will be appointed by the Synod of Scotland with responsibility for the management of the office, the servicing of synod committees, and the planning and implementation of synod business including, in co-operation with the honorary treasurer, matters relating to property and finance;
- an honorary treasurer, appointed by the Synod of Scotland, will provide oversight of the financial affairs, including the preparation and presentation of annual budgets and accounts;
- an administrative assistant and finance assistant will be employed in the office to provide assistance to moderator, the synod clerk and the honorary treasurer. The level of service required from these employees will not be less than that currently provided in the Congregational Union of Scotland, and it is possible that increased responsibilities may lead to a redefining of these posts.

## 2. Structure

The Joint Negotiating Group has set up a Synod Preparation Working Party to prepare proposals for an interim structure to be decided upon by the Synod. It is not envisaged that there will be a proliferation of committees, but that individuals will be appointed with responsibility to relate to the committees of the united Church and to promote their work within Scotland. The Working Party will also consider other staffing matters. The post of World Mission Secretary will not be continued. The current holder of the post will be offered an alternative position. The Principal of the Scottish Congregational College will act as the Synod's Education Officer. The post of Mission Enabler, presently funded by a grant from CWM, will continue until the end of the present post-holder's contract in 2002. Agreement has already been reached between the two denominations to create a half-time ecumenical officer. The possibility of a training officer related to youth and children's work will be considered in the light of a half salary available from central funds.

## 5.3 Provincial Area Council Structure in Scotland

This proposal will be available to the Synod of Scotland for its decision.

	Number of Members	Number of Adherents	Number of Churches
<b>SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND</b>	<b>2140</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>12</b>
Augustine United	95	19	
Bathgate	126	0	
Dalry	24	6	
Duke Street	158	0	
Dunfermline	167	15	
Galashiels	45	9	
Granton	52	22	
Livingston	1106		
Morningside United	114	0	
Portobello (UO)	27	10	
Saughtonhall	167	0	
Selkirk	59	62	
Tweedbank			
<b>GLASGOW</b>	<b>1092</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>11</b>
Broomhill Trinity (UO)	44	9	
Clydebank Morison	186	30	
Drumchapel	85	0	
Easterhouse	20	6	
Giffnock	265	10	
Govan	34	3	
Mossspark United	82	4	
Pottokshiels	90	14	
Priesthill	36	12	
Rutherglen	176	0	
Shawlands URC	74	4	
<b>MID SCOTLAND</b>	<b>1392</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>13</b>
Airdrie Park	120	30	
Avonbridge	20	0	
Carlisle	240	67	
Coatbridge	110	10	
Coatdyke	160	10	
Cumbernauld	122	3	
East Kilbride	220	12	
East Kilbride URC	43	8	
Falkirk URC	10		
Grahamston	61	1	
Hamilton	101	7	
Stonehouse	100	10	
Wishaw	85	1	

	Number of Members	Number of Adherents	Number of Churches
<b>NORTHERN</b>	<b>848</b>	<b>756</b>	<b>8</b>
Aberdeen Mastrick	29	2	
Aberdeen St Nicholas	252	26	
Avoch (UO)	38	350	
Fraserburgh	101	169	
Kirkwall	64	28	
Nairn	215	68	
Peterhead (UO)	37	60	
Thurso	112	53	
<b>TAYFORTH</b>	<b>583</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>8</b>
Broughty Ferry	50	0	
Coaltown URC	24	6	
Dundee	157	0	
Dundee URC	20	4	
Dunning	30	16	
Montrose (UO)	65	0	
Newburgh	95	37	
Tillicoultry	142	3	
<b>WEST SCOTLAND</b>	<b>1363</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>10</b>
Barrhead	224	12	
Beith	49	4	
Dumbarton	130	7	
Greenock East	162	6	
Greenock George Sq	130	12	
Greenock Nelson St	158	4	
Helensburgh	98	58	
Paisley	200	3	
Port Glasgow	128	11	
Stewarton	84	19	
<b>SOLWAY</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>3</b>
Annan	135	148	
Dumfries	75	8	
Thornhill	36	0	
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>7664</b>	<b>1508</b>	<b>65</b>

## Part 6

### Financial Arrangements

#### 1. Maintenance of the Ministry

- 1.1 The United Reformed Church will operate a centralised system for the remuneration of ministers in accordance with the United Reformed church (UK)'s Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration.
- 1.2 The conditions of service for ministers of the united church will not be changed to their disadvantage by the union whilst they remain in their existing posts. When they move to a new post the terms of settlement will be negotiated afresh, as is the present practice.
- 1.3 The basic stipend, determined annually following the General Assembly, will apply throughout the church as from the date of union. Any cash allowance in lieu of expenses paid by a local church should be paid through the Maintenance of the Ministry Office, at the expense of the local church. It will be subject to deduction of income tax and national insurance contributions, and the related employer's national insurance contribution will be payable by the local church.
- 1.4 In order to provide adequate time for the transition, ministers of the Congregational Union of Scotland will continue to be paid by the existing methods for a period of not more than 12 months from the date of union. The date of individual transfer to the central payment system will be decided by the Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee in consultation with the Synod of Scotland.

#### 2. Pensions

- 2.1 Ministers of the Congregational Union of Scotland will retain their pension rights secured by past contributions to the Scottish Congregational Ministers Money Purchase Pension Scheme (SCMMPPS). Those who enter the united church will have two options with regard to their future service:
  - 2.2.1 if they are under the age of 50\* years at the date of union, to join the (contributory) United Reformed Church Ministers Pension Fund (URCMPF), Any ministers who take this option would be encouraged to investigate the possibility of transferring their pension rights from the SCMMPPS to provide a past service benefit in the URCMPF;

*\*A proposal to change this to 55 will be presented to the United Reformed Church (UK)'s General Assembly in 1998.*

2.1.2 to remain in the SCMMPPS. In such circumstances, a contribution of 10.65% of the basic stipend (similar to the employer's contribution payable to the URCMPF) will be paid to this Fund from the Maintenance of the Ministry account.

2.2 Present ministers of the United Reformed Church (UK) retire and commence receiving their pensions at age 65 and no change in these arrangements is envisaged. Unless already registered for service beyond the age of 65½, all United Reformed Church (UK) ministers are required to retire from full-time stipendiary service at the time that they attain the age of 65½ and this will be the rule in the united church, subject to the proposals and conditions of service shown above. (see para 1.2)

### 3. Retired Ministers Housing

Although no minister of the United Reformed Church (UK) has any contractual entitlement to housing at the time of retirement, the United Reformed Church (UK) regards it as a matter of its integrity that retired ministers and widows of ministers shall be adequately housed. To this end, a Retired Ministers Housing Society provides housing for ministers at a nominal rental (currently £60 per month). There are certain service requirements, and this benefit is subject to a means test. It is intended that, in the event of the union, ministers of the Congregational Union of Scotland will enjoy the same benefits after fifteen years continuous service in the united church.

### 4. General Finance

At 31 December 1995, the general assets of the Congregational Union of Scotland were valued at approx.:-

	£
Heritable properties	150,000
Investments	250,000
Furniture, etc	21,000
Net current assets	<u>350,000</u>
Total	<u>£771,000</u>

Some of the funds represented by these assets are restricted for specific purposes, but most are either free funds, or designated funds. It is proposed that all these funds be passed to the united church, and necessary provision will be made for the funding of the Synod of Scotland. This is subject to a provision of the scheme of division under the Act of Parliament.



## 5. Money raising

If the union takes place, in 1997 terms the following additional costs will be added to the budget of the United Reformed Church (UK):-

Stipend of 50 ministers @ £14,232	711,600
Employer's contributions (21.75%)	154,773
Compensation allowance, housing of moderator, etc.	7,000
Other expenses*	<u>100,000</u>
Total say	<u>£973,000</u>

\*The group cannot see that there will be major savings in running costs arising out of the proposed amalgamation, though quite clearly there will be a number of minor savings.

At the same time churches of the Congregational Union of Scotland might be expected to have the following "cost savings" which will form the basis of contributions to be paid to the Ministry & Mission Fund:-

Basic stipend 50 ministers @ £13,897	694,850
NI contribution on above @ 10%	69,485
Contribution to pension scheme 50 @ £723	36,150
Contribution towards central SCC costs £10(?) per member	<u>75,000</u>
Total "saving"	<u>£875,485</u>

There will be significant non-recurring costs for the legal fees for effecting union and for the Unifying Assembly.

## Part 7

### The Unifying Assembly

#### A. Arrangements

1. The planning of the Unifying Assembly will be made by the Joint Working Party of the two denominations on which the Synod Preparation Working Party will be represented.
2. Membership of the Unifying Assembly will be the members of the Assembly of the Congregational Union of Scotland and the members of the General Assembly of the United Reformed (UK).
3. The presiding officer for the Unifying Assembly to the point of passing the Unifying Declaration will be the Chairman of the Congregational Union of Scotland and from that point the Moderator of the United Reformed Church.
4. The costs as regards the individual members shall be carried by the two denominations in their own ways and the overhead costs will be carried by them equally up to the point of union, and any costs remaining to be paid after the date of union will be met by the central budget of the united church.

#### B. Business

It is envisaged that the Assembly will be in two sessions. The first will be an Act of Worship celebrating the union. The passing of the Unifying Declaration and the adoption of the name the **United Reformed Church** will be the sole business. The second session will deal with all the other formal business and will conclude with the induction of the newly appointed Moderator of Synod and the officers and staff of the Synod.

1. A resolution to inform other bodies that union has taken place.
2. A resolution which provides for the setting up of the Synod of Scotland, its first meeting and the appointment of officers.
3. A resolution appointing the Moderator of the Synod.
4. A resolution affirming continued membership in the Council for World Mission, the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland and Action of Churches Together in Scotland and other ecumenical bodies.
5. A resolution from the General Assembly's Nominations Committee appointing representatives from the Synod of Scotland to wider

church bodies.

6. A resolution instructing the Mission Council to consider the implications of the Community of Women and Men in the Church and whether there are consequences for the central organisation of the United Reformed Church still to be faced.
7. A resolution approving a list of theological colleges and courses as recognised for the training of ordinands.

## Part 8

### Provisions for Future Unions in Scotland

- A. In 1988 it was the expressed hope of the Joint Negotiating Group that there would be further exploration of church unity in Scotland and that the Synod of Scotland of the United Reformed Church would be in the forefront of that process. At that time both denominations were engaged in the Scottish Multilateral Conversation and although that conversation has been brought to a conclusion, both the United Reformed Church (UK) and the Congregational Union of Scotland are members of its successor, the Scottish Church Initiative for Union (SCIFU). It is our hope that the union of the United Reformed Church (UK) and the Congregational Union of Scotland will help in the accomplishment of the greater union which that body, which includes the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Methodist Church and the Church of Scotland, seeks to bring about.
- B. The United Reformed Church is present in England, Scotland and Wales. The proposed union will create a Synod of Scotland corresponding to the already existing Synod of Wales. Both in Wales and in Scotland the United Reformed Church (UK) is engaged in unity conversations with other churches. In England it is possible that there may come a day when a wider unity becomes the subject of conversations with other churches. The willingness of the United Reformed Church to enter into negotiations for union has been confirmed on many occasions, and the General Assembly has indicated its willingness to permit the Synod in Wales to enter a Welsh churches union should they so wish. The same right will be extended to the Synod of Scotland, but it is recognised that it would be much less easy to agree a union that involved the eleven synods in England but excluded Scotland and Wales.
- C. Proposals or schemes for union in Scotland which involve the United Reformed Church will first be agreed by the Synod of Scotland. Only if the Synod votes in favour by the required majority will the matter come before the General Assembly. It will then be for the Assembly to reach a final decision.
- D. In order to facilitate future union the United Reformed Church will endeavour to hold within Scotland any funds which are transferred from the Congregational Union of Scotland in order that if and when a future union in Scotland takes place, assets and property held by the Synod's trustee body might be made available to a new united church.
- E. The relationships with other reformed churches in Scotland, the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church, which currently exist, will be continued after the union.

## Appendix F

### The Joint Negotiating Group

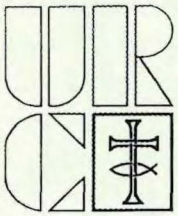
The Group met residentially for two days on four occasions in 1997 and twice in 1998. In addition a day meeting was held in 1998. The members were joined at one meeting by the Honorary Treasurer and at another by the Moderator of the Synod of Wales of the United Reformed Church (UK).

#### Members

Revd John W. Dyce	Co-Convener	Revd Dr. Stephen Orchard
Revd John Arthur	Co-Secretary	Revd Anthony G. Burnham
Revd Dr. John W.S. Clark		Revd G. Mary Barr
Dr James Merrilees		Revd James A. Breslin
Mrs Sheena Paul		Miss Felicity Harris
Revd. John A. Young		

#### Observers

Revd Maxwell Craig	General Secretary of, and representing, Action of Churches Together in Scotland
Revd Sheilagh Kesting	Secretary for Ecumenical Relations in the Church of Scotland, representing the Scottish Church Initiative for Union



# MISSION COUNCIL

## 13 - 15 March 1998



For discussion with a view to  
presentation to General Assembly

### Use of colleges review group

#### Introduction

1. As part of its major review of training within the Church, in the autumn of 1997 the Training Committee set up a review group to look specifically at the use of colleges for the training of stipendiary ministers.
2. The remit given to the group was:
  - 2.1 To review needs and current arrangements and, in the light of ecumenical commitments of the Training Committee and financial implications for the Church and the Colleges, the provision of college places required for URC ordinands in the foreseeable future.
  - 2.2 To recommend, in time for the General Assembly in 1998, the college or colleges which would be recognised for the education of ordinands in the foreseeable future.
3. The members of the review group were:

The Revd Derek Wales	(Moderator, Wessex Province) Convener
The Revd Jessie Clare	(Barnstaple)
The Revd Dr John Clark	(Principal, Scottish Congregational College)
The Revd Michael Diffey	(New Barnet)
The Revd Kenneth Howcroft	(Secretary for Initial Ministerial Training, the Methodist Church)
Dr Alun Jones	(Cardiff)
The Revd Canon June Osborne	(Canon Treasurer of Salisbury Cathedral and Senior Inspector of Theological Colleges and Courses for the House of Bishops)
Mr Graham Stacy	(Treasurer of the Church)

with the Revd John Waller acting as secretary.
4. The group was supplied with background information by the Training Committee.
5. It had a first meeting in London on 2 December 1997. The Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee (Secretary for Training) attended part of the meeting in order to answer questions. The group agreed its method of working.
6. During January members of the group visited the 4 present colleges (Mansfield College, Oxford; Northern College, Manchester; The Queen's College, Birmingham; and Westminster College, Cambridge) in pairs. Before the visits the colleges were asked to make a written submission to the visitors under certain headings. These submissions, together with the visitors' report on their visit, were made available to all members of the review group.

7. The group met to do the major part of its work at St Andrew's Hall, Birmingham from 2 - 4 February. In addition to the papers already mentioned, submissions from the Ministries and Training Committees, a paper on finance, a paper on the Scottish Congregational College, and a letter from the Ecumenical Committee were tabled. The latter dealt with discussions concerning the future of St Andrew's Hall and a proposed new programme called Belonging to the World Church.
8. After an initial discussion, the group spent a considerable amount of time talking with a succession of visitors. They were:

The Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee	Training Committee
The Revd Christine Craven	Ministries Committee
The Revd Dr David Cornick, Mr Chris Wright and Dr David Thompson	Westminster College
The Revd Peter Fisher, Dr Paul Smith, and the Revd Dr Neil Messer	The Queen's College
The Revd Charles Brock, Dr Elaine Kaye and the Revd Dr Catherine Middleton	Mansfield College
The Revd Dr John Sutcliffe, the Revd Dr Leslie Green, and the Revd Jane Scott	Northern College

The group is grateful to all these friends for their readiness to share openly in what must for some have been a difficult discussion. It was deeply impressed by the quality and commitment of them all and helped by their vision and insight.

9. In 1995 the General Assembly adopted 12 criteria by which the Training Committee will be guided in recognising colleges and courses for ministerial training. The group tested these in its discussion and in conversation with others. The criteria are warmly affirmed as a result of this exercise. In what follows, the word "training" is used generally to describe all that is done to prepare and sustain people in ministry.
10. The group spent a further day drawing up its conclusions and recommendations. These are presented in the remainder of this report.

### Some basic points

11. The group was aware that this was not the first attempt in recent times to consider the number of colleges. In 1995 Westminster College was given a limited guaranteed life by the General Assembly. In 1997 the Training Committee attempted to remove recognition from the The Queen's College but was dissuaded by Mission Council. Uncertainty has had a very bad effect on morale. It makes for difficulty in the continued close association with ecumenical partners. It also has an adverse effect on planning, staffing and investment. The group concluded that a clear decision was needed, and one which could stand for some time.
12. Whilst a reduction in the number of colleges has been a feature of our history (Western College, Bristol, New College, London) the 25 year life of URC has seen significant growth in the available training resources. The following list is almost all post the formation of the URC:
 

St Andrew's Hall	(mission training)
Windermere Centre	(lay training)
Yardley Hastings Centre	(youth training)
Arthur Rank Centre	(rural mission & ministry)

Ecumenical ministerial training courses  
Provincial Training officers  
Provincial Youth & Children's Work Trainers  
Training for Learning and Serving  
Scottish Congregational College (if union with Scottish Congregational  
Church follows)

13. The group recognised current developments within the United Reformed Church which could lead to a new programme of continuing ministerial education and a much greater emphasis on lay training. Provision needs to be made for enabling these developments. They are developments in which the colleges must be involved but the training resources listed in the previous paragraph will also have a part.
14. The group concluded early in its first meeting that it was only possible to give a credible response to its remit if the consideration was set in a broad context. Ministerial training cannot be considered separately from the training of the whole people of God. There is more to ministerial training than that which is done in the colleges. Whilst this report does not go far into those wider issues, they formed a vital part of the discussion and helped to shape the group's conclusions. Some of them are adumbrated in the final section of this report.
15. It is of vital importance that the people of God are able to express and relate the faith once delivered to the saints to their own lives and to the life of the world. The group believes that theological education, as a task of and for the whole church, needs to be given strong affirmation.
16. The group believes that the United Reformed Church ought to engage in a serious and continuous emphasis on Christian vocation.

From this broad base, this report turns to the narrower remit of the group.

### **Numbers of students**

17. The number of students in training at the colleges and on courses since 1982 is set out in an Appendix. The group believes that it is necessary to plan for a continuation of present levels whilst at the same time doing nothing which would make it difficult to handle an increased number of students in the future.
18. The colleges were asked to indicate the total number of students they regarded as the minimum viable number from an educational and financial point of view. Their responses were:

Mansfield	15
Northern	30
Queen's	not critical but less than 4 might be regarded as unsatisfactory
Westminster	30

Northern and Westminster colleges are currently operating below these figures.

19. With regard to maximum numbers, reference to the 1989 and 1990 allocations suggests that the existing colleges could cope with a total of at least 40 more students than they have at present.



20. It is clear that the pattern of allocation of students to colleges should ensure both that each year group is sufficiently large to provide mutual support and stimulation, and that each college is free from concern about its financial viability. The group is satisfied that with the existing capacity of the colleges the number of students at present is not sufficient to guarantee such educational and financial advantage, nor is it likely to be in the near future.
21. A compounding factor in the present scene is a possible increase in the use of part-time courses for training stipendiary ministers, further depriving the colleges of some students.
22. One option, which was suggested in more than one of the colleges' submissions, was that the consequences of the smaller number of students in initial ministerial training could be offset by the colleges diversifying into continual ministerial training and lay training. Whilst the group is of the firm belief that such diversification is necessary and desirable, and indeed forms part of the background to its own conclusions, it does not see this in itself as the answer to the problems created by falling student numbers without more radical measures.
23. These considerations led the group to the conclusion that one of the colleges at present receiving students for initial ministerial training should cease to do so. This conclusion was reached with great reluctance.

#### **Ceasing to use a college**

24. The group found this part of its task a painful one. This was partly out of recognition of the human consequences of leaving an institution. People's lives and hopes would be considerably disrupted by such a decision. Yet the burden was even heavier than that. Each of the four colleges represents a long and fine tradition of ministerial training. Each has played a distinctive part in the story of the United Reformed Church and its uniting traditions. Each has contributed to the life of the church and wider community in its area. Each is currently served by able and committed staff and each is a place where God is encountered in worship, study and involvement with the community.
25. Each college currently has both strengths and weaknesses. Each of them is different from the others in ways that must contribute to the richness and diversity of the ministry. None of them is so obviously worse than the others that it should not be used to train students for ministry. The group began from a point of affirmation of all four.
26. The group recognised the particular situation of The Queen's College, which is such that it can both manage without United Reformed students and cope with having a small number of them. From a numbers point of view there is advantage to the Church in continuing to recognise Queen's as a place for training ministers, because that allows the flexibility in planning described in paragraph 17 above.
27. However the group wishes to emphasise that its decision regarding The Queen's College was made on a much broader basis than that of fluctuating student numbers. Queen's offers a different ecumenical model from the other colleges and one which can be particularly appropriate for a Church many of whose ministers serve in Local Ecumenical Partnerships with Anglicans and Methodists. The ecumenical representatives on the group strongly urged that the United Reformed Church retained a living, even if small, presence at Queen's. It was noted that the College had recently made a joint staff appointment with the West Midlands Province and, in deciding to recommend that Queen's continue to

be used for training, the group hopes that further relationships can be built with that and other Provinces.

28. In approaching the question of which of the other three colleges should cease to be used, the group took into account a wide range of factors. Chief among these was the potential of each college to fit into the training requirements of the United Reformed Church in the future. These include the initial and further training of ministers and lay people together, within the Reformed tradition but in an ecumenical setting, in an integrated, collaborative and contextual mode, and for a variety of ministries. Among the additional considerations were those of geography and ease of access to colleges for students with dependants.
29. After very careful discussion and consideration of all the evidence presented to it, the group came to the unanimous conclusion that the two colleges that best meet the Church's requirements are Northern and Westminster. There is a value in a north/south presence. Both colleges have developed a good ecumenical model of working. Both work increasingly with Provinces in their region. Both have good links to university theological faculties. Both have responded to challenges of recent reviews. Both have developed particular specialisms. The group concluded that they should both continue to be used for training and that they should be the first focus in allocating students.
30. The group recommends in the light of its preference for Northern and Westminster Colleges that the United Reformed Church cease to send students for initial ministerial training to Mansfield College with immediate effect, that is, that no students should begin training there in the academic year 1998/99. It further recommends that the College should cease to be used for initial training not earlier than the end of the academic year 1998/99.
31. These may seem to be harsh and even hasty recommendations. The group believes that enough damage has been done already by the air of uncertainty hanging over all the colleges for the past 3 or 4 years. It believes that delaying or extending a painful decision only makes it more painful. The decision will release energy and creativity. If its recommendation is accepted, the group urges those responsible to give immediate and imaginative pastoral care to all the staff and students who are affected. The group urges the appropriate committees of the General Assembly to arrange necessary financial support during the period of withdrawal.

#### **Allocation to colleges**

32. At present there is an average of 18 students per year in training. So long as the number remains at about that level, the group envisaged about 2-3 of them being sent to The Queen's College and the remainder being allocated more or less equally to Northern and Westminster Colleges. This is stated as approximate guidance: the group does not propose any change in the present policy of taking account of the situation and training needs of each student.

#### **The wider agenda**

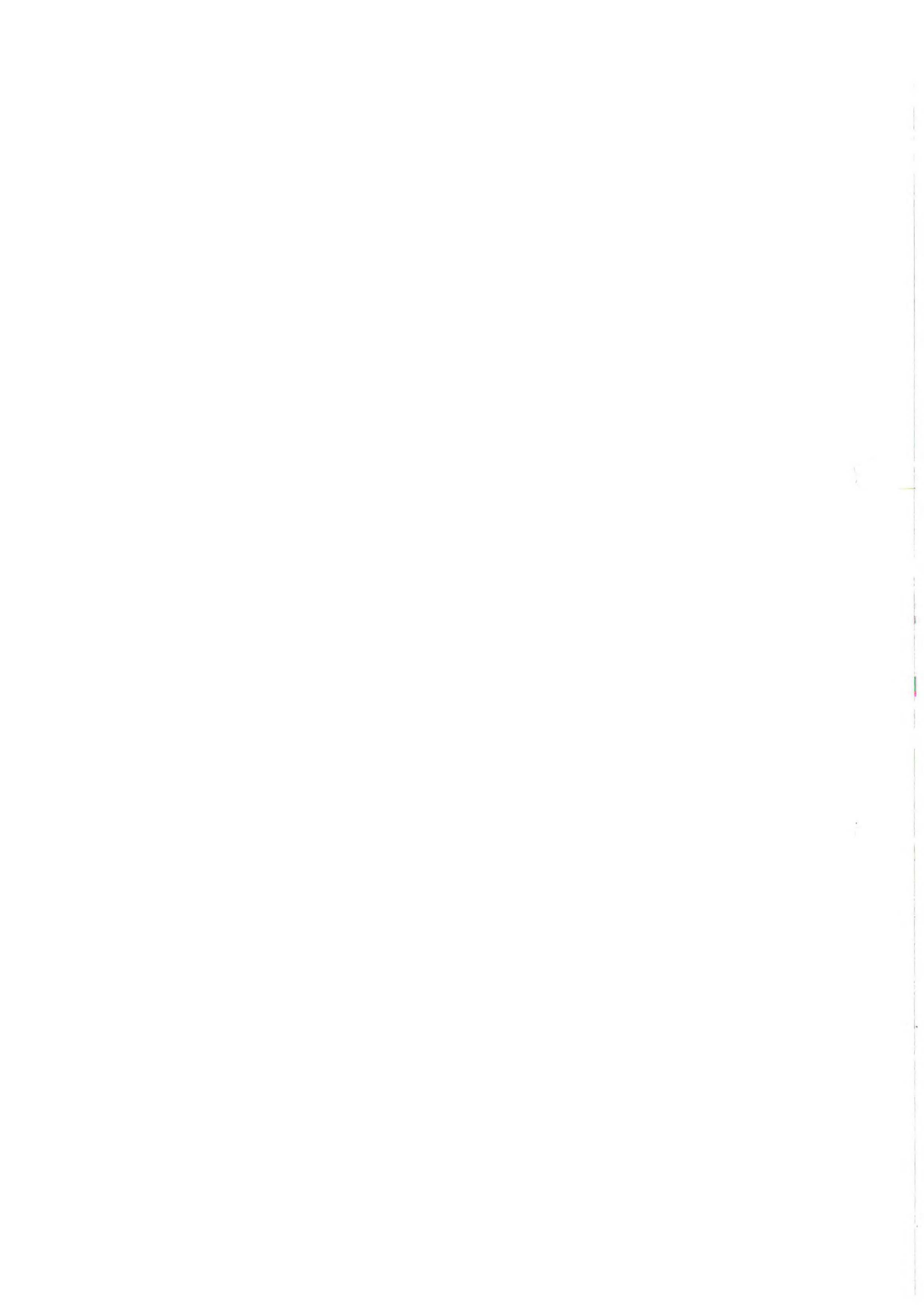
33. The remaining sections of this report are addressed in particular to the Training Committee but also to others whom they concern. These are issues which emerged during the review and which the group believes should be taken further. They are not intended for immediate debate.

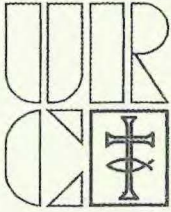
34. From more than one place the group heard a plea for a clear and cohesive policy on training. The removal of the uncertainty over the future of colleges will certainly assist that. It will help greatly if more is done to make policy clear. Is it possible to have a URC theological training strategy?
35. The group is concerned about areas in which there are overlapping responsibilities. The Training Committee and the Ministries Committee are each responsible for various parts of a person's training, care and development from the point of candidating to the end of ministerial service. Sometimes one is responsible, sometimes the other, sometimes both. This has been the cause of some confusion. It needs the attention of the Mission Council. Similarly, alongside the training colleges has grown up a network of other training resources (see paragraph 12). It seems that at times the two strands have a separate existence and sometimes they can see each other as rivals. This is a good time to develop a more formal but flexible pattern of co-operation and partnership. A possible structure could be based on 3 regions, each one related to a college.
36. By deliberate decision the group gave a secondary place to finance in its discussions. However it was concerned to note that present college structures and financial arrangements are such that it is very difficult to get a precise idea of the cost of training or the resources available for it. One inevitable result is mixed messages about what can and cannot be afforded.
37. Each of the recommended colleges is deeply engaged in training ecumenically, although each presents a different model. The group wishes to propose, in the case of The Queen's College, (a) that it consider directing some research and offering some courses specifically on mission and ministry in local ecumenical partnerships (these might be offered more widely) and (b) that it consider the development of the black studies course, which is currently taught at Queen's, in consultation with the United Reformed Church's multi-racial, multi-cultural development worker as well as ecumenical partners.
38. The group understands that there are uncertainties regarding the placing of the training for Church Related Community Workers. It did not engage with all the issues to be considered but, given the value placed on training people for different ministries together, suggests that consideration be given to the Northern College and/or a combination of Queen's and Westhill Colleges.
39. The group believes that the thought now being given to the future of St Andrew's Hall, and therefore to the placing of overseas scholarship holders, should be related to the Belonging to the World Church programme and to the future life of the colleges in such a way that the exchange of people in training is enhanced.
40. The Congregational Federation currently uses both Mansfield and Northern Colleges. It also has its own training programmes. The group wishes to recommend that the Training Committee have a dialogue with colleagues in the Federation in order to seek the highest practicable level of co-operation in training.
41. The group was sustained in its work by shared worship and Christian fellowship. With the Apostle it affirms, "It is he (Christ) who has given some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip God's people for work in his service, for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity inherent in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God....." (Ephesians 4: 11-13 REB).

APPENDIX

NUMBERS OF MINISTERIAL STUDENTS IN COLLEGES 1982 - 1997

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Northern	32	34	34	32	36	41	44	44	42	30	27	28	25	27	21	25
Westminster	30	28	22	27	23	24	36	40	41	41	36	27	30	29	27	29
Mansfield	20	18	16	17	16	14	15	23	25	22	24	24	21	25	19	16
Queens	1		1	2	2	3	5	5	5	8	7	6	6	10	6	3
Total	83	80	73	78	77	82	100	112	113	101	94	85	82	91	73	73
NSM courses			81	63	69	72	70	67	71	78	80	71	57	44	42	36





**MISSION COUNCIL**  
*13 - 15 March 1998*

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If Mission Council decides to endorse the report of the review group, the following 3 draft resolutions are offered for submission to the General Assembly.

**Assembly accepts the report of the review group on the use of colleges and advises the Training Committee that for the foreseeable future it should use The Queen's College, Birmingham; Northern College, Manchester; and Westminster College, Cambridge, for initial ministerial training.**

The language of "advice to the Training Committee" is used because in 1995 the General Assembly gave the responsibility for validating programmes of ordination training to that Committee (Assembly Record p 49).

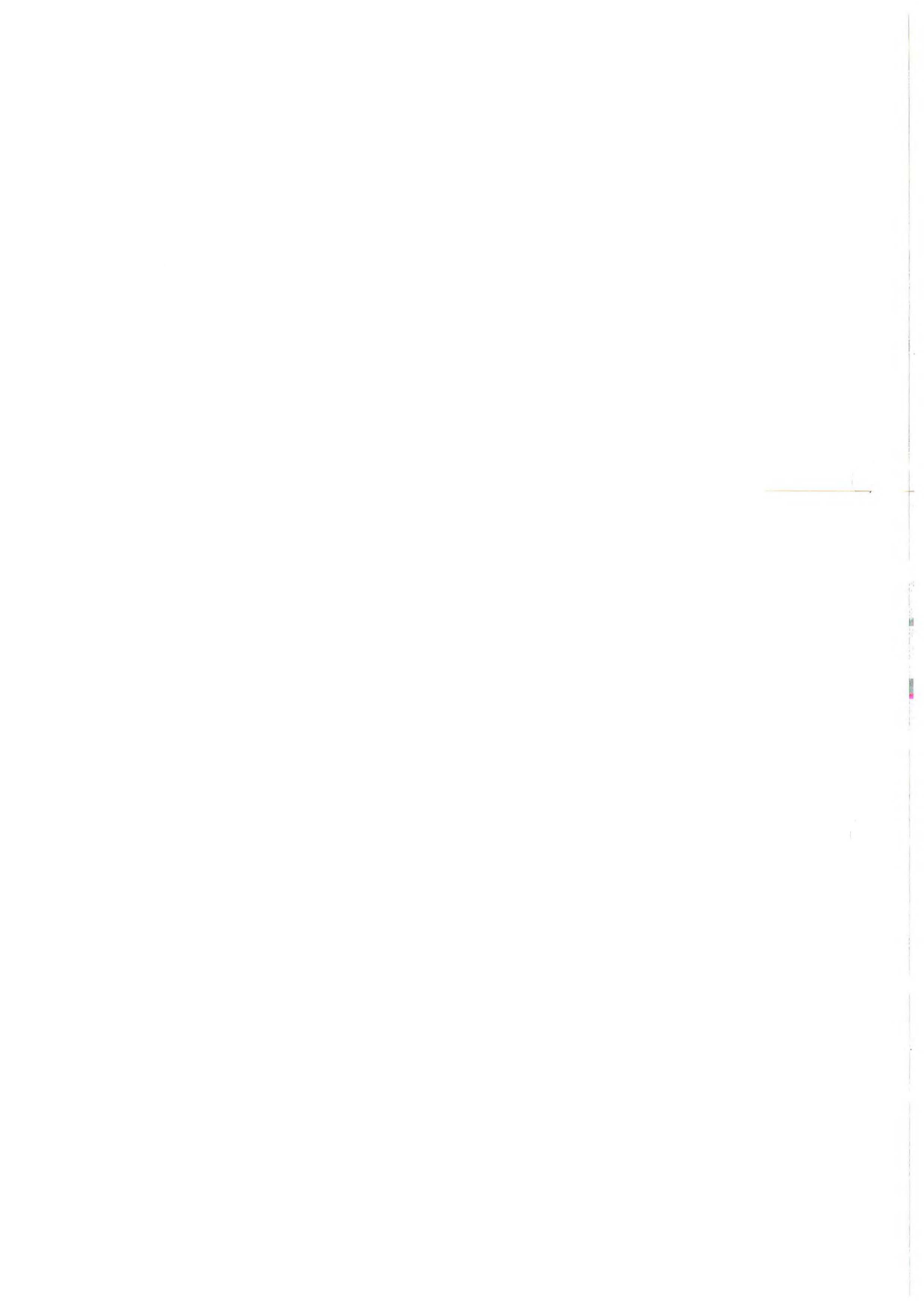
**Assembly asks the Training Committee to negotiate with the Ministerial Training Committee of Mansfield College, Oxford, the process by which the United Reformed Church ceases to use the College for initial ministerial training; and in particular asks the Committee:**

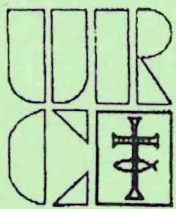
- (a) not to send any students to Mansfield in October 1998 or subsequent years;
  - (b) to plan the termination of the initial ministerial training programme at Mansfield not earlier than the end of the academic year 1998/9;
- and (c) to continue to ensure that there is pastoral care and support given to students and staff affected by the Assembly decision on the use of Mansfield College.

If the review group report is accepted, the situation of staff and students (and the college authorities) is delicate and sensitive. It is therefore important that there is negotiation in a pastoral spirit. However the negotiation needs to be set within the parameters proposed in paragraph 30 of the report. Much of this negotiation will need to take place before Assembly.

**Assembly gives thanks to God for the life and witness of Mansfield College, Oxford, since its foundation in 1886; acknowledges gratefully the college's significant contribution to the training of ministers in the Congregational and United Reformed Church tradition; resolves to continue its connection with the College in appropriate ways; and prays God's continued blessing on the College's life in the years ahead.**

John Waller  
6 March 1998





MISSION COUNCIL  
13 - 15 March 1998

L<sup>2</sup>

## Mansfield College Oxford

*The United Reformed Church needs leadership and a vision for the future:*

- **Leadership and vision** for the church's future requires theological backbone and depth. Mansfield has always been in the forefront of such provision.
- **Planning for growth** rather than decline requires the continuance of all four colleges.
- **Mansfield is accessible** to URC women and men in the Midlands, the South East and the South West and is therefore able to provide theological education for those in these regions who would not be able to train at other URC colleges.
- On present figures the proposed reallocation of students would provide 9 ordinands to be shared between Westminster and Northern (assuming that 2 go to Queen's). **This will not guarantee the additional ordinands needed for viability at Westminster and Northern.**
- To achieve **viability** Mansfield has adopted a pattern of theological education which involves employing a comparatively **small "core" staff** while using the resources of **local churches** and the **strong University theology faculty** to provide a wide range of high quality teaching and training.
- The **Congregational Federation** has not been consulted by the review group and is **deeply concerned** about the proposal to withdraw URC ordinands from Mansfield.
- There was no consultation with **Mansfield's ecumenical partners in Oxford**. These partners have made it clear that the loss of Mansfield will be a **serious impoverishment** to theological education in Oxford.

*Please turn over*





### **Resources**

Mansfield moved to Oxford over 100 years ago and offers a Reformed and Independent witness as well as benefiting from the resources of the University. Many financial and other resources in the College are at present dedicated specifically to theological education and ordination training: these resources would be lost to the churches if the URC withdraws.

### **Mansfield's Statutes**

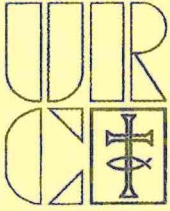
Three years ago negotiations between the URC, the Congregational Federation and the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches resulted in new statutes. These statutes require the College to appoint, as Chaplain and Director of Ordination Training, a minister of the URC or Congregational Churches and to provide a course appropriate for the education and training of candidates for ministry. The status of the Chaplain and Director is likely to be severely compromised if the URC withdraws ordination training. The denomination should not abandon the commitment made to the College.

### **The Committee's request**

Mission Council should give Mansfield (and other colleges it continues to use) a minimum of five years to continue initial ministerial education, as was given to Westminster College in 1995: during this time there should be full consultation with all parties involved. If this is agreed places offered to ordinands for 1998/9 should be confirmed by sending Provinces.

*Submitted by the Ministerial Education and Training Committee,  
Mansfield College,  
11<sup>th</sup> March 1998*





MISSION COUNCIL  
*13 - 15 March 1998*

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In the light of earlier discussions, can Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee take this report and resolution to General Assembly?

**Resolution:**

Assembly encourages District Councils in consultation with local churches to explore possible new forms of local church leadership, using the Guidelines.

## Local Church Leadership

1.1 For several years the United Reformed Church has been thinking about how best to provide for the local leadership of churches. In some Provinces ideas floated in the "*Patterns of Ministry*" report have been tried; others are keen to explore new forms of leadership but would like a sense that the Church is acting as a whole rather than piece-meal.

1.2 There are clearly many issues raised by the thought of 'local leaders':

- How would they differ from elders?
- How would they relate to ordained ministers?
- Doesn't 'local leadership' describe precisely what we expect of non-stipendiary ministry (Model 2)?
- Is this a 'back-door' into ministry for people who would otherwise not be accepted?
- Will this lead to a change in role for ordained ministers?
- Isn't the church secretary usually regarded as the lay leader in the local congregation?
- Would we be thinking about this at all if there were not a shortage of 'real' ministers?

1.3 We often quote the phrase in the Basis of Union which refers to 'the ministry of the whole people of God'. Perhaps we need to reflect on those words, and what they mean. Ministry is service, and we are all called to it. In the local setting we discover among the members of the church many different gifts, and the church is enriched as more and more people are enabled to use their gifts in a creative and satisfying way.

1.4 One gift, among many, is the gift of leadership: the ability to be a focus of the church's unity, to represent and arbitrate, to discern and draw out other people's abilities, to bring order and mutual respect. Down the centuries the church has recognised that though there may be many spiritual and pastoral leaders acting together (the eldership) nevertheless it is a human instinct to look for one person who will personify that oversight, and that person has usually been the local minister.

1.5 What do we do when the local minister lives ten miles away and is looking after four churches? We do one of two things: either we expect that minister and the elders somehow to carry on regardless; or we begin to think about personal leadership in a more flexible way. We stop worrying about titles and status, and we think about the job that needs doing and the gifts that are available. We stop thinking that it's either ordained ministry *or* local leadership, and we start to practice teamwork. We stop hankering after a pattern of ministry which, if we are honest, has often dis-abled the majority of believers in their own spiritual growth, and we look for an appropriate model of leadership for today - true to our Biblical understanding, and true to our needs.

1.6 Suppose, then, we simply give ourselves permission to experiment, and see what happens .....

And suppose we agree some guidelines which will help us to experiment without hurting too many people in the process .....

And suppose we remember that the wider leadership offered by ministers of the word and sacraments will still be there, a key part of the whole process, and a vital calling to which we should ask the Lord to draw people.....

2.

**So  
let's look at  
local leadership.**

2.1 The **task** in general is to be a *focus* for the unity of a particular local church. The specific tasks of the local leader will, however, vary according to local circumstances, personal gifting, and other gifts present in the life of a congregation.

2.2 The **process** of *selection* and *appointment* of a local leader is *biblical*, *ecclesial*, *collegial*, *mutual*, *open* and *oversight*.

2.3 The **minister** will probably relate to several congregations, but will be available to offer the *prophetic* and *sacramental* ministry which keeps the local church within the church universal.

2.4 The **wider church** through the District Council will help to identify local needs and appropriate leaders, and will manage a simple system of appointment and review, and a job description.

2.5 The **job description** will clarify what is being asked of this particular local leader at this time, and will prevent unrealistic expectations or demands. It will set out such practical details as the tasks to be undertaken, the support offered, expenses paid, and training to be done.

2.6 The **training** will be tailored to suit the individual and the local context. It will be organised by the Province, and will not take the local leader away from the sphere of ministry.

2.7 The **ministry** will be seen as belonging to the whole people of God, among whom some function in particular forms of leadership for a time, as part of the whole.

2.8 These are the key elements of our understanding of local leadership. Below are the guidelines which may help during the process of experimentation and development.

## GUIDELINES

Affirming the United Reformed Church's commitment to the ministry of the whole people of God, Assembly determines that local church leadership will be exercised:

- 1 in conformity with the Basis of Union
- 2 according to needs identified by Church Meeting and District Council
- 3 by those who have been recognised and appointed by the local church and District Council
- 4 for an agreed period of service, according to a clearly defined Agreement and Job Description, approved by all parties
- 5 under the authority of the District Council which, in consultation with the Province, is ultimately responsible for all aspects of local leadership including training
- 6 with a title chosen in relation to the work being undertaken
- 7 in partnership with those exercising ordained ministry
- 8 rooted in the local eldership, and in collaboration with others exercising lay ministries in the local church
- 9 by those who have made a commitment to take part in in-service training
- 10 by those who have been affirmed in a Service of Recognition conducted by the District Council

### **Local Church Leadership - a 'story-letter'**

Mary sat down again and stared at the blank sheet of white paper in front of her. 'What was it they wanted?' she asked herself once more. Her story of how she had become a Local Church leader, including some of the insights and difficulties encountered along the way. 'Why now?' Someone putting together a paper on the subject for Mission Council and later on for General Assembly!

She had struggled long and hard, often on her own. A paper would have helped Mary, the church and the District to have put in place some guidelines and a job description at the beginning. There hadn't been a great deal of planning or support and team work at the start. The group minister always seemed so busy. Jean, the Anglican curate, had been the most helpful. Often over a cup of tea in the kitchen they had chatted about the whole situation of ministry together, especially now that Jean was on her own as well.

Over the months the conversations deepened. What were the real issues in the area? How did the churches respond, on their own and together? What about Churches Together and the local group called Allied Workers they attended? Where was God in these networks and in their own call to ministry? What about the

ministry of the church members? How was Mary to help them with their mission and ministry when she needed so much help herself!? When all these issues were put together with ensuring the smooth running of the local church Mary realised again how rewarding and challenging the post had become.

How Mary had welcomed the chance to talk these issues through with someone who understood. Those were the early days of course. A lot had changed in the last seven years. Mary thought back lovingly over this exciting and challenging period.

First of all God's call to the work as she took early retirement. Her background of church and community involvement over the years, her skills as a teacher, her deep faith; all these had contributed as she responded to the needs in her local church and in the community. Half time at first, then as she grew in confidence the task seemed to grow with her. It wasn't just the title Local Church Leader that had unsettled her at first. It was the role itself and the subtle changes it made to her relationships with members and friends, whom she had worshipped with for many years.

What did it mean to be a local leader, and how did this relate to the group minister who had oversight of the three churches in the pastorate? Trust was a difficult issue at first. Both for the church and for the group minister. 'I also had to learn to trust myself and God,' thought Mary as she remembered taking her first funeral service. The warmth of the whole occasion flooded back into her memory and she gave thanks for the training she had received from one of the other ministers in the District. Other memories followed. The Elders training day at which they planned pastoral visiting in the church. How she had enjoyed planning and leading the day with the Provincial Training Officer. The local parents who now ran a toddlers group in the church hall and the worship they shared together once a month. The discussions about and development of a small team in the church who were now working together with the Elders in planning a video Workshop. The church dances and other social activities as well as the new initiative with the social services and local teams about the possibility of mental health awareness in the area.

into perspective and offered genuine support. She remembered vividly the months of loneliness when things hadn't been going so well. She was trying so hard and yet things were not working out. One of her friends had noticed at first. How tired she looked, how fraught and busy. She hadn't wanted to admit it to herself, let alone the church. Easier to try and keep up the happy smile. The relief of sharing the pressures, of other elders and members accepting more responsibility for the work and a growing understanding with the group minister and the team about roles, accountability and the freedom to experiment had been welcome. It had also resulted in more collaboration and sharing within their group of churches.

The small district group she now belonged to had also widened her understanding. This 'on the job' training and reflection suited her. The models and ways of working of her colleagues were very varied and offered many opportunities to explore new ways of working and thinking within her own situation, a place to bounce ideas off each other. At one meeting someone had said, 'It is the task that determines the ministry.' 'That is one of the other strengths,' she thought to herself. It was patiently working this out in prayer and faithfulness alongside other people that had proved to be most effective.

What else should she record about her story? The most important thing was the major evaluation of the post by the district. In six months time her five year 'contract' was ending. This more formal agreement had been drawn up in consultation following 'the crisis'. She welcomed the structure, the management and the yearly review that had helped both her, the church and the District to appreciate more thoroughly all the little ins and outs of the situation. She was also pleased that the job description had been written to encourage development of her skills, and was particularly related to the needs of their local situation.

Having ranged over seven years hard graft and the wider implications for Local Church leadership, Mary's thoughts focused again on her own situation and the church and community she loved so much. A final issue

for her was moving away from the area for personal reasons after so many happy years. 'Who would carry on the work?' She had tried hard to encourage others to take on parts of the job, because she believed that ministry was the task of the whole church, but with limited success. There was a clear need for continuing ministry and Mary wondered how someone coming into the situation, probably from outside the group, would be accepted. Perhaps the new paper would give some guidelines here. Certainly she didn't believe in a fixed pattern and hoped that the discussion document would be innovative and allow space and time for further exploration and development of these ideas.

Now all she could do was to prepare the way and hope that others would rise to the challenge of God's call to Local Church Leadership. Some she thought have greatness thrust upon them. As she addressed the envelope and stuck on the stamp she suddenly remembered that she had written nothing about local expenses. 'Why is it that we always leave things like that until last?' Then further thoughts, 'How would this letter be received? Had she been able to give a real flavour of Local Church Leadership? Will the members of Mission Council and the wider church be enabled by our experiences here to go on and develop their own responses to the needs of the local church?

As she popped the letter in the post box later on in the day, she voiced an unspoken and heartfelt prayer of thanks to God for the experiences of both joy and pain she had shared, and of a hope and a vision for the future of God's church.







## MISSION COUNCIL 13 - 15 March 1998

# N

MC is asked to consider these proposals. See "Next Steps" on page 5.

## Belonging to the World Church

### INTRODUCTION

The URC is part of the world church in many ways. Through our membership of the Council for World Mission (CWM), the World Council of Churches (WCC), the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), the World Convention of the Churches of Christ (WCCC) and the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council we both give to and receive from the global Christian community. However, this rarely impacts local congregations. This is especially true since we ceased having missionaries on furlough undertaking speaking tours. That those days have passed reflects our contemporary understanding of world mission. Together with other churches around the world we are partners in God's global mission. To this end we send and receive personnel, share together our financial resources and learn from one another fresh insights into God's missionary calling. However, we have still to fully grasp the new opportunities this presents us and exploit the potential that exists for enriching local church life and witness through our belonging to the world church.

#### **The Need**

For centuries Christians from this country took the gospel to foreign lands. Today the striking missionary challenge is to present the gospel confidently and meaningfully here. Many of our overseas partners are steeped in the tradition of being "missionary" churches. Alive and vital they display a self-confidence that is sadly lacking in much of the church in this country (witness the comments of those who have served with us from our overseas partners outside of Europe). We should be learning from them that we might rediscover our missionary calling and, interpreting what we find, seek fresh approaches to God's mission here. At very least, we should allow their enthusiasm, courage and vision to inspire us and energise our sense of purpose.

Alongside this is another contemporary challenge – globalisation. The church being both global and local is uniquely placed to speak to this phenomenon. The increased control of wealth and power across the world by a few individuals and large corporations needs challenging, most especially where the needs of people are ignored and the environment is mercilessly exploited. Working with our church partners, sharing stories and experiences, we can make connections and begin to try and understand the forces that are at work behind the term "globalisation". As the Christian community, we too can be global players, but we need to learn from one another and to work much more closely together. Our world church partnerships make this possible.

For both these reasons we need to raise our awareness of the world church so that we might

- stretch the imagination and vision of people in the URC by exposing them to churches whose life, witness and circumstances whilst markedly different from ours, offer much to be learned about being the church engaged in God's mission today
- take seriously the global challenges facing us and find ways of responding together as Christians called to care for God's world.

## **The Vision**

God's purposes are global. They encompass the world, seeking to bring healing to the nations, reconciliation and peace. They speak to our sin and failure, offering love and forgiveness; liberation from the past and new opportunities for tomorrow. They offer a vision of wholeness, of shalom – people at one with God, with each other and with the creation. They call us into partnership, to be witnesses to the ends of the earth.

Each generation has to make these purposes their own. To see in the signs of the times where God's mission lies for them. To interpret afresh Jesus' understanding of the kingdom and in their own words and actions to witness to these things that others might believe and share in the new life they offer.

The fruits of previous generations' missionary activity provide the foundations for our response to today's challenges. Partnerships transcending the world enable us to think and act globally; to make connections; to link local and international experience; to learn from and share with one another; to challenge others and to be renewed ourselves.

We live in a global culture. Our cities are international centres with communities drawn from many ethnic groups, cultures and faiths. Our rural communities now compete with rural communities across the world for markets which not so long ago could have been taken as granted as theirs. Around the world we are partners in God's mission with churches whose own life reflects the individual strands of the multifaceted society in which we minister. Together we face the common challenge of a global economy and global news and entertainment media. *Working together and learning from one another we can gain the perspective and form the networks that help us understand God's purposes in this age and enable us to proclaim and live a gospel that speaks to our time.*

What follows are programme proposals aimed at building into the life and witness of the URC a new awareness of belonging to the world church that we might better fulfil our calling to be witnesses to the ends of the earth: partners in God's mission, responding to the challenges of today.

## **PROGRAMME PROPOSALS**

In these proposals there is a presupposition that these developments should be organised on a reciprocal basis so that our partners might also draw more fully on our experiences and understand better the challenges facing churches in the post-industrial world.

The proposals are ambitious. Equally, the challenges are great. To that end these proposals are aimed at raising our awareness, vision and confidence that we might be emboldened to respond with the same zeal that sent our forebears across the world to proclaim the "glorious gospel of the blessed God."

### **Overseas Training Opportunities for Ordinands and CRCWs**

Ordained ministers and CRCWs have a central role in shaping the life and witness of the URC. It is therefore essential that in their training they be exposed to experiences that might enlarge their understanding and vision of what the church can be. In particular they need an understanding of what it is to be a missionary church, engaged in the life and concerns of society and making manifest God's reign in word and deed. Our partners in CWM outside Europe are steeped in this tradition. It is therefore proposed that everyone training for the URC ministry (stipendiary and non-stipendiary) or training to be a CRCW should be offered the opportunity of a placement overseas outside Europe in conjunction with our CWM partners.

The overseas placement might be constructed as follows:

- Three weeks in a theological college
- Four weeks on a placement
- One week concluding seminar.

### **Lay Training Opportunities**

Seeking to enrich the whole life of the church through our world church partnerships we would initiate with CWM events that bring together lay people from the URC and our partner churches to learn from one another and experience at first hand the richness and variety of the world church. Such events might be aimed at elders, choirs and church musicians, youth and children's workers, Bible study leaders, etc. Ideas for such events could be developed bilaterally with our CWM partners around the world. Over time this could be built up into an annual programme of world church lay training opportunities.

### **Opportunities for Young People and Children**

In recent years the URC has experienced difficulty in recruiting young people for some of the international opportunities which are available to them. We need a new approach.

The exact details should be worked out with FURY Council, the Youth and Children's Work Committee and the Youth Secretary. However, a useful starting point might be the creation of a FURY international reference group, whose tasks would include:

- The preparation and promotion of international opportunities within FURY; and
- Ensuring that there was a world church dimension in other aspects of FURY's work, including the FURY Assembly.

To encourage the development of international opportunities for young people it would be helpful to create a budget line to this effect in the youth budget.

The main vehicle for raising children's awareness of and sense of belonging to the world church is Pilots. The creation of a full-time Pilots Development Officer post with, amongst other things, the responsibility for developing "new projects which will involve and interest children in development issues, in their membership of the world-wide church, and with their partnership with other young people in CWM" will open up new opportunities for children.

### **Visiting Speakers**

Each year, through CWM, we would invite visiting speakers for each province from our partners outside Europe to pursue the following programme:

- Ten days orientation at the "Introduction to Church life in Britain" course
- One week in a pastorate in their host province
- Three weeks travelling around the province speaking, preaching, leading Bible studies, etc.
- Participation in a concluding consultation

Wherever possible the local programme would involve our ecumenical partners in this country, many of whom have the same overseas partners as us and would welcome the opportunity to hear and learn from our visiting speakers.

### **In-service Training Opportunities**

To encourage understanding of the significance of our world church partnerships we would also give opinion formers within the life of the church an opportunity to experience this at first hand. Each year there would be an exposure visit to one of our CWM partners outside Europe for *newly appointed* Provincial Moderators, Assembly-appointed staff, Provincial World Church Secretaries, and Conveners of some if not all Assembly Committees. Part of this experience would include organising a return visit by the partner church.

Similarly to extend these opportunities to those already serving the church we would adopt and promote a policy on overseas travel during sabbaticals and in other areas of in-service training (including for lay staff). A simple policy might be that where the sabbatical or other training programme has received the support of the Provincial Training Officer or other relevant person and it includes overseas travel it would automatically be eligible for an additional grant to take account of the extra costs involved.

### **Research Fellowships**

We should consider offering a research fellowship in each of our theological colleges, for study of an aspect of contemporary UK church life in the world context, with a view to

developing our understanding and practice of mission here. Insights gleaned through these studies would be shared in such ways that might influence the development of the church's life and witness.

#### **Scholarship Programme**

We would review our scholarship programme whereby we invite people from our overseas partners to study here, with a view to integrating it more with our own training programmes and offering more opportunities for sharing in URC church life.

#### **World Exchange**

The URC belongs to a volunteer programme for all ages over eighteen known as World Exchange. As we have encouraged local churches to consider European partnerships, similarly we would promote World Exchange, encouraging districts and local churches to sponsor someone to give a year as a volunteer to a church overseas. Through the volunteer such districts and churches could reasonably expect to receive news of local church life, etc. and thus develop a more personal world church dimension in their own programmes for a couple of years (from just before the volunteer departs and into the year after s/he returns). Ideas of how this might be done are already available.

#### **General Assembly**

Having defined a policy for our European visitors to Assembly (1996) we should now consider a more intentional approach to our visitors from outside Europe. This might include a willingness to pay the travel costs of those who would otherwise be unable to attend. However, if we take such a step we should also consider how such visitors could be better used during the Assembly.

As now we can count on the International Relations office to arrange at least one fringe meeting. To this should be added two slots in the Assembly programme where we can hear from one partner outside Europe and one of our European partners.

Additionally, consideration should be given to acceding our official international visitors speaking rights to encourage them to contribute to Assembly debates, sharing insights from their own church's experience.

#### **World Convention of the Churches of Christ**

Through the World Convention of the Churches of Christ there are opportunities for congregational level participation in an international church gathering. The Conventions occur every four years and bring together some 4,000 members of Disciples, Churches of Christ and United congregations from all around the world for a varied programme of workshops, visits, keynote speakers and worship. The next one is in Brisbane, Australia in August 2000, and the following one we are hosting in Brighton in July/August 2004. These events are an exceptional opportunity for ordinary church members to encounter the excitement and thrill of a world church gathering. Preparations are in hand to recruit a group to go to Brisbane and as with World Exchange we will be proposing that this is an opportunity where congregations and districts might sponsor someone to attend and report back on the experience. In 2004, of course, it is hoped that even more people will avail themselves of this opportunity and thereby introduce awareness of and continuing participation in this event across a wider section of the URC than is the case at present.

#### **Promotion and Advocacy**

Existing work in this area would still continue. Working with Provincial World Church Secretaries, District World Church Secretaries and Provincial European Link Co-ordinators we will continue to develop promote and distribute

- *URC Worldlinks*
- *URC Eurolinks*
- *CWM Inside Out* (the successor to *News Share*)
- Information about the annual *Window on the World* conference at Swanwick (an existing opportunity for people to learn about the world church at first hand)
- Speakers lists
- Other relevant material as it becomes available.

### **Finance and Administration**

A more serious engagement with the world church will, of course, require considerable financial support. Funds for this are available to the URC. Essentially they lie in three areas

- CWM grants
- the URC's own world church unexpended income fund
- the money traditionally allocated to CWM.

In developing its approach to supporting the mission programmes of its member churches, CWM is laying increasing stress on personnel exchange. Through the short-term exchange of people ideas can be shared, good practice learnt and existing challenges seen in a fresh light. Accordingly, CWM is increasing the funds available to support experience enlargement programmes which involve exposing people to the life and work of the church in other countries.

Since the inception of the URC, funds related to the work of the English Presbyterian Mission have been used by the World Church and Mission Department and its successor, the Ecumenical Committee, to support our involvement with the world church. However, it has become apparent that the funds have grown much faster than our use of them, to the extent that we have now accumulated around £1 million of unexpended income. From the outset a proportion, currently around £40,000, has been used as an annual subvention to the Committee's budget and in the years 1997-1999 a further £50,000 is being remitted annually to the general funds of the church. The World Church and Mission Fund (as it is known) is dedicated to "any purpose connected with the URC, dealing with its relationships with the Church overseas, under the direction of the Ecumenical Committee." From this source it is clear that we could realise at least a further £50,000 a year to support programme expenditure related to our involvement with the world church.

Lastly, there is our grant to CWM. Prior to CWM's receipt of the proceeds of the sale of the Nethersole Hospital in Hong Kong we contributed approximately 20% of CWM's budget. With the sale proceeds, even after all the special allocations, CWM's income has more than doubled. CWM have thus informed us that we are released from this commitment and that we should feel free to reduce our contribution so that it falls more into line with the other European members. This will release upwards of £400,000 per annum that is currently in the Ecumenical Committee budget for world church and mission.

It is anticipated that the total cost of these programme proposals when everything is fully up and running will be around £200,000 per annum, most but not all of which will be new expenditure and some of which will be receivable in CWM grants. This includes the provision of additional support staff in the International Relations office who will be responsible for implementing these programmes.

### **Next Steps**

The Ecumenical Committee have considered a more detailed paper which gives preliminary estimates of the costings involved and information on how the programmes would be administered. At their meeting in January they enthusiastically endorsed these proposals and requested that:

1. Mission Council consider and endorse the proposals and encourage the Ecumenical Committee to present them to the General Assembly in July.
2. General Assembly be asked to adopt the programme.
3. The Ecumenical Committee then set about the implementation of the proposals in co-operation with all concerned.

These proposals represent a significant change in our approach to raising and sustaining world church and mission awareness. They would clearly take time to implement and assess for effectiveness. Accordingly, if agreed, it is suggested that each individual programme be reviewed within five years of the time it is up and fully running.

PW 17/2/98





# MISSION COUNCIL

## 13 - 15 March 1998



### Summary of Provincial Concerns

*At the MC October 1997 there was a session in which representatives of the synods voiced their concerns. This paper is a summary of what was said, together with comments, in italics, from MCAG.*

#### On the church as a whole

1. No 1 priority is the future. (WM)

*While the challenge faces every council, committee, minister and elder, the responsibility rests with MC. The Resources Planning Advisory Group (RPAG) in its consideration of the Church's human resources is attempting to stimulate the thinking of MC. The MC in January was a first attempt.*

2. The decline in numbers of members and ministers must be addressed. (S, SW). The key area is growth. (We). Who is dealing with decline? (E). We need an analysis of decline. (WM). A place needs to be found on the agenda for local issues (NW). It is time for us to get to grips with Mission. In particular we should tell stories of local churches engaged in mission. (E)

*The General Secretary has done some preparatory thinking, which has led him to encourage certain initiatives by other staff members and committees e.g. Continuous Ministerial Development (Training Committee), Belonging to the World Church (Ecumenical), Pilots' Development Officer (Youth and Childrens' Work), with other possible developments in the pipeline. There has already been one challenge from CWM with regard to the use we make of our giving for mission. Another which will come from CWM will challenge the URC to prepare a mission programme for the next three to five years. MCAG recommends that the General Secretary brings together the strands raised by RPAG in January, these initiatives and others to the meeting in October 1998 to enable the MC to prepare a strategy in response to decline.*



3. How do we continue as a broad church in a creative way? (M, EM)

*The traditions we inherit have always pointed us in the direction of being a broad church. The question about continuing in this way is one aspect of the tensions over resolution 19. The reflections on resolution 18 are an attempt to be creative. Another approach is to think seriously and practically about our mission. The response to paragraph 2 indicates that this work is now underway.*

4. The matter of the number of ministers and deployment has never been properly debated in the MC. (M) Will the shortage of ministers put us out of business? (TN) We must tackle the recruitment of ministers. (TN)

Why do we not discuss the whole matter of developing lay ministries in the Assembly? (M) Churches need ministers to grow. (E)

*Both Ministries and RPAG have the issues of number of ministers, deployment and recruitment on their agendas. A report will be brought to the MC in October 1998, with the possibility of a report to Assembly in 1999. The reason for the recent silence in the Assembly on lay ministry is because MC did not agree with the proposals advocated by Discipleship and Witness.*

5. We ought to be helping district councils to do their work more effectively. Visitations from the synod could be a useful way of doing this. (N) In the same way synods ought to be visited. **Northern Synod formally invites MC to visit and review its life and work** (N).

*A report from MCAG is on the agenda of this meeting.*

6. Care must be taken not to overwhelm the local church. Priority must be given to stimulating their mission. (Wa)

*In the last few years greater demands have been made on local churches, partly as a result of the church's own heightened awareness and partly as a result of legislation. E.G. Good Practice, SORP (accounting procedures). The Equal Opportunities committee has also tabled some new guidelines. The work of stimulating mission in small local churches undertaken by some synods through a variety of development and mission enabling staff needs to be encouraged and the experience shared. The Resource Sharing Task Group could provide a model.*

7. What is distinctive about the URC? Do we need to continue? (We). What is our identity? (SW) Our identity is in danger of being overwhelmed by Methodists and Baptists. (TN)

*David Thompson in his papers, **Where do we come from?** and **What we believe** defines our identity. Another approach is **Let's***

*Discover the URC. One page leaflets on our identity, the Basis etc could be useful. While it is clear that some past agreements in LEPs were not adequate, TN ought to make its case to the Ecumenical Committee.*

8. Our ecumenical policy is not clear. (TN)

*This was set out in the Assembly Reports in 1996. TN should be invited to explain this question and direct it to the Ecumenical Committee.*

9. Perhaps part of our failure stems from the fact that we are too conciliar. We ought to have stronger personal leadership. (We).

*This should be drawn to the attention of the Res. 18 Working Group on the Authority of the General Assembly. It is also an aspect of Oversight Ministries.*

10. We ought to reconsider the addition of provincial representatives on Assembly committees. (SW)

*This raises a number of serious questions. Certain committees have dealt with this by gathering their own networks or by holding consultations. To go down this road with 15 committees (or even only 8 of them) would have a number of consequences which would imply another significant restructuring of the committee system. Would it not be more creative to share the experience of steps already taken by some committees and synods?*

11. We need to study the problems and opportunities of grouping churches in joint pastorates. (SW)

*RPAG have some aspects of this on their agenda. Our experience from the consideration by the Moderators and the Cambridge District of the issues raised by the Commission on Toller, was that no useful blueprint could be drawn up. A report on this is on the agenda of this meeting for transmission to the GA.*

12. What is the meaning of baptism and membership for today? (WM)

*Membership is already on the agenda of the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee. If any other work is needed on Baptism, it should follow the work on membership.*

13. How do members and local churches influence decisions in the wider church? Could not the Manual contain a simple guide on how to share in the decision making process? (EM)

*MCAG recommends that the East Midlands province is invited to prepare a short draft.*

## On the Mission Council

14. Is **Mission Council** the right name? (EM)

*Although there are good arguments against the use of **Council** in the title and we struggle to keep **Mission** on the agenda, it would be better to delay a consideration of a change in name until other major changes were being considered.*

15. The MC is still confused about its role. Is it an executive or a think-tank? Do we need two separate bodies? (NW)

*Although there is a case for a separation of functions, the argument against is that think-tanks with no executive responsibility do not stay in touch with reality.*

16. MC is too large. Do we not trust each other? (NW)

*This could be tested by proposing to reduce synod representation by one or even two. The only other categories are conveners and staff in attendance. An argument for the present size is to facilitate communication. (See above para 10).*

17. MC must not lose sight of its ministry of administration. It is the only forum bringing together Assembly staff, Moderators, Conveners, and members of local churches (Wa).

*This is an argument for retaining its present make-up and size.*

18. There is little on our agenda to indicate our concern for the poor. (TN)

*Is not this primarily a responsibility of Church and Society? Nevertheless there is an understanding of mission which sees identification with the poor as the touchstone of mission.*

19. A listening agenda is needed (TN).

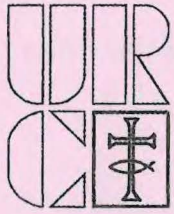
*This exercise in itself is a listening process.*

20. What is AGOGAL and is anyone interested? We need to learn how to communicate (We).

*Communication is a serious and continuing problem.*

21. Never mind AGOGAL: No one has heard of MC! (WM)

*Does this matter? What is important is that as a result of its life the church becomes more effective.*



**MISSION COUNCIL**  
*13 - 15 March 1998*

**P**

*For information*

**1. The nature of Biblical authority for the life of the Church**

The Basis of Union states that the Church understands itself to be under the authority of the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; its belief that in the ministry of the Word God makes known in each age his saving love, his will for his people and his purpose for the world; and its duty, under the authority of Holy Scripture, to be open at all times to the leading of the Holy Spirit (paragraphs 12, 13 and 18).<sup>1</sup>

The group should reflect on the following questions:

- a) what does it mean to be under the authority of the Word of God?
- b) how are the different books of the Bible interpreted and applied by the Church so as to reach a theological understanding of particular issues?
- c) by what criteria are some biblical injunctions neglected and others cherished today?
- d) is the nature of biblical authority different in matters of faith from matters of conduct?

It will be important to illustrate the conclusions drawn with reference to questions of human sexuality.

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<sup>1</sup> 12 The United Reformed Church confesses the faith of the Church catholic in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It acknowledges that the life of faith to which it is called is a gift of the Holy Spirit continually received in Word and Sacrament and in the common life of God's people. It acknowledges the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people.

13 The United Reformed Church believes that, in the ministry of the Word, through preaching and the study of the Scriptures, God makes known in each age his saving love, his will for his people and his purpose for the world.

18 The United Reformed Church, under the authority of Holy Scripture and in corporate responsibility to Jesus Christ, its everliving head, acknowledges its duty to be open at all times to the leading of the Holy Spirit and therefore affirms its right to make such new declarations of its faith and for such purposes as may from time to time be required by obedience to the same spirit.

At the same time the United Reformed Church accepts with thanksgiving the witness borne to the catholic faith by the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. It recognises as its own particular heritage the formulations and declarations of faith which have been valued by Congregationalists, Presbyterians and members of Churches of Christ as stating the Gospel and seeking to make its implications clear.

## 2. The relationship between the authority of General Assembly and the other Councils of the Church

The United Reformed Church is a conciliar church, in which the various councils have different but complementary responsibilities. These include responsibilities in relation to the selection, training, call and ordination of ministers. The discussions over human sexuality have exposed tensions at two levels of the functioning of councils. The General Assembly has a general function of oversight (function 1) and acts as the interpreter of the constitution (function x): it makes decisions on reports and recommendations from its own committees (function ii), and may also remit questions concerning the witness and judgement of the Church to other councils (function ix). There is a tension between the role of the General Assembly as the only council which is given the right to interpret the Basis of Union and opinions held by other councils and individuals about the Basis. There are also tensions between councils arising from the different functions assigned to them with regard to the selection, training, call and ordination of ministers. At the points at which the Provincial Synod takes decisions on candidates for the ministry (i.e. at selection and at determination of eligibility for call) and at the point at which the District council has to concur in calls to pastorates (which are themselves made by the pastorates), there is potential for conflict which needs to be resolved.

- a) what processes of decision making will lead to the reception by the whole church of the decisions made, particularly on contentious issues?
- b) what are the limits of diversity in policy appropriate to different councils of the Church, which will facilitate response to local circumstances without imperilling the authority of the General Assembly? (The issue of subsidiarity).
- c) what is the extent of the necessity of prescription of any issue?
- d) how may the rights of personal conviction and the safeguarding of the substance of the faith and the maintaining of the unity of the fellowship, as set out in para 10 of the Basis, be upheld?
- e) why have certain decisions in the area of human sexuality been problematic?

The group should make use of the report of the Task Group on Authority presented to Mission Council in January 1997.

**3. The matter of ordination and human sexuality, including the implications of ordaining ministers in committed homosexual relationships.**

The current discussions have revealed sharply divergent views about the extent to which certain patterns of sexuality and sexual practice should constitute an absolute ban on ordination to the ministry. Two related issues are the extent to which expectations of ministers of word and sacrament differ from those of church members in general, and the extent to which expectations of ministers differ from those of elders.

The group should reflect on the following questions:

- a) what does it mean for an ordained minister to be called to a holy life?
- b) how far should an ordained person be expected to be a "role model" in his or her personal relationships, and for whom, inside and outside the Church?
- c) should the Church publicly recognise committed homosexual relationships, and if so, how?
- d) could ordination to the ministry be considered in the absence of such recognition?
- e) should a distinction be drawn between relationships involving sexual activity and those which do not?
- f) what would be the implications of ordaining ministers who might not be acceptable throughout the Church?
- g) if persons in committed homosexual relationships were ordained to the ministry, how would the Church's understanding of fidelity in sexual ethics be maintained?

The Group should make use of the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee's Statement on Holy Living to General Assembly, 1997 and the statement on ordination accepted by Assembly in the Patterns of Ministry report 1995.

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#### 4. The wider issues of human sexuality

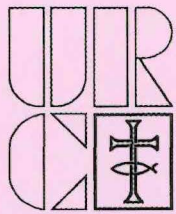
There has been widespread concern that the current discussions have focussed too exclusively on homosexuality and have failed to address the wider issues of human sexuality as the context in which it needs to be considered. At the same time there is evidence that some have found the discussion liberating and refreshing and that a new understanding of the complexity of the issues has been achieved.

The group should reflect on the following questions:

- a) how may the Church be assisted to reflect on the wider issues of human sexuality?
- b) how prescriptive should the Church be on sexual ethics and sexual activity?
- c) what are the pastoral and moral issues raised for church life by a diversity of culture and practice in this area?
- d) how can these issues be set in a balanced perspective for the Church's call to mission?







MISSION COUNCIL  
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P<sup>1</sup>

### ***RESOLUTION 18 CORE GROUP - interpreting the remit***

The Core Group's responsibilities are set out in Paper D which was submitted to the Mission Council in January 1998. Within that context, the Core Group has redefined its work in the following terms.

#### **A The Core Group's task**

*To enable the United Reformed Church (a) to decide whether or not the ordination of persons in committed homosexual relationships is appropriate, (b) to recognise and accept the grounds and consequences of such a decision and (c) to find ways of making these decisions in a spirit of openness and unity.*

#### **B Core Group objectives**

1. To study and evaluate relevant material -
  - passed on from the Task Group on Sexuality;
  - received from other denominations and from churches in WARC and CWM
  - received from the Working Groups;
  - otherwise identified as being useful resources.
2. To consider and where appropriate provide material -
  - which explains the process and timetable for discussion;
  - which might help to clarify the discussion, eg in relation to terminology and language or concerning distinctions which might be made such as between orientation and practice, ordained and lay, and regarding the role-model nature of leadership;
  - which is offered for the wider church by the Working Groups;
  - which might lead to a deeper understanding of and a Christian response to homosexuality.
3. To arrange discussion with churches of other denominations and other countries over key issues.
4. To ensure that all aspects of the discussion have been adequately considered either through the Working Groups or in some other way, including such areas as biblical, moral, scientific, medical, social, legal, cultural, ecclesiastical and ecumenical.

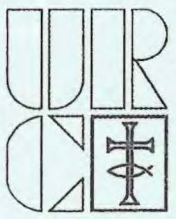
5. To offer a way forward, which *as far as possible*,
  - maintains the unity of the church;
  - enables the URC to declare its mind clearly;
  - respects the variety of views held within the church;
  - respects the views and practices of partner churches;
  - concludes this period of reflection and discussion with an agreement that the church can accept with integrity for the immediate future.
  
6. To involve the whole church as widely as possible in the process leading up to final decisions and to clarify how those decisions might be made, so that both the process and the conclusions are owned by the whole church.

### **C Other issues which the Core Group will need to consider**

A number of key issues have been referred directly to the Working Groups by Mission Council; these have been further developed in the detailed remits.

The following issues however seem to belong more to the work of the Core Group -

- the nature (or character) of the United Reformed Church;
- how to maintain the unity of the church;
- whether it is possible to hold together apparently mutually exclusive views;
- in conjunction with the Working Group on Authority, but looking more at the practical and pastoral dimensions of
  - ◆ the question of what is acceptable to the churches;
  - ◆ whether a sense of confidence and trust in the councils of the church can be restored;
- implications for Church, churches, councils and individuals of any decision explicitly to accept or not to accept the ordination of those in committed homosexual relationships, including, if a decision were made to ordain -
  - ◆ consideration of what liabilities and obligations might fall upon the Church in relation to homosexual partners;
  - ◆ the position of churches which might seek to secede;
 and if a decision were made not to ordain -
  - ◆ the position of those ordained ministers and those accepted for and in training, who are in committed homosexual relationships;
  - ◆ the position of churches which might seek to secede.
- ecumenical and international implications;
- the definition of terms so that there is common agreement about appropriate language and meanings;
- whether issues around the ordination of elders or the admission of members raise other questions;
- communication with councils and with local churches; listening to pressure groups and others;
- the provision of appropriate teaching material at the end of the process.



**MISSION COUNCIL**  
*13 - 15 March 1998*

# Q

*Resolutions to be put  
to General Assembly*

## **Changes to Structures and Rules of Procedure**

I Mission Council agrees to propose to the General Assembly the following amendments to the Structure of the United Reformed Church: (N.B. They will need to be taken following the procedure for constitutional amendments set out in Paragraph 3(1) of the Structure.)

- a) Amend the existing category at paragraph 2(3)(a) by adding the words: "and Assembly appointed ministers who are members of a United Reformed Church in that district."
- b) To the existing category at Paragraph 2(4)(h) add the words: "2.4a or" before the words: "clause 2.4g" so that the category reads as follows: "All retired ministers not covered by clause 2.4.a or 2.4.g above residing within the province, who shall be associate members of the synod having the right to speak but not to vote at meetings of the synod."
- c) In the existing category at Paragraph 2(5)(c) delete the words: "departments and".
- d) In the third sentence of the concluding section of Paragraph 2(5) delete the words: "set up departments and".
- e) In the fifth sentence of the concluding section of paragraph 2(5) delete the words: "department or".
- f) Amend the existing paragraph 3(1)(f) to read: "If by such date such notice has not been received, a motion to agree the proposed amendment shall come before the General Assembly at its next meeting. Such a motion shall require a simple majority of the members present and voting to pass."

II Mission Council agrees to propose to the General Assembly the following amendments to the Rules of Procedure for the Conduct of the United Reformed Church:

- a) Amend the existing Paragraph 1(4) by replacing the word "four" in the third sentence with "two".
- b) Number the existing unnumbered final paragraph of section 1 as 1(5).
- c) Insert a new Paragraph 1(6): "The Members of Assembly at any time between Annual Meetings of the Assembly are those who were included on the Roll of Assembly of the preceding Annual Meeting of the Assembly."

III Mission Council agrees to propose the following resolution at General Assembly:

General Assembly, acting under the provisions of paragraph 2(5) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church, elects the Treasurer of the United Reformed Church to be an officer of the Assembly.





## MISSION COUNCIL

*13 - 15 March 1998*

# S

### **Membership of United Reformed Church Ministers Pension Fund for ministers who are 50 or more at the date of commencement of stipendiary service**

1. Para 6.1.4 of the Plan for Partnership, as amended by Mission Council on 24 January 1998, reads:-

6.1.4 Pension Fund: ministers who have not attained the age of 50 years at the date of initial induction to stipendiary service under the Plan may join the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund (URCMPF).

A minister aged 50 years or over at the date of initial induction to stipendiary service under the Plan, may not join the URCMPF. Only in these circumstances will an amount agreed by the General Assembly be paid, at the minister's request, to any personal pension arrangement chosen by that minister. From 1 January 1998, this will be the same percentage of basic stipend as that payable as an employer's contribution to the URCMPF in the terms of para 15.1 of the Rules of the URCMPF.

2. Para 14 of the Rules of the URCMPF reads:-

14.1.1 "Every minister under the age of fifty years at the date of ordination or induction to stipendiary service remunerated under the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration may at the time of ordination or commencement of such stipendiary service become a contributing member of the Fund .....

14.1.2 If a minister serving a local church is inducted to part-time service whilst under the age of fifty years or being a contributing member of the Fund reduces his/her commitment to that of part-time service whilst under normal pension age, his/her entry to the Fund or his/her continuing contributory membership to the Fund shall be regarded as limited membership ....."

Members of the Ministries Committee will be aware that resolution 34, passed by Assembly in 1997, provided that in general ministers will commence their stipendiary service before their 55<sup>th</sup> birthday. The Pensions Executive, in light of this, feel that it is appropriate to raise the maximum age of admission to the Pension Fund from 50 to 55. The Executive feel that the cost of some £600 per minister per annum is not such that this is likely to place undue pressure on the funds of the Church or the Pension Fund, and that it is only fair to older ministers to permit them to become members of the URCMPF. To this end, the Ministries Committee is asked to recommend the following resolutions to Assembly:-

This paper has now been considered by the Ministries Committee, and is recommended to Mission Council for onward transmission to Assembly.

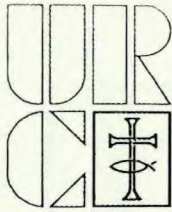
#### **Resolution 1**

"Assembly amends para 6.1.4 of the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration by replacing "50 years" with "55 years" in each of the first two sub-paragraphs of para 6.1.4"

#### **Resolution 2**

"Assembly amends para 14 of the Rules of the United Reformed Church Ministers Pension Fund by the replacement of the word "fifty" with "fifty-five" in para 14.1.1 and 14.1.2 of the Rules."





# MISSION COUNCIL

## 13 - 15 March 1998

# T

### DRAFT BUDGET FOR 1999

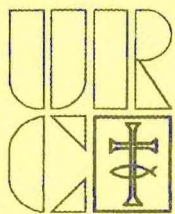
	Actual 1996 £'000	Actual 1997 £'000	Budget 1997 £'000	Estimate 1998 £'000	Budget 1999 £'000
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>					
<b>MINISTRY</b>					
Stipends - local and special ministries	11,615	11,834	12,320	12,180	12,693
Stipends - CRCWs	133	146	157	160	169
Resettlement and other grants	354	279	301	308	309
Provincial moderators - stipends & expenses	390	375	369	395	411
Pension Fund additional contributions - normal	1,100	750	1,130	750	750
- exceptional	2,500				
	16,092	13,384	14,277	13,793	14,332
<b>TRAINING</b>					
College training for stipendiary ministry	637	699	763	757	809
Other training for stipendiary ministry	72	74	79	78	266
Training for non-stipendiary ministry	81	71	79	90	90
YLTO/YCWT programme	360	363	432	376	392
Support for Westminster College	29	(2)	58		
Support for Windermere Centre	27	37	37	39	40
Support for Yardley Hastings	51	36	45	47	59
Lay training costs	12	20	12	32	39
Scholarship programme	78	81	80	83	85
	1,347	1,379	1,585	1,502	1,780
<b>ASSEMBLY APPOINTED STAFF</b>					
Salaries/stipends - executive staff	237	240	249	265	270
Salaries/stipends - support staff	181	223	205	235	244
Housing and expenses	128	118	112	125	134
	546	581	566	625	648
<b>MISSION</b>					
Council for World Mission and support of missionaries	689	739	715	204	167
Grants for national and local mission	186	190	191	195	202
Ecumenical councils	122	132	123	188	197
	997	1,061	1,029	587	566
<b>ASSEMBLY RELATED COSTS</b>					
General Assembly	71	94	102	156	95
Assembly committees/conferences	56	71	73	79	88
Mission Council committees/conferences	22	26	29	33	34
	149	191	204	268	217
<b>COMMUNICATION AND EDITORIAL</b>					
Salaries	139	141	112	164	171
Other costs	27	53	33	54	58
	166	194	145	218	229
<b>ADMINISTRATION (support for the church nationally and locally)</b>					
Personnel and finance - salaries	245	272	267	283	295
- other costs	9	20	13	27	24
Premises costs	171	168	152	210	173
Professional fees	79	77	66	73	76
Miscellaneous expenses	191	192	152	193	235
	695	729	650	786	803
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	19,992	17,519	18,456	17,779	18,575



## DRAFT BUDGET FOR 1999

	Actual 1996 £'000	Actual <b>1997</b> <b>£'000</b>	Budget 1997 £'000	Estimate 1998 £'000	Budget <b>1999</b> <b>£'000</b>
<b>INCOME</b>					
<b>INVESTMENT INCOME</b>					
Dividends	304	162	190	159	170
Income from World Church & Mission Fund		50	50	50	50
Interest	308	367	190	250	300
	612	579	430	459	520
<b>GRANTS</b>					
Memorial Hall Trust	448	546	475	476	476
New College London Trust	225	235	225	245	245
URC Insurance Company Limited	78	71	66	78	75
Department for Education & Employment	59	51	50	54	55
CWM towards cost of multi racial development worker				8	8
	810	903	816	861	859
<b>MINISTRY AND MISSION CONTRIBUTIONS</b>	16,462	16,764	16,797	16,712	17,000
<b>LEGACIES AND MAJOR DONATIONS</b>	74	59	50	50	50
<b>OTHER INCOME</b>					
Sundry income	99	9	28	8	5
Provincial contributions to YLTO/YCWT programme	152	180	195	183	190
	251	189	223	191	195
<b>PROFIT ON SALE OF PROPERTIES</b>	35	15			
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	17,791	18,512	18,411	18,313	18,624
<b>DEBITS (DEDUCTIONS) IN YEAR</b>	(1,678)	993	(1,401)	494	49

The budget that it is proposed will be presented to the General Assembly covers expenditure and income of the following funds: Ministry and Mission, Maintenance of the Ministry, Ministerial Training and Memorial Hall Trust grants.



MISSION COUNCIL  
*13 - 15 March 1998*

U

***PCE Overseas Mission Committee Archives***

These are presently lodged at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). The archive comprises 278 boxes of documents, printed material and photographs. To carry out our trust responsibility, we ought to spend some money for their preservation, making access easier and in servicing the collection.

Almost all the churches to which the records refer are now members of CWM. The CWM (largely LMS) archives are also at SOAS.

I have been able to negotiate that, in the event of the URC making a permanent loan of these archives to CWM, the necessary work for preservation, access and servicing would be undertaken by SOAS as part of its work on the LMS/CWM Archive. It would remain a separate collection from the LMS/CWM Archives.

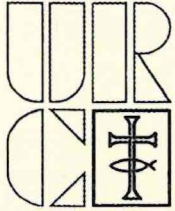
It is proposed that

Mission Council agrees to place the archives of the Presbyterian Church of England Overseas Mission Committee and those of the Women's Missionary Association on permanent loan to the Council for World Mission, for as long as they are kept in the library of the School of African and Oriental Studies, of the University of London.

**Tony Burnham**

**March 1998**





MISSION COUNCIL  
*13 - 15 March 1998*



*The URC, the Local Church and the Community*

*This paper has been considered by the representatives at Mission Council from the Ministries, Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness, Church and Society and Nominations Committees and the CRCW Review and Resources Planning Advisory Groups.*

**Introduction**

From the beginning of its existence, the Mission Council (MC) has been frustrated because it has not been able to come to grips with mission. The concerns of the synod representatives (MC October 1997) emphasised the need to recognise our decline and consciously look for a way forward. Preman Niles' letter constitutes a challenge, together with the release of resources from CWM.

Since the last Assembly various initiatives and programmes from committees have begun to emerge and can be interpreted as the separate strands of a developing mission strategy.

**Resources Planning** is sharpening our thinking about the relationship between decline and resources and, therefore, direction and priorities.

**Training**, in focusing on the crucial leadership role of ministers and elders, is proposing a significant change in training through **Continuous Ministerial Education**.

**Ecumenical** believes that a new openness to the world church could have a transforming effect on our churches and is proposing an imaginative programme of systematic personnel movement and exchange, **Belonging to the World Church**.

**Youth & Children's Work**, in conjunction with the above programme, is seeking to stimulate children's work by developing **Pilots**, building on the organisation's world church foundations.

**Church & Society** continues to develop steady growth in the **Commitment for Life** programme.

**Discipleship, Stewardship & Witness**, in collaboration with the Mersey province, is working on alternative forms of local leadership.

**Resource Sharing** is creating a new mood of co-operation between national offices and the provinces and between the provinces.

**Unity** developments include negotiation with the CUS and the possibility of informal talks with Anglicans and Methodists.

CWM intends to ask all member churches to prepare a mission programme for a three year period. The above are only some of the elements which could form part of that. They reveal also that all is not negative in our life and that the URC could be on the threshold of the most creative phase of its life since 1972.

**The context of mission.** However, we cannot consider our mission without recognising that the church must relate to its human and social context as prophet and servant. The decline in size and influence of most local churches has made them and their ministers cautious, even feeble, prophets. Nevertheless a great many of our churches have continued to find ways of serving the community. The rest of this paper focuses on this issue.

## **Community Service**

The URC has tried to find ways of serving the community. Most of these have been at local level. Assembly has made three main attempts to support such work:

- the CRCW programme
- special category minister posts
- a limited amount of funding.

In addition the Church and Society Committee in 1994 undertook some research into the community work undertaken by local churches. Undoubtedly the work of many churches since 1972 has been of a very limited nature. At one extreme this is no more than income generation by room lets. At the other extreme, there is a full blown community use and involvement, using many £100,000's of public money. In between, are many churches with a commitment to their neighbourhood and community but receiving no guidance from the church as a whole.

In addition, it should not be forgotten that our members have their own vocations in the world and also do a considerable amount of voluntary work as part of their Christian obedience. This is usually unrecognised by the church and, more importantly, they are often not supported by their fellow Christians. (Perhaps here is a new role for the Church Meeting?)

***However districts, synods and the General Assembly have never made serious attempts to develop a policy or to stimulate, co-ordinate and share ideas and good practice in the field of community service.***

In addition to this history and experience, a number of new developments at the present time make it necessary for the URC nationally to consider a new initiative.

1. **Public money**, including the Lottery, is funding an increasing number of large developments. These raise a number of serious questions

- why is each one re-inventing the wheel? They are creating charitable trusts, seeking additional funding and undertaking major building projects in isolation from each other. District councils have little or no experience of how to give critical support
  - to whom are small churches with large public funding accountable?
2. **Government policy.** The history of government funding for local community work since the early 1970's has presented a fascinating kaleidoscope of changing opportunities. Those churches, usually inner-city, which have ridden this roller-coaster know all about death and resurrection. When our history is written, the inaction of the wider church to collate experiences and offer support and guidance throughout this period will be seen as a serious failing. Again there are critical questions
- does dependence on public monies compromise our prophecy?
  - does the church become no more than another non-governmental agency providing cheap premises and cheap management for secular institutions?
  - how far does public funding channel our response to the community down tracks which avoid the real needs?
3. **Community development.** The URC through CRCWs has backed the Community Work model. Where is the forum for us to consider other models eg campaigning organisations, social entrepreneurs etc? Where do we take account of the experience of the Churches Urban Fund?
4. **Church Related Community Work Development Worker** The January MC agreed to continue the post wef 1 September 1998. However it has three significant changes from the present post:
- the mouthful of a (working) title indicates a shift in emphasis from managing CRCW's to developing the churches' community work
  - in the five year period of the appointment, it is intended that management of CRCW's will move from Assembly level nearer to, or at, the local level
  - the postholder will be an Assembly staff member resourced accordingly.
5. **CWM Self Support Fund** We will shortly receive details of a Self Support programme, which could open for us possibilities of co-ordinating community work already done and creating a coherent policy for local churches in community service.

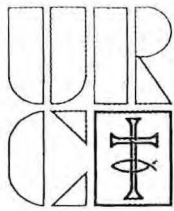
## Some Consequences

The immediate consequences are to affect the appointments of the two staff members: Secretaries for Discipleship, Stewardship & Witness and Community Work Development. The two nominating groups (conveners: Jessie Clare and Graham Cook) will need to take account of the new directions suggested by this paper, the development work involved and the need for the two secretaries to collaborate closely.

**Committee Responsibility** It is too soon to resolve the details of this. Initial thinking suggests the possible extension of the remit of the Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee. The addition of an emphasis on *community* does not negate the other important emphases *on discipleship, stewardship* and *witness*. In fact, adding deeds (service) to the words (witness) makes for a more rounded understanding of evangelism. This also points to the need for a re-consideration of the committee's cumbersome name. Are we moving towards a *Home Mission Committee*?

Tony Burnham

March 1998



MISSION COUNCIL  
*13 - 15 March 1998*

# ASS

In this bundle of papers you will find a number of resolutions with supporting text, which various of the committees propose to bring to this year's General Assembly.

They do not need the approval of Mission Council as such, but the Council is charged with having a general oversight of the Assembly agenda.

Therefore there will be a brief opportunity, in groups and then in plenary session, to make comments on these papers. Conveners will no doubt take note of anything that is said and take appropriate action.

You can look at the papers in any order you like: there may not be time for all the groups to look at them all.

Will groups A,C,E and G be sure to look at the Training Committee papers; group B at Health and Healing; group D at Ecumenical; group F at Communications and Editorial, and group H at Youth and Childrens Work. After that, take your pick!

John Waller  
February 1998





## Health and Healing Group

The joint URC / Methodist group on H&H want to bring a resolution to Assembly to signal the progress they have made following the establishment of the joint group in 1996. Text below.

### RESOLUTION

#### Assembly

- i endorses the strategy of the Joint Health and Healing Development Group for its work until 2000AD as set out in Annex 1;
- ii welcomes the publication by the Methodist Church and the Churches' Council for Health and Healing of "Guidelines for Good Practice for those involved in the Christian healing ministry", including a code of conduct;
- iii encourages all Provinces to appoint and support Health and Healing Advisers;
- iv welcomes the revision of "In Hospital" and the plan to revise and publish other booklets to aid the pastoral ministry;
- v notes the resolutions on mental health passed overwhelmingly at FURY Assembly (as set out in Annex 2) and encourages links between the Joint Group and FURY Council in raising awareness and understanding throughout the Church.

## **Annex 1: The Health and Healing Joint Group strategy has two main goals:**

- 1 The Promotion of the normality of this aspect of ministry;
- 2 The development of good practice.

### **Action to achieve the first goal:**

- a Production of position paper in a popular format on health and healing.  
*(agency for action: the Joint Group with the Churches' Council for Health and Healing - CCHH)*
- b The inclusion of prayers for healing in the service books of both denominations and, specifically, the inclusion of the calling "to heal" in the final version of the Methodist ordination service.  
*(agency for action: the Methodist Pastoral Care and Christian Education committee, the URC Doctrine Prayer and Worship committee)*
- c Training programmes for theological colleges and courses to be encouraged to include health and healing in the curriculum.  
*(agency for action: denominational committees and CCHH)*
- d Promotion of the Church's relationship with the world of medicine.  
*(agency for action: CCHH primarily)*
- e Developing the role of the Connexional Secretary for Health and Healing in the Methodist Church.
- f Further co-operation with other Methodist and URC staff members, where work overlaps.

### **Action to achieve the second goal:**

- a Promotion of the publication 'Guidelines for Good Practice'  
*(agency for action: bookstalls and similar opportunities)*
- b Continuing the role of (Methodist) District and (URC) Provincial Advisers in Health and Healing, servicing and supporting them.  
*(agency for action: Joint Group, Bulletin, joint training with ACORN)*
- c Using the open Learning Centre course.
- d Stimulating local contacts with medical practitioners.  
*(agency for action: Connexional Secretary, Free Churches Council Hospital Chaplaincy Secretary)*

## **Annex 2: Resolution passed at FURY Assembly:**

FURY Assembly recognises that many people suffer from mental health problems such as anxiety, stress, depression, schizophrenia and obsessive behaviour.

FURY Assembly believes that the Church requires a greater understanding of mental illness to be able to respond helpfully to the needs of people with mental health difficulties and their families and carers.

FURY Assembly requests the FURY Council to raise the issue in the following ways:

- a Produce new recourse material for young people, in conjunction with and promoting existing material already available, about mental health, themselves and the Church;
- b Publish an article about these issues in FURY National;
- c Work with the Equal Opportunities committee, Church and Society committee and other appropriate councils of the church to raise awareness of these issues;
- d Take the issues to General Assembly with a view for positive action;
- e Provoke discussion of the issues within ecumenical youth organisations.

## **Resolution from the Ecumenical Committee**

### **Methodist/United Reformed Church Relationships**

The General Assembly agrees to release the General Secretary from the direction of the 1992 General Assembly to arrange an annual meeting between Methodist and United Reformed Church central staff and the President and Vice- President of Conference and the Moderator of General Assembly.

1. *The Next Steps* In 1992 the Methodist Conference and the United Reformed Church Assembly agreed on a number of steps to take as the relationship between the two churches developed. (See Conference Agenda p. 633ff and General Assembly Reports p. 87ff).

These steps were:

- 1.1 to encourage the birth of more local partnerships and Joint Areas and to facilitate their life and witness;
  - 1.2 to monitor and assist the process through the Methodist/URC Liaison Committee;
  - 1.3 to urge District Synods and Provincial Synods to consider a wide range of modes of co-operation;
  - 1.4 to direct the Secretary of Conference and the General Secretary of the United Reformed Church to arrange a meeting at least once a year, which would include President, Vice President, Secretary of Conference and Divisional General Secretaries; Moderator, General Secretary and Departmental Secretaries. The purpose of these meetings was to spend time in prayer, to share information, and to consider things in which further joint work at national level would be desirable and should be undertaken remembering the Lund dictum that we should not undertake separately what could be done together.
2. During the last five years, there have been many developments in the relationship which now make it appropriate to review these steps. Among these developments have been:
    - ◆ a variety of forms of co-operation through CCBI, ACTS, CYTUN and CTE.
    - ◆ in Scotland involvement in multi-lateral talks (SCIFU)
    - ◆ in Wales, participation in ENFYS (The Commission of Covenanted Churches) and in The Working Group for one United Free Church

- ◆ in England, the conversations of both the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church with the Church of England.

The ecumenical instruments have developed a great deal of inter-departmental co-operation and staff from both churches regularly meet together, in common interest groups, with their colleagues from the churches.

3. With this background, the appropriate committees of both churches have reviewed the work of the Liaison committee. It is proposed that it be strengthened to take responsibility for encouraging greater co-operation at all levels between the churches, in particular those mentioned above in 1.1 and 1.3 and any matters to be carried forward from 1.4 (see below para 4).
4. The meeting of officers of the two churches in the formal way described in 1.4 is no longer necessary. Both churches have undergone reorganisation ending the offices of Methodist Divisional General Secretaries and United Reformed Departmental Secretaries. The Secretary of Conference and the General Secretary meet frequently at a variety of ecumenical meetings and, whenever necessary, privately, consult over matters affecting the two churches. The Ecumenical Secretaries also meet frequently and are themselves the officers of the Liaison Group. The meeting which has taken place every year has become a formality, covering ground already well known to those who take part. Conference and General Assembly in 1992 have agreed to discontinue this meeting. The Secretary of the United Reformed Church from the direction to arrange this meeting, in the assurance that its purpose is now fulfilled in other ways and that relationships between the two churches will not be impaired in any way by its discontinuance.

## **YOUTH AND CHILDRENS WORK COMMITTEE**

- 1) Assembly commends to the church the use of music and film as tools for all ages to explore creativity in the world.
- 2) Assembly believes that young people have a valuable contribution to make to the decision-making councils of the church at all levels.

Assembly expects councils of the church at all levels to make meetings accessible to young people by

- i) paying attention to (day, evening, weekend) meeting dates
- ii) acknowledging and responding to transport restrictions
- iii) setting and publishing yearly dates.

Assembly encourages and urges young people to take advantage of the opportunities to participate and contribute to the councils of the church at all levels.

Assembly offers the *They've asked me to be....* paper to be used by young people and councils of the church to prepare young people for fuller involvement.

## COMMUNICATIONS AND EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

The Communications and Editorial office is constantly asked to provide labels or mailing lists to other organisations. The present policy is to provide a limited list of ministers to Christian Aid and to the Free Church Federal Council only for particular mailings.

The URC Year Book, published annually, gives personal details on all ministers of the United Reformed Church, names and details for ministers of other churches serving the denomination and names and full addresses of church secretaries.

It is apparent that despite the copyright notice printed in the book many commercial organisations purchase the Year Book and compile mailing lists from the information therein. It is also possible to buy a URC mailing list through a commercial organisation specialising in the compilation of lists from a wide variety of sources. The information on such lists is often inaccurate. There has been concern expressed by ministers and church officers at the amount of unsolicited mail which is constantly received.

There has now been a request from a commercial publisher to publish the information contained within the Year Book on the Internet. The Committee are of the opinion that if such information is to be published in this way it should be published by the Church using its own site, where it can be regularly updated. It is hoped to publish on the URC website, a list of those ministers in pastoral charge who have agreed to their names being included, in the near future.

Churches Information for Mission, an organisation set up under the aegis of CTE has plans to provide a central data base of all church information including details of ministers and officers. The Committee welcomes the work already done by CIM in this area, especially in mapping projects as a tool for mission.

For CIM to develop further and to become a fully effective tool for mission, the Project has apparently to rely for some funding on the sale of mailing lists to commercial organisations. Although reassurances have been received that each denomination may determine how its own material is used, the Committee have expressed unease at such a Project being funded in this way and seek guidance on how much material should be made available and how privacy can be safeguarded.

### RESOLUTION

Recognising on the one hand the increasingly diverse ways in which information can be disseminated by electronic means, and on the other the need to protect the privacy of individuals, Assembly authorises those responsible for the gathering of personal information to allow other Christian organisations access to information on

- (i) the location of local churches
- (ii) the details of a contact person for each local congregation who will normally be the minister in pastoral charge but may be an officer who has agreed to their name being so used
- (iii) relevant contact information for Provincial and District Offices

and furthermore instructs the Communications and Editorial Committee to discourage the commercial use of information contained within the Year Book of the United Reformed Church.

The Churches Advertising Network (CAN) is an ecumenical project which, seeing as its target audience are those who do not go to church, aims to bring to their attention the "rumour of God" in an increasingly hostile world through a series of topical and relevant radio advertisements, poster and leaflet campaigns.

CAN is a professional organisation using some of the best names in advertising and yet is economical in that most of the expertise, time and equipment used is donated. As yet there is little financial input from most denominations and the network operates within an extremely tight budget.

### Resolution

Assembly commends the work of the Churches Advertising Network to local congregations and asks the Treasurer, through the Communications and Editorial Committee to make funds available for the future work of CAN.

A presentation is also planned for this topic.

## Extract from Training Committee Report to General Assembly 1998

### **13. Continuing Ministerial Education**

- 13.1.1 The Training Committee believes that the time has come to re-launch and enlarge a new programme of Continuing Ministerial Education (formally known as In-Service Training) for the United Reformed Church. [The term, '*Continuing Ministerial Education*' (CME) is used in other Churches. Its use by the United Reformed Church will make ecumenical recognition and collaboration easier than the use of another term. *Continuing Ministerial Education* is an umbrella term which includes both Post-Ordination Education and Training and other In-Service Learning opportunities for Ministers and Church Related Community Workers.]
- 13.1.2 **Why is Continuing Ministerial Education important?** Continued enrichment of mind and spirit is vital for Ministers and Church Related Community Workers and for the Church. Only by such enrichment will Ministers and Church Related Community Workers continue to be equipped to participate in the Mission of God, to address the needs of individuals, and to engage with the issues that shape a plural and changing society.
- 13.1.3 The Committee believes that Ministers and Church Related Community Workers should be firmly committed to keeping abreast of new thinking and methodologies in order that the whole people of the Church may be equipped, excited and inspired by new insights, and may take up the challenges that come to those willing to discover the ever new things that God is doing. We believe that over a period, participation in the proposed scheme will help them to be better Ministers both in their personal development and in preparing them for specific ministries, and that it will increase the effectiveness of Ministers and give them a greater sense of their fulfilment in their discipleship and outworking of their calling. It will lead to members of the Church being better equipped to relate their faith to the demands and decisions of daily life and to speak about their faith.
- 13.1.4 The Committee has worked hard to prepare the foundations for a new programme of Continuing Ministerial Education. During the preparation of these proposals a representative of the Committee has had discussion with the Resource Planning Advisory Group and has taken cognizance of the report of the Church of Scotland's Committee on the Maintenance of the Ministry, May 1987, which addresses the topic of 'Ministry Development' and of the in-service scheme operated by the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.

#### **13.4. Aim:**

The **aim** of Continuing Ministerial Education is to help ministers be more effective both in their personal development and in preparation for specific ministries.

#### **14. Objectives for Continuing Ministerial Education:**

- (i) To help ministers reflect theologically on their ministry, so that theory and practice are brought together.
- (ii) To help ministers appreciate the creative relationship between personal appraisal and continuing ministerial education.
- (iii) To enable ministers to keep abreast of Biblical, theological and other learning relevant to ministry in a rapidly changing world
- (iv) To assist ministers to continue to develop appropriate specialisms and skills as the emphases of their ministry change
- (v) To encourage ministers to have a thirst for learning, continued spiritual growth and informed flexibility in ministry
- (vi) To help ministers take seriously their role as teaching elders, to share good practice and to learn from growth points in the Church.
- (vii) To renew ministers in their tasks of caring for and enabling people to develop and express their discipleship
- (viii) To encourage, as an extra to normal continuing ministerial education, the provision of induction courses for all new work.

And, during the Post-Ordination period to:

- (ix) Provide a consistent and co-ordinated programme for ministers in their first three years of ministry.
- (x) Provide a programme which is earthed in practical ministry.
- (xi) Offer support.

15. In order to achieve this, we propose the development of two already existing programmes:

- A. Post Ordination Education and Training – (POET)
- B. Continuing Ministerial Education (previously known as In-Service Training for Ministers)

#### **16. A. Post Ordination Education and Training – POET**

##### **Post Ordination training – what we have at the moment**

- 16.1 Post Ordination Training is compulsory for all ministers and takes place during the first three years of their ministry. Until now, the responsibility for organising Post-Ordination Training has lain with the Province who have generally laid on a number of pastoral /support/ skill learning days; and Districts have appointed a pastoral adviser for each new minister. At the end of the first three years in ministry, ministers have been invited to a refresher course at either Westminster College or at the Windermere Centre. Ministers have also been invited to a 24-48 hour visit to The United Reformed Church House to learn more about the work of the URC committees and of the House.
- 16.2 Post Ordination Training is needed because not all training needs can be covered prior to ordination and because some needs only emerge during the practice of ministry.



### **16.3. The need for new proposals.**

- 16.3.1 So why are we introducing new proposals? Currently, the quality and quantity of Post ordination training is variable. Some Provinces have produced admirable guidelines and run excellent courses. Some ministers have worked very hard in this area. But this is not, unfortunately, true throughout the Church. The intention is that the programme of Post-ordination education and training described below will be an obligation for all ministers. The arrangements for Post-ordination education and training are to be made part of the settlement agreement for each new minister.
- 16.3.2 The Training Committee's aim is to introduce a programme of continuing ministerial education for all serving ministers. Post-ordination education and training is a very important part of these plans, because it introduces both ministers and local churches to the idea that the minister will continue to learn and develop, so the learning becomes a habit, integral to ministry.

## **B. Continuing Ministerial Education for More Experienced Ministers**

### **Continuing Ministerial Education – what we have at the moment**

- 17.1.1 All those in ministry – (Stipendiary and Non-Stipendiary Ministers, Church Related Community Workers, Youth and Children's Work Trainers and Lay Preachers) are encouraged to take part in In-Service Training. Stipendiary and Non-Stipendiary Ministers are expected to take one week each year (including Sunday) off from their pastorates, in order to take time apart to study and reflect. Ministers, Church Related Community Workers and Youth and Children's Workers are invited to apply for In-Service Training grants supported by the national Church and Provinces. Then, every ten years, both Stipendiary and Non-Stipendiary Ministers are encouraged to take up to three months off for study and reflection, again supported by grants.

### **18. The need for new proposals.**

- 18.1 We find, however, that barely ten percent of ministers apply for In-Service Training grants that are offered, and even if Ministers apply for support from other sources, or personally fund their training, we suspect that perhaps only about twenty percent of ministers take the opportunity to take time off to develop their spiritual and personal skills for ministry. If this is true, then this is a great cause of concern. Ministers are important gate-keepers to new ideas and visions which will help the Church grow. If Ministers are stuck, educationally and spiritually, in the period in which they initially trained for ministry, then the Church itself will not grow.

- 18.1.1 The following three Resolutions offer proposals for ways forward which will enable all ministers grow and develop their ministry.
-

The General Assembly endorses the programme of Continuing Ministerial Education set out in the Book of Reports.

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### **Continuing Ministerial Education**

1.1 Ministers and Church Related Community Workers are strongly urged to devote two weeks per year to Continuing Ministerial Education. [Post Ordination courses, refresher course and sabbatical leave will count as continuing ministerial education in the year in which they are taken. Ministers may opt, if they wish, to nominate Provincial summer and spring schools for ministers as one of their weeks or part of one of their weeks of Continuing Ministerial education depending on the length of the school. It will be possible for some courses to be planned as first or higher degree modules. To make this possible it will be best, as far as stipendiary ministers are concerned, to think of 'week' meaning Monday 9.00am until Friday lunch time. Ministers attending a week long course should not be expected to lead worship on the following Sunday thus allowing time for time off and for the family. For non-stipendiary ministers who, because of other work cannot attend a mid-week course, a 'week' means two weekends each lasting from Friday evening until Sunday evening.

1.2 The development of the Continuing Ministerial Education programme will take place in two stages:

- (a) January 2000 to December 2001: At this stage, all ministers in active service of the United Reformed Church and Church Related Community Workers shall devote one week per year to Continuing Ministerial Education.
- (b) January 2001 onwards: After this initial period, it will be expected that all ministers and Church Related Community Workers should normally devote two weeks per year to continuing ministerial education.

1.3 District Councils are strongly urged to ensure that an agreement requiring the minister to take one week's continuing ministerial education in the academic year beginning in January 2000 and two weeks In-Service training in the academic year beginning in January 2001 and in subsequent years be included in all settlement agreements made after the 1<sup>st</sup> September 1998

1.4 and that a settlement agreement without such a clause be not accepted or a call confirmed by a District Council.

1.5 All ministers should keep a record of continued learning.

1.6 Continuing Ministerial Education may be provided via two routes:

- (i) a programme of approved courses from which ministers may select or
- (ii) an agreed programme of reading, writing or other activity suggested by the

minister and approved by a Continuing Ministerial Education Provision sub-committee

- 1.7 In any year where a new ministry is being taken up, an opportunity for continuing ministerial education of up to four weeks should be available as part of the induction into a new post. This time should be used for the direct benefit of equipping the minister for the work ahead.
- 1.8 Resource Planning Advisory Group are asked to include the cost of Continuing Ministerial Education in the budget of the Church.
- 1.9 The Training Committee is requested to set up a Continuing Ministerial Education sub-committee, composed of representatives of the Colleges recognised by the United Reformed Church's Training Committee, representatives of Provincial Training Officers and of the Training Committee.
- 1.10 The brief of the Continuing Ministerial Education Provision sub-committee is to:
  - (i) prepare a programme of learning opportunities which may be taken in the colleges recognised by the Training Committee, the Windermere Centre and any other hired venue. [This could be an additional source of income for Colleges]
  - (ii) list learning opportunities provided by other bodies which may be used as examples of the courses for which funding will be provided,
  - (iii) assess proposals from ministers for in-service learning and the funding required and to be provided.

The General Assembly endorses the programme for Post-Ordination Education and Training of Ministers set out below:

### **The proposed model for Post-ordination education and training.**

2.1 The programme will consist of three strands: theological reflection, personal / spiritual development and the acquiring of further skills, knowledge and understanding information. All three strands will be provided by each of three different sources:

*(a) Locally – through one to one work with a pastoral adviser.*

The Province will, having consulted with the new minister and with the relevant District Pastoral Committee, appoint a Pastoral Adviser. This will happen as soon as possible, and in any case within three months of ordination. The task of the Pastoral Adviser is to offer support, opportunities for theological reflection and encouragement of spiritual and personal development. The minister and Pastoral Adviser will meet every six weeks. Guidelines regarding the role of the Pastoral Adviser will be made nationally in collaboration with Provinces, but training opportunities will be delivered provincially. Further guidelines and training opportunities for Pastoral Advisers will be made available.

*(b) Provincially – through work with a group of new ministers in their first three years of ministry.*

At least three training days a year will be provided by the Province. The programme for the first three years of ministry is designed to help new ministers to identify with their Provincial group. It is important for new ministers to identify with their Provincial group, which will consist of ministers in at least their first, second and third year of ministry. Guidelines for Provincial Directors of training will be issued.

*(c) Nationally - through residential weekends.*

New ministers will attend two 48 hour residential weekends in each of the three years of the programme. These will be run using a syllabus such as the one suggested below so that a variety of areas of skill and experience can be developed. Courses time-tabled at weekends are important because they provide an opportunity for all new ministers to attend, and they provide a Sunday free of leading worship and the preparation involved. Arrangements will be made for defraying essential costs.

#### **2.2 Further detail**

- a) The oversight of the programme will be carried out nationally.
- b) It is proposed that this new Post-ordination education and training programme begins for all newly-ordained ministers in September 1999. In order to make Provincial groups more viable, ministers ordained in 1997 and 1998 will be invited to join these groups.
- c) There will need to be a 24 hour consultation for Provincial Post ordination education and training co-ordinators and Provincial Moderators in Spring 1999.
- d) Training for Pastoral Advisers should begin in Spring 1999.
- e) Initial training colleges and Courses will be asked to provide suggestions about the training needs of each new minister as initial training is completed. The Provincial

Director of Training, or some other similar person in the Province, could encourage new ministers to work on these suggestions during the Post-ordination education and training.

- f) The refresher course year would move from the third year after ordination to the fourth year, followed by the seventh, fourteenth, twenty-first, etc...

### 2.3 Suggested syllabus for residential weekends.

Nine courses will be offered (three in each year of Post-ordination education and training), from which the new ministers will choose six (two in each year).

The topic for these could be :

- a) Ministry in context
- b) Handling conflict
- c) Administration
- d) Communication
- e) Time Management
- f) Working in groups
- g) Ministry and identity
- h) Spirituality
- i) Worship
- j) Social Analysis
- k) Theological Reflection

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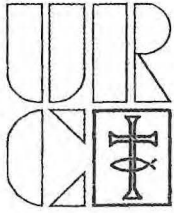
**RESOLUTION 3****Training**

Assembly, having approved a policy for Continuing Ministerial Education, asks Mission Council to consider the appropriate staffing arrangements.

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**Staffing arrangements**

3.1 The programmes for Continuing Ministerial Education and Post-Ordination Education and Training will require considerable energy, administration and co-ordination with Provinces, District Councils and ministers themselves. The Training Committee believes that it will be necessary for an additional staff post to be created if this programme is to succeed, especially as the work of the Training Committee is already over-stretched. The Committee therefore asks Mission Council to discover how the existing staff post together with additional staff support, might be organised to effect the programmes outlined in the Book of Reports.



MISSION COUNCIL  
*13 - 15 March 1998*

MORE **ASS**

The Assembly resolutions from the Church and Society Committee and the Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee came in after the second mailing was complete.

They are for consideration on Sunday morning.

Please will group A start with Church and Society and group C start with Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness?

Otherwise every group is welcome to cover any of the ASS and MORE ASS papers it wishes.

John Waller  
10 March 1998

## Church and Society draft resolutions for General Assembly

### 1 Roots and Branches

#### Assembly

- a recognises with thanksgiving and repentance that the care and stewardship of God's creation is an essential part of Christian discipleship;
- b challenges every local church to address its own responsibilities over the next two years, using the pack 'Roots and Branches';
- c in particular, instructs Church and Society, in conjunction with other committees, to develop a plan for energy audits of church premises;
- d invites District Councils to consider these matters in their regular visits to churches.

*This is the main Church and Society resolution this year. The supporting text will contain an outline of the distinctive approach being adopted in the 'Roots and Branches' pack and a report on the Church of Scotland energy audit programme on which ours might be modelled.*

### 2 from the Joint working group on ageing and work with older people (Church and Society with Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness)

1 Assembly welcomes and endorses the development by this joint working group of a strategy, outlined below, which will:

a) enable the Church to regard older people more appreciatively;

2 Assembly therefore instructs the wider church:-

a) to enable increased access to information on the circumstances and concerns of older

people and, through ecumenical action and partnership with appropriate bodies, to encourage study, debate and action on the issues of old age and of an ageing society, with particular reference to the International Year of Older Persons designated for 1999;

b) to seek ways in which positive perceptions of old age and older people may be reflected in the life and worship of the church.

*The supporting text sets out the seven-point strategy for promoting this work in the run-up to the International Year of Older Persons 1999 and the Millennium Debate of the Age, launched March 5; it is hoped to have a mobile exhibition at Assembly for one day.*

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Church and Society is also involved in the resolutions on Human Rights (jointly with Ecumenical Committee) and on health and healing (from the joint Methodist / URC group)



United Reformed Church  
Ecumenical Committee / Church & Society Committee

Resolution for General Assembly on  
**50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights**

This Assembly,

Noting that 1998 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights,

- a) Gives thanks for the work and witness of the UN Human Rights Commission,
- b) Calls upon Her Majesty's Government
  - to ratify the first Optional Protocol to the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, allowing individuals to access the UN Committee on Human Rights
  - to ratify the second Optional Protocol to the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, committing the UK to a complete and permanent ban on capital punishment,
- c) Welcomes the move of Her Majesty's Government to incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights into UK legislation,
- d) And requests the Church and Society Committee to study the proposals by the InterAction Council for a Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities in the context of the debate on Human Rights, and to make an appropriate submission to Her Majesty's Government.

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## Resolution 1

### Evangelism after the Decade

Assembly encourages

- a) local churches to engage actively in evangelism and evangelisation, using those with appropriate gifts
  - b) District Councils to hold Vision Workshops
  - c) the Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee to explore ecumenically the possibility of establishing a College of Evangelists
  - d) the idea of a mission enabler/development worker being used in every Province, to help local churches engage in God's mission.
- 

## Evangelism after the Decade

1.1 Churches in England are observing the 1990's as a Decade of Evangelism. There are two more years to go, but already there is an emerging consensus about some fundamental perceptions:

- the local church and its members are universally seen as the primary agent of faith-sharing
- faith-sharing cannot be separated from other parts of Christ's mission (e.g. caring, nurturing believers)
- evangelism and particular evangelising projects can often bring together Christians of different denominations and theological traditions; this is true at national and local level
- the tasks of evangelism and evangelisation are inextricably linked, the individual and the social cannot be separated

<i>evangelism</i>	sharing the good news of Jesus Christ in ways that people are able to respond to with faith and commitment
<i>discipleship</i>	growing in understanding and practice of faith, usually through relating to other Christians
<i>evangelisation</i>	discerning spiritual truths relevant to the contemporary world and in partnership with others engaging those forces which dehumanise and destroy
<i>mission</i>	all of these are facets of God's mission: God who gave himself to the world in Jesus Christ seeks to reconcile all things to himself.

3.1 **The principle agent for mission is the local church and its members**  
gathered as a community for worship  
caring for one another  
serving in the world individually and as a fellowship  
actively challenging all that dehumanises and destroys

3.2 **An evangelising church**  
listens to the Holy Spirit and the community in which it is set  
grows in understanding and practice of the faith  
shares the gospel story, which has the power to transform individuals and institutions  
provides an opportunity for response

3.3 **The Committee invites local churches to consider the implications of the above by**

- 3.3.1 developing personal and corporate prayer life which interacts with the community
- 3.3.2 reflecting on the care and service of individual Christians and local churches and on
  - how far such service should and does make Christ visible
  - how far it provides opportunities for speaking about Jesus
  - how far it helps Christians to discern the good news of Jesus Christ, and so leads us on to an informed critique of our lives, the church's priorities and community values.
- 3.3.3 contemplating what growth in Christ means in practical ways for the Christian fellowship
- 3.3.4 finding ways in which Christians can learn to speak comfortably about their faith, learn to share together their experiences of Christian discipleship and can be provided with occasions for faith sharing
- 3.3.5 examining how the worship of the church reflects the experience of the worshippers and the community and engages with issues of concern to them so that God's voice may be heard
- 3.3.6 identifying those within the fellowship who have the gift of helping others to faith in Jesus, and encouraging them in this; and finding ways in which they can learn and develop their gift.

4.1 Many churches have found 'Alpha' courses have helped church members and enquirers to develop their understanding of the Christian faith, and their readiness for commitment. 'Emmaus' is a similar course with a greater emphasis on the church community.

4.1.1 There are other materials available including 'Hitchhikers Guide to the Gospel', 'Developing Discipleship', 'Let's explore the United Reformed Church', and particular parts of 'Training for Learning and Service'. The Open Learning Centre provides a unit of study on Evangelism.

4.1.2 Southern Province and Wessex Province have both developed their own courses which could usefully be shared across the denomination.

## 5 The wider church

- 5.1 The task of the wider church is
  - to stimulate, encourage and enable the local church to evangelise
  - to share stories of what has been done
  - to encourage theological reflection about the gospel and ways of enacting and proclaiming it
  - to reflect on trends in society and their implications for evangelism
  - to support regional and nation-wide evangelistic initiatives, both denominational and ecumenical
  - to remind the churches that the URC at every level is committed to work with other churches and Christian agencies wherever possible
- 5.2 Provinces can help churches to think about evangelism into the next decade by
  - encouraging the use of good quality training materials
  - making an evangelism enabler or development worker available
- 5.3 District Councils can help churches by
  - having a District vision workshop

- encouraging churches to identify people with the gifts of evangelism and evangelisation, and providing training, support and opportunities
- developing District visits as occasions for stimulating mission planning
- providing opportunities to exchange experience of faith sharing
- considering networking members in similar occupations/situations to talk together about living an authentic Christian life at work, leisure or in other particular circumstances

5.4 The Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee can help by

- evaluating mission projects and exploring ecumenically new forms of being church
- considering ecumenically what 'growth' and 'success' mean for mission
- thinking through what discipleship will mean in the next decade, and so how Christians can be helped to grow in Christ, and what the implications are for the local church
- exploring whether membership is a useful concept in an age in which people do not join or belong
- learning from the experience of those on the frontiers (e.g. CRCWs, industrial missionaries, Christians in the Media and Science)
- discerning through 'the Open Book' how the gospel can speak to areas of economics, politics and corporate ethics
- talking to other denominations about a College of Evangelists which would authenticate and support those with a gift of evangelism.

6 Beyond 2000

6.1.2 Relevance of Christ's people in wider society: how, how and how, so the church needs to be evangelised too.

6.1.3 Becoming what Christ wants us and all humanity to be; so the structures of our society need to be evangelised too.

APPENDIX

SHOULD THE URC HAVE AN OFFICE OF EVANGELIST?

1 The Committee has considered several requests and studied several papers suggesting that the URC ought to recognise those with the gift of evangelism through some sort of Order or Commissioning of Ministry.

2 The Committee's understanding is that every local church should be seeking to identify those within its fellowship who have the gift of talking about Jesus. They need to be encouraged to use their gift in ways that evoke a response of faith. It will be appropriate to help them learn and reflect on their own faith; there are courses, books and programmes available to help them.

3 It may be that some Christians could suitably exercise their gift of talking about Jesus in a wider context. They should be offered training which would not take them away from the work they are doing, and they should be offered relevant on-the-job development of appropriate skills including biblical training and

how to work collaboratively. A number of suitable courses already exist (such as the Open Learning Centre's evangelism unit) and individuals should be encouraged to use them.

4 The Committee has heard many pleas from local churches for help with outreach, and surveys in three provinces have shown conclusively that a person is preferred to a 'pack'. However, there has been no indication that churches would like there to be more evangelists available to conduct services and missions and engage with local people outside the church. The committee therefore does not consider it opportune to recommend the creation of an order of evangelists as an additional category of ministry at this time. However, it will explore the idea of 'Apologists'. These would be elders or members who would receive some training in theology, contemporary issues, inter-personal communications skills, storytelling and parables; they would be available to districts for use in churches at meetings to talk about the Christian faith.

5 The Committee points out that it is possible for a serving minister or a lay person to be freed by the councils of the Church to use his/her gifts of evangelism in the wider church, and encourages Districts and Provinces to experiment in this way. This has the advantage of providing a framework of accountability; it uses existing schemes of training; and it does not typecast or marginalise those who are appointed.

6 The Church of England is in the process of establishing a 'College of Evangelists' to recognise and oversee those seeking to exercise their gift of evangelism nation-wide. The Committee, with equivalents in the Baptist Union and Methodist Church, is talking with the Church of England about whether this might become an ecumenical College, recognising those with a calling to evangelise beyond their own local church. This would go a considerable way to recognising evangelists within the URC.

7 Although the Committee is not at present recommending the recognition of the ministry or office of the evangelist as a separate or distinct ministry, it values evangelists exercising their call within our own and other traditions; many local churches testify to how the Holy spirit has used such people to bring others to faith.

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## **Resolution 2**

### **Baptismal Records**

#### **General Assembly**

- a) charges all churches with keeping a Baptismal record and recommends using the URC Baptismal record book
  - b) requests District Councils to discover what provision each local church makes for recording Baptisms and recommends that, during pastoral oversight visits, visitors ensure that the Baptismal records are kept up to date.
- 

## **Baptismal Records**

The Committee's attention had been drawn to the failure of many local churches to keep adequate Baptismal records. Random enquiries suggest that many congregations might not keep proper records, yet church secretaries and ministers are often asked to certify that a person has been baptised. The committee agreed that it is vital that local churches keep an accurate record of Baptisms

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## Resolution 1

### NewStart

Assembly welcomes ecumenical co-operation in preparations for the Millennium and recommends

- a) the idea of local Churches Together groups giving every home a millennium candle and encouraging the nation to share in the Millennium Resolution on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1999
  - b) the New Start theme of the Churches' Millennium Group, and encourages local churches to consider how they can advocate a New Start for the world's poor, a New Start at home, and a New Start with God in their own communities
  - c) the idea of churches following the same general themes during the period Advent 1999 to Epiphany 2000 and welcomes the proposed ecumenical publication of worship material.
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## NewStart

1.1.1 NewStart Ltd will be producing a millennium candle and a copy of the millennium resolution for every household. Local churches are asked to purchase them, and make a gift of them to the homes in their neighbourhood. Obviously there will be a cost in both money and time, as well as a need for inter-church planning, and that planning needs to begin soon.

1.1.2 It is not often that the church appears on the doorstep to offer a gift. Here is an opportunity to encourage whole neighbourhoods to unite in a non-discriminating desire for a better world. The resolution

*will be a gift to every home in the country. It will be a gift to every home in the country. It will be a gift to every home in the country.*

1.3 Churches which are offering spiritual hope to their local communities will be glad to be able to think and worship following the same themes and using the same materials from Advent to Epiphany. Churches using the revised common lectionary, Partners in Learning, SALT (Scripture Union) and Roman Catholic educational materials will find that for that period they will all be focused on the same themes. There will be supporting worship materials published by the Millennium Group.

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## Resolution 2

### District Correspondents

Assembly invites District Councils to appoint a Millennium Correspondent to receive information about Christian thinking and planning for the millennium.

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## District Correspondents

1.1 'Millennium News' is an excellent publication brimful of news and ideas; many different groups come forward with good ideas which churches would benefit from hearing about. It would be good if the Task Group could direct such information to one person in each District, who for this limited period would take the responsibility for sharing information across their district.