

**Minutes of the joint meeting of the Methodist Council and the
United Reformed Church Mission Council meeting at
The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick
13th – 15th October 2010**

URC Session 1

Moderator Mrs Val Morrison welcomed members to the Council Meeting. Opening worship was led by the chaplain Rev Rachel Poolman.

Apologies for Absence were received and sustained from: Mr George Grime, N Western Synod; Mr Arthur Swift, Mersey Synod; Mr Chris Reed, Yorkshire Synod; Rev Dr Peter Cruchley-Jones, Synod of Wales; Rev John Sanderson, Synod of Scotland; Mr David Harvey, Moderator of FURY; Ms Kay Parris, Editor of Reform; Ms Francis Brienen, Secretary for Mission; Rev Andrew Prasad, Moderator, Thames North Synod; Mrs Suzanne Adofo, CRCW; Rev Peter Noble, Moderator Synod of Wales; Rev David Lawrence, Thames North Synod.

New members and representatives were welcomed: Rev Dr James Coleman, chaplain to Mrs Val Morrison; Rev Rachel Poolman, Chaplain to Rev Dr Kirsty Thorpe; Rev Ruth Whitehead, Ministries Convenor; Rev Geoffrey Clarke, Rep, NW Synod (also Synod Clerk); Rev Nicola Furley -Smith, Southern Synod; Rev Ann Jackson, Northern Synod; Ms Jo Merrygold, Northern Synod; Rev Gillian Poucher, E. Midlands Synod; Mrs Jenny Poulter, Yorkshire Synod; Rev Sally Thomas, N Western Synod; Miss Sarah Dodds, Secretary Nominations Committee; Rev Dr Roger Paul, Church of England; Mr Simon Loveitt, JPIT.

The Moderator introduced the Assembly staff responsible for the Mission Council.

10/32 The minutes of the Mission Council held March 9 – 11th 2010 were approved and signed, following the addition of the words “**recommends to the General Assembly that it**” in the preamble to the resolution. (10/12)

10/33 The Role of Synod Moderator

The General Secretary, the Rev Roberta Rominger, presented Paper A. Many changes have occurred since the last review in 1997. District councils are no more, compliance issues abound and new procedures all require understanding and expertise. The time is right for a new review.

The General Secretary proposed that

A review of the role of the Synod Moderator be authorised under the terms of reference on Paper A.

The General Secretary responded to comments received from the floor. She agreed that the group should consult widely as part of their deliberation. Further discussion

ensued about the wording of the resolution, the composition of the review group and its terms of reference. It was agreed that a review should be commissioned but that further work was needed on the terms of reference. A facilitating group was set up to bring an amended version of the remit of the review group to a later session.

10/34 MIND

The Clerk, the Rev. James Breslin, introduced papers B, B1, B2, and B3. He indicated a number of changes of wording as highlighted. He then proposed the adoption of the wording in papers B1 (Disciplinary Process) and B2 (Incapacity Procedure). Mr Andrew Middleton responded to a query. The moderator suggested that the decision be deferred until later in the council meeting.

The Clerk indicated that in the joint sessions with the Methodist Council, the Mission Council would act as a "Mission Council Working Party"; any resolutions would be brought to a later session of the Mission Council alone.

Session J1

Exploring our history, context and characteristics within a framework of worship

Moderator Mrs Val Morrison welcomed all present to the historic gathering of the two Councils. Papers BT 10/01 and BT 10/02 provided background information for the session.

Rev Dr Kirsty Thorpe explained some of the differences between the denominations.

She invited Rev Rachel Poolman to lead opening worship. She then gave a light-hearted overview of the history of the two denominations.

A panel comprising Rev Liz Smith, Rev Alison Tomlin, and Mr David Walton for the Methodist Church, and Mrs Val Morrison, Mr Peter Pay and Rev David Grosch-Miller for United Reformed Church gave their personal responses to the questions:

1. What do you most treasure from your denomination?
2. Which misconception about your tradition would you most want to change?
3. What can we learn from one another?

Those present added their views. Discussion was animated.

The session closed with worship, led by Rev. Mark Wakelin.

Session J2 Bible Study

Mr David Walton introduced Mr Lawrence Moore, Moderator Elect (URC) and Director of the Windermere Centre, who engaged the Joint Council in Bible Study centred on Galatians 2. 11- 14, Acts chapters 9 & 10, and Philippians 3. 2 – 6. Mr

Moore challenged members to emulate the example to Jesus and welcome all people whatever their status into the embrace of the church.

Session J3 Discussion Groups

Members of the two Councils explored key challenges facing churches locally and denominationally.

Session J4 Fresh Expressions

Moderator Rev Dr Kirsty Thorpe, introduced Bishop Graham Cray, the Bishop responsible for “Fresh Expressions”, and invited him to address the meeting.

Bishop Cray outlined the way Fresh Expressions has developed from its early beginnings emerging from the document ‘A Mission Shaped Church’ to an ecumenical enterprise across the country manifesting in many very different and imaginative ways to reach people who otherwise would have no contact with the church. He explained how parallel worshipping communities were formed alongside traditional churches.

The Moderator thanked Bishop Graham for his interesting and helpful presentation.

Closing prayers were led by Rev Alison Tomlin.

THURSDAY 14 OCTOBER

Session J5 The General Secretaries present our two Churches’ current major themes

Mr David Walton took the chair. He invited the Rev Rachel Poolman to lead opening worship.

The General Secretaries, Rev Roberta Rominger (URC) and Rev Dr Martyn Atkins (Methodist Church) gave the Councils an outline of the issues and initiatives currently live in each denomination. Common themes emerged as each church had seen the need to be more relevant in the 21st century: i.e., structural changes across the churches; reorganisation of church committees and staff members roles; re-engagement with the Bible; learning to share faith stories; awareness of distinctive identities; and a conviction that God still has work for us to do to engage with those who are not part of the church communities

Session J6 Ways ahead for Children and Youth Work **Paper BT/10/03**

Mr. Doug Swanney and Rev Rob Weston supported by the staff members for Youth and Children’s Work in each denomination presented current policies and

programmes and shared case studies; i.e. the Consultative Group for Ministry with Children (CGMC) (M); The Child Friendly church Award (U); The Well (M); FURY (U); Youth Participation Strategy (M) and Pilots (U).

Members of Council were invited to reflect on three questions in the discussion groups after coffee.

1. What opportunities do children and young people present for a twenty first century church?
2. What are the challenges that face us?
3. How can they be overcome?

Session J7

Moderator Mrs Val Morrison outlined a change in order of business.

Rev Pauline Barnes, URC Consensus advisor for the URC, gave a brief explanation of the consensus decision-making procedure. A small group presented a sketch to demonstrate how the procedures work so that the procedure might be used for the subsequent session.

Building Opportunities -- Report of the Church Buildings Think Tank Paper BT/10/04

The Moderator invited James North and Clifford Patten to speak to their report. Inherited buildings, often with a legacy of high costs, have shaped the worshipping families into their present positions. There is often little flexibility for different styles of worship or for re-organising spaces more convenient for welcoming people. There is a need for more 'mission friendly' buildings, including rationalisation across denominations where appropriate. Denominational structures can inhibit this. The Think Tank recommended a re-examination of structures to encourage the development of buildings for mission. Listed buildings do not have to be kept if not fit for today's purpose. James responded to questions for clarification. Consideration of the resolution attached to the report was deferred.

Session J8

Workshops were offered in response to requests from groups the previous evening.

Session 9 United Reformed Church separate session

Moderator Rev Dr Kirsty Thorpe took the chair.

10/35 Treasurer

Mr John Ellis, Hon. Treasurer, provided updates on issues from previous Mission Councils.

Windermere. The link building between Carver URC and its church hall has been completed within the budget, and the General Secretary preached at the opening service.

Westminster College building plans. The Finance Committee had scrutinised the Business plan, recommended some changes, which were supported by the General Assembly. One million pounds had been earmarked for the Westminster Appeal from the Sale of New College Fund.

Minister's Pension Fund. All the Synods had responded favourably to the request for additional contributions. The URC Trust has signed the appropriate legal Guarantee and papers have been sent to the Pension's Regulator. There may be the need to adjust the benefit package provided by the Fund, and proposals may be brought to the May Mission Council. The next valuation is due in January 2012.

Budget 2011

He then presented the budget for 2011, Papers C and C1, which included a Stipend increase of 3.65% from £22,416 to £23,232. Mr Ellis explained that there would be no increase in Central costs (administration). A deficit budget of 3% is proposed. Mr Ellis responded to questions. Mr Ellis moved:

Mission Council approves the budget for 2011.

Resolved by agreement.

10/36 Human Sexuality Task Group

The Deputy General Secretary, Rev Richard Mortimer presented Paper E on behalf of the Task group. He moved that:

The remit of the Task Group be altered to read in its final bullet point: To report to Mission Council, and, through Mission Council to General Assembly regularly, so that interim progress reports are given, if appropriate, to each meeting of these bodies, and that clear statements of policy on the use of Church premises for the holding of civil partnerships and on the ordination of those in committed same-sex relationships be submitted for consideration to General Assembly 2012.

The Legal Advisor gave his opinion on the outworking of the Equality Act. The Deputy General Secretary responded to questions.

After lengthy discussion the proposal was split into two sections.

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Resolved by agreement

The chaplain led in prayer.

The remit of the Task Group be altered to read in its final bullet point: To report to Mission Council , and , through Mission Council to General Assembly regularly, so that interim progress reports are given, if appropriate, to each meeting of these bodies, and that clear statements of policy on the ordination and induction of those in committed same-sex relationships be submitted for consideration to General Assembly 2012.

Mission Council did not reach agreement to pass the resolution.

10/37 Enabling Resolution, National Synod of Wales

The Clerk proposed on behalf of the Synod of Wales.

Subject to the agreement of the National Synod of Wales: Mission Council a) approves the continuation of the Commission of Covenanted Churches in Wales for a period of five years from 2011 to 2016 to pursue the agenda set out in the report entitled “The Commission of Covenanted Churches in Wales” and dated June 2010. And b) requests a review of the situation in 2016.

Resolved by consensus.

10/37 Buildings Think Tank Follow on

The Clerk proposed:

Subject to the approval of the Joint Council and the Methodist Council, the Mission Council approves the setting up of a follow on group to facilitate the next stage of the work following the dissolution of the Church Buildings Think Tank.

Resolved by consensus.

10/38 Nominations Committee

The Convenor, Rev John Durell, proposed, on behalf of the Nominating Group:

Mission Council agrees to appoint the Rev Clare Downing as Moderator of Wessex Synod from January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2017.

Passed by acclamation

10/39 Synod Reports on Vision 2020

The General Secretary gave notice of a MCAG suggestion which would be brought to the next meeting of Mission Council asking each synod to report to a subsequent meeting on its progress in implementing Vision 2020.

10/40 Assembly Arrangements Committee

The convenor Dr David Robinson addressed a concern about the accessibility of the Assembly Reports when presented in electronic form and said that the committee would reconsider. There were serious questions about the viability of Southport as a venue for 2012. He moved :

Mission Council resolves to delegate to the Officers of Assembly, in consultation with the Assembly Arrangements Committee, authority to determine the venue and dates for General Assembly in July 2012.

Resolved by consensus.

Mr Robinson suggested that the planning group in Mersey Synod be put on hold until a decision is made.

10/34 MIND Advisory Group Papers B1 and B2

The Clerk returned to the changes in paragraphs A12, A13, A14 and AA. The Synod Moderators asked for time to make preparations for the implementation of Section AA and an amendment was added that this should take effect on 30 April 2011. Passed by unanimous vote. [See appendices 1 and 2.]

10/41 Commission Officer for Incapacity procedure (Section P) Paper B3

The Clerk proposed:

Mission Council resolves to appoint a Commission Officer to act as specified within the Incapacity Procedure (Section P of The Manual) and directs the Nominations Committee to appoint, on its behalf, a suitable person as soon as possible. In view of the need to comply with best practice it asks that decisions be made by Committee officers if necessary in order to avoid delay.

Passed by unanimous vote.

Session 10 United Reformed Church Uncompleted Business

Moderator Mrs Val Morrison took the chair.

10/42 Moderator Nominating Groups

The General Secretary proposed:

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, authorises the Nominating Groups to act on its behalf in appointing the Moderators of Southern and EM Synods and report to Mission Council at its next meeting.

Resolved by consensus

10/43 Olympics and Paralympics

Jill Nichol spoke on behalf of Communications and Editorial Committee. She challenged the church to become involved in the events surrounding the games because of common values shared with the Olympic Movement, a focus for ministry and mission, service opportunities for volunteers at the games and an opportunity for ecumenical working. Eleven synods had been represented at a recent gathering to discuss this work. A network of reps will be set up. More information is available on the URC website.

10/32 The Role of Synod Moderator

The facilitating group provided new Terms of Reference.

Terms of Reference for the Review Group.

- 1. Develop a new role description for the synod moderator.***
- 2. Draft resolutions to amend the Structure of the URC as appropriate.***
- 3. Make recommendations regarding the role of the moderators' meeting.***
- 4. In undertaking the review:***
 - a) Consider the issues of responsibility, leadership, authority, authorisation, accountability and episcopacy;***
 - b) Consider possibilities arising from collaborative working;***
 - c) Consider and take note of ecumenical work on the issues in 4(a), including episcopate under the church of England/Methodist Covenant and the Welsh explorations into an ecumenical bishop, and assess their relevance for the URC;***
 - d) Consider and take note of 'The role of the Synod Moderator' paper presented to Mission Council October 2010-10-14***
 - e) Consult widely across the councils of the church and other appropriate groups.***
- 5. Identify wider issues arising from the review in liaison with the Moderators' Think Tank so that these may be referred for further work as appropriate.***
- 6 Report [progress] to Mission Council in November 2011.***

Following some discussion the terms were accepted by consensus

The Clerk further proposed:

MCAG should be charged with giving further consideration to the composition of the review group, and then ask Nominations Committee to identify the people to serve.

Resolved by consensus.

Evening Prayers were led by Rev Rachel Poolman.

FRIDAY 15 OCTOBER

Joint Session 11

Mr David Walton took the chair.

Rev Kenneth Howcroft announced the order of business for the morning session. Rev Richard Mortimer announced that the 'Back up day' reserved in November for a Mission Council meeting in London would not be needed. He also announced that the 'God's Reign – our Unity' Report from the Church of England/ United Reformed Church working party, would be brought to the General Synod of the Church of England and the Mission Council in the Spring of 2011. A favourable outcome would mean that the URC would be fully recognised as a partner church by the Church of England.

Work with Children and Young People. BT/10/03

Following positive responses to the document 'Which Way Now?' earlier in the meeting the following resolutions were put:

- 1. The Methodist Council and Mission Council commit themselves to the crucial work of re-engaging with children and young people in Britain through the widest variety of media and other means.***
- 2. The Methodist Council and Mission Council commit itself to do those things with the Mission Council and Methodist Council that they are able to do, and to seek continually new areas of co-operation.***

A number of questions and comments were received to which Doug Swanney and Rob Weston responded. They agreed that the wording was somewhat bland with no particular outcomes stated, but emphasised that work between the two denominations was well in progress and the resolution was a particular encouragement to continue what has been begun.

After discussion the second resolution was amended to read:

- 2. The Methodist Council and Mission Council commit their staff teams to work together to bring plans for joint working to future meetings of the Councils.***

The resolutions were carried by a single vote of the whole meeting.

Building Opportunities BT/10/04

Clifford Patten and James North on behalf of the Church Buildings Think Tank proposed the resolution:

The Councils call for the formation of a follow on group to facilitate the next stage of this work, following the dissolution of the Church Buildings Think Tank.

Following discussion, in which a number of queries were raised, Rev Martyn Atkins reminded the Council members of the wealth of work already undertaken in this field and encouraged any follow on group to use that work as a starting point.

The resolution was carried by a single vote of the whole meeting with the understanding that:

The matter be referred to the Strategic Oversight Group and the results of discussions be presented to future meetings of the two Councils.

Poverty in Britain in 2010 Paper BT/10/06

Paul Morrison on behalf of the Joint Public Issues Team proposed the resolution:

The Methodist Council and the Mission Council meeting together resolve:

- ***To promote just distribution of income by confirming our commitment to the Living Wage and by calling for benefit and wage policies that provide the opportunity for all to live and work in dignity.***
- ***Through the work of the Joint Public Issues Team and others, to challenge the causes of poverty and inequality inherent in our society.***
- ***To stand alongside those worst affected by the government spending review and to demand that the burdens of the current economic situation are not unfairly put on the poor and the vulnerable.***

Amended to read:

- ***To stand alongside the poorest and most vulnerable and to demand that the burdens of the current economic situation do not place a further burden upon them.***
- ***To challenge those who would stigmatise the poor and portray those in poverty as “lazy”, or “having made a bad lifestyle choice” or being “scroungers”.***
- ***To listen to and tell the real stories of those who struggle on low incomes.***

Many supportive comments were received; some would have preferred protest and more challenge to be included; individuals were encouraged to lobby their Members

of Parliament; all were reminded that inequality had negative effects on all sections of our society.

The resolution was carried by a joint vote of the whole meeting.

Review of the Methodist/United Reformed Church National Rural Officer Post Paper BT/10/05

Rev Elizabeth Caswell, Convenor of the Review Group, presented the report. She spoke warmly of the good work already achieved and noted that much remains to be done in our isolated rural communities. She highlighted the recommendations made by the review group and proposed the resolution:

The Councils accept the recommendations in the review report, but in addition agree to undertake an earlier review of the post where any developments give rise to significant changes in the current funding arrangements and model, or in the bilateral and /or ecumenical partnership arrangements.

The Methodist Council and the Mission Council, voting separately, each approved the resolution.

Reflections on the Joint Meeting.

- A welcome occasion, inspiring especially the small group discussions.
- Disappointment that more meaningful discussions had not been possible
- Much helpful work had been done by the Methodist/ URC liaison group in the background
- We have been helped to understand the complex dynamics of our denominations
- We need enabling structures to allow initiatives to happen
- How will the URC advertising campaign affect URC elements within LEPs
- Can we now move to a more visible unity though our working, "Better Together"?
- Much work is ongoing
- We should not underestimate the value of being together and discussing together

Thanks.

Mr John Ellis, speaking on behalf of the Methodist Connexion, thanked all those who had made the meeting possible and particularly thanked Irene Wren who had agreed to minute the joint sessions. He presented her with a John Wesley Tercentenary Medal in appreciation. Mr David Walton also offered thanks to the staff members of both churches who had spent much time in preparation. Moderator Mrs Val Morrison thanked the URC members of Mission Council who were completing their terms of service and wished them well.

Final Worship.

Members of both councils gathered to celebrate Holy Communion. The worship was led by Rev Dr Kirsty Thorpe, and Rev Eunice Attwood, assisted by Rev Alison Tomlin and Mrs Val Morrison who preached the sermon.

The next meeting of the URC Mission Council will be 17 – 19 May, at High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon.

Appendix 1

Changes to Part II of the Ministerial Disciplinary Process (Section O)

[Note: Most of the changes shown here arise out of the proposed introduction of a Caution Stage, which are contained in a new Section AA, but some other important changes are being brought forward as well.]

A.3 After the word “**Paragraphs**” add “**AA.8.1,**”.

A.5 In the opening sentence of this paragraph insert the words “**including Section AA**” after “**Sections A to J**”

Insert the following additional definitions, placing them in the correct alphabetical sequence and making the necessary consequential amendments to the sub-numbering of the other definitions in this Paragraph:

“**Capability Procedure**” shall mean the Procedure adopted by the General Assembly of the Church in July 2008 (or any subsequent modification thereof) for maintaining and improving the performance of ministers and known as the Capability Procedure.

“**Caution**” shall mean a sanction in the form of a written Caution imposed on a Minister in accordance with the procedures set out in the Caution Stage under Section AA (not to be confused with the Written Warning defined later in this Paragraph A.5).

“**Caution Stage**” shall mean the first stage in all disciplinary cases not involving Gross Misconduct, the rules applicable thereto being set out in Section AA.

“**Final Caution**” shall mean a Final Caution imposed under Paragraph AA.7.

“**Gross Misconduct**” shall mean misconduct which is considered by the Synod Moderator to be so serious as to justify bypassing the Caution Stage and calling in the Mandated Group under Section B immediately to conduct its Initial Enquiry.

“**Guidelines of Conduct and Behaviour**” shall mean the Guidelines of Conduct and Behaviour for Ministers of Word and Sacrament and the Guidelines of Conduct and Behaviour for CRCWs adopted by the General Assembly of the Church in July 2010 (or any subsequent modification thereof).

“**Independent Safeguarding Authority**” shall mean the Independent Safeguarding Authority established by Section 1 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.

“**Initial Caution**” shall mean an Initial Caution imposed under Paragraph AA.6.

“Synod Appointees” shall mean the persons appointed to examine a disciplinary case within the Caution Stage and, if considered appropriate, to impose Cautions upon the Minister.

“Written Warning” shall mean a written warning issued to a Minister by the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission and appended to and forming part of its decision under Sections E or G as the case may be (not to be confused with a Caution imposed on a Minister under the Caution Stage).

A.5.33 Replace the words **“from which persons shall be appointed to be members of the Mandated Group”** with **“which shall serve the purposes set out in that Paragraph”**.

A.12 Add a new Paragraph A.12 as follows:

In the event of the Minister having already been the subject of the Capability Procedure, the record of any decisions (including decisions on appeal) taken under that procedure, together with such papers, records, and statements and other data as formed the body of information relevant in that procedure (save only such as may be protected on the grounds of confidentiality) shall be made available to all those persons responsible at various stages and in various capacities for the conduct of the Section O Process.

A.13 Add a new Paragraph A.13 as follows:

Whilst the Guidelines for Conduct and Behaviour are not intended to be rigorously applied in the same manner as precise rules they nevertheless have an important part to play in the process of considering whether, in any given case, the Minister might be in breach of his/her ordination promises under Part I, Paragraph 4.1 and consequently it would be appropriate for reference to be made to these Guidelines as appropriate within the Section O Process.

A.14 Add a new Paragraph A.14 as follows:

In any case where it is necessary or appropriate to make a referral to the Independent Safeguarding Authority in accordance with the Referral Guidance from time to time issued by that Authority, whether as a mandatory or a voluntary referral as described in the said Guidance, any such referral made pursuant to such Guidance shall be deemed to be made in furtherance of a public responsibility and not as part of any decision made in accordance with these Rules of Procedure.

B.2.1 To become B.2.1.1 and open the Paragraph with the words "Subject to Paragraph B.2.1.2, every Synod....".

After the words "from that Synod" add the following words: "(see also Paragraph B.2.1.2)"

Add the following sentences at the end of this Paragraph:

“The purposes of the Synod Panel are to enable the following appointments to be made from that Panel when a disciplinary case arises, that is to say (i) the appointment of two persons in accordance with Paragraph B.3 to act as members of the Mandated Group in that case and (ii) the appointment of two persons in accordance with Paragraph AA.1.5 to act as the Synod Appointees during the Caution Stage if initiated. The same persons shall not act as Synod Appointees and members of a Mandated Group in the same case.”

B.2.1.2 Add a new paragraph as follows:

“A Synod may appoint to its Synod Panel persons from any other Synod so long as the number of such persons does not exceed 25% of the total membership of the Synod Panel.”

B.3.1 After the words **"Synod Panel for that Synod"** insert the following **"(or in an emergency one person from the Synod Panel of that Synod and one person from the Synod Panel of another Synod)"**.

B.6.3 Add the following words at the beginning of this Paragraph:

"If the Synod Moderator has proceeded directly to the calling in of the Mandated Group without first initiating the Caution Stage,"

B.6.4 Add the following words at the end of the first sentence:

“, together with all reports, papers and other documents relevant to the case, including, if relevant, a copy of the Synod Appointees’ report to the Synod Moderator at the conclusion of the Caution Stage and all supporting papers, copies of any Cautions issued and of the record of any appeals decisions made in respect of such Cautions.”

In the final sentence replace the words **"that statement"** with **"the written statement mentioned above"**.

B.8.2 The existing Paragraph B.8.2 to become B.8.2.1.

B.8.3 The existing Paragraph B.8.3 to become B.8.2.2.

B.8.4 The existing Paragraph B.8.4 to become B.8.3.

E.5.1.3 After the words **“written statement(s)”** insert **“signed by both parties”**.

E.8.6 Add a new Paragraph E.8.6 as follows:

“The terms of any Caution imposed on the Minister at the Caution Stage and the Minister’s reaction thereto, particularly in terms of his/her performance and the level of his/her response to the Caution during the period whilst the Caution was in place.”

F.2.3 At the end of the paragraph, delete the full-stop and add the following: **“as a consequence of which it cannot form the subject matter of any appeal.”**

F.3.2 At the end of the paragraph, add the following: **“...and shall specify the Council(s) of the Church whom it charges with the responsibility of monitoring the minister's future conduct in the light of such warning, provided; (i) that the monitoring process may be dealt with by the pastoral committee of that Council or in any other manner considered appropriate by that Council and; (ii) that, should the minister subsequently move from the oversight of one Council to another, the first Council shall advise the second Council of the existence of the warning and supply such information as is necessary for the second Council to take over the monitoring process.”**

F.4 Remove the words: **“,except as to its responsibilities under Paragraph J.3,”**.

G.16.1 Remove the words: **“,except as to its responsibilities under Paragraph J.3,”**.

J.1 After the words **“Paragraph E.5.3”** insert **“or decisions of the Synod Appointees or the appeals body as to the impositions of Cautions during the Caution Stage”**.

INCAPACITY PROCEDURE

Changes to Part II

[Note: The changes fall into the five categories shown below and the paragraphs containing the proposed changes are allocated to the relevant category:

A. The introduction of a Commission Officer.

A.1.1 (definition of “Commission Officer” and “Enquiry Stage”), B.3.3, C.4.1/2/3, D.3.4, the whole of the new Sections F and G, J.1, J.2.1, J.2.3, J.3, L.8, L.9.8.

B. The need to remove the power to make recommendations.

A.1.1 (definition of “Outside Organisation”), A.3, J.10, K.5.2, K.5.3, K.6, K.7, L.11.2, L.11.3, L.12.1, L.12.2.

C. The requirement that the case has passed through PRWC and that PRWC can do no more.

A.1.1 (definition of "Certificate of Entry"), B.1.1, B.2.2, B.2.3, B.3.1, B.3.2, D.3.2, D.3.3, D.3.4 and F.8.

D. The removal of adversarial-type language.

J.2.3, J.3, J.4.1/2, J.5, J.6, J.8, L.9.6, M.4

E. Miscellaneous.

B.6, E.8, J.2.2.]

A.1.1 "Certificate of entry" Add the following definition:-

"Certificate of entry" means the Certificate duly completed and signed by the Convener of the PRWC in the format set out in the Appendix to this Part II.

"Commission Officer" Add the following definition:-

"Commission Officer" means the person appointed to act under the instructions of the Review Commission in carrying out an investigation and assembling the relevant information and documentation for the assistance of the Review Commission and whose role and functions are set out in Section G.

"Enquiry" – Change the definition to "Enquiry Stage" and continue "means the pre hearing stage during which the Review Commission conducts its enquiry in accordance with Section F assisted by the Commission Officer."

"Outside Organisation" - Replace the words "recommendation(s) or guidance being issued under the relevant paragraph of these Rules of Procedure" with "guidance being issued under the relevant paragraph of the Incapacity Procedure".

A.3 Delete the words "recommendations or".

B.1.1 After the words "Paragraph 1 of Part I" replace the remainder of the Paragraph with the following:

"...s/he shall enquire from the Convener of the PRWC (i) whether the PRWC has been involved with the Minister and, if so, (ii) whether it has now reached the point where it believes it can do no more for him/her. If, and only if, the answer to both questions is in the affirmative, s/he shall, wherever possible, consult the other of them (i.e. the Moderator of

the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary as the case may be) and s/he shall also consult the Convener of the PRWC and those persons (“the Consultation Group”) shall decide whether the Incapacity Procedure should be initiated. For the avoidance of doubt, unless and until the questions posed at (i) and (ii) above can both be answered in the affirmative, the Incapacity Procedure cannot be initiated.”

B.2 Replace the existing wording with:

“As part of the consultation referred to in Paragraph B.1.1, the Consultation Group must satisfy itself as to the following matters:-”

B.2.1 Replace the word “made” with “attempted”.

B.2.2 Insert the word "Church's" immediately before the word "procedures".

B.2.3 Replace the existing wording with:

“...that the PRWC has been involved with the Minister but has now stated that it believes it can do no more for him/her; and....”.

B.3 Replace the existing Paragraph B.3 with the following:-

B.3.1 If, having so consulted, the Consultation Group is satisfied unanimously that all the conditions contained in Paragraphs B.1.1 and B.2 have been complied with, the Group shall send or deliver to the Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary as the case may be a Certificate of Entry* completed in strict accordance with the format set out in the Appendix to this Part II, this being an essential pre-condition to a case entering the Incapacity Procedure. When this step has been completed, the Incapacity Procedure shall apply and the procedures set out in Paragraphs B.3.2 and B.3.3 shall come into operation.

B.3.2 The Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary shall forthwith send or deliver to the Secretary of the Review Commission* the Certificate of Entry and a Commencement Notice* (together with such accompanying papers as are germane to the case) in order to activate the Incapacity Procedure, setting out the reasons for the issue of such Notice and s/he shall at the same time inform the Minister that this step has been taken. As to the procedures to be followed regarding suspension, see Section E.

B.3.3 The Secretary of the Review Commission shall thereupon notify the following persons in writing of the issue of the Commencement Notice, namely the General Secretary, the Synod Moderator (if s/he did not issue the Commencement Notice), the Synod Clerk, the Press Officer, the

Secretary for Ministries, the Convener of the PRWC and the responsible officer of any relevant Outside Organisation. The Notice shall stress to all the recipients the sensitive nature of the information imparted and the need to exercise care and discretion as to how it is used. If appropriate, the Notice may be combined with a Notice given under Paragraph E.4 regarding suspension.

B.3.4 On receipt of the Commencement Notice, the Secretary of the Review Commission shall forthwith activate the procedure for the calling in of the Commission Officer to carry out his/her functions as described in Section G when instructed to do so by the Review Commission.

B.6 In the expression "Paragraph B.1 and B.2" add an "s" to the word "Paragraph".

After the words "to the contrary" remove the comma and insert the words "and so long as the Consultation Group is satisfied that the conditions contained in Paragraphs B.1.1 and B.2 have been complied with,"

C.4.1 Add a new paragraph as follows:

Mission Council shall, on behalf of General Assembly, appoint a person with some legal, tribunal or professional experience or other similar background to act as the Commission Officer in cases coming within the Incapacity Procedure and a second person with similar credentials to act as a reserve Commission Officer should the person firstly appointed be unable for any reason to participate in a particular case.

C.4.2 Add a new paragraph as follows:

In the event that neither of the persons referred to in Paragraph C.4.1 is able to act as Commission Officer in any particular case, the Secretary shall invite the Officers of General Assembly to appoint another person to act as Commission Officer in that case, making every effort to appoint someone with similar credentials.

C.4.3 Add a new paragraph as follows:-

The principle enunciated in Paragraph D.1 must be taken into account in considering whether a person is eligible to act as Commission Officer in any given case.

D.3.2 After the words "copies of" add "the Certificate of Entry,".

D.3.3 Replace the words "a copy of" with "copies of the Certificate of Entry,".

D.3.4 Add a new paragraph as follows:

The Secretary shall send to the Commission Officer copies of the Certificate of Entry, the Commencement Notice and any supporting documentation, together with a notice requesting confirmation that the addressee is unaware of any circumstances which in the present case might prevent him/her from serving as Commission Officer and, in the event that that person is unable to serve as the Commission Officer, the Secretary shall repeat the procedure with the second person referred to above.

E.8 Insert a new E.8 as follows:

Suspension does not imply any view about the correctness or otherwise of the reasons for the entry of the case into the Incapacity Procedure nor of any statements made or information given concerning the Minister, nor does it affect the Minister's stipend or the CWCW's salary or the Minister's or the CRCW's pension arrangements made under the relevant United Reformed Church Pension Scheme.

Sections F and G Replace the existing Sections F and G with the following:

F. Role and responsibilities of the Review Commission at the Enquiry Stage

F.1. The Review Commission shall have control of all procedural matters at the Enquiry Stage, including the gathering of information and any issues relating to the Minister's suspension. The Review Commission shall also have discretion as regards the extent to which written statements, reports, videos, recorded interviews and other recordings and transcripts may be taken into account. This discretion will be particularly apposite when considering any report, information and documentation submitted by the Commission Officer under Paragraph G.4

F.2 Where cases come into the Procedure following a recommendation from the Disciplinary Process, information may already have been considered within that Process. However, the Review Commission must always carry out its own enquiry and cannot rely upon such information simply because it was presented and considered within the Disciplinary Process.

F.3 The members of the Review Commission shall consult together as soon as possible to consider the information laid before them and to agree upon the course which their enquiry should take.

F.4 At the outset the Review Commission will need to address the following questions:

- F.4.1** Have all the steps outlined at Paragraphs B.1 and B.2 been taken?
- F.4.2** Are there any issues regarding suspension which need to be resolved by the Review Commission (see Section E)?
- F.4.3** How has the Minister responded, if at all, to the issues raised in the Commencement Notice, particularly those relating to his/her conduct and/or behaviour or to any other concerns and/or problems expressed about his/her ministry and will it be necessary to meet with other persons with knowledge of any relevant events or circumstances to test the accuracy and weight of these matters and their importance to the enquiry?
- F.4.4** Is specialist advice and guidance relevant as to the question of whether, based on the criteria set out in Part I, Paragraphs 1 and 5, the Minister is or is not capable of exercising, or of continuing to exercise, ministry? If so, what steps should be taken to ensure that such advice and guidance are available for consideration by the Review Commission? Has any such advice or guidance already been taken and, if so, can this be made available to the Review Commission?
- F.5** The Review Commission shall be entitled to call for and consider all minutes of meetings, correspondence, notes, reports and documents which it considers appropriate to its enquiry. This provision shall not apply where those from whom such documentation is requested can demonstrate that it is protected by confidentiality.
- F.6** Should the Review Commission consider that at any time the Minister might, whether or not deliberately, be in danger of infringing any of Paragraphs K.1.5/8, it shall, wherever practicable, draw this to the attention of the Minister or his/her representative.
- F.7** Having carried out its initial review, the Review Commission will consider the information so far available and consider the implications of this information in the light of the criteria set out in Paragraphs 1 and 5 of Part I and will then issue instructions to the Commission Officer to enable him/her to carry out his/her responsibilities under Section G. In doing so, the Review Commission should draw the particular attention of the Commission Officer to Paragraphs A.2, H.1 and K.1.
- F.8** The Review Commission shall at the same time supply the Commission Officer with copies of the Certificate of Entry, the Commencement Notice, any supporting documentation and all necessary information for the better performance of his/her responsibilities. Information relating to any specific advice or guidance as mentioned in Paragraph F.4.4 is

particularly pertinent in this respect. Furthermore the Review Commission must make clear to the Commission Officer the issues identified by the Review Commission to which it wishes the Commission Officer to direct his/her enquiries so that there is consistency and the avoidance of duplication in the gathering of information.

- F.9** The Review Commission will at all times be able to issue guidance and instructions to the Commission Officer as s/he carries out his/her role under Section G.
- F.10** The Review Commission may, if it considers it appropriate so to do, adjourn the Enquiry and direct the Commission Officer to put his/her investigation on hold pending further instructions. Bearing in mind the need to move the Procedure along in a timely manner, this power should only be used sparingly when warranted by the special circumstances of the case and any such adjournment should last only so long as is strictly necessary.
- F.11** On receipt of the dossier and accompanying papers from the Commission Officer referred to in Paragraph G.7, the Secretary of the Review Commission shall forthwith supply copies of all such papers to each member of the Review Commission who may seek clarification and/or further information from the Commission Officer on any of the matters referred to therein.
- F.12** The members of the Review Commission, in considering the material presented to them, should always have in mind the desirability of reaching agreement with the Minister or the Minister's representative as to any information and advice which is accepted as common ground with a view to simplifying the Hearing and making it appear less confrontational.
- F.13.1** When the Review Commission has satisfied itself as to the matters referred to in Paragraph F.11, the Secretary of the Review Commission shall thereupon, acting on the instructions of the Review Commission, send to the Minister or the Minister's representative a copy of the Commission Officer's statement and copies of all the statements, reports and other documents contained in the accompanying dossier (save only that, if the Commission Officer shall have already provided the Minister with copies of the documents in the agreed bundle in accordance with Paragraph G.6, the Secretary is not required to send to him/her further copies of those particular documents at this stage).
- F.13.2** At the same time s/he shall notify the Minister or his/her representative by letter that, should s/he wish to make any observations or

representations on any of the matters contained in the said statement and dossier or should s/he wish to submit any further statements, reports, or other papers, these should all be lodged with the Secretary within 21 days of receipt of the said letter. The Secretary shall forthwith on receipt supply each member of the Assembly Commission with a copy of any such observations, representations or documents.

F.14 After the expiration of the said period of 21 days or, if a request for an extension of time is received, within such further period of time, if any, as the members of the Review Commission consider reasonable, the Review Commission will instruct the Secretary to put in hand arrangements for a hearing to take place in accordance with Section J.

G Role and Responsibilities of Commission Officer

G.1 The role and responsibilities of the Commission Officer shall be:-

G.1.1 To study the Commencement Notice and any supporting papers and any representations made by the Minister and/or others and

G.1.2 To note the instructions of the Review Commission and any supporting information supplied with them (see Paragraphs F.7 and F.8) and

G.1.3 In pursuance of those instructions, to obtain such reports, carry out such interviews and consultations and take such other steps as are deemed appropriate within the scope of those instructions including the assembling of all the relevant information in a dossier for presentation to the Review Commission and

G.1.4 To attend the Hearing in order to respond to any questions which may be put to him/her by the Review Commission and/or the Minister or the Minister's Representative.

G.2 The Commission Officer shall have regard to the following:-

G.2.1 S/he must act within the scope of the instructions issued by the Review Commission under Paragraph F.7.

G.2.2 Should the Commission Officer, in the course of his/her investigation, be drawn into a new line of enquiry, s/he must refer back to the Review Commission for further instructions.

G.2.3 The Commission Officer must not commission reports or incur costs without specific authorisation from the Review Commission.

G.3 Subject always to the terms of the Review Commission's instructions, the following questions (which are not necessarily exhaustive) should

be addressed by the Commission Officer in the course of carrying out his/her responsibilities in accordance with Paragraph G.1:-

- G.3.1** How has the Minister responded, if at all, to the issues raised in the Commencement Notice, particularly those relating to his/her conduct and/or behaviour or to any other concerns and/or problems expressed about his/her ministry and will it be necessary to meet with other persons with knowledge of any relevant events or circumstances to test the accuracy and weight of these matters and their importance to the investigation?
- G.3.2** Is specialist advice and guidance relevant as to the question of whether, based on the criteria set out in Part I, Paragraphs 1 and 5, the Minister is or is not capable of exercising, or of continuing to exercise, ministry? If so, what steps should be taken to ensure that such advice and guidance are available for consideration by the Review Commission?
- G.3.3** Are there any special factors in the particular case which should be taken into account at this stage? This is particularly relevant in cases coming into the Incapacity Procedure following a recommendation from the Disciplinary Process.
- G.4** So long as such actions fall within the scope of the Review Commission's instructions and are within the constraints set out in Paragraph G.2, the Commission Officer may seek the written permission of the Minister or his/her representative (but only so far as the latter has the authority in law to grant such permission on behalf of the Minister) to apply for copies of all the Minister's medical notes, records and reports from his/her General Practitioner and copies of the reports from any specialist who may have examined or been consulted by the Minister. If the Commission Officer is unable to obtain copies of any such notes, records and reports s/he shall report this to the Review Commission and the Procedure shall continue with the best information available.
- G.5.1** The Commission Officer should seek to obtain from each person from whom s/he obtains information a written statement setting out such information and summarising the discussion at the meeting. This statement should, wherever possible, be agreed and signed by the Commission Officer and the person concerned immediately after the meeting and whilst they are still together. The Commission Officer should inform that person that s/he may be called later to attend the Hearing and answer questions which may be put to him/her by the Review Commission and/or the Minister or the Minister's representative.

- G.5.2** If any such person refuses or expresses an unwillingness to attend any Hearing in person or if the Commission Officer has any other reason to believe that that person will not in fact do so, the Commission Officer shall report this to the Review Commission, which may if it thinks fit invoke its discretionary powers as set out in Paragraph F.1. In such situations, it is essential that the Commission Officer should use every endeavour to obtain an agreed written statement from the person concerned as described in Paragraph G.5.1.
- G.6.** The Commission Officer shall consult, or endeavour to consult, with the Minister or his/her representative for the purpose of securing an agreed bundle of documents. A list of the documents in the agreed bundle should be prepared by the Commission Officer and signed by him/her and by the Minister or his/her representative. The Minister may request copies of the documents in the agreed bundle there and then. Otherwise they will be sent to him/her by the Secretary of the Review Commission (see Paragraph F.13.1). Should the Commission Officer be unable to secure an agreed bundle of documents for whatever reason, s/he shall prepare a report which shall explain why it has not proved possible to do so.
- G.7** When the Commission Officer has completed his/her investigation, s/he shall lodge with the Secretary of the Review Commission a dossier containing (i) a written statement setting out the result of his/her investigation, summarising the information contained in the dossier and adding any comments which s/he deems appropriate and (ii) either of the following:-
- G.7.1** If it has proved possible to secure an agreed bundle of documents in accordance with Paragraph G.6, the originals (or copies if the originals are not held by the Commission Officer) of the documents forming the agreed bundle, the signed copy of the agreed list of documents and the originals or copies of any further documents which are not included in the agreed bundle but which, in the opinion of the Commission Officer, should nonetheless be passed on to the Review Commission or
- G.7.2** If it has not proved possible to secure an agreed bundle of documents in accordance with Paragraph G.6, the originals (or copies if the originals are not held by the Commission Officer) of all statements, reports and other documents considered by him/her to be relevant to the case, including the report referred to in Paragraph G.6 as to why it has not been possible to secure an agreed bundle of documents.
- J.1** After the words "the Minister" add "the Commission Officer".

J.2.1 The existing J.2 shall become J.2.1 and the following shall be inserted as the fifth bullet point:

- **The Commission Officer**

J.2.2 The existing J.3 shall become new Paragraph J.2.2. Also replace the word “should” with “shall”.

J.2.3 Add a new J.2.3 as follows:

The Convener shall open the proceedings by introducing him/herself and the other members of the Commission and such other persons as may be present. S/he shall also explain their respective roles and the manner in which the Hearing will be conducted. The Review Commission shall have complete discretion as to the manner of conducting the Hearing and may, if considered appropriate, invite the Commission Officer at the outset to present his/her report to the Hearing.

J.3 Insert the following as new J.3:

J.3 If invited to do so by the Review Commission, the Commission Officer will present the information set out in the written dossier and its supporting papers and, if any of the persons referred to in the dossier are present, the Review Commission may invite him or her to provide their information orally. Any such persons will be subject to questioning by the Convener (and by other members of the Commission with the Convener’s permission) and by the Minister or the Minister’s representative.

J.4.1 Replace the words “All witnesses called by the Review Commission to give evidence shall be subject to questioning...” with “All persons attending the Hearing in person to provide information may be questioned...” Also at the end, replace the word “witnesses” with “persons”.

J.4.2 Remove the words “When the process described in Paragraph J.4.1 has been completed,” and replace the words “witnesses called by him/her to give evidence” with “persons attending at his/her request to provide information”.

J.5 After the words “directs otherwise,” replace the existing words with “persons attending to provide information and/or answer questions shall only be present whilst they are doing so”.

J.6 Replace the existing paragraph with the following:

"When the procedures outlined in Paragraphs J.3 and J.4 have been completed, the Minister or the Minister's representative may if s/he wishes address the Review Commission".

J.8 Delete the words **"evidence and"**.

J.10 Insert a space between "Commission" and "will wish"

Delete the words **"and/or recommendation(s)"**.

Change the paragraph reference in the text from B.1 to **B.3**.

K.5.2 Delete this paragraph.

K.5.3 The existing K.5.3 to become **K.5.2**.

K.6 Delete the words **"recommendations or"**.

K.7 Delete the words **"...and any recommendations appended to the Decision (as regards any Outside Organisation, only those recommendations which it expressly states to be its wish that such be passed on to that Outside Organisation) and sent to the Minister in accordance with Paragraph K.6..."**.

L.8 After the words **"shall take"** replace the remainder of the first sentence with **"having in mind but not being bound to follow the procedures laid down for the Review Commission in Section F"**.

Delete the words **"In addition"** at the beginning of the second sentence.

L.9.6 Replace the words **", evidence and interpretation"** with **"and any legal issues which may arise relating to the interpretation of the information provided at the Hearing"**.

L.9.8 This paragraph to become L.9.8.2 (see below):

L.9.8.1 Add a new L.9.8.1 as follows: **"If requested to do so by the Appeals Review Commission, the General Secretary shall invite the Commission Officer to attend the Hearing of the Appeal and at some point during the Hearing the Convener may invite the Commission Officer and the Minister or his/her representative to address the Appeals Review Commission on the subject matter of the Appeal.**

L.9.8.2 The existing Paragraph **L.9.8** shall become **L.9.8.2**

L.11.2 Delete this paragraph.

L.11.3 The existing L.11.3 to become **L.11.2**.

L.12.1 Delete the words “**recommendations or**”.

L.12.2 Delete the words “**recommendations or**” both times they appear.

M.4 Replace the word “**served**” with “**sent or delivered**”.

ADDENDUM TO THE INCAPACITY PROCEDURE

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Form [...]

**THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
MINISTERIAL INCAPACITY PROCEDURE
(as set out in Section P of the MANUAL)**

**CERTIFICATE OF SUITABILITY FOR ENTRY INTO THE PROCEDURE
(defined in the Procedure as “the Certificate of Entry”)**

re:

This Certificate of Entry has been completed by the Convener of the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee (PRWC) to fulfil the requirements of Paragraphs B.1.1 and B.2 of Part II of the Procedure.

As Convener of the PRWC I hereby certify as follows:

1. Pursuant to Paragraph B.1.1, the Consultation Group (as defined in Paragraph A.1 1 of the Procedure) has carried out its responsibility to consider the question of whether the Incapacity Procedure should be initiated in respect of the above named Minister/Church Related Community Worker (CRCW) and has reached the conclusion that it should be so initiated and

2. The PRWC, after having given full consideration to the concerns relating to the above named Minister/CRCW as required by Paragraph B.2, has reached the following conclusions:

(i) That all reasonable steps to rehabilitate the Minister/CRCW have been attempted (B.2.1): and

(ii) That the Church's procedures for ill health retirement do not apply and that there is no reasonable prospect of their implementation or of the resignation of the Minister (B.2.2): and

(iii) That the PRWC has been involved with the Minister/CRCW but has now stated that it believes it can do no more for him/her (B.2.3): and

either

(iv) That no case against the Minister/CRCW is already in progress under the Ministerial disciplinary Process:

or

(iv) That the Minister/CRCW is already involved in a Ministerial Disciplinary case, but the provisions of Paragraph B.6 of Part II apply.

[delete whichever does not apply]

Dated.....20...

Signed.....Convener of PRWC

APPENDIX 2 MINISTERIAL DISCIPLINARY PROCESS (Section O) –
CAUTION STAGE *to take effect on 30 April, 2011*

Section AA to be inserted after Section A of Part II of the Disciplinary Process (Section O)

AA.1.1 This Section AA sets out a Caution Stage which provides the mechanism whereby an enquiry can be set up to examine matters of concern involving ministers which fall short of Gross Misconduct, leading, if appropriate, to an Initial Caution and a Final Caution being issued to the Minister in the form of written notices.

AA.1.2 Any such matters of concern shall only fall within the Section O Process if demonstrating a degree of blameworthiness attributable to deliberate intent or to a blatant lack of care and concern, the effect of which, if substantiated, would indicate a breach of the criteria laid down in Part I, Paragraph 4.1. In the absence of these elements, no case for discipline arises under this Section AA.

AA.1.3 If at any time during the Caution Stage the Synod Moderator becomes aware of any information suggesting the possibility of Gross Misconduct on the part of the Minister, s/he shall have the power to bring the Caution Stage to an immediate conclusion and call in a Mandated group to commence its Initial Enquiry in accordance with Section B of these Rules. Any relevant information already gathered within the Caution Stage shall be passed on to the Mandated Group and the Synod Moderator shall discharge the Synod Appointees from any further responsibility.

AA.1.4 References in this Section AA to the Synod Moderator can also be taken as a reference to the Deputy General Secretary, except where precluded by the context.

AA.1.5.1 Each Synod is required to appoint from its Synod Panel two persons to conduct the enquiry under the Caution Stage and to take such other actions as are required under this Section AA and two persons to act as reserves for such purposes should the principal appointees be unable for whatever reason to act in that capacity in a particular case.

AA.1.5.2 The Synod may make these appointments in any of the following ways: (i) it may appoint persons from its own Synod Panel or (ii) it may appoint persons from the Synod Panel(s) of one or more other Synods, with the consent of the Moderator of that Synod or those Synods, or (iii) it may appoint persons who, although not members of any Synod Panel, have legal, tribunal or other appropriate professional experience. The appointments do not need to be made from one and the same group.

AA.1.5.3 These appointments should, wherever possible, be standing ones and made in advance, not made ad hoc when the situation arises. If, however, there shall not be any Synod Appointees in place at the time when the Synod Moderator wishes to initiate the Caution Stage, s/he may call upon the Synod to make the necessary appointments at that time.

AA.1.5.4 The persons appointed to act in any given case under this Paragraph shall be referred to as “the Synod Appointees”.

AA.2.1 Should the Synod Moderator wish to initiate the Caution Stage in relation to a particular minister, s/he shall call in the Synod Appointees, by written notice to each of them, to carry out the enquiry in accordance with the procedure set out in this Section AA.

AA.2.2 Should the Deputy General Secretary wish to initiate the Caution Stage in relation to any particular minister, s/he shall follow the procedure set out in Paragraph AA.1.5 to appoint two persons to act as the Synod Appointees in that case.

AA.2.3 Should either or both the principal and the reserve appointee(s) of the Synod be unable to act in a particular case, the Moderator of the Synod shall, with the consent of the Moderator(s) of another Synod or other Synods, call in the principal or reserve Synod Panel Member(s) for that/those Synod(s) to carry out the functions of the Synod Appointees in that case. The two so appointed need not be members of the same Synod Panel.

AA.2.4 In calling in the Synod Appointees as above, the Moderator of the Synod shall inform the Minister that this step has been taken and supply both the Synod Appointees and the Minister with a written statement setting out the matters of concern which have led to the calling in of the Synod Appointees, the names of possible informants and other sources of information at that time available and any observations as to ways in which the Moderator considers that the Minister’s perceived shortcomings might be addressed. The statement supplied to the Synod Appointees shall be accompanied by any reports, statements and other documents which the Synod Moderator considers might be helpful to the Synod Appointees, including, if applicable, all papers relative to a recommendation that the Section O Process should be commenced, made in accordance with Section H of Part II of the Incapacity Procedure.

AA.2.5 The principle enunciated in Paragraph B.4 regarding membership of a Mandated Group shall be equally applicable when considering the eligibility of persons to act as Synod Appointees in any given case.

AA.2.6 For purposes of confidentiality and the chain of continuity of the Process, the Disciplinary Case against a particular minister shall, if the Caution Stage is invoked,

be deemed to have commenced on the calling in of the Synod Appointees in accordance with this Paragraph AA.2. It should be noted that the initiation of the Caution Stage will not involve the suspension of the Minister.

AA.2.7 At all meetings with the Synod Appointees, the Minister and any other persons interviewed by the Synod Appointees may, if they wish, be accompanied by a friend.

AA.3 The purpose of the enquiry is to establish whether, in the opinion of the Synod Appointees, the matters of concern referred to in Paragraph AA.2.4, whilst they may fall short of Gross Misconduct, do nonetheless amount to a failure on the part of the Minister to live up to the promises which s/he made at ordination (see Part I, Paragraph 4.1) and whether if the Synod Appointees do come to that conclusion it would be appropriate for them to issue a Caution in the form of a written notice to the Minister and, if so, in what terms or, if they consider the case more serious, whether to recommend to the Synod Moderator that s/he should take the case into the main part of the Disciplinary Process by calling in a Mandated Group under Section B of these Rules.

AA.4.1 The Synod Appointees will have discretion as to the manner in which they conduct their enquiry in the light of the circumstances of the case. However, as a general rule the following steps should be taken:

AA.4.1.1 The Synod Appointees should at the earliest possible stage in their enquiry seek a meeting with the Minister.

AA.4.1.2 At the outset of that meeting the Synod Appointees should explain that the purpose of the meeting is to raise with the Minister the concerns set out in the statement referred to in Paragraph AA.2.4 and to make clear that the outcome might be the issue of a Caution or Cautions or even (if the Synod Appointees viewed the matter as sufficiently serious) a recommendation to the Synod Moderator to call in a Mandated Group and thus to take the matter directly into the main part of the Disciplinary Process.

AA.4.1.3 The Synod Appointees should then discuss, or endeavour to discuss, the said concerns with the Minister, listen to the Minister's explanations and consider any reports, written statements and papers which the Minister produces which are germane to the case and, if possible, should attempt to reach agreement with the Minister as to the areas of concern and as to how the problems should be resolved. If the Minister is co-operative and agrees to the accuracy and validity of the concerns expressed by the Synod Moderator, the Synod Appointees may well feel able to omit the steps suggested at Paragraphs AA.4.2, AA.4.3 and AA.4.4 and proceed straight to the steps set out at Paragraph AA.5.

AA.4.2 The Synod Appointees may wish to meet with some or all of those who, according to the information provided in the Synod Moderator's statement, have had involvement with the Minister and who may have relevant knowledge of the causes of those concerns.

AA.4.3 The Synod Appointees may wish to refer back to the Synod Moderator for discussion upon any matters which arise during the course of their enquiry, including the appropriateness of the terms of any Caution which they are minded to impose.

AA.4.4 If, following the meeting with the Minister referred to at Paragraph AA.4.1.1, the Synod Appointees have held meetings or discussions in accordance with Paragraph AA.4.2 or Paragraph AA.4.3, the Synod Appointees should once more meet with the Minister for a further discussion and, if possible, should attempt to reach agreement with the Minister as to the areas of concern and as to how the problems should be resolved.

AA.4.5 At the conclusion of every interview taking place under this Paragraph AA.4, including any meetings with the Minister, the Synod Appointees should prepare a detailed minute thereof and seek the interviewee's agreement to the wording thereof, whereupon the Synod Appointees should sign two copies, requesting the interviewee to do the same, whereupon they should retain one copy and hand the other copy to the interviewee. If the interviewee should decline to sign the minute, an endorsement to this effect should be made explaining the reasons for this.

AA.5 Having satisfied themselves that they have taken all the steps necessary under Paragraph AA.4, the Synod Appointees will conclude their enquiry in one of three ways:

AA.5.1 The Synod Appointees may conclude that no further action needs to be taken, in which case they may give written notice to this effect to the Synod Moderator and the Minister as soon as they reach this conclusion, or

AA.5.2 They may invoke the procedure relating to the issue of Cautions set out in the succeeding Paragraphs of this Section AA or

AA.5.3.1 They may, if in their view the concerns are sufficiently serious to justify such a course, serve a written notice on the Synod Moderator consisting of a recommendation that s/he should call in a Mandated Group and thus take the matter out of the Caution Stage and directly into Section B of these Rules of Procedure (this course, involving as it does a recommendation only, cannot be the subject of an appeal by the Minister). The notice shall set out the reasons for making such a recommendation. At the same time, they shall serve on the Minister a written notice informing him/her that this step has been taken.

AA.5.3.2 Should the Synod Moderator be unwilling to accept this recommendation, s/he may by written notice to each of the Synod Appointees, request them to

continue with their enquiry and, if they accede to this request, they will proceed with the remainder of the Caution Stage in accordance with this Section AA.

AA.5.3.3 Should the Synod Appointees be unwilling to continue with their enquiry, they may, by giving written notice to the Synod Moderator within one month of the receipt of the notice from him/her, decide to reject his/her request (see also Paragraph AA.10.2).

AA.6.1 If, in accordance with Paragraph AA.5.2, the Synod Appointees invoke the procedure relating to the imposition of Cautions, they shall first of all issue to the Minister a written notice consisting of an Initial Caution setting out the following:

AA.6.1.1 the matters of concerns which they have identified as amounting to a breach of discipline at the light of Part I, Paragraph 4.1 and

AA.6.1.2 the steps which they require the Minister to take to resolve those concerns in order to bring his/her ministry back to a level compatible with his/her ordination promises and

AA.6.1.3 the period of time, not exceeding twelve months, within which those steps must be taken and

AA.6.1.4 the consequences which would follow from a failure on the part of the minister to comply with the terms of the Initial Caution, which would be the issue of a Final Caution in accordance with Paragraph AA.7, unless in the opinion of the Synod Appointees the Minister's failure to comply with the terms of the Initial Caution was sufficiently serious as to justify the bypassing of a Final Caution and the issuing of a recommendation to the Synod Moderator in the terms of Paragraph AA.5.3.1, and

AA.6.1.5 a statement informing the Minister of his/her right to appeal against the imposition of the Caution, drawing attention to the period of time within which the notice of appeal must be lodged and the fact that time is of the essence in the lodging of the appeal notice (for further information as to the lodging of an appeal and in particular the time allowed for this, see Paragraph AA.8.1).

AA.6.2.1 The written notice of an Initial Caution issued under Paragraph AA.6.1 may either be handed to the Minister at the conclusion of the Synod Appointees' final interview with the Minister at the Initial Caution Stage or it may be sent to the Minister within ten days of that interview, either method constituting service for the purposes of Paragraph H.2.

AA.6.2.2 The Minister has the right to appeal against the imposition of an Initial Caution issued under Paragraph AA.6.1 and the appeal provisions are contained in Paragraph AA.8.

AA.6.3.1 During the period whilst the Initial Caution is in place, the Synod Appointees shall keep the situation under review and, if they become aware of conduct or behaviour on the part of the Minister which indicates that s/he is not adhering to the terms of the Caution, they have the authority to call the minister to account at any time and, if the circumstances should so require, to issue a Final Caution under Paragraph AA.7 or bypass the Final Caution Stage and to proceed directly to a recommendation to the Synod Moderator in the terms of Paragraph AA.5.3.1 without waiting for the period of the Caution to expire.

AA.6.3.2 The provisions of Paragraph AA.4 as to the conduct of meetings with the Minister and other interviewees shall also apply during and at the expiration of the period of the Initial Caution.

AA.6.4 At the expiration of the period of the Initial Caution (or sooner if warranted under Paragraph AA.6.3.1), the Synod Appointees shall carry out a further review, which will involve a meeting with the Minister and possible meetings or discussions with others who might have information to assist the Synod Appointees in their review. Arising out of this review, the Synod Appointees must take one of the following steps:

AA.6.4.1 They may conclude that the Caution should be removed and that no further disciplinary action is necessary in the light of the improvements and the positive response made by the Minister following the imposition of the Initial Caution, in which case they may give written notice to this effect to the Synod Moderator and the Minister as soon as they reach this conclusion, or

AA.6.4.2 They may proceed to the Final Caution Stage in accordance with Paragraph AA.7 or

AA.6.4.3.1 If they form the view that the Minister has failed to comply with the terms of the Caution and if their concerns are sufficiently serious to justify such a course, they may serve a written notice on the Synod Moderator consisting of a recommendation that s/he should call in a Mandated Group and thus take the case out of the Caution Stage and directly into Section B of these Rules of Procedure (this course, involving as it does a recommendation only, cannot be the subject of an appeal by the Minister). The notice shall set out the reasons for making such a recommendation. At the same time, they shall serve on the Minister a written notice informing him/her that this step has been taken.

AA.6.4.3.2 Should the Synod Moderator be unwilling to accept this recommendation, s/he may by written notice to each of the Synod Appointees, request them to continue with their enquiry and, if they accede to this request, they will proceed with the remainder of the Caution Stage in accordance with this Section AA.

AA.6.4.3.3 Should the Synod Appointees be unwilling to continue with their enquiry, they may, by giving written notice to the Synod Moderator within one month of the receipt of the notice from him/her, decide to reject his/her request (see also Paragraph AA.10.2).

AA.7.1 If, having followed the procedure outlined at Paragraph AA.6 and in accordance with Paragraph AA.6.2, the Synod Appointees continue with the next step in the procedure relating to the imposition of Cautions, they shall issue to the Minister a written notice consisting of a Final Caution setting out the following:

AA.7.1.1 the matters of concerns which they have identified as amounting to a breach of discipline at the light of Part I, Paragraph 4.1, which shall include a statement as to why, in considering the Minister's response to the Initial Caution, they have deemed it necessary to issue a Final Caution, and

AA.7.1.2 the steps which they require the Minister to take to resolve those concerns in order to bring his/her ministry back to a level compatible with his/her ordination promises and

AA.7.1.3 the period of time, not exceeding twelve months, within which those steps should be taken and

AA.7.1.4 the consequences which would follow from a failure on the part of the minister to comply with the terms of the Final Caution, which would be the issuing of a recommendation to the Synod Moderator in the terms of Paragraph AA.5.3.1, the Synod Appointees having no authority to issue any further cautions, and

AA.7.1.5 a statement informing the Minister of his/her right to appeal against the imposition of the Caution, drawing attention to the period of time within which the notice of appeal must be lodged and the fact that time is of the essence in the lodging of the appeal notice (for further information as to the lodging of an appeal and in particular the time allowed for this, see Paragraph AA.8.1).

AA.7.2.1 The written notice of a Final Caution issued under Paragraph AA.7.1 may either be handed to the Minister at the conclusion of the Synod Appointees' final interview with the Minister at the Final Caution Stage or it may be sent to the Minister within ten days of that interview, either method constituting service for the purposes of Paragraph H.2.

AA.7.2.2 The Minister has the right to appeal against the imposition of a Final Caution under Paragraph AA.7.1 and the appeal provisions are contained in Paragraph AA.8.

AA.7.3.1 During the period whilst the Final Caution is in place, the Synod Appointees shall keep the situation under review and, if they become aware of conduct or behaviour on the part of the Minister which indicates that s/he is not

adhering to the terms of the Caution, they have the authority to call the minister to account at any time and, if the circumstances should so require, to issue a recommendation to the Synod Moderator in the terms of Paragraph AA.5.3.1 without waiting for the period of the Caution to expire.

AA.7.3.2 The provisions of Paragraph AA.4 as to the conduct of meetings with the Minister and other interviewees shall also apply during and at the expiration of the period of the Final Caution.

AA.7.4 At the expiration of the period of the Final Caution (or sooner if warranted under Paragraph AA.7.3.1), the Synod Appointees shall carry out a further review, which will involve a meeting with the Minister and possible meetings or discussions with others who might have information to assist the Synod Appointees in their review. The outcome of this further review will be one of the following:

AA.7.4.1 They may conclude that the Caution should be removed and that no further disciplinary action is necessary in the light of the improvements and the positive response made by the Minister following the imposition of the Final Caution, in which case they must give written notice to this effect to the Synod Moderator and the Minister as soon as they reach this conclusion, or

AA.7.4.2 If they form the view that the Minister has failed to comply with the terms of the Caution and if their concerns are sufficiently serious to justify such a course, they may serve a written notice on the Synod Moderator consisting of a recommendation that s/he should call in a Mandated Group and thus move the case into Section B of Part II of these Rules of Procedure (this course, involving as it does a recommendation only, cannot be the subject of an appeal by the Minister) (see also Paragraph AA.10.2). The notice shall set out the reasons for making such a recommendation. At the same time, they shall serve on the Minister a written notice informing him/her that this step has been taken.

AA.8.1 Should the Minister wish to appeal against a Caution, whether an Initial Caution imposed under Paragraph AA.6 or a Final Caution imposed under Paragraph AA.7, s/he must serve on the Synod Moderator as the person authorised to accept service a notice of such appeal no later than 21 days from the service upon him/her of the Notice of the Caution, time being of the essence for the purpose of the lodging of the appeal. The Notice shall state the grounds of the appeal (which may be in detail or in summary form as the minister chooses) and the Minister may lodge with the Notice any statements or documents in support of the appeal if s/he so wishes.

AA.8.2 The body to hear the appeal shall consist of three persons and shall be constituted as follows:

AA.8.2.1 The Synod Moderator shall request the Moderator of another Synod to constitute the appeals body and to make the appointments in accordance with the criteria laid down for the appointment of Synod Appointees under Paragraph AA.1.5.

AA.8.2.2 Should a Minister who has previously appealed against the imposition of an Initial Caution (“the Initial Caution Appeal”) lodge an appeal against the imposition of a Final Caution (“the Final Caution Appeal”) in the same case, the Synod Moderator shall request the Moderator of a Synod other than his/her own or that of the Moderator who constituted the body which heard the Initial Caution Appeal to constitute the body to hear the Final Caution Appeal and to make the appointments in accordance with the criteria laid down for the appointment of Synod Appointees under Paragraph AA.1.5.

AA.8.2.3 In a situation arising under Paragraph AA.8.2.2, the Synod Moderator making the appointments must not appoint any person who served on the body which heard the Initial Caution Appeal.

AA.8.2.4 The principle enunciated in Paragraph B.4 regarding membership of a Mandated Group shall be equally applicable when considering the eligibility of persons to act as the appeals body and as the secretary thereof.

AA.8.2.5 Having made the appointments required under Paragraph AA.8.2.1 or Paragraph AA.8.2.2/3 as the case may be, the Moderator(s) of the other Synod(s) shall have no further part to play and all references to the Synod Moderator, apart from specific references to any other such Synod Moderator, shall denote the Synod Moderator who appointed the Synod Appointees.

AA.8.2.6 The Synod Moderator shall be responsible for appointing a suitable person to act as the secretary to the newly constituted appeals body. The person so appointed shall not be a member of the appeals body.

AA.8.3 Immediately following the appointment of the appeals body, the Synod Moderator shall provide each member thereof with copies of the written notice containing the Caution, all statements and other documents accompanying the report and the Minister’s notice of appeal and any accompanying statements and documents. In the case of an appeal against a Final Caution, if the Minister had appealed against the imposition of an Initial Caution, the record of the decision of the appeals body hearing that appeal shall also be included.

AA.8.4 As the appeal must be strictly limited to the terms of the Caution, it would be inappropriate for the Synod Moderator to supply any other information, statements or documents. Nor should the Synod Moderator make any personal reflections or offer any opinions on the issues before the appeals body.

AA.8.5 The members of the appeals body shall not be required to carry out any enquiry or investigation of their own but, having considered the material provided by

the Synod Moderator, they shall meet with the Minister and provide him/her with the opportunity of addressing them on the ground of the appeal.

AA.8.6 Thereafter the members of the appeals body shall retire to make their decision in private.

AA.8.7 Within ten days of the reaching of the decision, the secretary of the appeals body shall serve on the Minister, the Synod Appointees and the Synod Moderator notice of the decision together with a statement setting out the reasons for the decision.

AA.8.8 If the appeal is successful the notice of the decision shall also declare that the Caution is discharged with immediate effect, that the Disciplinary case against the Minister is at an end and that the Synod Appointees are discharged from any further responsibility. The Synod Appointees shall thereupon present their report to the Synod Moderator in accordance with Paragraph AA.9.

AA.8.9 If the appeal is unsuccessful the Caution will remain in place.

AA.8.10 No appeal is possible from the decision of the appeals body.

AA.8.11 The service of the notice of the appeals decision under Paragraph AA.8.7 shall have the effect of discharging the members of the appeals body from any further involvement in that disciplinary case.

AA.9.1 The Synod Appointees shall, at the conclusion of the Caution Stage, present their report to the Synod Moderator, which shall summarise the steps which they took and state the manner in which they conducted their review, stating which of the courses they took under Paragraph AA.5 and, if they proceeded to the issue of Cautions under Paragraphs AA.6 and AA.7, the steps they took and the nature of the Minister's response. If they have resolved to issue a recommendation that the Synod Moderator should call in a Mandated Group and thus move the case into Section B of these Rules of Procedure, they shall set out such recommendation clearly in their report, giving their detailed reasons for such recommendation.

AA.9.2 They shall attach to their report copies of all statements and other documents which were germane to their enquiry, including copies of any written Cautions (both Initial and Final) issued to the Minister.

AA.9.3 Except in cases where the Synod Appointees have made a recommendation that the Synod Moderator should call in Mandated Group under Section B of these Rules of Procedure (see Paragraph AA.10.3 below), the Caution Stage shall be concluded immediately upon the issue of the Synod Appointees' report to the Synod Moderator and their responsibilities will terminate at same time.

AA.10.1 Should the Synod Appointees conclude, whether under Paragraph AA.5, Paragraph AA.6 or Paragraph AA.7, that no further action should be taken, the Caution Stage and indeed the Disciplinary Process itself shall end with the lodging of their report with the Synod Moderator in accordance with Paragraph AA.9.1 and the involvement of the Synod Appointees shall cease at the same time.

AA.10.2.1 Should the Synod Appointees, whether under Paragraph AA.5.3.1, Paragraph AA.6.4.3.1 or Paragraph AA.7.4.2, recommend to the Synod Moderator that s/he should call in a Mandated Group under Section B, the disciplinary case shall remain in abeyance pending the calling in of the Mandated Group by the Synod Moderator.

AA.10.2.2 In cases where the recommendation is made under either Paragraph AA.5.3.1 or Paragraph AA.6.4.3.1, the involvement of the Synod Appointees shall, subject to Paragraph AA.10.3.2, cease when the Mandated Group has been so called in. The Synod Moderator shall notify them in writing as soon as this has happened.

AA.10.2.3 In a case where the recommendation is made under Paragraph AA.7.4.2 following the imposition of a Final Caution, the involvement of the Synod Appointees will cease as soon as they present their report to the Synod Moderator in accordance with the procedure set out in Paragraph AA.9.1.

AA.10.2.4 If, following a recommendation such as is referred to in Paragraph AA.10.2.1, the Synod Moderator has not, within a period of six months from the date of receipt of the notice of such recommendation from the Synod Appointees, called in a Mandated Group, then unless Paragraphs AA.5.3.3 or Paragraph AA.6.4.3.3 applies (as to which see Paragraph AA.10.2.5) the Disciplinary Process shall come to an end immediately upon the expiration of such period. In such a case, the involvement of the Synod Appointees shall, where either Paragraph AA.5.3.1 or Paragraph AA.6.4.3.1 applies, cease at that time. The Synod Moderator shall notify the Synod Appointees at the expiration of that period that no Mandated Group has been called in, whereupon they should present their report to the Synod Moderator, following the procedure set out in Paragraph AA.9.1.

AA.10.2.5 If either Paragraph AA.5.3.3 or Paragraph AA.6.4.3.3 applies, the Disciplinary Process shall come to an end when the Synod Appointees give written notice to the Synod Moderator of their rejection of his/her request to proceed with the Caution Stage, at which time their involvement shall cease at that time and they should then present their report to the Synod Moderator in accordance with the procedure set out in Paragraph AA.9.1. The Synod Moderator shall have the remainder of the six months period to decide whether or not to call in a Mandated Group under Section B and if s/he shall have failed to do so at the expiration of that period the Disciplinary case shall come to an end.



The United Reformed Church

86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT, United Kingdom
Deputy General Secretary: The Revd Richard Mortimer

To: Members of Mission Council
and staff in attendance

9th August 2010

Dear Colleague

Mission Council: Wednesday – Friday 13-15th October 2010
The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Alfreton, Derbyshire, DE55 1AU
Tel: 01773 526000; Fax: 01773 540841; email: office@cct.org.uk

As previously indicated, Mission Council this autumn is holding a joint meeting with Methodist Council, the two bodies performing broadly similar functions within the polity of each Church. The idea for the joint meeting began as an initiative of the Churches' General Secretaries. The aim is to have open, strategic discussion on issues which affect both Churches, and to engage in a set of structured workshops on a number of topics. There will also be three individual sessions where each Council will meet separately.

I look forward to welcoming you to this and pray that it will be a time of rich sharing, mutual exploration and support. We shall meet at The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick from 13-15th October. To ensure that our arrangements are completed in time, I would ask you to supply us as soon as possible with the information we need about your requirements for accommodation and meals.

It would be very helpful if you could reply immediately (and by 25th August) either by e-mail (krystyna.pullen@urc.org.uk); by telephone (020 7916 8646); by fax (020 7916 2021); or by completing the enclosed form and sending it to Krystyna Pullen at the above address.

Some preliminary papers are enclosed:

- directions to The Hayes
- a list of URC members and representatives (to help you plan to share transport).
- an expenses slip (to be completed and handed in at the end of the meeting)
- a Reply Form about your accommodation, meal requests, and certain other necessary information

Wednesday 13th - approximate timings, subject to minor adjustments, are

1130 hrs	Individual Sessions of Mission Council and Methodist Council
1245	Lunch
1345	Opening Devotions Purpose, Structure and Schedule Introductions Background Initial Group Discussion
1545	Tea
1630	Session: Challenges facing the Church
1845	Dinner
2000	Sessions: Fresh Expressions
2100	Prayers

Meals and Refreshments

Thursday 14th

0830 hrs Breakfast
1045 Coffee
1245 Lunch
1545 Tea
1845 Dinner

Friday 15th 1230 hrs Lunch and Departures

Please note that only if it should prove necessary, we shall hold a one-day meeting of Mission Council on Saturday 20th November 2010 at Lumen URC, 88 Tavistock Place, London WC1

The next meeting dates are:

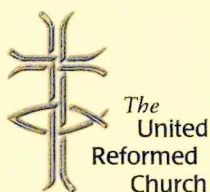
Days	Dates From / To	Venue
<i>Saturday</i>	<i>20th November 2010 (provisional)</i>	<i>Lumen URC, London</i>
Tuesday – Thursday	17 th – 19 th May 2011	High Leigh, Hoddesdon
Friday – Sunday	25 th – 27 th November 2011	The Hayes, Swanwick
Wednesday – Friday	21 st – 23 rd March 2012	High Leigh
Friday – Sunday	30 th November – 2 nd December 2012	The Hayes
Monday – Wednesday	13 th – 15 th May 2013	High Leigh
Friday – Sunday	08 th – 10 th November 2013	The Hayes

With good wishes

Yours sincerely



The Revd Richard Mortimer
Deputy General Secretary



MISSION COUNCIL

13 – 15 OCTOBER 2010

Wednesday - Friday

MEMBERS & REPRESENTATIVES

Moderators	Rev Dr Kirsty Thorpe Mrs Val Morrison	Past Moderator	Rev John Marsh
General Secretary	Rev Roberta Rominger	Moderators Elect	Rev Dr Michael Jagessar
Deputy General Secretary	Rev Richard Mortimer	Treasurer	Mr Lawrence Moore
Clerk	Rev James Breslin	Legal Adviser	Mr John Ellis
		Consensus Advisor	Mr Andrew Middleton Rev Pauline Barnes

Assembly Standing Committees

Assembly Arrangements	Dr David Robinson
Communications & Editorial	Rev Dr Kirsty Thorpe
Education & Learning	Prof Malcolm Johnson
Equal Opportunities	Rev Elizabeth Nash
Finance	Mr John Ellis
Ministries	Rev Ruth Whitehead
Mission	Rev Ed Cox
Nominations	Rev John Durell
Youth & Children's Work	Rev Rob Weston

FURY Advisory Board Representatives

~~Mr David Harvey~~ – Moderator
Mrs Jane **Leighton**

URC Trust

Mr Alan **Small** - Chair

13 synod Moderators, plus 3 representatives from each synod

1 Nor	Rev Rowena Francis	Rev John Durell	Rev Ann Jackson	Ms Jo Merrygold
2 N.W	Rev Richard Church	Rev Geoffrey Clarke	Mr George Grime Ms Marie Trubic	Rev Sally Thomas
3 Mer	Rev Howard Sharp	Miss Emma Pugh	Rev A. Gordon Smith	Mr Arthur Swift
4 York	Rev Kevin Watson	Rev Kay Alberg	Mrs Jenny Poulter	Mr Chris Reed Mr Neil Robinson
5 E.M	Rev Terry Oakley	Rev Gillian Poucher	Mr Duncan Smith	Mrs Jill Turner
6 W.M	Rev Roy Lowes	Mr Bill Robson	Mrs Val Phillips	Mrs Adella Pritchard
7 E	Rev Paul Whittle	Revd Dr Catherine Ball	Ms Linda Harrison	Mr Clifford Patten
8 S.W	Rev David Grosch-Miller	Rev Roz Harrison	Mrs Sarah Lane Cawte	Rev Stephen Newell
9 Wex	Rev Adrian Bulley	Mr Peter Pay	Mrs Margaret Telfer	Rev Mary Thomas
10 Th.N	Rev Dr Andrew Prasad	Mr Simon Fairnington	Rev Maggie Hindley	Rev David Lawrence
11 South -		Rev Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor	Rev Chris Parker	Rev Nicola Furley-Smith
12 Wal	Rev Peter Noble	Rev Dr Peter Cruchley-Jones Rev Kevin Snyman	Rev Shelagh Pollard	Mrs Iris Williams
13 Scot	Rev John Humphreys	Mrs Barbara Bruce	Miss Irene Hudson	Rev John Sanderson Rev Carolyn Smyth

In attendance

Minute Secretary	Mrs Irene Wren	Mission	Ms Francis Brien
Co-Moderators' Chaplains (KT)	Rev Rachel Poolman	Nominations Secretary	Ms Sarah Dodds
(VM)	Rev Dr James Coleman	Pilots Development	Mrs Karen Bulley-Morrison
Children's Work Development	Ms Jo Williams	Press Officer	Ms Gill Nichol
Church & Society	Mr Frank Kantor	Racial Justice & Multicult'l	Revd Dr Michael Jagessar
Church Related Community Work	Mrs Suzanne Adofe Mr Stephen Summers	'Reform' Editorial	Ms Kay Parris
	Mr Stephen Summers	Rural Consultancy	Rev Graham Jones
Communications	Rev Martin Hazell	Windermere Centre	Mr Lawrence Moore (Bible Study only)
Ecumenical Relations	Rev David Tatem	World Church Relations	Rev Jane Rowell
Education & Learning	Rev Fiona Thomas	Youth Work	Mr John Brown
Finance	Mr Andrew Grimwade	C of E Representative	Rev Dr Roger Paul
Human Resources	Ms Michelle Marcano	Methodist Representative	Rev Alison Tomlin
Ministries	Rev Craig Bowman	JPIT?	Mr Simon Loveitt

Joint Council Session Chairs - 13-15th October 2010

Session	Session Chair	Session Facilitator
2	Val Morrison	Kirsty Thorpe Methodist counterpart
3	David Walton	Martyn Atkins Roberta Rominger
4	Kirsty Thorpe	Bishop Graham Cray Alison Tomlin & URC counterpart
5	David Walton	URC rep
6	Val Morrison	Cliff Patten James North
7	Kirsty Thorpe	Discussion groups
10	David Walton	Graham Jones

Better Together Joint Council Group List

<p>Group One Leader Peter Pay</p> <p><i>Main Hse</i> <i>Writing room</i></p>	<p>Martyn Atkins MC Rev Dr Kirsty Thorpe URC</p> <p>MC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gareth Baron • Nigel Barton • Jade Bath • Andrew Bryer • Andrew Gibbs <p>URC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr David Robinson • Prof Malcolm Johnson • Rev Ruth Whitehead • Rev Rob Weston • Miss Jane Hoddinott • Rev Terry Oakley
<p>Group Two Leader Elizabeth Nash</p> <p><i>main</i> <i>Reading</i></p>	<p>Eunice Attwood MC Mrs Val Morrison URC</p> <p>MC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Colenutt • Stephen Cooper • Susan Culver • Gill Dascombe • Toby Scott <p>URC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Alan Small • Rev Rowena Francis • Rev Richard Church • Rev Howard Sharp • Mr Frank Kantor • Mrs Barbara Bruce
<p>Group Three Leader Kevin Watson</p> <p><i>Book Rm</i></p>	<p>Christine Elliott MC Rev Roberta Rominger URC</p> <p>MC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keith Davies • Gerry Davis • Chisty-Anna Erington • Clive Fall • Alison Jackson <p>URC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rev Roy Lowes • Rev Paul Whittle • Rev David Grosch-Miller • Rev Adrian Bulley • Mr Stephen Summers • Rev Kevin Snyman

Better Together Joint Council Group List

<p>Group Four Leader John Ellis</p> <p><i>Main Group</i></p>	<p>(John Ellis) MC Rev James Breslin URC</p> <p>MC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eden Fletcher • Ruth Gee • John H Goacher • Mandy Godridge • Ruth Goodland <p>URC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rev Geoffrey Clarke • Miss Emma Pugh • Rev Kay Alberg • Rev Gillian Poucher • Mr Bill Robson • Rev Martin Hazell • Rev Ann Jackson
<p>Group Five Leader Roz Harrison</p> <p><i>Denby</i></p>	<p>Ken Wales MC Rev Richard Mortimer URC</p> <p>MC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carla Hall • Novette Headley • Graham Horsley • Peter Howson <p>URC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Simon Fairnington • Rev Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor • Mrs Karen Bulley-Morrison • Ms Sarah Dodds • Ms Marie Trubic • Rev A Gordon Smith • Rev Jane Rowell
<p>Group Six Leader Catherine Ball</p> <p><i>Walsby Road</i></p>	<p>Kenneth Howcroft MC Mr Andrew Middleton URC</p> <p>MC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nwabueze Nwokolo • Lionel Osborn • Andrew Owen • Eileen A Sanderson <p>URC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mrs Jenny Poulter • Mr Duncan Smith • Mrs Val Phillips • Ms Linda Harrison • Mrs Sarah Lane Cawte • Rev Carolyn Smith • Mr John Brown

Better Together Joint Council Group List

<p>Group Seven Leader Stephen Newell</p> <p><i>Indi 2</i></p>	<p>Alison Tomlin MC Rev Pauline Barnes URC</p> <p>MC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Elizabeth Smith• Joseph B Surray• Simon Sutcliffe• Richard Vautrey <p>URC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mrs Margaret Telfer• Rev Maggie Hindley• Rev Chris Parker• Rev Shelagh Pollard• Miss Irene Hudson• Rev Craig Bowman• Rev Dr Roger Paul
<p>Group Eight Leader John Durell</p> <p><i>Indi 3</i></p>	<p>Mark Wakelin MC Rev Dr Michael Jagessar URC</p> <p>MC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Roger Walton• David Warnock• Richard Wills• Ted Awty• Pete Phillips <p>URC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ms Jo Merrygold• Rev Sally Thomas• Mr Neil Robinson• Mrs Jill Turner• Mrs Adella Pritchard• Ms Michelle Marcano

Better Together Joint Council Group List

<p>Group Nine Leader John Humphreys</p> <p><i>Ank 4</i></p>	<p>David Walton MC (John Humphreys) URC</p> <p>MC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nick Moore• Beverly Richardson• Claire Herbert• Angela Evans• Stephen Charman <p>URC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr Clifford Patten• Rev Mary Thomas• Rev Nicola Furley-Smith• Mrs Iris Williams• Rev Fiona Thomas• Mr Andrew Grimwade
<p>Group Ten Leader David Tatem</p> <p><i>Ank 5</i></p>	<p>Ruth Pickles MC (David Tatem) URC</p> <p>MC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Steve Hucklesby• Doug Swanney• Anna Drew• Richard Hall• Jane Allin <p>URC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rev Dr James Coleman• Ms Jo Williams• Mr Stephen Summers• Rachel Poolman• Ms Gill Nicholl• Simon Loveitt

MISSION COUNCIL 13-15 OCTOBER 2010 – for GROUPS

Top Table/Leaders (one in each group)	Synod Moderators (one+ in each group)	Committee Conveners (one in each group)	Synod Reps (not with same synod Mod/Mmbr)	In Attendance (spread throughout groups)	Visitors
Rev Richard Mortimer	Rev Richard Church	Rev John Durell	Rev Geoffrey Clarke (2)	Rev James Coleman	Rev Roger Paul
Rev James Breslin	Rev Howard Sharp	Rev Rob Weston	Rev A Gordon Smith (3)	Rev Martin Hazell	
Rev John Marsh	Rev Kevin Watson	Rev Stephen Newell (8)	Rev David Tatam	Rev David Tatam	
Rev Michael Jagessar	Rev Terry Oakley	Rev David Lawrence (10)	Rev Craig Bowman	Rev Craig Bowman	
	Rev Roy Lowes		Rev Derrick Dzandu Hedidor (11)	Rev Graham Jones	
	Rev Paul Whittle		Rev Chris Parker (11)		
	Rev David Grosch-Miller		Rev Kevin Snyman (12)		
	Rev Adrian Bulley				
	Rev John Humphreys				
Mr Andrew Middleton		Dr David Robinson	Mr Neil Robinson (dep) (4)	Mr Frank Kantor	
		Prof Malcolm Johnson	Mr Duncan Smith (5)	Mr Steve Summers	
		Mr Alan Small	Mr Bill Robson (6)	Mr Andrew Grimwade	
		Mr John Ellis	Mr Clifford Patten (7)	Mr John Brown	
			Mr Peter Pay (9)	Mr Simon Loveitt	
			Mr Simon Fairington (10)		
Rev Kirsty Thorpe	Rev Rowena Francis	Rev Ruth Whitehead	Rev Ann Jackson (1)	Rev Rachel Poolman	
Rev Roberta Rominger		Rev Elizabeth Nash	Rev Sally Thomas (2)	Rev Fiona Thomas	
Rev Pauline Barnes			Rev Kay Alberg (4)	Rev Jane Rowell	
			Rev Gillian Poucher (5)	Rev Alison Tomlin	
			Rev Catherine Ball (7)		
			Rev Roz Harrison (8)		
			Rev Mary Thomas (9)		
			Rev Maggie Hindley (10)		
			Rev Nicola Furley-Smith (11)		
			Rev Shelagh Pollard (12)		
			Rev Carolyn Smyth (dep) (13)		

Top Table/Leaders (one in each group)	Moderators (one+ in each group)	Committee Conveners (one in each group)	Synod Reps (not with same synod Mod/Mmbr)	In Attendance (spread throughout groups)	Visitors
Mrs Val Morrison			Miss Jane Hoddinott	Mrs Karen Bulley-Morrison	
			Ms Jo Merrygold (1)	Ms Gill Nichol	
			Ms Marie Trubic (2)	Ms Jo Williams	
			Miss Emma Pugh (3)	Ms Michelle Marcano	
			Mrs Jenny Poulter (4)	Mrs Irene Wren (not in group?)	
			Mrs Jill Turner (5)	Ms Sarah Dodds	
			Mrs Val Phillips (6)		
			Mrs Adella Pritchard (6)		
			Ms Linda Harrison (7)		
			Mrs Sarah Lane Cawte (8)		
			Mrs Margaret Telfer (9)		
			Mrs Iris Williams (12)		
			Mrs Barbara Bruce (13)		
			Miss Irene Hudson (13)		

Numbers in brackets = synod no.

Joint Council Discussion Group Facilitators -13th-15th October 2010

Facilitator	Team/Organisation
1. Rachel Lampard	JPIT
2. Frank Kantor	JPIT
3. Cliff Patten	URC
4. James North	JPIT
5. Toby Scott	Media & Comms
6. Martin Hazell	Media & Comms
7. Reverend Phil Meadows & URC Counterpart??	Inspire Network Coordinator
8. Joanne Cox	URC MC
9. Michael Jagesser	URC
10. Frances Briennen	URC
11. Triumph Ayo Isegun	Projects, Research & Development
12. Linda Mead	URC
13. Pete Philips	? MC
14. Richard Mortimer	URC
15. Reverend David Tatum	URC
16. Paul Winyard	Projects, Research & Development
17. Liz Clutterback	Projects, Research & Development
18. Doug Swanney	Discipleship & Ministries
19. Craig Bowman	URC
20. Elizabeth Hall??	Development & Personnel
21. Revd. Graham Sparkes	Baptist Union
22. Rosemary Kidd	Baptist member of JPIT
23. Martyn Atkins	Methodist Church
24. Roberta Rominger	URC
25. Rob Weston	URC
26. Graham Jones	URC
27. Bishop Graham Cray	URC MCH
28. Alison Tomlin & URC Rep?	Methodist Church & URC

↓ Ex 14 wa

old

AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS

PLEASE SIGN UP IN THE COFFEE BREAK FOR 1 WORKSHOP

- 1) Realising Ministers Potential
➤ Training & deployment in the 21st century - C. MATHIE ROOM, Train
- 2) Developing Ecumenical Local Visions
➤ Including future for the LEP concept - BATHING ROOM, main
- 3) Growing Local Leadership
➤ Including the Inspire project - MAIN LOBBY
- 4) Articulating & Communicating Faith
➤ Speaking into contemporary culture - BOOK ROOM, main
- 5) Finding the Missing Generation - C. THE ROOM, main
- 6) Making Buildings Assets
➤ Adapting within the rules - GREAT HALL
- 7) Mission Shaped Structures
➤ Lightening the load on the local - ANTE P C. Hall
- 8) Big Society – An Opportunity?
➤ What it could mean for our denominations - ANTE 2 "
- 9) Big Society – How the Local Church Engage - ANTE 3 "
- 10) Spending Cuts – A Bias to the Poor
➤ Explaining issues of poverty - DINE ROOM Lakeside

BETTER TOGETHER

Briefing for Discussion Group Leaders

Wednesday Session 3

Thank you for being willing to lead one of the discussion groups.

The principal objectives of the whole Better Together event are:

- To show a practical response to the instruction from the 2008 General Assembly and Conference to explore closer co-operation between the two denominations and their structures
- To provide an opportunity for members of the two Councils to get to know each other better and to understand more of their respective convictions, passions and concerns
- To identify, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, areas where the governance bodies and their staff should develop further co-operative or joint work.

To contribute to this discernment process, your group will consist of a mixed group of Methodist Council and Mission Council members and staff who will meet in a room which will be allocated for you. The group will meet from approximately 1700 and finish in time for people to be ready for Dinner at 1845.

In the discussion groups, encourage all the members to bring their experiences from the place from which they come: this session is intended to be very much “bottom up” not “top down”.

Stage 1

Please use the first part (perhaps 30 minutes) to hear something about the setting in which the members live out their discipleship: what is their “front line” as a Christian disciple? This will doubtless include their local church but also, eg, District/Synod responsibilities, their place of work, their community action. You might helpfully draw out similarities and differences in people’s settings.

Stage 2

Please then steer the discussion into the principal issues that challenge your group members as they seek to live out their discipleship in contemporary society. Are these the same for Methodists and members of the United Reformed Church or do significant differences of emphasis emerge? How do the two denominations have to change in order to serve the local church members better?

Stage 3

Ensure you leave enough time to draw out from these discussions what are the issues members of your group would like to explore in more detail in the Workshops that will be arranged for Thursday afternoon. For example:

- Are there particular projects underway in one or other denomination that you would like to hear more about eg the Inspire project about developing local leadership; the Missing Generation project; preparing for the 2012 Olympics
- Is help needed for areas of social engagement, complementing what is planned centrally eg Asylum and migration questions; how to incorporate a Bias to the Poor in spending cuts; where does peace-making go next?

- How do local churches best achieve impact on major political issues eg shaping the Big Society
- How could the Churches use our combined resources more effectively eg media links; buildings
- How can our structures work together better eg what can we learn from the Joint (Baptist/URC/Methodist) Public Issues Team model; where next in the search for visible unity?
- After the joint report *Hope in God's Future*, what help is needed on climate change at local level?
- Other areas where practical advice would be useful eg Safeguarding, multicultural opportunities, Equality and Diversity issues

Remember that on this occasion we have a particular interest in areas where working together between the two Churches might open up fresh possibilities.

Please ensure that you or your group's reporter hands in the completed feedback form to Richard Mortimer, John Ellis or Isha Coke not later than the end of Wednesday's programme at 2130. It would be helpful if you could indicate on the sheet the relative weight of different suggestions: was a request enthusiastically supported by the whole group or just the great passion of one member?

Thank you.



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?

WEDNESDAY 13 OCTOBER 2010			
10.30–11.00 am	Registration		
11.00 am	Coffee		
11.30 am	SESSION 1		
	Prayers		
	The Role of Synod Moderator - Review	The General Secretary	PAPER A
	MIND	The Clerk	PAPERS B, B1, B2, B3
	Nominations <i>(to be tabled)</i>	The Convenor	PAPER D
12.45–1.45 pm	Lunch		
THURSDAY 14 OCTOBER 2010			
4.30 pm	SESSION 8		
	Prayers		
	Treasurer's Report	The Treasurer	PAPERS C, C1
	Communications: 2012 Olympics and Paralympics	The Press Officer	
	Human Sexuality Task Group <i>(to be tabled)</i>	The Deputy General Secretary	PAPER E
	Enabling Resolution, National Synod of Wales	The Deputy General Secretary / The Clerk	
	Assembly Arrangements Committee	The Convenor	
	Synod Reports on Vision 2020	The General Secretary	
	Nominations <i>(if not completed)</i>		
8.00 pm	SESSION 9		
	Uncompleted Business		
9.00 pm	Prayers		

Worship at Joint Council Meeting 13-15 Oct 2010

Weds 11.30 am URC Session

Shortish opening prayers. No powerpoint or accompaniment

Liaison person: Rachel Poolman

Weds 1.45 am Joint session

Opening hymn – for powerpoint and accompaniment 'Let us build a house'

Other hymns will be included – liaison person for info: Kirsty Thorpe

Weds 9.15pm Closing prayers

Liaison person for info: Alison Tomlin (poss no powerpoint/accompaniment)

Thurs 9.15 am Joint session

Hymn – for powerpoint and accompaniment - The Lord's my shepherd (Townend version)

Liaison person for info: Rachel Poolman

Thurs 4.30 pm URC session

Surprised to see prayers included here – but will happily lead something if needed !

RP

Thurs 9.00 pm URC session

Hymn – for powerpoint and accompaniment – Put peace into each others hands (altd version)

Liaison person for info: Rachel Poolman

Fri 9.15 am Joint session

Not sure if anything required given communion service later

Fri 11.15 am Communion

Hymns for powerpoint and accompaniment – My Jesus, my saviour – Be still for the presence of the Lord - Brother, sister, let me serve you

Liaison person for info: Val Morrison

Other hymns that may be slotted in:

For everyone born a place at the table

God with humanity made one

THE ROLE OF THE SYNOD MODERATOR

Observations towards a review
March 2010

There shall be a moderator for each synod being a minister appointed from time to time by the General Assembly according to its rules of procedure and responsible to the General Assembly.

The Moderator shall:

- *be separated from any local pastoral charge*
- *stimulate and encourage the work of the URC within the province or nation*
- *preside over meetings of the synod and exercise a pastoral office towards the ministers, CRCWs and churches within the province or nation*
- *suggest names of ministers to vacant pastorates, in consultation with interim moderators of local churches*
- *preside, or appoint a deputy to preside, at all ordinations and/or inductions of ministers and all commissionings and/or inductions of CRCWs within the province or nation*
- *fulfil the responsibilities ascribed to the Moderator of Synod under the Ministerial Disciplinary Process and the Incapacity Procedure.*

The moderators of the synods shall meet together at regular intervals for the better discharge of their duties.

From the Structure of the United Reformed Church

1. Appointed by the General Assembly and responsible to it

- i. The recent review of the appointment procedure for synod moderators is important reading. It highlights the perceptions of the role of the moderator across the church.
- ii. In what sense are synod moderators responsible to Assembly? The paper on their appointment and review (Book of Reports, Assembly 2004, p. 84) is the working document at present. Within the bounds of confidentiality, is there a place for greater transparency as to each moderator's vision and priorities? Who monitors workload?

2. Be separated from any local pastoral charge

- i. There has been a suggestion that the team approach used by Baptist Regional Ministers has much to commend it. Each Baptist Association has at least one full-time Regional Minister (is this true?) but the team will be supplemented by ministers in pastoral charge. Is there a case for (a) teams of moderators working across several synods, each majoring in a particular area of work, or (b) teams within synods where the responsibilities of the moderator are divided between several people, each in local pastoral charge? Or other models? North Western Synod is the pioneer with two Special Category Ministers, one working in an oversight role and the other in the networking of churches.
- ii. The United Reformed Church is half the size it was when it decided to set twelve ministers apart for service as Moderators. Is it still appropriate to have a full-time post in each of thirteen synods?
- iii. The URC values the overview held by the moderators but does not draw upon it in any deliberate way. Is it sufficient that the moderators can take the initiative in alerting others to issues they have identified? What is the purpose of the moderators' report to General Assembly?

3. Stimulate and encourage the work of the URC within the province or nation

- i. Ecumenical work is very demanding in some synods where there are multiple intermediate bodies. The moderator is seen as the church leader, equivalent to the bishops. Is this what the URC expects?
- ii. Some synods have fully developed strategies so as to experience the work of the Assembly as a distraction or intrusion; others rely on the priorities of the Assembly to shape their work within the synods. Until the URC decides what sort of church it wants to be, the moderators are often caught in the middle.
- iii. The introduction of Vision 2020 caused a constitutional tremor to rumble through the church. Are synods obliged to participate in Assembly initiatives? Do they have a role in protecting their churches from 'initiative overload' or programmes that are not suited for a particular regional context? In what sense are synods accountable to the Assembly and how is this accountability exercised?
- iv. Where does leadership lie in the development of synod life?
- v. Moderators are Assembly appointees but their job descriptions are written by synods. One role or 13?
- vi. The removal of district councils has had great impact on the work of synods. This should be examined carefully in reference to the role of the moderator.

- vii. The moderator is an important link between the synod and the Assembly, representing each to the other. Moderators are appointed by the Assembly and are members of Mission Council and General Assembly.
- viii. Compliance issues abound – health & safety, child protection policies, CRB checks, SORP accounting, charity registration, monitoring of right to work, etc. – whose responsibility is it to ensure that ministers, CRCWs and churches are operating according to the law?
- ix. What is the role of the moderator in relation to the synod trust?
- x. The moderator's role as mediator in situations of conflict is assumed. Not all moderators are skilled in this area despite training (the training does not always address the particular power dynamics within URC culture). Difficult situations demand significant energy and time – is this what moderators are for? What is the moderator's role?

4. Presidency at synod meetings; pastoral care of ministers, CRCWs and churches

- i. Chairing the synod gives moderators the ability to make things happen, alongside membership on Mission Council and General Assembly.
- ii. The perception of the moderator as “pastor to the pastors” is an inheritance from Congregational days. Is it realistic? Ministers need more than Moderators can deliver. Also, the moderator's involvement with deployment (let alone discipline) conflicts.

5. Introductions to vacant pastorates

- i. The protocol for introductions adopted by Mission Council in January 2004 and reported to General Assembly opened the system to the possibility of multiple candidates for a vacancy and new powers for ministers to request introductions. The role of the moderator changed from primary agent in matching ministers/CRCWs and churches to companion, adviser, enabler and administrator.
- ii. This has implications:
 - for churches whose expectations were formed by the old system and who are critical of the moderator for inappropriate introductions
 - for the lack in the system of someone who vouches for the introduction – perhaps references are needed
 - for moderators of the synods that struggle to attract ministers/CRCWs who no longer operate in the meeting with the authority to override stated geographical preferences

6. Presidency at ordinations, commissionings, inductions

- i. The moderators are the face of the URC on these occasions. This is also true at civic occasions

- ii. It is even more significant in ecumenical gatherings. The moderator is seen as a church leader alongside the bishops. Should the representational role of the moderator be included in a future role description?

7. Responsibilities under the Disciplinary Process and the Incapacity Procedure

- i. The moderator is the guardian of the processes – disciplinary, incapacity, capability, grievance, appeals. In a previous generation, moderators followed their instincts and devised processes appropriate to each situation. Now the moderator must implement the correct procedure.
- ii. The moderator also has particular responsibilities in the long-term sickness and ill-health retirement procedures.

8. The moderators shall meet together at regular intervals...

- i. As the Assembly-wide group meeting most frequently, the moderators are a powerful think tank. But the Moderators Meeting is not a council of the church and cannot “deliver”. What is the relationship between the Moderators Meeting and Mission Council? Does the Mods Meeting usurp discussions that should be taking place at Mission Council? What is to be done about issues that come up repeatedly at Moderators Meeting where the power to effect a resolution lies elsewhere?
- ii. Chief among these is the area of problem ministers. The moderators have first-hand knowledge of ministers’ shortcomings and sometimes wish to refuse to introduce them to new pastorate for fear of the damage they might do. What happens when the Mods Meeting simply says no?
- iii. Is the Moderators Meeting perhaps a sub-group of Mission Council?
- iv. What is the relationship between the Moderators Meeting and the committees of the Assembly? The Assembly-appointed staff? (The staff are asking this too.)
- v. What, if anything, do we do about the gender imbalance on the Moderators Meeting? The recent review of the appointment process for Moderators is important reading on this matter.
- vi. It is a strength of the Moderators Meeting (perhaps) that it has no externally-imposed agenda.
- vii. The Moderators Meeting could be a place of mutual support and sharing but the experience of some is that there is not time on the agenda for issues requiring in-depth examination and strategising.
- viii. The Moderators Meeting is a thermometer for pastoral issues emerging across the URC. How is this insight shared so that appropriate responses can be made?

Terms of reference for a Mission Council review of the role of the synod moderator

1. Create a new role description for the synod moderator to replace the version in the Structure of the United Reformed Church.
2. Make recommendations regarding the role of the Moderators Meeting with reference to previous reports on "The authority of the General Assembly and other councils" (published in the collection of human sexuality reports, Assembly 1999), "Authority in the URC" (Appendix 2 in the 2002 Assembly Reports) and "Personal and Conciliar Leadership and Authority" (Mission Council, October 2002).
3. Consider the outcomes of work concerning episcopate under the Church of England/Methodist Covenant and the Welsh explorations into an ecumenical bishop and assess their relevance for the United Reformed Church.
4. Note the wider issues which arise so that they may be referred for further work as appropriate. Liaison with the Moderators' Think Tank with their work on medium term planning for the church will be particularly relevant.

Suggested membership of a review group (to be identified by the Nominations Committee for appointment by Mission Council):

a past Assembly Moderator to chair
 a secretary to write the report
 a member of the Faith & Order Reference Group as ecclesiology consultant
 a serving synod moderator with long experience of the way the role has developed
 a moderator's PA with significant experience
 one person from outside the URC with skills in non-profit organisational consultancy
 a serving minister
 a synod clerk

total 7

Roberta Rominger

22 April 2010

MIND

The MIND Advisory Group again needs to ask Mission Council to act on behalf of General Assembly to make a significant number of changes to Parts II of Section O (which is our Disciplinary Process) and of Section P (our Incapacity Procedure). These are spelt out in attached papers.

In order to comply with legislation and to establish best practice these changes need to be made as soon as possible.

The major change in Section O is to introduce a “Caution Stage” to the Disciplinary Process to address less serious matters. At present our only formal process is the one designed to deal with gross misconduct and it is both necessary and fair to all concerned that the Church should be able to investigate lesser matters which might necessitate the issue of a caution. Other changes take note of the Church’s responsibility to the new Independent Safeguarding Authority.

The major change to Section P is the introduction of a Commission Officer within the Procedure – this on the advice of Counsel. It is also necessary to make clear that no Section P Procedure can start until the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee has indicated that it can do no more. We also need to remove the possibility of making “Recommendations” which would have been unlikely to have been either practicable or helpful. (The ability to make “Recommendations” has been removed from Section O.)

If Mission Council agrees to these changes steps should be taken as a matter of urgency to appoint a Commission Officer for the Incapacity Procedure as soon as possible.

We recognise that this involves a lot of detail, much of it technical: such is inevitable in order to comply with legislation, best practice, natural justice and, we trust, the well-being of the Church and its ministry.

Julian Macro Convener, Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline Advisory Group

DISCIPLINARY PROCESS

Proposed changes to Part II (including the new Section AA set out in the appendix to this paper)

[Note: Most of the changes shown here arise out of the proposed introduction of a Caution Stage, which are contained in a new Section AA, but some other important changes are being brought forward as well.]

A.3 After the word “**Paragraphs**” add “**AA.8.1,**”.

A.5 In the opening sentence of this paragraph insert the words “**including Section AA**” after “**Sections A to J**”

Insert the following additional definitions, placing them in the correct alphabetical sequence and making the necessary consequential amendments to the sub-numbering of the other definitions in this Paragraph:

“**Capability Procedure**” shall mean the Procedure adopted by the General Assembly of the Church in July 2008 (or any subsequent modification thereof) for maintaining and improving the performance of ministers and known as the Capability Procedure.

“**Caution**” shall mean a sanction in the form of a written Caution imposed on a Minister in accordance with the procedures set out in the Caution Stage under Section AA (not to be confused with the Written Warning defined later in this Paragraph A.5).

“**Caution Stage**” shall mean the first stage in all disciplinary cases not involving Gross Misconduct, the rules applicable thereto being set out in Section AA.

“**Final Caution**” shall mean a Final Caution imposed under Paragraph AA.7.

“**Gross Misconduct**” shall mean misconduct which is considered by the Synod Moderator to be so serious as to justify bypassing the Caution Stage and calling in the Mandated Group under Section B immediately to conduct its Initial Enquiry.

“Guidelines of Conduct and Behaviour” shall mean the Guidelines of Conduct and Behaviour for Ministers of Word and Sacrament and the Guidelines of Conduct and Behaviour for CRCWs adopted by the General Assembly of the Church in July 2010 (or any subsequent modification thereof).

“Independent Safeguarding Authority” shall mean the Independent Safeguarding Authority established by Section 1 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.

“Initial Caution” shall mean an Initial Caution imposed under Paragraph AA.6.

“Synod Appointees” shall mean the persons appointed to examine a disciplinary case within the Caution Stage and, if considered appropriate, to impose Cautions upon the Minister.

“Written Warning” shall mean a written warning issued to a Minister by the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission and appended to and forming part of its decision under Sections E or G as the case may be (not to be confused with a Caution imposed on a Minister under the Caution Stage).

A.5.33 Replace the words **“from which persons shall be appointed to be members of the Mandated Group”** with **“which shall serve the purposes set out in that Paragraph”**.

A.12 Add a new Paragraph A.12 as follows:

“In the event of the Minister having already been the subject of the Capability Procedure, the record of any decisions (including decisions on appeal) taken under that procedure, together with such papers, records, and statements and other data as formed the body of information relevant in that procedure (save only such as may be protected on the grounds of confidentiality) shall be made available to all those persons responsible at various stages and in various capacities for the conduct of the Section O Process.”

A.13 Add a new Paragraph A.13 as follows:

“Whilst the Guidelines of Conduct and Behaviour are not intended to be rigorously applied in the same manner as precise rules they nevertheless have an important part to play in the process of considering whether, in any given case, the Minister might be in breach of his/her ordination promises under Part I, Paragraph 4.1 and consequently it would be appropriate for reference to be made to these Guidelines as appropriate within the Section O Process.”

A.14 Add a new Paragraph A.14 as follows:

“In any case where it is necessary or appropriate to make a referral to the Independent Safeguarding Authority in accordance with the Referral Guidance from time to time issued by that Authority, whether as a mandatory or a voluntary referral as described in the said Guidance, any such referral made pursuant to such Guidance shall be deemed to be made

in furtherance of a public responsibility and not as part of any decision made in accordance with these Rules of Procedure.”

AA CAUTION STAGE

Add a new Section AA the wording of which is set out in the Appendix to these changes.

B.2.1 To become B.2.1.1 and open the Paragraph with the words "**Subject to Paragraph B.2.1.2, every Synod....**".

After the words "**from that Synod**" add the following words: "**(see also Paragraph B.2.1.2)**"

Add the following sentences at the end of this Paragraph:

“**The purposes of the Synod Panel are to enable the following appointments to be made from that Panel when a disciplinary case arises, that is to say (i) the appointment of two persons in accordance with Paragraph B.3 to act as members of the Mandated Group in that case and (ii) the appointment of two persons in accordance with Paragraph AA.1.5 to act as the Synod Appointees during the Caution Stage if initiated. The same persons shall not act as Synod Appointees and members of a Mandated Group in the same case.**”

B.2.1.2 Add a new paragraph as follows:

“**A Synod may appoint to its Synod Panel persons from any other Synod so long as the number of such persons does not exceed 25% of the total membership of the Synod Panel.**”

B.3.1 After the words "**Synod Panel for that Synod**" insert the following "**(or in an emergency one person from the Synod Panel of that Synod and one person from the Synod Panel of another Synod)**".

B.6.3 Add the following words at the beginning of this Paragraph:

“**If the Synod Moderator has proceeded directly to the calling in of the Mandated Group without first initiating the Caution Stage,**”

B.6.4 Add the following words at the end of the first sentence:

“**, together with all reports, papers and other documents relevant to the case, including, if relevant, a copy of the Synod Appointees’ report to the Synod Moderator at the conclusion of the Caution Stage and all supporting papers, copies of any Cautions issued and of the record of any appeals decisions made in respect of such Cautions.**”

In the final sentence replace the words "**that statement**" with "**the written statement mentioned above**".

B.8.2 The existing Paragraph B.8.2 to become B.8.2.1.

B.8.3 The existing Paragraph B.8.3 to become B.8.2.2.

B.8.4 The existing Paragraph B.8.4 to become B.8.3.

E.5.1.3 After the words “written statement(s)” insert “signed by both parties”.

E.8.6 Add a new Paragraph E.8.6 as follows:

“The terms of any Caution imposed on the Minister at the Caution Stage and the Minister’s reaction thereto, particularly in terms of his/her performance and the level of his/her response to the Caution during the period whilst the Caution was in place.”

F.2.3 At the end of the paragraph, delete the full-stop and add the following: “as a consequence of which it cannot form the subject matter of any appeal.”

F.3.2 At the end of the paragraph, add the following: “...and shall specify the Council(s) of the Church whom it charges with the responsibility of monitoring the minister's future conduct in the light of such warning, provided; (i) that the monitoring process may be dealt with by the pastoral committee of that Council or in any other manner considered appropriate by that Council and; (ii) that, should the minister subsequently move from the oversight of one Council to another, the first Council shall advise the second Council of the existence of the warning and supply such information as is necessary for the second Council to take over the monitoring process.”

F.4 Remove the words: “,except as to its responsibilities under Paragraph J.3,”.

G.16.1 Remove the words: “,except as to its responsibilities under Paragraph J.3,”.

J.1 After the words “Paragraph E.5.3” insert “or decisions of the Synod Appointees or the appeals body as to the impositions of Cautions during the Caution Stage”.

APPENDIX

DISCIPLINARY PROCESS – CAUTION STAGE

Section AA to be inserted after Section A of Part II of the Disciplinary Process (Section O)

- AA.1.1 This Section AA sets out a Caution Stage which provides the mechanism whereby an enquiry can be set up to examine matters of concern involving ministers which fall short of Gross Misconduct, leading, if appropriate, to an Initial Caution and a Final Caution being issued to the Minister in the form of written notices.
- AA.1.2 Any such matters of concern shall only fall within the Section O Process if demonstrating a degree of blameworthiness attributable to deliberate intent or to a blatant lack of care and concern, the effect of which, if substantiated, would indicate a breach of the criteria laid down in Part I, Paragraph 4.1. In the absence of these elements, no case for discipline arises under this Section AA.
- AA.1.3 If at any time during the Caution Stage the Synod Moderator becomes aware of any information suggesting the possibility of Gross Misconduct on the part of the Minister, s/he shall have the power to bring the Caution Stage to an immediate conclusion and call in a Mandated group to commence its Initial Enquiry in accordance with Section B of these Rules. Any relevant information already gathered within the Caution Stage shall be passed on to the Mandated Group and the Synod Moderator shall discharge the Synod Appointees from any further responsibility.
- AA.1.4 References in this Section AA to the Synod Moderator can also be taken as a reference to the Deputy General Secretary, except where precluded by the context.
- AA.1.5.1 Each Synod is required to appoint from its Synod Panel two persons to conduct the enquiry under the Caution Stage and to take such other actions as are required under this Section AA and two persons to act as reserves for such purposes should the principal appointees be unable for whatever reason to act in that capacity in a particular case.
- AA.1.5.2 The Synod may make these appointments in any of the following ways: (i) it may appoint persons from its own Synod Panel or (ii) it may appoint persons from the Synod Panel(s) of one or more other Synods, with the consent of the Moderator of that Synod or those Synods, or (iii) it may appoint persons who, although not

members of any Synod Panel, have legal, tribunal or other appropriate professional experience. The appointments do not need to be made from one and the same group.

- AA.1.5.3 These appointments should, wherever possible, be standing ones and made in advance, not made ad hoc when the situation arises. If, however, there shall not be any Synod Appointees in place at the time when the Synod Moderator wishes to initiate the Caution Stage, s/he may call upon the Synod to make the necessary appointments at that time.
- AA.1.5.4 The persons appointed to act in any given case under this Paragraph shall be referred to as “the Synod Appointees”.
- AA.2.1 Should the Synod Moderator wish to initiate the Caution Stage in relation to a particular minister, s/he shall call in the Synod Appointees, by written notice to each of them, to carry out the enquiry in accordance with the procedure set out in this Section AA.
- AA.2.2 Should the Deputy General Secretary wish to initiate the Caution Stage in relation to any particular minister, s/he shall follow the procedure set out in Paragraph AA.1.5 to appoint two persons to act as the Synod Appointees in that case.
- AA.2.3 Should either or both the principal and the reserve appointee(s) of the Synod be unable to act in a particular case, the Moderator of the Synod shall, with the consent of the Moderator(s) of another Synod or other Synods, call in the principal or reserve Synod Panel Member(s) for that/those Synod(s) to carry out the functions of the Synod Appointees in that case. The two so appointed need not be members of the same Synod Panel.
- AA.2.4 In calling in the Synod Appointees as above, the Moderator of the Synod shall inform the Minister that this step has been taken and supply both the Synod Appointees and the Minister with a written statement setting out the matters of concern which have led to the calling in of the Synod Appointees, the names of possible informants and other sources of information at that time available and any observations as to ways in which the Moderator considers that the Minister’s perceived shortcomings might be addressed. The statement supplied to the Synod Appointees shall be accompanied by any reports, statements and other documents which the Synod Moderator considers might be helpful to the Synod Appointees, including, if applicable, all papers relative to a recommendation that the Section O Process should be commenced, made in accordance with Section H of Part II of the Incapacity Procedure.

- AA.2.5 The principle enunciated in Paragraph B.4 regarding membership of a Mandated Group shall be equally applicable when considering the eligibility of persons to act as Synod Appointees in any given case.
- AA.2.6 For purposes of confidentiality and the chain of continuity of the Process, the Disciplinary Case against a particular minister shall, if the Caution Stage is invoked, be deemed to have commenced on the calling in of the Synod Appointees in accordance with this Paragraph AA.2. It should be noted that the initiation of the Caution Stage will not involve the suspension of the Minister.
- AA.2.7 At all meetings with the Synod Appointees, the Minister and any other persons interviewed by the Synod Appointees may, if they wish, be accompanied by a friend.
- AA.3 The purpose of the enquiry is to establish whether, in the opinion of the Synod Appointees, the matters of concern referred to in Paragraph AA.2.4, whilst they may fall short of Gross Misconduct, do nonetheless amount to a failure on the part of the Minister to live up to the promises which s/he made at ordination (see Part I, Paragraph 4.1) and whether if the Synod Appointees do come to that conclusion it would be appropriate for them to issue a Caution in the form of a written notice to the Minister and, if so, in what terms or, if they consider the case more serious, whether to recommend to the Synod Moderator that s/he should take the case into the main part of the Disciplinary Process by calling in a Mandated Group under Section B of these Rules.
- AA.4.1 The Synod Appointees will have discretion as to the manner in which they conduct their enquiry in the light of the circumstances of the case. However, as a general rule the following steps should be taken:
- AA.4.1.1 The Synod Appointees should at the earliest possible stage in their enquiry seek a meeting with the Minister.
- AA.4.1.2 At the outset of that meeting the Synod Appointees should explain that the purpose of the meeting is to raise with the Minister the concerns set out in the statement referred to in Paragraph AA.2.4 and to make clear that the outcome might be the issue of a Caution or Cautions or even (if the Synod Appointees viewed the matter as sufficiently serious) a recommendation to the Synod Moderator to call in a Mandated Group and thus to take the matter directly into the main part of the Disciplinary Process.
- AA.4.1.3 The Synod Appointees should then discuss, or endeavour to discuss, the said concerns with the Minister, listen to the Minister's explanations and consider any reports, written statements and papers which the Minister produces which are

germane to the case and, if possible, should attempt to reach agreement with the Minister as to the areas of concern and as to how the problems should be resolved. If the Minister is co-operative and agrees to the accuracy and validity of the concerns expressed by the Synod Moderator, the Synod Appointees may well feel able to omit the steps suggested at Paragraphs AA.4.2, AA.4.3 and AA.4.4 and proceed straight to the steps set out at Paragraph AA.5.

- AA.4.2 The Synod Appointees may wish to meet with some or all of those who, according to the information provided in the Synod Moderator's statement, have had involvement with the Minister and who may have relevant knowledge of the causes of those concerns.
- AA.4.3 The Synod Appointees may wish to refer back to the Synod Moderator for discussion upon any matters which arise during the course of their enquiry, including the appropriateness of the terms of any Caution which they are minded to impose.
- AA.4.4 If, following the meeting with the Minister referred to at Paragraph AA.4.1.1, the Synod Appointees have held meetings or discussions in accordance with Paragraph AA.4.2 or Paragraph AA.4.3, the Synod Appointees should once more meet with the Minister for a further discussion and, if possible, should attempt to reach agreement with the Minister as to the areas of concern and as to how the problems should be resolved.
- AA.4.5 At the conclusion of every interview taking place under this Paragraph AA.4, including any meetings with the Minister, the Synod Appointees should prepare a detailed minute thereof and seek the interviewee's agreement to the wording thereof, whereupon the Synod Appointees should sign two copies, requesting the interviewee to do the same, whereupon they should retain one copy and hand the other copy to the interviewee. If the interviewee should decline to sign the minute, an endorsement to this effect should be made explaining the reasons for this.
- AA.5 Having satisfied themselves that they have taken all the steps necessary under Paragraph AA.4, the Synod Appointees will conclude their enquiry in one of three ways:
 - AA.5.1 The Synod Appointees may conclude that no further action needs to be taken, in which case they may give written notice to this effect to the Synod Moderator and the Minister as soon as they reach this conclusion, or
 - AA.5.2 They may invoke the procedure relating to the issue of Cautions set out in the succeeding Paragraphs of this Section AA or

- AA.5.3.1 They may, if in their view the concerns are sufficiently serious to justify such a course, serve a written notice on the Synod Moderator consisting of a recommendation that s/he should call in a Mandated Group and thus take the matter out of the Caution Stage and directly into Section B of these Rules of Procedure (this course, involving as it does a recommendation only, cannot be the subject of an appeal by the Minister). The notice shall set out the reasons for making such a recommendation. At the same time, they shall serve on the Minister a written notice informing him/her that this step has been taken.
- AA.5.3.2 Should the Synod Moderator be unwilling to accept this recommendation, s/he may by written notice to each of the Synod Appointees, request them to continue with their enquiry and, if they accede to this request, they will proceed with the remainder of the Caution Stage in accordance with this Section AA.
- AA.5.3.3 Should the Synod Appointees be unwilling to continue with their enquiry, they may, by giving written notice to the Synod Moderator within one month of the receipt of the notice from him/her, decide to reject his/her request (see also Paragraph AA.10.2).
- AA.6.1 If, in accordance with Paragraph AA.5.2, the Synod Appointees invoke the procedure relating to the imposition of Cautions, they shall first of all issue to the Minister a written notice consisting of an Initial Caution setting out the following:
- AA.6.1.1 the matters of concerns which they have identified as amounting to a breach of discipline at the light of Part I, Paragraph 4.1 and
- AA.6.1.2 the steps which they require the Minister to take to resolve those concerns in order to bring his/her ministry back to a level compatible with his/her ordination promises and
- AA.6.1.3 the period of time, not exceeding twelve months, within which those steps must be taken and
- AA.6.1.4 the consequences which would follow from a failure on the part of the minister to comply with the terms of the Initial Caution, which would be the issue of a Final Caution in accordance with Paragraph AA.7, unless in the opinion of the Synod Appointees the Minister's failure to comply with the terms of the Initial Caution was sufficiently serious as to justify the bypassing of a Final Caution and the issuing of a recommendation to the Synod Moderator in the terms of Paragraph AA.5.3.1, and
- AA.6.1.5 a statement informing the Minister of his/her right to appeal against the imposition of the Caution, drawing attention to the period of time within which the notice of

appeal must be lodged and the fact that time is of the essence in the lodging of the appeal notice (for further information as to the lodging of an appeal and in particular the time allowed for this, see Paragraph AA.8.1).

- AA.6.2.1 The written notice of an Initial Caution issued under Paragraph AA.6.1 may either be handed to the Minister at the conclusion of the Synod Appointees' final interview with the Minister at the Initial Caution Stage or it may be sent to the Minister within ten days of that interview, either method constituting service for the purposes of Paragraph H.2.
- AA.6.2.2 The Minister has the right to appeal against the imposition of an Initial Caution issued under Paragraph AA.6.1 and the appeal provisions are contained in Paragraph AA.8.
- AA.6.3.1 During the period whilst the Initial Caution is in place, the Synod Appointees shall keep the situation under review and, if they become aware of conduct or behaviour on the part of the Minister which indicates that s/he is not adhering to the terms of the Caution, they have the authority to call the minister to account at any time and, if the circumstances should so require, to issue a Final Caution under Paragraph AA.7 or bypass the Final Caution Stage and to proceed directly to a recommendation to the Synod Moderator in the terms of Paragraph AA.5.3.1 without waiting for the period of the Caution to expire.
- AA.6.3.2 The provisions of Paragraph AA.4 as to the conduct of meetings with the Minister and other interviewees shall also apply during and at the expiration of the period of the Initial Caution.
- AA.6.4 At the expiration of the period of the Initial Caution (or sooner if warranted under Paragraph AA.6.3.1), the Synod Appointees shall carry out a further review, which will involve a meeting with the Minister and possible meetings or discussions with others who might have information to assist the Synod Appointees in their review. Arising out of this review, the Synod Appointees must take one of the following steps:
- AA.6.4.1 They may conclude that the Caution should be removed and that no further disciplinary action is necessary in the light of the improvements and the positive response made by the Minister following the imposition of the Initial Caution, in which case they may give written notice to this effect to the Synod Moderator and the Minister as soon as they reach this conclusion, or
- AA.6.4.2 They may proceed to the Final Caution Stage in accordance with Paragraph AA.7 or

- AA.6.4.3.1 If they form the view that the Minister has failed to comply with the terms of the Caution and if their concerns are sufficiently serious to justify such a course, they may serve a written notice on the Synod Moderator consisting of a recommendation that s/he should call in a Mandated Group and thus take the case out of the Caution Stage and directly into Section B of these Rules of Procedure (this course, involving as it does a recommendation only, cannot be the subject of an appeal by the Minister). The notice shall set out the reasons for making such a recommendation. At the same time, they shall serve on the Minister a written notice informing him/her that this step has been taken.
- AA.6.4.3.2 Should the Synod Moderator be unwilling to accept this recommendation, s/he may by written notice to each of the Synod Appointees, request them to continue with their enquiry and, if they accede to this request, they will proceed with the remainder of the Caution Stage in accordance with this Section AA.
- AA.6.4.3.3 Should the Synod Appointees be unwilling to continue with their enquiry, they may, by giving written notice to the Synod Moderator within one month of the receipt of the notice from him/her, decide to reject his/her request (see also Paragraph AA.10.2).
- AA.7.1 If, having followed the procedure outlined at Paragraph AA.6 and in accordance with Paragraph AA.6.2, the Synod Appointees continue with the next step in the procedure relating to the imposition of Cautions, they shall issue to the Minister a written notice consisting of a Final Caution setting out the following:
- AA.7.1.1 the matters of concerns which they have identified as amounting to a breach of discipline at the light of Part I, Paragraph 4.1, which shall include a statement as to why, in considering the Minister's response to the Initial Caution, they have deemed it necessary to issue a Final Caution, and
 - AA.7.1.2 the steps which they require the Minister to take to resolve those concerns in order to bring his/her ministry back to a level compatible with his/her ordination promises and
 - AA.7.1.3 the period of time, not exceeding twelve months, within which those steps should be taken and
 - AA.7.1.4 the consequences which would follow from a failure on the part of the minister to comply with the terms of the Final Caution, which would be the issuing of a recommendation to the Synod Moderator in the terms of Paragraph AA.5.3.1, the Synod Appointees having no authority to issue any further cautions, and

AA.7.1.5 a statement informing the Minister of his/her right to appeal against the imposition of the Caution, drawing attention to the period of time within which the notice of appeal must be lodged and the fact that time is of the essence in the lodging of the appeal notice (for further information as to the lodging of an appeal and in particular the time allowed for this, see Paragraph AA.8.1).

AA.7.2.1 The written notice of a Final Caution issued under Paragraph AA.7.1 may either be handed to the Minister at the conclusion of the Synod Appointees' final interview with the Minister at the Final Caution Stage or it may be sent to the Minister within ten days of that interview, either method constituting service for the purposes of Paragraph H.2.

AA.7.2.2 The Minister has the right to appeal against the imposition of a Final Caution under Paragraph AA.7.1 and the appeal provisions are contained in Paragraph AA.8.

AA.7.3.1 During the period whilst the Final Caution is in place, the Synod Appointees shall keep the situation under review and, if they become aware of conduct or behaviour on the part of the Minister which indicates that s/he is not adhering to the terms of the Caution, they have the authority to call the minister to account at any time and, if the circumstances should so require, to issue a recommendation to the Synod Moderator in the terms of Paragraph AA.5.3.1 without waiting for the period of the Caution to expire.

AA.7.3.2 The provisions of Paragraph AA.4 as to the conduct of meetings with the Minister and other interviewees shall also apply during and at the expiration of the period of the Final Caution.

AA.7.4 At the expiration of the period of the Final Caution (or sooner if warranted under Paragraph AA.7.3.1), the Synod Appointees shall carry out a further review, which will involve a meeting with the Minister and possible meetings or discussions with others who might have information to assist the Synod Appointees in their review. The outcome of this further review will be one of the following:

AA.7.4.1 They may conclude that the Caution should be removed and that no further disciplinary action is necessary in the light of the improvements and the positive response made by the Minister following the imposition of the Final Caution, in which case they must give written notice to this effect to the Synod Moderator and the Minister as soon as they reach this conclusion, or

AA.7.4.2 If they form the view that the Minister has failed to comply with the terms of the Caution and if their concerns are sufficiently serious to justify such a course, they

may serve a written notice on the Synod Moderator consisting of a recommendation that s/he should call in a Mandated Group and thus move the case into Section B of Part II of these Rules of Procedure (this course, involving as it does a recommendation only, cannot be the subject of an appeal by the Minister) (see also Paragraph AA.10.2). The notice shall set out the reasons for making such a recommendation. At the same time, they shall serve on the Minister a written notice informing him/her that this step has been taken.

- AA.8.1 Should the Minister wish to appeal against a Caution, whether an Initial Caution imposed under Paragraph AA.6 or a Final Caution imposed under Paragraph AA.7, s/he must serve on the Synod Moderator as the person authorised to accept service a notice of such appeal no later than 21 days from the service upon him/her of the Notice of the Caution, time being of the essence for the purpose of the lodging of the appeal. The Notice shall state the grounds of the appeal (which may be in detail or in summary form as the minister chooses) and the Minister may lodge with the Notice any statements or documents in support of the appeal if s/he so wishes.
- AA.8.2 The body to hear the appeal shall consist of three persons and shall be constituted as follows:
- AA.8.2.1 The Synod Moderator shall request the Moderator of another Synod to constitute the appeals body and to make the appointments in accordance with the criteria laid down for the appointment of Synod Appointees under Paragraph AA.1.5.
- AA.8.2.2 Should a Minister who has previously appealed against the imposition of an Initial Caution (“the Initial Caution Appeal”) lodge an appeal against the imposition of a Final Caution (“the Final Caution Appeal”) in the same case, the Synod Moderator shall request the Moderator of a Synod other than his/her own or that of the Moderator who constituted the body which heard the Initial Caution Appeal to constitute the body to hear the Final Caution Appeal and to make the appointments in accordance with the criteria laid down for the appointment of Synod Appointees under Paragraph AA.1.5.
- AA.8.2.3 In a situation arising under Paragraph AA.8.2.2, the Synod Moderator making the appointments must not appoint any person who served on the body which heard the Initial Caution Appeal.
- AA.8.2.4 The principle enunciated in Paragraph B.4 regarding membership of a Mandated Group shall be equally applicable when considering the eligibility of persons to act as the appeals body and as the secretary thereof.

- AA.8.2.5 Having made the appointments required under Paragraph AA.8.2.1 or Paragraph AA.8.2.2/3 as the case may be, the Moderator(s) of the other Synod(s) shall have no further part to play and all references to the Synod Moderator, apart from specific references to any other such Synod Moderator, shall denote the Synod Moderator who appointed the Synod Appointees.
- AA.8.2.6 The Synod Moderator shall be responsible for appointing a suitable person to act as the secretary to the newly constituted appeals body. The person so appointed shall not be a member of the appeals body.
- AA.8.3 Immediately following the appointment of the appeals body, the Synod Moderator shall provide each member thereof with copies of the written notice containing the Caution, all statements and other documents accompanying the report and the Minister's notice of appeal and any accompanying statements and documents. In the case of an appeal against a Final Caution, if the Minister had appealed against the imposition of an Initial Caution, the record of the decision of the appeals body hearing that appeal shall also be included.
- AA.8.4 As the appeal must be strictly limited to the terms of the Caution, it would be inappropriate for the Synod Moderator to supply any other information, statements or documents. Nor should the Synod Moderator make any personal reflections or offer any opinions on the issues before the appeals body.
- AA.8.5 The members of the appeals body shall not be required to carry out any enquiry or investigation of their own but, having considered the material provided by the Synod Moderator, they shall meet with the Minister and provide him/her with the opportunity of addressing them on the ground of the appeal.
- AA.8.6 Thereafter the members of the appeals body shall retire to make their decision in private.
- AA.8.7 Within ten days of the reaching of the decision, the secretary of the appeals body shall serve on the Minister, the Synod Appointees and the Synod Moderator notice of the decision together with a statement setting out the reasons for the decision.
- AA.8.8 If the appeal is successful the notice of the decision shall also declare that the Caution is discharged with immediate effect, that the Disciplinary case against the Minister is at an end and that the Synod Appointees are discharged from any further responsibility. The Synod Appointees shall thereupon present their report to the Synod Moderator in accordance with Paragraph AA.9.
- AA.8.9 If the appeal is unsuccessful the Caution will remain in place.
- AA.8.10 No appeal is possible from the decision of the appeals body.

- AA.8.11 The service of the notice of the appeals decision under Paragraph AA.8.7 shall have the effect of discharging the members of the appeals body from any further involvement in that disciplinary case.
- AA.9.1 The Synod Appointees shall, at the conclusion of the Caution Stage, present their report to the Synod Moderator, which shall summarise the steps which they took and state the manner in which they conducted their review, stating which of the courses they took under Paragraph AA.5 and, if they proceeded to the issue of Cautions under Paragraphs AA.6 and AA.7, the steps they took and the nature of the Minister's response. If they have resolved to issue a recommendation that the Synod Moderator should call in a Mandated Group and thus move the case into Section B of these Rules of Procedure, they shall set out such recommendation clearly in their report, giving their detailed reasons for such recommendation.
- AA.9.2 They shall attach to their report copies of all statements and other documents which were germane to their enquiry, including copies of any written Cautions (both Initial and Final) issued to the Minister.
- AA.9.3 Except in cases where the Synod Appointees have made a recommendation that the Synod Moderator should call in Mandated Group under Section B of these Rules of Procedure (see Paragraph AA.10.3 below), the Caution Stage shall be concluded immediately upon the issue of the Synod Appointees' report to the Synod Moderator and their responsibilities will terminate at same time.
- AA.10.1 Should the Synod Appointees conclude, whether under Paragraph AA.5, Paragraph AA.6 or Paragraph AA.7, that no further action should be taken, the Caution Stage and indeed the Disciplinary Process itself shall end with the lodging of their report with the Synod Moderator in accordance with Paragraph AA.9.1 and the involvement of the Synod Appointees shall cease at the same time.
- AA.10.2.1 Should the Synod Appointees, whether under Paragraph AA.5.3.1, Paragraph AA.6.4.3.1 or Paragraph AA.7.4.2, recommend to the Synod Moderator that s/he should call in a Mandated Group under Section B, the disciplinary case shall remain in abeyance pending the calling in of the Mandated Group by the Synod Moderator.
- AA.10.2.2 In cases where the recommendation is made under either Paragraph AA.5.3.1 or Paragraph AA.6.4.3.1, the involvement of the Synod Appointees shall, subject to Paragraph AA.10.3.2, cease when the Mandated Group has been so called in. The Synod Moderator shall notify them in writing as soon as this has happened.

AA.10.2.3 In a case where the recommendation is made under Paragraph AA.7.4.2 following the imposition of a Final Caution, the involvement of the Synod Appointees will cease as soon as they present their report to the Synod Moderator in accordance with the procedure set out in Paragraph AA.9.1.

AA.10.2.4 If, following a recommendation such as is referred to in Paragraph AA.10.2.1, the Synod Moderator has not, within a period of six months from the date of receipt of the notice of such recommendation from the Synod Appointees, called in a Mandated Group, then unless Paragraphs AA.5.3.3 or Paragraph AA.6.4.3.3 applies (as to which see Paragraph AA.10.2.5) the Disciplinary Process shall come to an end immediately upon the expiration of such period. In such a case, the involvement of the Synod Appointees shall, where either Paragraph AA.5.3.1 or Paragraph AA.6.4.3.1 applies, cease at that time. The Synod Moderator shall notify the Synod Appointees at the expiration of that period that no Mandated Group has been called in, whereupon they should present their report to the Synod Moderator, following the procedure set out in Paragraph AA.9.1.

AA.10.2.5 If either Paragraph AA.5.3.3 or Paragraph AA.6.4.3.3 applies, the Disciplinary Process shall come to an end when the Synod Appointees give written notice to the Synod Moderator of their rejection of his/her request to proceed with the Caution Stage, at which time their involvement shall cease at that time and they should then present their report to the Synod Moderator in accordance with the procedure set out in Paragraph AA.9.1. The Synod Moderator shall have the remainder of the six months period to decide whether or not to call in a Mandated Group under Section B and if s/he shall have failed to do so at the expiration of that period the Disciplinary case shall come to an end.

INCAPACITY PROCEDURE

Proposed changes to Part II

[Note: The changes fall into the five categories shown below and the paragraphs containing the proposed changes are allocated to the relevant category:

A. The introduction of a Commission Officer.

A.1.1 (definition of "Commission Officer" and "Enquiry Stage"), B.3.3, C.4.1/2/3, D.3.4, the whole of the new Sections F and G, J.1, J.2.1, J.2.3, J.3, L.8, L.9.8.

B. The need to remove the power to make recommendations.

A.1.1 (definition of "Outside Organisation"), A.3, J.10, K.5.2, K.5.3, K.6, K.7, L.11.2, L.11.3, L.12.1, L.12.2.

C. The requirement that the case has passed through PRWC and that PRWC can do no more.

A.1.1 (definition of "Certificate of Entry"), B.1.1, B.2.2, B.2.3, B.3.1, B.3.2, D.3.2, D.3.3, D.3.4 and F.8.

D. The removal of adversarial-type language.

J.2.3, J.3, J.4.1/2, J.5, J.6, J.8, L.9.6, M.4

E. Miscellaneous.

B.6, E.8, J.2.2.]

A.1.1 "Certificate of entry" Add the following definition:-

"Certificate of entry" means the Certificate duly completed and signed by the Convener of the PRWC in the format set out in the Appendix to this Part II.

"Commission Officer" Add the following definition:-

"Commission Officer" means the person appointed to act under the instructions of the Review Commission in carrying out an investigation and assembling the relevant information and documentation for the assistance of the Review Commission and whose role and functions are set out in Section G.

"Enquiry" – Change the definition to "Enquiry Stage" and continue "means the pre hearing stage during which the Review Commission conducts its enquiry in accordance with Section F assisted by the Commission Officer."

"Outside Organisation" - Replace the words "recommendation(s) or guidance being issued under the relevant paragraph of these Rules of Procedure" with "guidance being issued under the relevant paragraph of the Incapacity Procedure".

A.3 Delete the words "recommendations or".

B.1.1 After the words "Paragraph 1 of Part I" replace the remainder of the Paragraph with the following:

"...s/he shall enquire from the Convener of the PRWC (i) whether the PRWC has been involved with the Minister and, if so, (ii) whether it has now reached the point where it believes it can do no more for him/her. If, and only if, the answer to both questions is in the affirmative, s/he shall, wherever possible, consult the other of them (i.e. the Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary as the case may be) and s/he shall also consult the Convener of the PRWC and those persons ("the Consultation Group") shall decide whether the Incapacity Procedure should be initiated. For the avoidance of doubt, unless and until the questions posed at (i) and (ii) above can both be answered in the affirmative, the Incapacity Procedure cannot be initiated."

B.2 Replace the existing wording with:

"As part of the consultation referred to in Paragraph B.1.1, the Consultation Group must satisfy itself as to the following matters:-"

B.2.1 Replace the word "made" with "attempted".

B.2.2 Insert the word "Church's" immediately before the word "procedures".

B.2.3 Replace the existing wording with:

"...that the PRWC has been involved with the Minister but has now stated that it believes it can do no more for him/her; and...".

B.3 Replace the existing Paragraph B.3 with the following:-

B.3.1 If, having so consulted, the Consultation Group is satisfied unanimously that all the conditions contained in Paragraphs B.1.1 and B.2 have been complied with, the Group shall send or deliver to the Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary as the case may be a Certificate of Entry* completed in strict accordance with the format set out in the Appendix to this Part II, this being an essential pre-condition to a case entering the Incapacity Procedure. When this step has been completed, the Incapacity Procedure shall apply and the procedures set out in Paragraphs B.3.2 and B.3.3 shall come into operation.

B.3.2 The Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary shall forthwith send or deliver to the Secretary of the Review Commission* the Certificate of Entry and a Commencement Notice* (together with such accompanying papers as are germane to the case) in order to activate the Incapacity Procedure, setting out the reasons for the issue of such Notice and s/he shall at the same time inform the Minister that this step has been taken. As to the procedures to be followed regarding suspension, see Section E.

B.3.3 The Secretary of the Review Commission shall thereupon notify the following persons in writing of the issue of the Commencement Notice, namely the General Secretary, the Synod Moderator (if s/he did not issue the Commencement Notice), the Synod Clerk, the Press Officer, the Secretary for Ministries, the Convener of the PRWC and the responsible officer of any relevant Outside Organisation. The Notice shall stress to all the recipients the sensitive nature of the information imparted and the need to exercise care and discretion as to how it is used. If appropriate, the Notice may be combined with a Notice given under Paragraph E.4 regarding suspension.

B.3.4 On receipt of the Commencement Notice, the Secretary of the Review Commission shall forthwith activate the procedure for the calling in of the Commission Officer to carry out his/her functions as described in Section G when instructed to do so by the Review Commission.

B.6 In the expression “Paragraph B.1 and B.2” add an “s” to the word “Paragraph”.

After the words "to the contrary" remove the comma and insert the words "and so long as the Consultation Group is satisfied that the conditions contained in Paragraphs B.1.1 and B.2 have been complied with,"

C.4.1 Add a new paragraph as follows:

Mission Council shall, on behalf of General Assembly, appoint a person with some legal, tribunal or professional experience or other similar background to act as the Commission Officer in cases coming within the Incapacity Procedure and a second person with similar credentials to act as a reserve Commission Officer should the person firstly appointed be unable for any reason to participate in a particular case.

C.4.2 Add a new paragraph as follows:

In the event that neither of the persons referred to in Paragraph C.4.1 is able to act as Commission Officer in any particular case, the Secretary shall invite the Officers of General Assembly to appoint another person to act as Commission Officer in that case, making every effort to appoint someone with similar credentials.

C.4.3 Add a new paragraph as follows:-

The principle enunciated in Paragraph D.1 must be taken into account in considering whether a person is eligible to act as Commission Officer in any given case.

D.3.2 After the words “copies of” add “the Certificate of Entry,”.

D.3.3 Replace the words “a copy of” with “copies of the Certificate of Entry,”.

D.3.4 Add a new paragraph as follows:

The Secretary shall send to the Commission Officer copies of the Certificate of Entry, the Commencement Notice and any supporting documentation, together with a notice requesting confirmation that the addressee is unaware of any circumstances which in the present case might prevent him/her from serving as Commission Officer and, in the event that that person is unable to serve as the Commission Officer, the Secretary shall repeat the procedure with the second person referred to above.

E.8 Insert a new E.8 as follows:

Suspension does not imply any view about the correctness or otherwise of the reasons for the entry of the case into the Incapacity Procedure nor of any statements made or information given concerning the Minister, nor does it affect the Minister’s stipend or the CWCW’s salary or the Minister’s or the CRCW’s pension arrangements made under the relevant United Reformed Church Pension Scheme.

Sections F and G Replace the existing Sections F and G with the following:

F. Role and responsibilities of the Review Commission at the Enquiry Stage

F.1. The Review Commission shall have control of all procedural matters at the Enquiry Stage, including the gathering of information and any issues relating to the Minister’s suspension. The Review Commission shall also have discretion as regards the extent to which written statements, reports, videos, recorded interviews and other recordings and transcripts may be taken into account. This discretion will be particularly apposite when considering any report, information and documentation submitted by the Commission Officer under Paragraph G.4

F.2 Where cases come into the Procedure following a recommendation from the Disciplinary Process, information may already have been considered within that Process. However, the Review Commission must always carry out its own enquiry and cannot rely upon such information simply because it was presented and considered within the Disciplinary Process.

F.3 The members of the Review Commission shall consult together as soon as possible to consider the information laid before them and to agree upon the course which their enquiry should take.

F.4 At the outset the Review Commission will need to address the following questions:

F.4.1 Have all the steps outlined at Paragraphs B.1 and B.2 been taken?

F.4.2 Are there any issues regarding suspension which need to be resolved by the Review Commission (see Section E)?

- F.4.3** How has the Minister responded, if at all, to the issues raised in the Commencement Notice, particularly those relating to his/her conduct and/or behaviour or to any other concerns and/or problems expressed about his/her ministry and will it be necessary to meet with other persons with knowledge of any relevant events or circumstances to test the accuracy and weight of these matters and their importance to the enquiry?
- F.4.4** Is specialist advice and guidance relevant as to the question of whether, based on the criteria set out in Part I, Paragraphs 1 and 5, the Minister is or is not capable of exercising, or of continuing to exercise, ministry? If so, what steps should be taken to ensure that such advice and guidance are available for consideration by the Review Commission? Has any such advice or guidance already been taken and, if so, can this be made available to the Review Commission?
- F.5** The Review Commission shall be entitled to call for and consider all minutes of meetings, correspondence, notes, reports and documents which it considers appropriate to its enquiry. This provision shall not apply where those from whom such documentation is requested can demonstrate that it is protected by confidentiality.
- F.6** Should the Review Commission consider that at any time the Minister might, whether or not deliberately, be in danger of infringing any of Paragraphs K.1.5/8, it shall, wherever practicable, draw this to the attention of the Minister or his/her representative.
- F.7** Having carried out its initial review, the Review Commission will consider the information so far available and consider the implications of this information in the light of the criteria set out in Paragraphs 1 and 5 of Part I and will then issue instructions to the Commission Officer to enable him/her to carry out his/her responsibilities under Section G. In doing so, the Review Commission should draw the particular attention of the Commission Officer to Paragraphs A.2, H.1 and K.1.
- F.8** The Review Commission shall at the same time supply the Commission Officer with copies of the Certificate of Entry, the Commencement Notice, any supporting documentation and all necessary information for the better performance of his/her responsibilities. Information relating to any specific advice or guidance as mentioned in Paragraph F.4.4 is particularly pertinent in this respect. Furthermore the Review Commission must make clear to the Commission Officer the issues identified by the Review Commission to which it wishes the Commission Officer to direct his/her enquiries so that there is consistency and the avoidance of duplication in the gathering of information.
- F.9** The Review Commission will at all times be able to issue guidance and instructions to the Commission Officer as s/he carries out his/her role under Section G.
- F.10** The Review Commission may, if it considers it appropriate so to do, adjourn the Enquiry and direct the Commission Officer to put his/her investigation on hold pending further instructions. Bearing in mind the need to move the Procedure along in a timely manner, this

power should only be used sparingly when warranted by the special circumstances of the case and any such adjournment should last only so long as is strictly necessary.

- F.11 On receipt of the dossier and accompanying papers from the Commission Officer referred to in Paragraph G.7, the Secretary of the Review Commission shall forthwith supply copies of all such papers to each member of the Review Commission who may seek clarification and/or further information from the Commission Officer on any of the matters referred to therein.
- F.12 The members of the Review Commission, in considering the material presented to them, should always have in mind the desirability of reaching agreement with the Minister or the Minister's representative as to any information and advice which is accepted as common ground with a view to simplifying the Hearing and making it appear less confrontational.
- F.13.1 When the Review Commission has satisfied itself as to the matters referred to in Paragraph F.11, the Secretary of the Review Commission shall thereupon, acting on the instructions of the Review Commission, send to the Minister or the Minister's representative a copy of the Commission Officer's statement and copies of all the statements, reports and other documents contained in the accompanying dossier (save only that, if the Commission Officer shall have already provided the Minister with copies of the documents in the agreed bundle in accordance with Paragraph G.6, the Secretary is not required to send to him/her further copies of those particular documents at this stage).
- F.13.2 At the same time s/he shall notify the Minister or his/her representative by letter that, should s/he wish to make any observations or representations on any of the matters contained in the said statement and dossier or should s/he wish to submit any further statements, reports, or other papers, these should all be lodged with the Secretary within 21 days of receipt of the said letter. The Secretary shall forthwith on receipt supply each member of the Assembly Commission with a copy of any such observations, representations or documents.
- F.14 After the expiration of the said period of 21 days or, if a request for an extension of time is received, within such further period of time, if any, as the members of the Review Commission consider reasonable, the Review Commission will instruct the Secretary to put in hand arrangements for a hearing to take place in accordance with Section J.

G Role and Responsibilities of Commission Officer

G.1 The role and responsibilities of the Commission Officer shall be:-

- G.1.1 To study the Commencement Notice and any supporting papers and any representations made by the Minister and/or others and
- G.1.2 To note the instructions of the Review Commission and any supporting information supplied with them (see Paragraphs F.7 and F.8) and
- G.1.3 In pursuance of those instructions, to obtain such reports, carry out such interviews and consultations and take such other steps as are deemed appropriate within the scope of those

instructions including the assembling of all the relevant information in a dossier for presentation to the Review Commission and

- G.1.4 To attend the Hearing in order to respond to any questions which may be put to him/her by the Review Commission and/or the Minister or the Minister's Representative.
- G.2 The Commission Officer shall have regard to the following:-
- G.2.1 S/he must act within the scope of the instructions issued by the Review Commission under Paragraph F.7.
- G.2.2 Should the Commission Officer, in the course of his/her investigation, be drawn into a new line of enquiry, s/he must refer back to the Review Commission for further instructions.
- G.2.3 The Commission Officer must not commission reports or incur costs without specific authorisation from the Review Commission.
- G.3 Subject always to the terms of the Review Commission's instructions, the following questions (which are not necessarily exhaustive) should be addressed by the Commission Officer in the course of carrying out his/her responsibilities in accordance with Paragraph G.1:-
- G.3.1 How has the Minister responded, if at all, to the issues raised in the Commencement Notice, particularly those relating to his/her conduct and/or behaviour or to any other concerns and/or problems expressed about his/her ministry and will it be necessary to meet with other persons with knowledge of any relevant events or circumstances to test the accuracy and weight of these matters and their importance to the investigation?
- G.3.2 Is specialist advice and guidance relevant as to the question of whether, based on the criteria set out in Part I, Paragraphs 1 and 5, the Minister is or is not capable of exercising, or of continuing to exercise, ministry? If so, what steps should be taken to ensure that such advice and guidance are available for consideration by the Review Commission?
- G.3.3 Are there any special factors in the particular case which should be taken into account at this stage? This is particularly relevant in cases coming into the Incapacity Procedure following a recommendation from the Disciplinary Process.
- G.4 So long as such actions fall within the scope of the Review Commission's instructions and are within the constraints set out in Paragraph G.2, the Commission Officer may seek the written permission of the Minister or his/her representative (but only so far as the latter has the authority in law to grant such permission on behalf of the Minister) to apply for copies of all the Minister's medical notes, records and reports from his/her General Practitioner and copies of the reports from any specialist who may have examined or been consulted by the Minister. If the Commission Officer is unable to obtain copies of any such notes, records and reports s/he shall report this to the Review Commission and the Procedure shall continue with the best information available.

- G.5.1** The Commission Officer should seek to obtain from each person from whom s/he obtains information a written statement setting out such information and summarising the discussion at the meeting. This statement should, wherever possible, be agreed and signed by the Commission Officer and the person concerned immediately after the meeting and whilst they are still together. The Commission Officer should inform that person that s/he may be called later to attend the Hearing and answer questions which may be put to him/her by the Review Commission and/or the Minister or the Minister's representative.
- G.5.2** If any such person refuses or expresses an unwillingness to attend any Hearing in person or if the Commission Officer has any other reason to believe that that person will not in fact do so, the Commission Officer shall report this to the Review Commission, which may if it thinks fit invoke its discretionary powers as set out in Paragraph F.1. In such situations, it is essential that the Commission Officer should use every endeavour to obtain an agreed written statement from the person concerned as described in Paragraph G.5.1.
- G.6.** The Commission Officer shall consult, or endeavour to consult, with the Minister or his/her representative for the purpose of securing an agreed bundle of documents. A list of the documents in the agreed bundle should be prepared by the Commission Officer and signed by him/her and by the Minister or his/her representative. The Minister may request copies of the documents in the agreed bundle there and then. Otherwise they will be sent to him/her by the Secretary of the Review Commission (see Paragraph F.13.1). Should the Commission Officer be unable to secure an agreed bundle of documents for whatever reason, s/he shall prepare a report which shall explain why it has not proved possible to do so.
- G.7** When the Commission Officer has completed his/her investigation, s/he shall lodge with the Secretary of the Review Commission a dossier containing (i) a written statement setting out the result of his/her investigation, summarising the information contained in the dossier and adding any comments which s/he deems appropriate and (ii) either of the following:-
- G.7.1** If it has proved possible to secure an agreed bundle of documents in accordance with Paragraph G.6, the originals (or copies if the originals are not held by the Commission Officer) of the documents forming the agreed bundle, the signed copy of the agreed list of documents and the originals or copies of any further documents which are not included in the agreed bundle but which, in the opinion of the Commission Officer, should nonetheless be passed on to the Review Commission or
- G.7.2** If it has not proved possible to secure an agreed bundle of documents in accordance with Paragraph G.6, the originals (or copies if the originals are not held by the Commission Officer) of all statements, reports and other documents considered by him/her to be relevant to the case, including the report referred to in Paragraph G.6 as to why it has not been possible to secure an agreed bundle of documents.
- J.1** After the words "the Minister" add "the Commission Officer".
- J.2.1** The existing J.2 shall become J.2.1 and the following shall be inserted as the fifth bullet point:

- **The Commission Officer**

J.2.2 The existing J.3 shall become new Paragraph J.2.2. Also replace the word “**should**” with “**shall**”.

J.2.3 Add a new J.2.3 as follows:

The Convener shall open the proceedings by introducing him/herself and the other members of the Commission and such other persons as may be present. S/he shall also explain their respective roles and the manner in which the Hearing will be conducted. The Review Commission shall have complete discretion as to the manner of conducting the Hearing and may, if considered appropriate, invite the Commission Officer at the outset to present his/her report to the Hearing.

J.3 Insert the following as new J.3:

J.3 **If invited to do so by the Review Commission, the Commission Officer will present the information set out in the written dossier and its supporting papers and, if any of the persons referred to in the dossier are present, the Review Commission may invite him or her to provide their information orally. Any such persons will be subject to questioning by the Convener (and by other members of the Commission with the Convener’s permission) and by the Minister or the Minister’s representative.**

J.4.1 Replace the words “**All witnesses called by the Review Commission to give evidence shall be subject to questioning...**” with “**All persons attending the Hearing in person to provide information may be questioned...**” Also at the end, replace the word “**witnesses**” with “**persons**”.

J.4.2 Remove the words “**When the process described in Paragraph J.4.1 has been completed,**” and replace the words “**witnesses called by him/her to give evidence**” with “**persons attending at his/her request to provide information**”.

J.5 After the words “**directs otherwise,**” replace the existing words with “**persons attending to provide information and/or answer questions shall only be present whilst they are doing so**”.

J.6 Replace the existing paragraph with the following:

“When the procedures outlined in Paragraphs J.3 and J.4 have been completed, the Minister or the Minister’s representative may if s/he wishes address the Review Commission”.

J.8 Delete the words “**evidence and**”.

J.10 Insert a space between “**Commission**” and “**will wish**”

Delete the words “**and/or recommendation(s)**”.

Change the paragraph reference in the text from **B.1** to **B.3**.

K.5.2 Delete this paragraph.

- K.5.3** The existing K.5.3 to become **K.5.2**.
- K.6** Delete the words **"recommendations or"**.
- K.7** Delete the words **"...and any recommendations appended to the Decision (as regards any Outside Organisation, only those recommendations which it expressly states to be its wish that such be passed on to that Outside Organisation) and sent to the Minister in accordance with Paragraph K.6..."**.
- L.8** After the words **"shall take"** replace the remainder of the first sentence with **"having in mind but not being bound to follow the procedures laid down for the Review Commission in Section F"**.
Delete the words **"In addition"** at the beginning of the second sentence.
- L.9.6** Replace the words **", evidence and interpretation"** with **"and any legal issues which may arise relating to the interpretation of the information provided at the Hearing"**.
- L.9.8** This paragraph to become L.9.8.2 (see below):
- L.9.8.1** Add a new L.9.8.1 as follows: **"If requested to do so by the Appeals Review Commission, the General Secretary shall invite the Commission Officer to attend the Hearing of the Appeal and at some point during the Hearing the Convener may invite the Commission Officer and the Minister or his/her representative to address the Appeals Review Commission on the subject matter of the Appeal.**
- L.9.8.2** The existing Paragraph L.9.8 shall become **L.9.8.2**
- L.11.2** Delete this paragraph.
- L.11.3** The existing L.11.3 to become **L.11.2**.
- L.12.1** Delete the words **"recommendations or"**.
- L.12.2** Delete the words **"recommendations or"** both times they appear.
- M.4** Replace the word **"served"** with **"sent or delivered"**.

APPENDIX TO THE INCAPACITY PROCEDURE

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Form [...]

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
MINISTERIAL INCAPACITY PROCEDURE
(as set out in Section P of the MANUAL)

CERTIFICATE OF SUITABILITY FOR ENTRY INTO THE PROCEDURE
(defined in the Procedure as “the Certificate of Entry”)

re:

This Certificate of Entry has been completed by the Convener of the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee (PRWC) to fulfil the requirements of Paragraphs B.1.1 and B.2 of Part II of the Procedure.

As Convener of the PRWC I hereby certify as follows:

1. Pursuant to Paragraph B.1.1, the Consultation Group (as defined in Paragraph A.1 1 of the Procedure) has carried out its responsibility to consider the question of whether the Incapacity Procedure should be initiated in respect of the above named Minister/Church Related Community Worker (CRCW) and has reached the conclusion that it should be so initiated and
2. The PRWC, after having given full consideration to the concerns relating to the above named Minister/CRCW as required by Paragraph B.2, has reached the following conclusions:
 - (i) That all reasonable steps to rehabilitate the Minister/CRCW have been attempted (B.2.1): and
 - (ii) That the Church's procedures for ill health retirement do not apply and that there is no reasonable prospect of their implementation or of the resignation of the Minister (B.2.2): and
 - (iii) That the PRWC has been involved with the Minister/CRCW but has now stated that it believes it can do no more for him/her (B.2.3): and

either

- (iv) That no case against the Minister/CRCW is already in progress under the Ministerial disciplinary Process:

or

(iv) That the Minister/CRCW is already involved in a Ministerial Disciplinary case, but the provisions of Paragraph B.6 of Part II apply.

[delete whichever does not apply]

Dated.....20...

Signed.....Convener of PRWC

2011 BUDGET

Introduction

1 The last Mission Council of the year needs to agree a budget for the following year. The Finance Committee offers this proposed budget with the support of the URC Trust.

Stipend Increase

2 One key element in setting the budget is agreeing the level of the basic stipend to be paid to stipendiary ministers and Church-Related Community Workers (CRCWs). The Finance Committee and the URC Trust take advice from the Ministries Committee in reaching a decision on this, and reports this decision to the Mission Council.

3 The stipend increase is normally taken as the average of the annual growth in prices as measured by the Retail Prices Index, excluding the effects of housing costs, and the annual growth in earnings. This year, exceptionally, the growth in earnings has been below the rate of inflation so the average produces a figure below the rise in the cost of living.

4 The calculated rise in stipends by applying the usual formula works out at 3.65%, representing an increase in the basic stipend from £22,416 to £23,232. This adds around £600k to the overall budget.

5 The 3.65% figure generated extensive debate within the Finance Committee. Some members (both ministerial and lay) felt it was too high, bearing in mind the number of church members who had a small or no rise in their incomes this year. Furthermore, increasing the costs of each minister each year was in the longer term restricting the number of ministers the Church could support. However others in the committee felt it was important to be consistent in using the formula in years when it produces a relatively high figure as well as in years when it produces a relatively low one. In addition, a rise of 3.65% would still impose a reduction in the real value of the stipend and some manse families could ill afford this. By a narrow majority the Committee eventually decided to set a stipend based on the full 3.65% and this decision was endorsed subsequently by the URC Trust.

The Budget

6 The proposed budget for 2011, including this stipend increase, is set out in summary form in Appendix 1. Its shape may be more easily discerned from the very simplified presentation of the same figures in Table 1 below.

Table 1: 2011 Budget

£m	2010 Budget	2011 Budget
Income:		
M&M Contributions	20.5	20.3
Pensions Support	0.5	1.0
Other Income	1.1	0.9
Total	22.1	22.2
Expenditure:		
Local Ministers/CRCWs	16.6	16.9
Other Expenditure	6.2	6.0
Total	22.8	22.9
Deficit	0.7	0.7

7 On the income side the best estimates available suggest that the income from the Ministry and Mission Fund (M&M) giving is now on a falling trend. This will be a critical constraint on expenditure in the medium term. However we are very grateful to the Synods for their positive and creative responses to the need for extra money for the Ministers' Pension Fund and we look forward to the full £1m of extra pensions support required in 2011 being provided.

8 The rise in the overall costs of local front-line ministry to £16.9m is mainly due to higher pensions contributions, although there is also an increase in National Insurance to be paid from April 2011. The number of stipendiary ministers is expected to be lower than in 2010, in line with the Assembly policy to reduce minister numbers in line with overall membership numbers. This reduction in the number of ministers largely offsets the costs of a higher stipend.

9 For the second year running, the budget avoids any increase at all in the aggregate of Other Expenditure, which includes the support costs for ministers, eg through training, the costs of all Assembly programmes, governance, legal and administrative costs. This is despite costs inflation running at nearly 5%.

10 Within the overall freeze on non-ministerial costs, each individual budget line has been examined separately and in some areas there are significant agreed rises in expenditure while in others there are reductions. Amongst the more significant increases in budget is an agreement to increase the subsidy given to *Reform* from £68k in 2010 to £89k in 2011. The Finance Committee continues a friendly but frank dialogue with the Communications and Editorial Committee about the medium term trends in the magazine's finances.

11 The budget numbers in Table 1 and Appendix 1 actually show a reduction in Other Expenditure from £6.2m to £6.0m rather than just a freeze. This is however mainly as a result of implementing the Mission Council decision to move the costs of the Synod Children and Youth

Development Officers (CYDOs) to the Synods. This moves £130k of expenditure from the central budget to Synod budgets.

The Legacy Fund

12 In 2008 Mission Council agreed to set up a Legacy Fund to ensure that when general legacies were received by the Church centrally this money was set aside for exciting and possibly risky projects, rather than absorbed in routine expenditure. An exceptionally large legacy has boosted this Fund to over £700k in 2010. It has therefore been possible to fund a number of projects which have the enthusiastic support of Synod or Assembly committees from this Fund without straining the normal budget. In 2011 we envisage expenditure of around £130k from the Legacy Fund.

13 General Assembly agreed to the Mission Council suggestion that the Legacy Fund might also assist the Westminster College Development Appeal by up to around £200k to cover the College's potential loss of income during building works.

The Implied Deficit

14 The budget implies a deficit in 2011 of around £750k. This represents approximately 3% of total expenditure.

15 This deficit is similar to that in the 2010 budget, which was intended to be exceptional for reasons explained a year ago. The Finance Committee is well aware that the Church cannot run indefinitely with a large budget deficit. However the Committee recommends the budget despite this deficit noting in particular:

- (i) the accounts for 2010 to date make it very likely that the out-turn for the full year will be a deficit much lower than the £720k approved in the original budget;
- (ii) the present Pension Fund position is not typical and a clearer view of the likely medium term demands will be possible after the 2012 valuation exercise;
- (iii) it is reasonable to draw on reserves in periods of economic recession.

Recommendation

Mission Council approves the budget for 2011.

John G Ellis
Treasurer

15 September 2010

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Draft 2011 Budget

Income and surpluses are shown in brackets

Income

Ministry and Mission contributions
Pensions - additional funding

Investment and other income

Dividends
Donations
Specific legacies
Grants/Income - Congregational Memorial Hall Trust funds
Interest - New College Trust /Fund
Net interest
Other

Total income

Expenditure

A Ministry

Local and special ministries and CRCWs
Synod Moderators - stipends and expenses
Ministries department

B Education & Learning

Initial training for ministry
Continuing training for ministry
Resource Centres support

Training for Learning & Serving - net support
Lay preachers support
Windermere Centre - net support
Education & Learning department

C Youth & Children's Work

Youth and Children's work
Children & Youth development officers
Pilots development

D Mission

Mission programmes and team
Marketing and Identity Campaign (grant funded)
Grants to local churches (ex MC grants/loans group)

E Governance

General Assembly
Mission Council
Professional fees
Other

F Administration & Resources

Central Secretariat
Pastoral & welfare
Equal opportunities
URC House costs
I.T. Services
Finance (incl. maintenance of ministry)
Communications & Editorial

Total expenditure

NET (SURPLUS)/DEFICIT

	2009	2010	2011	Comments
	Actual	Budget	Draft Budget	
	£	£	£	
	(20,575,541)	(20,467,000)	(20,257,000)	Lower estimates by some Synods
	0	(500,000)	(1,000,000)	
	(638,098)	(609,000)	(650,000)	
	(16,337)	(14,000)	0	
	(14,931)	0	0	
	(385,000)	(385,000)	(220,000)	As advised by CMHT
	(30,100)	0	0	
	(24,215)	(50,000)	(50,000)	
	(13,658)	(20,000)	(20,000)	
	(1,122,338)	(1,078,000)	(940,000)	
	(21,697,879)	(22,045,000)	(22,197,000)	
				Pay: NI 1% increase for all Ministers: 3.65% stipend increase Lay staff: implementation of new remuneration system - max. cost 4% incl. CofL increase
	15,422,820	16,556,000	16,876,000	Numbers on trend; full year higher pension cost
	697,853	647,500	673,000	
	319,704	313,400	321,235	
	16,440,378	17,516,900	17,870,235	
	731,527	798,000	581,400	Moving to new Resource Centre support structure from 2010/11 academic year
	197,415	210,500	211,000	
	292,802	330,000	539,720	
	1,221,743	1,338,500	1,332,120	
	121,537	122,200	130,000	
	5,540	25,000	10,000	
	158,912	99,700	109,700	
	147,630	150,900	161,500	
	1,655,362	1,736,300	1,743,320	
	259,682	292,400	282,400	All local costs to Synods from 2011
	125,761	155,400	24,000	
	106,838	113,100	117,300	
	492,282	560,900	423,700	
	835,202	849,900	787,700	Use of Legacy fund for £106k discretionary grants and new programmes
	0	0	0	
	69,944	55,000	0	
	905,145	904,900	787,700	
	150,000	155,000	150,000	
	48,399	52,000	50,000	
	122,252	102,000	111,000	
	75,361	34,500	66,000	Now budgeting for disciplinary process costs
	396,011	343,500	377,000	
	382,304	409,800	395,500	
	9,387	2,000	2,000	
	1,020	2,000	2,000	
	282,930	293,700	292,900	
	143,106	134,400	147,300	Improved offsite backup
	451,317	460,600	514,700	VAT rate increase (irrecoverable element)
	355,057	399,250	389,300	
	1,625,122	1,701,750	1,743,700	
	21,514,300	22,764,250	22,945,655	
	(183,579)	719,250	748,655	

NOMINATIONS REPORT

1. Report of Appointing Group for the Moderator of Wessex Synod

The Appointing Group for the Moderator of Wessex Synod, convened by Dr Graham Campling, unanimously submits the name of the Revd Clare Downing to be Moderator of Wessex Synod.

Resolution: *Mission Council agrees to appoint the Revd Clare Downing as Moderator of Wessex Synod from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2017.*

2. Appointing group conveners

The Revd Cecil White has agreed to convene the appointing group for the Moderator of Southern Synod and the Revd John Oldershaw has agreed to convene the appointing group for the Moderator of East Midlands Synod.

3. Officers of Committees

The following have agreed to serve:

- 1.7 MIND (Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline) Advisory Group (Secretary)
Revd Hugh Graham from 1 July 2011
- 4.4 Faith and Order Reference Group (Convener elect)
Revd Elizabeth Welch from 1 July 2011
- 4.8 Disciplinary Process – Commission Panel (Deputy Convener)
Dr Jim Merrilees to General Assembly 2014
- 4.8 Disciplinary Process – Commission Panel (Secretary)
Mrs Wilma Frew to General Assembly 2012 (extension of appointment for one additional year)
- 4.13 Pensions Executive (Convener elect)
Revd Roger Woodall from 1 July 2011

Confirmation is still awaited regarding the following (all from 1 July 2011):

- 1.7 MIND (Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline) Advisory Group (Convener elect)
- 2.1 Mission Committee (Convener elect)
- 2.1.2 Commitment for Life Reference Group (Convener elect)
- 3.1.2 Ministries – CRCW Programme Sub-Committee (Convener elect)
- 4.9.1 Standing Panel for the Incapacity Procedure (Secretary elect)
- 4.14 Investment Committee (Convener elect)

4. Review Group for the Role of Synod Moderator

In the event of Mission Council deciding to set up a group to review the role of the Synod Moderator, Nominations Committee was invited to identify possible people to serve on such a group, bearing in mind that Mission Council might wish to change its proposed composition. Names will be brought to the meeting.

5. **Equal Opportunities Committee**

Nominations Committee received a request from Equal Opportunities Committee for formal representation on the Assembly Arrangements Committee. For 2010 General Assembly a member of Equal Opportunities attended meetings and site visits as an observer and was able to raise a range of issues. Although such participation was valuable, Equal Opportunities felt that because of inevitable changes in committee membership this role might be overlooked so wished to request formal membership. Whilst Nominations suggested that one option might be to ask Assembly Arrangements Committee to invite a representative to Equal Opportunities to attend meetings and visits as an observer as a matter of routine, it was felt that any decision regarding formal membership lay with Mission Council.

HUMAN SEXUALITY TASK GROUP

In 2007 the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church adopted a Commitment on Human Sexuality. In it we recognised that despite lengthy debates, much study and many reports, opinions had not changed sufficiently for us to be of one mind. We recognised a range of views and accepted that they were all held with integrity. We affirmed our belief that Christ called us to strive to live together, which could only be accomplished by relying on the grace of God. The Commitment concluded: "In love and submission to Christ who holds us together, we therefore commit ourselves to stay together, to work and pray together, to treat one another with respect, and to seek God's gifts of unity, harmony, wisdom and deeper understanding".

At that moment of adopting the Commitment, it was very clear that a substantial majority preferred to live in fellowship in the United Reformed Church with those who in good conscience thought differently rather than to press for a decisive statement of policy on same-sex relationships.

Since then, however, we have become aware of two things.

- a) The passing of the Equality Act by Her Majesty's Government will at some point require an authoritative body to state policy on whether or not United Reformed Church premises may be registered for the holding of civil partnership ceremonies. We will be pressed for a decision and it is one that will require a theological and ecclesiological rationale.
- b) Since 2007, while we have been trying to live in fellowship with some with whom we disagree, decisions about calls have had to be made in local pastorates. It is now clear that, for some, when the decision has been to call/appoint a minister in a homosexual or lesbian relationship, some have perceived that as akin to the setting of policy without it ever coming to a clear vote in an authoritative setting such as General Assembly. Others have felt that the failure to consider the call/appointment of such a minister is also akin to setting policy. The demise of District Councils has removed an opportunity for the different voices to be heard as decisions are taken. This sense of something having been resolved without an authoritative ruling by General Assembly is harmful to the unity and peace of the United Reformed Church.

Because life has moved on and circumstances in particular situations have changed, living with the Commitment is not proving as easy as agreeing with it in principle.

For these reasons I therefore move that the remit of the Human Sexuality Task Group be altered to read, in its final bullet point: *To report to Mission Council, and, through Mission Council, to General Assembly regularly, so that interim progress reports are given, if appropriate, to each meeting of these bodies, and that clear statements of policy on the use of Church premises for the holding of Civil Partnerships and on the ordination of those in committed same-sex relationships be submitted for consideration to General Assembly 2012.*

The Role of the Synod Moderator
URC Mission Council October 2010

Terms of Reference for the Review Group

1. Develop a new role description for the synod moderator.
2. Draft resolutions to amend the Structure of the United Reformed Church as appropriate.
3. Make recommendations regarding the role of the Moderators' Meeting in relation to the councils of the church.
4. In undertaking the review:
 - a. consider the issues of responsibility, leadership, authority, authorisation and episcopacy;
 - b. consider possibilities arising from collaborative working;
 - c. consider and take note of ecumenical work on the issues in 4(a), including episcopate under the Church of England/Methodist Covenant and the Welsh explorations into an ecumenical bishop, and assess their relevance for the United Reformed Church;
 - d. consider and take note of 'The Role of the Synod Moderator' paper presented to Mission Council October 2010;
 - e. consult widely across the councils of the church and other appropriate groups.
5. Identify wider issues arising from the review in liaison with the Moderators' Think Tank so that these may be referred for further work as appropriate.
6. Report [progress] to Mission Council in November 2011.

The United Reformed Church



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30 September 2010

The Methodist Church



Methodist Church House,
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Telephone: +44(0)20 7486 5502
e-mail: asc@methodistchurch.org.uk

JOINT MEETING OF THE URC MISSION COUNCIL AND THE METHODIST COUNCIL

Wednesday 13 to Friday 15 October 2010

The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick DE55 1AU

Telephone: 01773 526000 Fax: 01773 540841 email: hayes@cct.org.uk

Better Together

Dear Colleague

We look forward to welcoming you to the first ever joint meeting of the Councils of our respective Churches. We hope and pray that as we meet each other we shall discover God afresh amongst us; and that through our worship and conferring, our socialising and learning we shall discern more of God's grace and more of God's will for our Churches in our time.

Please find enclosed a copy of the Agenda for all our time together, and the relevant papers and reports. You will see from the Agenda that we shall spend the opening session meeting separately as the URC Mission Council and the Methodist Council, and that we shall have two further sessions meeting separately on the Thursday. Most of our time, however, will be spent in joint sessions. We are hoping to introduce each other to our various methods of decision-making, including consensus. But if the joint deliberations lead to us making significant decisions together we shall do so in the final joint session by voting in 'houses'.

The papers for the joint sessions have been bound in a book labelled "Better Together". If you are a member of the URC Mission Council you will receive this from Church House in Tavistock Place together with a bundle of URC papers for the separate Mission Council sessions. If you are a member of the Methodist Council you will receive the "Better Together" booklet and a second booklet of Methodist papers for the separate Methodist Council sessions. URC and Methodist members will not be sent the papers for each others' separate sessions, but you are welcome to talk with each other about anything that is not marked "confidential".

We begin with coffee at 11 am on Wednesday 13th. Registration will take place from 10.30 at the Lakeside Centre. Please consult the enclosed site map. All the accommodation is en-suite.

We hope that the balance in the agenda of worship, presentations, formal and informal discussions will give everyone the opportunity to feel that they have contributed and learned from each other, as we all share our experience of faith and our insights about the life and mission of Christ's Church.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Mortimer

Kenneth G. Howcroft

BETTER TOGETHER

A JOINT MEETING OF THE METHODIST COUNCIL AND THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MISSION COUNCIL

The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick
13 - 15 October 2010

A G E N D A

Sessions 2-7 & 10 will be held jointly with agenda items numbered J;
for sessions 1, 8 & 9 the two Councils will meet separately with Methodist agenda items
numbered M and URC agenda items numbered U

*The agenda items for the separate Methodist and URC sessions will be separately notified with
the papers for those sessions.*

Glossary of terms

note = for information

discussion = significant discussion time but not expecting resolutions

approve = resolution required but appears not to need any substantial debate

decision = resolution required and probably does need substantial debate first

Wednesday 13 October

11:00 COFFEE

11:30 **Session 1: Separate Sessions of the Methodist Council and the Mission Council**

12:45 LUNCH

13:45 **Session 2: Joint Session**

J1. Exploring our history, context and characteristics within a framework of worship

Papers BT 10/01 and BT 10/02

15:45 TEA

16:30 **Session 3: Joint Session**

J2. The General Secretaries unpack our two Churches' current major themes

J3. Groups explore the key challenges facing the Church locally and denominationally

18:45 DINNER

20:15 **Session 4: Joint Session**

J4. Fresh Expressions: presentation and discussion led by Bishop Graham Cray

21:15 EVENING PRAYERS

Thursday 14 October

08.30 Breakfast

09:15 Session 5: Joint Session

J5. Bible Study led by Laurence Moore, Moderator-elect of the General Assembly

J6. Ways Ahead for Children & Youth Work **Paper BT/10/03**

10:45 COFFEE

11:15 Session 6: Joint Session

J7. Ways Ahead for Children & Youth Work (Continued)

Interlude: Consensus Voting Procedures Explained

J8. Building Opportunities **Paper BT/10/04**

12:45 LUNCH

13:45 Session 7: Joint Session

J9. The Church in the World

A selection of Workshops facilitated by experts

15:45 TEA

16:30 Session 8: Separate Sessions of the Mission Council and the Methodist Council

18:45 DINNER

20:00 Session 9: Separate Sessions of the Methodist Council and the Mission Council

21:00 CLOSING PRAYERS in the separate sessions

Friday 15 October

08.30 Breakfast

09:15 Session 10: Joint Session

J10. Feedback and Proposals from Workshops

J11. Rural Officer Post Review **Paper BT/10/05**

J12. Reflections on the Joint Council

10:45 COFFEE

11:15 HOLY COMMUNION

12:15 LUNCH

BETTER TOGETHER

A JOINT MEETING OF THE METHODIST COUNCIL AND THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MISSION COUNCIL

The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick
13 - 15 October 2010

A G E N D A For members of the Methodist Council

Sessions 2-7 & 10 will be held jointly with agenda items numbered J;
for sessions 1, 8 & 9 the two Councils will meet separately with Methodist agenda items
numbered M and URC agenda items numbered U

Glossary of terms

note = for information

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approve = resolution required but appears not to need any substantial debate

decision = resolution required and probably does need substantial debate first

1. Participant Observers

Representative of the Faith and Order Committee

The Revd Dr Peter M Phillips

Governance Support/Legal and Constitutional Practice

The Revd Gareth J Powell

Connexional Treasurer

Mr Andrew Gibbs

Chair of Audit Committee (Accounts only)

Mr John Chastney

2. Other officers

Media Officer

Anna Drew

Minutes Secretary

Anne-Marie Chisem

3. Administrative Support

Ben Bradley

Liz Clutterbuck

Isha Coke

4. Other staff attending entire Council

Claire Herbert

Nick Moore

Doug Swanney

Siôn Rhys Evans

Toby Scott

Steve Hucklesby

Wednesday 13 October

11:00 COFFEE

11:30 Session 1: Methodist Council

M1. Opening Prayers

The President

M2. Welcomes, Apologies, Letters, Announcements; Observers

Letters including to Norman Mann as retiring Chair Audit Cttee

Ken Howcroft & The President

Apologies:

David Gamble, David Perkins, John Woosey

David Ingham (replaced by Beverley Richardson)

through a role play), and an opportunity for some initial group discussion. Some input on successful LEPs.

At end of session Chair to ask all leaders of the discussion groups to meet with John Ellis before going to tea.

15:45 **TEA**

16:30 **Session 3: Joint**

Chairing: David Walton (Methodist Council Chair)

J2. Bible Study led by Lawrence Moore, Moderator-elect of the General Assembly

If presentation less than 30 minutes, Chair might wish to invite brief response.

J3. Groups explore the key challenges facing the Church locally and denominationally

John Ellis will give a brief introduction reminding groups what the purpose is of the discussions over the following two days: what are the important issues facing the church which these two bodies can constructively move forward on?

Ben Bradley will give detail of rooms allocated.

All go to pre-arranged groups until Dinner. Via feedback forms, discussions will shape the workshops on Thursday afternoon.

18:45 **DINNER**

20:15 **Session 4: Joint**

Chairing: Kirsty Thorpe (Moderator of the General Assembly)

J4. Fresh Expressions: presentation and discussion led by Bishop Graham Cray

This would be an interactive session led by the Bishop Graham Cray on Fresh Expressions, with the opportunity for the sharing of positive stories.

21:15 **EVENING PRAYERS**

Facilitating: Alison Tomlin

Richard Mortimer, John Ellis and Isha Coke to discuss groups for the next day. The feedback from workshops will have been received which will shape the following day.

Shape then to be confirmed with David Walton., Kirsty Thorpe and Val Morrison.

Announcements:

- (i) *New signatories for Finance Bank Account: Andrew Gibbs, Ted Awty and Strategic Leaders (at least two – or all)*
- (ii) *Proposals to implement the Resolution of Conference regarding the closure of Wesley College Bristol: 44 positive responses were received by 25 August.*

- M3. Announcement of Chair's Business **David Walton**
- M4. Minutes of the Methodist Council held on 10-12 April **to approve**
David Walton
- M5. Matters arising from the Council minutes **to note** **MC/10/82 (tabled)**
Ken Howcroft
- M6. Executive action taken by the officers of the Council since it last met *oral report*
Ken Howcroft
- M7. Minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on: **Ken Wales**
(i) 28 April **to note**
(ii) 9 September **to note**
- M8. Matters arising from the SRC minutes (including Venture FX) *oral report*
Ken Wales
- M9. Report from the Connexional Leaders' Forum *oral report*
Martyn Atkins
- M10. Report from Strategic Leaders *oral report*
Chris Elliott followed by Mark Wakelin
- M11. Introduction to the Joint Council
John Ellis followed by Ken Howcroft

12:45 **LUNCH**

13:45 **Session 2: Joint**

Chairing: Val Morrison (Moderator of the General Assembly)

- J1. Exploring our history, context and characteristics within a framework of worship
BT 10/01 and BT 10/02

*Led by **Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe** (Moderator of the General Assembly)*

This opening joint session will set the scene for the event and may include a significant act of worship, an explanation of the meeting purpose, structure and schedule (including some mapping presentation), possible F&O statement, some introductions of Methodist and URC leadership (The Chairs, Presidents, General Secretaries etc) and their function, an ice breaker to mix up the room, some discussion of the history of both churches (possibly

Thursday 14 October

08.30 Breakfast

09:15 **Session 5: Joint**

Chairing: David Walton (Methodist Council Chair)

On all seats a list of Workshops for the afternoon session

J5. The General Secretaries unpack our two Churches' current major themes
Roberta Rominger followed by Martyn Atkins

J6. Ways Ahead for Children & Youth Work **Paper BT/10/03**
Facilitating: Doug Swanney & the Revd Rob Weston

Immediately before going to coffee, John Ellis to remind all to sign up for preferred afternoon Workshops

10:45 **COFFEE**

11:15 **Session 6: Joint**

Chairing: Val Morrison (Moderator of the General Assembly)

J7. Ways Ahead for Children & Youth Work (Continued)

Interlude: Consensus Voting Procedures Explained
Led by the Revd Pauline Barnes, Consensus Adviser to Assembly Moderators

J8. Building Opportunities **Paper BT/10/04**
Led by Cliff Patten (Chair) and James North (Convenor) of the Buildings Think Tank

Immediately before lunch, John Ellis to give brief introduction to workshops

12:45 **LUNCH**

13:45 **Session 7: Joint in Mixed Groups**

J9. The Church in the World
A selection of Workshops facilitated by experts

15:45 **TEA**

16:30 **Session 8: Methodist Council**

M12. Update on progress re Wesley College Bristol **to note** **MC/10/83**
Doug Swanney & Sion Rhys Evans

M13. Brief update on process agreed by SRC for review of recommendations re Resourcing Mission Office **oral report** **Nick Moore**

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| M14. Transfers of Funds (MMTA etc) | to approve | MC/10/84 and
MC/10/84(a) (tabled) | Gareth Powell |
| M15. Workload Issues | to note | | MC/10/85
John Ellis |
| M16. Timetable of work coming to the Council and the Conference | to note | | Ken Howcroft |
| M17. SRC D&P Sub-Cttee Terms of Reference | to note | | MC/10/86
Nick Moore |
| M18. Confidential Item | oral report in closed session | | John Ellis |

18:45 **DINNER**

20:00 **Session 9: Methodist Council**

Chair or Assistant Secretary to highlight feedback forms on desks

- | | | | |
|--|-------------------|---|---|
| M19. Connexional Team Work 2009-10 | to note | | MC/10/87
John Ellis |
| M20. Connexional Team Work Priorities 2010-11 | to approve | and MC/10/88 Amended Appendix 1 (tabled) | MC/10/88
John Ellis |
| M21. Candidating for the Ministry – criteria | to approve | | MC/10/89
Doug Swanney & Ken Howcroft |
| M22 Approval of En Bloc Items: | | | Ken Howcroft |
| a. Committee membership lists (Committees appointed by the Council) | | MC/10/90 and MC/10/90(a) Amendments | |
| b. Governance Scrutiny Group for the Connexional Grants Committee – Terms of Reference | | | MC/10/91 |
| c. Authorisation and delegations | | | MC/10/92 |
| d. Conference 2012 Plymouth | | | MC/10/93 |
| e. ACT Alliance Observer Status Renewal (WCC) | | | MC/10/94 |

21:00 **CLOSING PRAYERS**

The Vice President

Richard Mortimer, John Ellis and Isha Coke to meet to shape Session 10.

Shape then to be confirmed with David Walton, Kirsty Thorpe and Val Morrison.

**JOINT MEETING OF THE
METHODIST COUNCIL AND
THE UNITED REFORMED
CHURCH MISSION COUNCIL**

13-15 October 2010

To be held at:

**The Hayes Conference Centre
Swanwick
Alfreton
Derbyshire
DE55 1AU**

**Telephone:
01773 526000**

**How our Churches work:
an introduction to the URC Mission Council and the Methodist Council**

Basic Information

Contact Name and Details	Richard Mortimer richard.mortimer@urc.org.uk 020 7916 2020 Ken Howcroft howcroftk@methodistchurch.org.uk 020 7486 5502
Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	For information
Draft Resolution	n/a
Alternative Options, if Any	n/a

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	To give members of the URC Mission Council and the Methodist Council some background information about the structures of their two Churches, particularly with regard to oversight and governance
Main Points	The first section gives information about the URC; the second about the Methodist Church
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	The context is the first joint meeting of the two Councils under the title "Better Together"

How the United Reformed Church works

To understand the way the URC works you can read several Acts of Parliament, the URC Manual and a book shelf of General Assembly resolutions since 1972. The Clerk to the Assembly is always happy to provide magisterial guided tours.

Or you can think of a ferris wheel. Key pods include the Assembly (with the Trust linked in) the Synod and the Church Meeting. Different pods are at the top at different times as none is automatically supreme.



The tasks and composition of Church Meeting, Synod and Assembly are summarised below.

In some places Synod functions are delegated to a URC-Methodist United Area.

Church Meeting

Local mission
Ecumenical relations
Call ministers, CRCWs
Elect & ordain elders
Elect officers, leaders
Admit/transfer members
Send ministry candidates
Buildings & finance
(Local trusteeship)
Wider issues – send
resolutions to Synod,
which may be passed on
to Assembly

Led by:

*Members, elders,
ministers of Word and
Sacraments, Church
Related Community
Workers, lay preachers,
local church leaders*

Synod (United Area)

Regional mission
Ecumenical & international
relations
Oversight of churches
Oversight of ministers, CRCWs
Church planting
Authorise lay presidency
Local Mission & Ministry
Review
Concur with calls to ministers
Ordain Ministers
App't non-stipendiary ministers
Synod trusts hold the property
Send ministry candidates
Approve people for ordination /
commissioning
Send resolutions to Assembly

*Synod Moderators, Synod
Clerks, Training and/or
Mission Development Officers,
Children's and Youth
Development Officers, Trust
Officers*

General Assembly

*Mission Council acts for
Assembly in between its
biennial meetings*

General oversight
Witness & welfare of URC
Ecumenical relations
International relations
Constitutional matters
Doctrinal matters
Approve ministry candidates
Train ministers/CRCWs
Elect/appoint officers
Create committees and appoint
people to serve
Judiciary – appeals, discipline
Such other things as need
doing

*Moderators of Assembly (2,
serving for two years), Clerk,
General Secretary, Deputy
General Secretary, Mission
Council, Committees, staff at
86 Tavistock Place*

HOW THE METHODIST CHURCH IN GREAT BRITAIN WORKS

The Methodist Church in Great Britain is marked by the fact that its members still speak and subconsciously think of themselves primarily as “the people called Methodist”. They began as a discipleship movement within the wider Church, a society of people seeking holiness and engaging in worship and mission. In Wesley’s time and through succeeding generations they have continually adapted to changing circumstances in order to fulfil that calling as effectively as possible. The current expressions of that dynamic are the programme *Our Calling* which has led in turn to the *Priorities for the Methodist Church*; the process in which Local Churches, Circuits and Districts review their life, worship and mission under the heading *Regrouping for Mission*; and the *Team Focus* review of how the staff and other officers who are appointed to serve the whole of the Methodist Church (“the Connexional Team”) can best serve those Local Churches, Circuits and Districts as they regroup and are renewed in the ways they fulfil their calling.

Methodists therefore participate in a discipleship movement. Some people participate in that movement as welcome fellow-travellers (who used to be known as “adherents” or as “those on the community roll”) or as baptised and confirmed members of the universal Church (whether they were baptised and confirmed in a Methodist Church or not). But those who are confirmed as members of the universal Church through the agency of a Methodist Church or are transferred into the membership of a Methodist Church from another denomination are at the same time received into membership of the Methodist Church as a whole, not just of a particular Local Church. In other words, membership is connexion-wide in scope, but then held and embodied in a Local Church on behalf of the whole. This sense of Methodist membership comes from the discipleship movement beginning its life as a Society. So for Methodist members, discipleship includes accepting a share of the responsibility of sustaining and developing the movement for themselves and for others.

All Methodist members therefore participate in the *oversight* of the Church, i.e. the process of ensuring that the Church remains true to the gospel, to Christian (particularly the Methodist) tradition and to the promptings of the Spirit. Ministers (presbyters) who are ordained to a ministry of the Word, Sacraments and Pastoral Responsibility and who have been received into Full Connexion with the Methodist Conference [i.e. “Methodist ministers (presbyters)” who exercise their ministry under the jurisdiction of the Methodist Church] or are recognised and regarded as such have what the foundational documents of the Church call “a principal and directing part in these great duties” of oversight by virtue of exercising the particular characteristics of the ministry to which they are ordained. But they do not have the only part or role in oversight, and they do not exercise their ministry exclusively but in collaboration with others. Deacons are admitted into membership of a dispersed religious order within the Church, but are also received into Full Connexion with the Conference and ordained to a ministry of Witness through Service, by virtue of which they make their distinctive contributions to the exercise of oversight. Lay officers of the Church, and lay people in general, also have important and distinctive roles to play.

Oversight in Methodism is therefore shared between those who are lay and those who are ordained. It is exercised primarily through corporate bodies and then secondarily through individuals who represent those bodies [e.g. the President of the Conference (who is a presbyter) and the Vice-President (who is a deacon or lay person); the Superintendent minister and the Circuit Stewards]. The nature of those corporate bodies varies somewhat depending on to which part of the Methodist Church they relate. As a movement, the Methodist Church understands itself as a “Connexion”, a single entity or “organism” whose inter-dependent parts make up an inter-related whole. The various parts express different aspects of the whole on behalf of the whole. Thus the Local Church is the primary place where people express their worship and discipleship and experience nurture and care. The Circuit is the primary place where resources of finance, personnel and property are deployed to sustain the Local Churches in their inter-dependence and to further mission in the locality [n.b. presbyters and deacons are appointed to Circuits not to particular Local Churches: which Local Churches they relate to is a matter of Circuit policy and may change from year to year]. The District is the primary vehicle for relating to ecumenical and secular bodies in the wider region; for supporting the Circuits; for deploying ordained ministry to them in the process known as “stationing” [n.b. presbyters and deacons are in full connexion with the Conference and are then deployed by the Conference to particular Circuits or other types of appointment: in other words they are ministers of

the Conference for a particular Circuit or other type of appointment, not ministers of that Circuit or appointment]. The oversight bodies for these parts of the Connexion (the Local Church Council, the Circuit Meeting, and the District Synod respectively) therefore vary somewhat in their make-up in ways that are appropriate to the aspects of the whole of the connexion that the particular part embodies. But in each of these “Councils and Courts” of the Church both lay and ordained people share in their various ways in the exercise of connexional oversight.

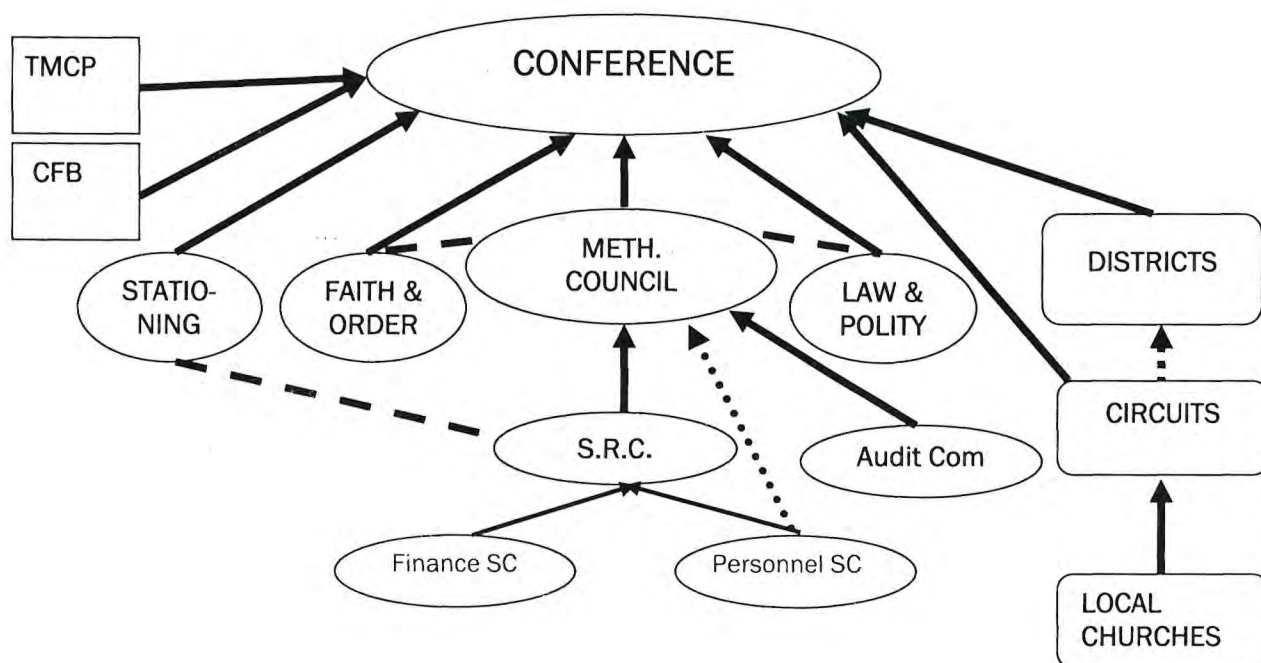
The Conference is the governing body of the Methodist Church under God. Because the Connexion is a single entity, the Conference is the most important oversight body for each of the constituent parts as well as the Church as a whole. It has 306 full, voting members, of whom 14 are deacons and the rest more or less equally divided between presbyters and lay people. Some are *ex officio* members [e.g. the President and Vice-President; the Secretary of the Conference/General Secretary of the Methodist Church (a dual role held by the same person); the officers of the Conference Secretariat supporting the role of Secretary of the Conference; the Connexional Team Secretaries supporting the role of the General Secretary in strategic leadership]. Others are appointed by subsidiary bodies, principally the Districts, to represent them or by the Conference itself to represent particular wisdom or expertise. It is important to note that they are all representatives, not mandated delegates, and that they all have a vote. In addition to the full members, however, there are 26 associate, non-voting members representing partner Churches overseas or in Great Britain.

As the supreme oversight body in the Connexion, the annual Conference has responsibility for what the foundation documents of the Church call the government, discipline, management and administration of its affairs. It fulfils this responsibility through a process of “Christian conferring”. This involves its members in seeking to discern the will of God through taking counsel together in a mutual, prayerful and thoughtful conversation that leads to collective decision-making in formulating and adopting the principal vision, purposes and policies of the Connexion under the guidance of the Spirit and in the light of Scripture. Much of its exercise of oversight is therefore in the form of governance i.e. exercising final authority over things and adopting rules and guidelines for the life of all parts of the Church (within the parameters set by the Methodist Church Act 1976 and the other foundational documents of the Church). Another major expression of that oversight is in the form of exercising leadership i.e. inspiring Methodist people to be imaginative, to articulate vision and to act faithfully and courageously. Less of the Conference’s activity is to do with expressing oversight through detailed management of activity in any part of the Connexion, the direct exercise of which is the duty of other groups and bodies.

The principal body subsidiary to the Conference is the Methodist Council, which meets three times a year. It comprises some senior connexional officers (including the General Secretary and the Connexional Team Secretaries), representatives of some major connexional bodies, and, predominately, a representative of each district. All are voting members (with officers of the Law and Polity Committee, the Faith and Order Committee and the Audit Committee as participating observers). They again include both lay and ordained people; and are again representatives not mandated delegates. The elected Chair of the Council, the Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee, the Secretary and Assistant Secretary of the Conference have particular roles to play in the preparing of the Council’s agenda and executing its decisions. The Council has to keep in review the life of the Methodist Church and propose to the Conference changes which will make the Church’s work more effective; and to give spiritual leadership to the Church. This involves elements of leadership, in that the Council seeks to harvest insights from the work of the Districts and the Team, articulate vision for them in return, and motivate and inspire them. It also involves major elements of governance. Many other major connexional bodies are accountable or report to the Council.

The Council is the trustee body for the Methodist Church Fund. It is also the employing body for lay staff in the Connexional Team (and for some such as Training Officers and District Development Enablers who are not members of the Connexional Team), and it nominates to the Conference any presbyters and deacons who are to be stationed to serve in the Team. The Council aspires to adopt best practice in fulfilling these responsibilities and looks for best practice to be applied in the management of staff in the Team. The Council also makes many nominations to the Conference for Committee and other appointments and makes a range of other such appointments itself.

GOVERNANCE OF THE METHODIST CHURCH



The Stationing Committee, Law and Polity Committee and Faith and Order Committee are all at the same level of governance as the Methodist Council. Faith & Order and Law & Polity have participant observer status on the Council. Some of those bodies have sub-groups that report through them. There are also bodies like the Candidates Selection Committees and Connexional Probationers Oversight Committees (both of which deal with presbyters and deacons) that report directly to the Conference.

The Connexional Team serves the Conference and acts to fulfil its wishes and directions. That involves the Team acting to fulfil the wishes and directions of the Stationing Committee, Faith & Order Committee, Law & Polity Committee, their subsidiaries and other bodies like the Candidates Selection Committees and Connexional Probationers Oversight Committees. Those bodies can direct the work of the Team, but do not manage it. Because the Conference has not been a legal person, the Methodist Council has acted as the employing body for those lay people employed in the Connexional Team (and the responsible body making recommendations to the Stationing Committee about the deployment of presbyters and deacons in the Connexional Team). The Team is therefore managed by the Methodist Council, which in turn delegates much of its responsibility in this regard to the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC).

Districts and Circuits are separate entities. They have their own accounts and budgets. They can employ lay people in the same way that the Methodist Council can (and so can local churches). They are also bodies which make recommendations to the Stationing Committee about the deployment of presbyters and deacons.

Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP) and Central Finance Board (CFB) are totally separate entities. They have their own accounts and budgets, and employ people.

The Methodist Council is responsible for the accounts of all entities in the Church which are not Districts, Circuits or Local Churches; nor separate entities like TMCP. They include the "Connexional Central Services Budget", which in turn covers the work of the Methodist Council; Stationing; F&O; L&P etc. etc. together with grant-making by connexion-wide bodies (as opposed to districts, circuits etc.). But they also include other things. Overall, they are serviced by the Connexional Team even though not all is in the control of the Team.

KGH September 2010

Towards more visible unity: affirmations from a URC/Methodist consultation

BASIC INFORMATION

Contact Name and Details	John Howard john_d_howard@hotmail.com 01902 332508; Chris Sissons sissonsc@methodistchurch.org.uk 020 7467 5278
Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	For information and potential discussion
Potential Outcomes	The Councils might wish to make the affirmation and/or call for further work to be done to take the matter forward

SUMMARY OF CONTENT

Subject and Aims	In April 2010 a URC-Methodist Consultation was held under the auspices of the Methodist-URC Liaison Committee entitled "Closer Working". One of the outcomes was a desire that both locally and on behalf of the whole of our denominations, our Churches would be given and take the opportunity to make their progress on their journey to visible unity more visible. A recommendation to that affect is presented to the Mission Council and the Methodist Council at their joint meeting for information and to see if the Councils wish to take this matter forward.
Main Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recommendation from the Consultation • The proposed affirmation

Uniting Churches in Britain

The United Reformed/Methodist consultation "Closer Working" meeting at Woodbrooke Hall Birmingham in April 2010, affirms both the valuable ecumenical work taking place across Britain and the urgent mission imperative to more effectively empower this work. We call upon our two churches to work with the Church of England, the Episcopal Church of Scotland and the Church in Wales, to create a higher profile for a movement towards visible unity that brings into being "Uniting Churches in Britain", The consultation therefore invites the appropriate bodies of our two churches (both "centrally" and locally) and any other interested churches to make the following affirmation:

We recognise that the Anglican/Methodist Covenant, the growing shared work between the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church and agreements between our two churches in Scotland and Wales mean that the three churches, Anglican, Methodist and United Reformed are on a journey together with a goal of full visible unity. We invite others who share this goal to join us on this journey. To aid the recognition of this journey together in the mission work we undertake, we commit ourselves to work together to become more visibly "Uniting Churches in Britain".

Which Way Now?: engaging with children and young people in our contemporary context

Basic Information

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Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	For information
Draft Resolution	n/a
Alternative Options, if Any	n/a

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To raise with the Councils the issues of declining engagement with children and young people • To consult on why that engagement is less effective than it used to be • To engage the Councils in the context of children and young people in 2010 • To examine case studies of successful work both denominations are engaging in
Main Points	<p>The following paper is an information sheet to provide background to the discussion.</p> <p>Presentations will be made to the Councils of other material, including the showing of a DVD. The sessions will involve case studies, group work and buzz groups.</p>
Potential outcomes	<p>The Councils might wish</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to commit both denominations to the crucial work of re-engaging with children and young people in Britain through the widest variety of media and other means; • to commit both denominations to do those things together that they are able to do, and to seek continually new areas of co-operation

WHICH WAY NOW?

Engaging with children and young people



Over **8 million** children in the UK have access to the internet
76% of parents don't have rules about what their children can do on the computer

For the first time there are more people over **65** than under **16** living in the UK

Children comprise **3.1%** of the prison population
 Each year **one in three** 10-15 year olds will be a **victim** of a **crime**

1/5
 Children & teenagers make up one fifth of the total population

There are **116** active mobile phone contracts for every **100** people living in the UK
Over 90% of teenagers own a mobile phone



4 million children live in poverty in the UK today

30% of all households are single people living alone
 The average family size has fallen from **5.8** children in **1950** to just **1.5** in **2010**

1% of people in the UK control **25%** of the wealth

Traffic is the biggest single cause of accidental death for **12 to 16**-year-olds
 The second most common cause of death among **15 to 24** year olds is **suicide**

In 2009 "The Good Childhood Inquiry" concluded that the "excessive individualism" of adults was damaging our children
 More than **1 in 10** young people feel that life is meaningless

Each week an average child in the UK spends **32** hours at school; **46** hours in front of a screen; **0** hours at church

Building Opportunities – Report of the Church Buildings Think Tank

BASIC INFORMATION

Contact Name and Details	Clifford Patten, cliffordpatten@btinternet.com 01992 500234; James North, northj@methodistchurch.org.uk Tel: 020 7467 5101
Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	Discussion and decision
Draft Resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Councils receive the Building Opportunities report • The Councils call for the formation of a follow on group to facilitate the next stage of this work, following the dissolution of the Church Buildings Think Tank
Alternative Options, if Any	Whether other denominations and partners might be involve in the next stage of work rather than this remaining a joint Methodist URC initiative

SUMMARY OF CONTENT

Subject and Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church buildings represent a major investment of capital, running costs and time. This in turn can limit local churches' mission. Can our denominations combine their expertise, creativity and resources to address these issues and ensure that our buildings are welcoming focal points of Christian witness? • Following presentation of the report, there will be time for discussion of key questions
Main Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The priority remains widespread cultural change at local level: local Church leaders must think creatively and bravely about God's mission in that place • Our denominations should combine resources and expertise, and consideration of joint mission objectives should be a requirement of consent to building projects • Churches should develop the skills and knowledge needed to play a more integral role in their local communities
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Strategic Oversight Group of Methodist Church and United Reformed Church commissioned the Think Tank • A complementary strand is the 2010 URC Assembly's resolution which instructed its officers "to explore the possibility of collaboration in the area of property advice to local churches"
Consultations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the Think Tank brought a wide variety of perspectives from each denomination.

SUMMARY OF IMPACT

Faith and Order	The think tank noted the ongoing need to look at the theology not just of buildings but also of resources and of land and sacred ground.
Financial	Resource-sharing between local churches including those of different denominations should release significant resources
External (e.g. ecumenical)	The recommended approach would involve closer engagement with communities and local authorities as well as grassroots cooperation among different denominations.
Risk	In view of the challenges of coordinating building advice in our two denominations, we recommend that lessons are learned from the current functioning of Local Ecumenical Partnerships and that staff from our denominations trial modes of collaboration through cooperating on Listed Buildings.

BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES REPORT

September 2010

1. INTRODUCTION

Our brief was to engage in visionary thinking aiming to address familiar issues in new ways, to make good use of previous work, and to look beyond the limitations of our Churches' existing initiatives and governance structures. As a coming together of representatives of the Methodist Church and the URC, we welcomed this opportunity to share perspectives and shed light on our own denominations' present situations. Where relevant we also explored possibilities for sharing mission and resources, in the belief that our findings should lead to recommendations for action, where possible.

For the purposes of this report, we have divided our conclusions into key issues in our work together (in ordinary type) and key findings and recommendations (bulleted and formatted in bold, italic type).

- We begin by identifying key strategic principles for future work on Church buildings (Section 2)
- We develop their implications for our denominations and their governance structures (Section 3).
- We suggest that this naturally leads to opportunities around shared mission (Section 4)
- We outline the kind of local sharing that would be possible by taking this approach (Section 5).
- Finally, we attempt to lay foundations for the much more extensive work of linking this process with the community context (Section 5).

Further suggestions for developing this work are contained in:

- APPENDIX 1 - The Way Forward
- APPENDIX 2 - Background on our denominations' governance structures
- APPENDIX 3 - A short note on the possible co-location of public services.
- APPENDIX 4 - Roadmap of the way in which the thinktank's key recommendations could be developed further.
- The Think Tank papers from which this report is compiled are available on request.

2. PRINCIPLES FOR FUTURE WORK ON CHURCH BUILDINGS

- ***Our first conclusion was that before any of the processes, resources or strategies to do with buildings become relevant, we must inspire Local Church Leaders to think creatively, widely and bravely about God's mission in that place, recognising that change is only successful when effected locally and supported by denominational policies.***

We noted that work focused on changes in our Churches' thinking about buildings, and in our relationship to the wider community has resulted in many new ideas and tools for change. However, our consensus was that these reports and programmes have not led to a significant change of culture. This is no reflection on their quality, merely their inability to take root in previous circumstances.

- ***Our denominations should carefully consider the practical context in which work on buildings operates, before investing too much in further aspirational or theoretical approaches to buildings.***

We considered typical symptoms of a counterproductive split between mission and buildings planning. Some Church buildings feature a strong separation between the worship space and the spaces where other healing and caring ministries are based: this may send a message that our communities are closed rather than open to the world. There can also be a preconception that Victorian Gothic is a norm, rather than simply one option. These factors can lead to situations where following tradition becomes an energy sapping 'end in itself'.

We note and approve the freedom which Fresh Expressions have given Churches to make innovative use of non-'Churchy' buildings, or indeed to use no building at all. We do not wish to tie congregations to traditional use of buildings if their discernment leads them to other possibilities. But we recognize the need for Churches to take full, mission-led ownership for all their buildings, being clear why they need and how they are to use their buildings, just as much as any other resource at their disposal.

- ***The primary guiding principle for all future work relating to Church buildings is that, if a Church chooses to use a building, whether traditional or modern, all planning should be grounded in mission. We wish to see local Churches being inspired to be much more creative with their building plans, rather than tied to what has gone before.***

3. TOWARDS A STRATEGIC VISION FOR OUR CHURCH BUILDINGS

- ***In both of our denominations, cultural change in the Local Church is a priority – inspiring and equipping the local Church to be mission-focused, releasing congregations to pursue their mission and what needs to happen to buildings will emerge in support of that mission.***

Central denominational initiatives can play a positive role in helping to influence, facilitate and inspire, rather than direct. Particularly in the Methodist context, it is important that we show how this work continues the process of Team Focus and the Property Consents Process by empowering the local Church and equipping it to discern and implement its mission.

- ***We recommend that our respective denominations combine and maximize the available support personnel and train volunteers locally to assist Churches to recognize when expert help is needed. In this context, we recommend that the Methodist Church should consider the possibility of continuing to support District Development Enablers.***

We discussed various instances known to us of Churches facing **steady decline**, which, rather than contemplating bold decisions about the future, drifted into a position of unsustainability. We consider that Ministers are the key agents in these situations, as they may be required to guide their congregations towards and through decisions such as closure, which may be very painful. Denominational support or other training should be available.

- ***A key part of investing in people resources will be equipping Ministers with skills in change management as early as possible in their careers.***

4. SHARED MISSION OPPORTUNITIES & GOVERNANCE ISSUES

We note that neither denomination has a central body able to assist with specialized issues relating to Church buildings other than Listed Buildings. The URC Listed Buildings Advisory Group (LBAG) could strengthen links with the Methodist specialist on Listed Buildings and conservation issues.

- ***We suggest that our Churches start planning a joint approach to the narrow area of Listed Buildings: we note that this work is timely, in view of current changes in the Methodist Church and discussions within URC Synods.***
- ***The Methodist Church holds a Resourcing Mission Forum which brings together those responsible for mission and buildings on an occasional basis. We recommend that our denominations explore these issues jointly at the RMF or a similar newly formed body. Web based contact with an annual physical forum would provide a useful arena for collective discussion of current issues and best practice, and build on the specific connection in the case of Listed Buildings to develop broader collaboration.***

Our discussions highlighted that **our denominations have different regulatory processes**. However, we envisage that the URC and the Methodist Church can develop shared vision for buildings through developing relationships that operate on three levels:

- i. national and denominational expertise –through the merger of Listed Building expertise
- ii. regional support – through resource sharing between Methodist District Development Enablers and URC Mission Enablers
- iii. local mission – through giving incentives to shared local mission

We consider that the developed practice of sharing will release congregations to become much more proactive and focused on taking ownership of their mission.

- ***The background to sharing should be our Churches' increasing focus on sustainable mission on behalf of the Kingdom, not just the sustainability of a particular Church building.***

5. STEWARDSHIP, MISSION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The basic Biblical mandate to share should increasingly be the foundation of our thinking about collective Church resources, in particular in relationship to the sharing of buildings and associated ministry. Rather than relying on centralized means of redistribution like levies, some of us would like to see more fluid and locally-originated means of sharing our wealth, time, expertise and other assets. We see this as one way of building cross denominational support through local unity.

- ***Those in our denominations responsible for making decisions about building projects should require consideration and exploration of joint mission objectives, before giving consent to a project. Our experience of the strengths and weakness of LEPs should be included in relevant planning.***
- ***The think tank sees joint mission audits as being a useful way of preparing for local resource-sharing. These should involve a much more extensive gathering of demographic and contextual information by our Churches than has previously been done and exploration of potential partnerships with public bodies and voluntary organizations to meet community needs.***

Many of these important matters connecting policy and theology are currently in the remit of the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT)¹ engages in shared responses by the Methodist, United Reformed, and Baptist Churches to matters of public policy.

- ***Current work on congregational giving – related to stewardship in the URC and financial discipleship in the Methodist Church - should be developed with mission and buildings planning and linked to the ecological agenda. We recommend that these issues which strongly link policy, theology and practice, should be included in JPIT's ongoing work.***

The Methodist Church's work on Carbon Reduction has resulted in the intention to form a new Energy Service, which aims to support the Church through encouragement, expert advice, information and incentives. These principles are closely in line with the recommendations contained in this report.

- ***We recommend that planning for cultural change in our grassroots be taken forward together with the new energy service.***
- ***Further work should be done to establish whether there are any circumstances that indicate mandatory strategic planning for Church buildings which are genuinely outdated. We suggest that buildings already identified as having environmental issues should receive attention as a priority.***

¹ <http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/>

6. CHURCH BUILDINGS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

We recognise the need for further work on links between mission and community, but saw these issues as complex: it was beyond the parameters of our work to make specific recommendations about the community context of our Church buildings. We view these as important issues for Church families to ascertain.

Ultimately, each Church using a building must shape that building to reflect who they are and what they are saying to their local community, taking full ownership of their building's place in their mission. This is a major undertaking, and may require property advisers and consultants to work with them for the course of the discernment and planning process. We need our personnel to determine visionary approaches through local partnerships, and thus produce a holistic mission and buildings response.

- *Our denominations should consider how we can benefit and learn from the experience and expertise of organizations like Faithworks, OneChurch100Uses and others, whether through consultation or specific projects. We specifically note the need for our personnel to have relevant training in dealing with the full range of relevant agencies in the course of buildings-related planning.*
- *However, we hold that it is preferable for Churches to develop the skills and vision they need rather than rely on external agencies. As such, we suggest that our denominations explore how Churches can benefit from their experience and expertise, partnering or through utilizing their skills in training and consultation.*

APPENDIX 1 – THE WAY FORWARD

If the general direction suggested in the report meets with approval, there are various ways in which this work could be taken forward.

1. PROVISIONAL CONSULTATION

The think tank has now completed its work. However, we could remain available to expand upon some points which we discussed in our work together, but which we were unable to put fully into writing due to time constraints.

2. WE RECOMMEND THAT OUR DENOMINATIONS:

- Instigate new work to encourage local Churches to understand their relationships with their buildings and to assist them in responding to the wider mission of the Church
- Set out a strategy for coordinating existing property advice within and between their governance boundaries. We would also recommend that our Churches consider the possibility of involving other denominations and forming partnerships with public and voluntary organizations in this process in the future.
- Plot a 10 year route towards the implementation of our main property proposals if agreed.
- Expand the research and further develop a Church building theology, to encourage the exchange of ideas and approaches and act as a resource and training advocate perhaps to build a web based resource for all Churches.

3. TO BUILD ON THE OUR THINK TANK’S FINDINGS, WE WOULD LIKE TO SUGGEST THAT OUR CHURCHES:

- Consider forming a follow-on group after the dissolution of this think tank (perhaps named the “Property Vision Group” or the “Building Opportunities Group”). This group could act as an executive body able to offer strategic direction and help coordinate the work of those in our denominations who will take this work forward.
- Develop guidelines (with this group’s assistance) for training those responsible for approving building work in our respective denominations, and a simple guidelines for Managing Trustees and Elders regarding their role in the process.
- Create strong links between this group, (or between the officials given responsibility for this work), and a similar mission strategy group which will implement the whole community discernment of mission.
- Give specific consideration to how, on the basis of these findings, and our ecumenical approach we may **enable local Methodist and URC Churches to work together, and thus discern their shared mission and response.**
- Assess the suggestions for further research (below) to accompany the actions outlined in the report.

4. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER WORK FOLLOWING ON FROM THIS REPORT

1. We suggest that **developing our awareness of the Church and its community will require extensive consultation with community groups and providers.** We see such consultation as a key element in creating relationships with Churches’ local contexts, but we also recognise the need for research in our denominations. We recommend that the follow-on group proposed above assist in developing research into
 - The distribution of Churches

- Demographics of our congregations and the local communities
 - Perceptions of our Churches and their buildings among congregations and the local community
2. We are aware of the potential links between our findings work and current work on **congregational giving** in our denominations. In the URC this is being looked at as part of a broadened understanding of stewardship; in the Methodist Church, as part of Financial Discipleship. We recommend that future work on giving and the theology of resource should:
- Be developed alongside mission and buildings planning
 - Be linked to the ecological agenda
 - Explore links between resource, ecology and the theology of land as sacred ground
 - Be taken forward in partnership with the Joint Public Issues Team's priorities
3. We recommend that future **research into the nature of our denominations' building stock** aim to establish the links between criteria of age and environmental suitability, and the true role of listed buildings and heritage. In particular, we advise that the ways in which a listed Church or a heritage site can promote or be part of contemporary mission are explored.
- We suggest that the Methodist Heritage Committee, the Connexional Team's conservation officer, and the URC's Listed Buildings Advisory Group (LBAG) cooperate to facilitate this research complementing LBAG's development of a URC policy on the role of the historic Church building in mission.
4. Regarding **broader issues in heritage**, we suggest that it is taken forward outside the Think Tank, and recommend that the URC consult with the Methodist Church on the subject when they are looking at their system and co-ordination of approach across the denomination.
5. We recognise that there is often a call to sell buildings to fund other work such as Fresh Expressions and mission and evangelism. However, we would emphasise our denominations' responsibility to ensure that this does not lead to **unsustainable funding streams**.
6. We saw the issues involved in assessing corporate money flows and strategic planning as complex and going beyond the scope of the present exercise, but we would like to suggest that research is conducted into the future funding of the new mission work we recommend in our main report, and our local Churches take ownership of the strategic vision outlined in our report, our denominations conduct research into key questions involved in sustainability, e.g.
- In planning funding for mission and the personnel to ensure Church building work is informed by mission thinking, what is the appropriate balance between funding from investment income (as currently practised by the URC Eastern Synod) and funds generated by Churches?
 - What proportion of our buildings needs to be retained to enable the radical reorganization of our building stock that may potentially be needed?
 - Does this imply the need to develop new models for Church, based on fewer but more self-sufficient buildings, able to generate energy and funds for key mission and ministry needs?

APPENDIX 2 - GOVERNANCE IN OUR DENOMINATIONS

Whilst the names, titles and some procedures differ between the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church, there are several key similarities on which to build a unified system if that would be helpful.

This Appendix outlines the governance and decision-making processes relevant to Church Buildings in our denominations so as to put future discussion of this subject in context.

1. LEGAL OWNERSHIP

This is almost invariably NOT vested in the local church community, but in a legal entity created largely for the purpose.

For the Methodist Church that body is the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP) to which the ownership of virtually all Methodist property in England, Scotland and Wales (there are parallel bodies for the Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey) was transferred by enactment of The Methodist Church Act 1976. TMCP hold this property as Custodian Trustees subject to the direction of the relevant Managing Trustees.

The United Reformed Church uses regional Synod Trust Companies and so there are 13 different bodies which hold most church buildings and manses on Statutory Trusts in accordance with the United Reformed Church Acts of 1972, 1981 and 2000.

These bodies would routinely check the accuracy of legal documents and enter into key transactions such as conveyances, for local church leaders. There are a few exceptions in both denominations where property is still held in the names of individual trustees for reasons specific to that property.

In both denominations, local church leaders hold responsibility for day to day management of buildings, including routine maintenance, decoration and repairs.

- Within The Methodist Church this means the members of each Church Council, Circuit Meeting or District Trustee body, who are collectively the Managing Trustees when dealing with property issues.
- Within the United Reformed Church this means the Elders working with and on behalf of the Church Meeting and whilst much of their role and responsibilities are similar to that of Managing Trustees, decision making is shared with the Synod Trustees in accordance with the United Reformed Church Acts.

2. MAINTENANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

In both denominations, the local Church Leaders (Elders and Church Meeting or Church Council) are responsible for routine maintenance and decoration, but also for any development of buildings.

Similar web based resources are available for general guidance:

- PLATO² Property Handbook (United Reformed Church)

² PLATO stands for Property, Legal, Administrative and Trust Officers. It is a self-help network that meets twice a year and communicates by email in-between. All Synods of the United Reformed Church participate, as do some central Church staff, but the group is not formally constituted as a council of the Church and has no authority.

- Property Consents Help and Guidance (The Methodist Church)
- There is a legal requirement that every listed building undergoes a Quinquennial Inspection by an independent and qualified professional. The Methodist Church requires this of all buildings and United Reformed Church Synods generally encourage the practice also. Whilst seen by some as an unwelcome chore, it is meant positively as a set of fresh eyes may well identify developing problems that those using the premises constantly may miss through familiarity. If used correctly, it also causes the preparation of an outline budget to cover essential work over the next few years.

3. STRUCTURAL ALTERATIONS AND OTHER TRANSACTIONS

- Neither denomination has successfully defined the term 'Structural Alteration' and so it is open to different interpretations which could be a problem within any future unified process. The requirement common to both denominations is that any project involving structural alterations must be authorised by a superior church body before local church leaders implement the work and take responsibility for its successful completion.
- The process for obtaining such permission is different in each denomination:
 - The Methodist Church has recently moved from a paper based system of schedules designed to attain central 'Approval' to a web based process whereby an appropriate body in each district or a similar body acting on behalf of The Methodist Council confirm that the proposals of the appropriate managing trustees for a local property are consonant with the purposes of and mission strategies of the wider Connexion by giving them their 'Consent'. This change supports the belief that important policy decisions about property are best made locally where there is likely to be a better understanding of the local circumstances, particularly the mission challenge, than a central body can ever hope to have.
 - In the United Reformed Church approvals systems vary around the Synods, with some Synod Trustee bodies taking a more proactive role than others, but the role of Church Meeting is crucial in all decision making in accordance with both the legal and theological framework within which the Church operates.
- Similarly, both denominations require local church leaders to seek Consent or other permission for transactions involving:
 - The acquisition of a new interest in a property.
 - The giving up of the whole or part of an interest in church owned property.
 - A proposal to share a building.
 - Listed buildings or buildings in a Conservation Area.

4. MANAGEMENT OF FUNDS

There are differences between the denominations, and indeed within the United Reformed Church, in the way in which proceeds of the sale of church property are managed.

- Within The Methodist Church, managing trustees have always been able to spend income as they saw fit, but spending of capital was strictly controlled. However, since Conference 2009, they also have full authority to spend capital on buildings or any other projects, provided that the purpose is within the purposes of the Church.
- Whenever Methodist buildings are sold, the net proceeds of sale are subject to a levy to the Connexional Priorities Fund, unless the sale proceeds are required to fund a linked project to buy or build a replacement property. This applies equally to churches and manses.

- The ambition of this procedure was to build up a central fund that could distribute money to situations where a mission objective had been identified but funds were not available.
 - Currently, the levy is set at 20% on the first £100K of any net proceeds and 40% on amounts above that.
- The United Reformed Church is served by 13 area Synods who currently have varying methods for dealing with the proceeds of sale of church buildings in accordance with the United Reformed Church Acts.
 - In 1990 the Methodist Conference and all (the then) 12 Provincial Synods of the United Reformed Church adopted the advice of a consultation of representatives of the Provinces and the Methodist Property Division that capital contributions by one church towards a building scheme on a shared chapel owned by the other church should be made as non-returnable grants. This is worth remembering and does demonstrate that it is possible to move forward by consensus without varying current governance practices as such.

APPENDIX 3 – A NOTE ON PUBLIC SERVICES CO-LOCATION

Recently, in the House of Lords, the Revd Lord Mawson (a URC minister) asked whether Her Majesty's Government have considered co-locating public services in under-used Church buildings. The potential of co-location to bring the Church back to the centre of community life and engage with its communities was debated.

"If the church stops hiding behind committees and archdeacons, and instead shows strong business-like leadership, it can play an important neutral role in bringing partners to the table and in opening up conversations with the health provider, the local authority, the school, the housing provider and the shop." (*Lords Hansard, 22 Feb 2010*)

Partnerships with Local Authorities, local housing associations, public services and voluntary organisations are strongly advocated, breaking down barriers and pooling resources. The creation of social cohesion along with a spirit of enterprise presents an opportunity to restore life into underused assets and make more efficient use of limited funds.

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has expressed its support for community focussed organisations who act as focal points to identify needs of the communities often not met by the public or private sector. Churches host such enterprises as cafes, nurseries, playgroups, counselling, shops, libraries, post offices, police help points, drop-ins for youth or elderly people, exhibitions, health centres, drama or concert performances and many more.

Neither the Government nor the think tank expect to be able to transform things overnight, and it could be argued that a solely top-down approach would be counter-productive. However, partnership at a local level can be made most effective by policies which give support and help people to change cultures and the way in which they think.

APPENDIX 4 – A ROADMAP FOR EXPLORATIONS BASED UPON OUR FINDINGS

(FOUNDATIONS FOR A VISIONARY APPROACH TO CHURCH BUILDING STRATEGIES)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 ROADMAP

The Church Buildings think tank's findings and recommendations have focused on general principles and work areas where Churches can work together, specifically the Methodist Church and the URC. But we considered it would be useful to present some of our more detailed reflections on how these recommendations might be implemented in practice, to assist decisions on how to develop the next stage of this work.

1.2 CONTEXT

If the proposals contained in the main report meet with approval, persons and groups charged with the responsibility of taking this work forward will benefit from a roadmap of options to consider. This paper presents a small number of options for taking forward the principles and recommendations outlined in the main report. It is not our intention to provide definitive solutions to any issue but to suggest areas for further investigation, and we are aware that further research may suggest different approaches towards fulfilling the same objectives.

1.3 CURRENT PROGRAMMES AND GUIDANCE

We recognise the wide variety of programmes for mission and development and guidance processes adopted over the last 10 years by both denominations, some shared with others. We suggest that, as part of the recommendations in The Way Forward, Section C:

- i. a catalogue of all mission and building focused programmes and information is produced both as a resource and as a means of understanding how they interrelate.
- ii. this catalogue assess existing programmes against the recommendations and findings we have advanced, specifically noting the need for greater recognition of the part that buildings and facilities play in conditioning the response from the Local Church family.

2. A MISSION-CENTRED APPROACH TO BUILDINGS

We have commented extensively on the relationship between the need for new strategic thinking on buildings, and key features of our governance structures in Sections 2 and 3 of the main report. This part of the report summarises some of our further thinking around useful perspectives as this work is taken forward.

2.1 THE NEED FOR DEVELOPING A JOINT LOCAL MISSION STRATEGY

The Church's response to its mission has traditionally been focused upon the local Church family. Denominational structures and governance principles have grown to support and reinforce this understanding. Thus, the wider Church recognises the full breadth of our communities' spiritual and pastoral needs, the inequalities and other social problems of our generation and continuously creates report and initiatives to generate a suitable response. But the local Church, responsible for undertaking this work frequently feels under resourced and quite naturally develops a much more limited view of mission.

The think tank noted extreme cases where this leads to congregations 'reinforcing their doors and windows' to protect them from the results of this mismatch between expectation, resource and

visionary engagement with mission, and observed that:

- In practice this focus can lead to independent but overlapping local projects, perpetuating the former barriers between local Church families which can almost appear as competing interests.
- This division of Christian people and financial resource between local Churches has the understandable impact of creating a restricted or selective view of the Church families' response to the wider needs of the community in terms of spiritual guidance, a caring and healing ministry and providing a support network to both start and facilitate the spiritual journey of individuals.
- The long established practice, determined by procedure and governance of Investing in individual denominational projects can result in funds not always being used in the most effective way and perpetuates the barriers between local Church families.

2.2 THE ROLE OF LOCAL CHURCH

We saw a great need to encourage a change of heart and mind to move away from 'competitive mission'. Recognising that all projects should be mission led, there is a clear need for all local Church families to work together. Our denominations should consider how we might encourage managing trustees, Elders and Church Councils to look boldly into the future and to have the courage to 'dream dreams' and develop visions of a world in which the Church and community work hand in hand?

This is in many respects a matter of 'culture change' but in practice this is the key element in the success of all the proposals contained in the think tank's work.

2.3 HELPING LOCAL CHURCHES GROW TOWARDS A MISSION-SHAPED FUTURE

We feel that the focus upon mission 'delivery' should move to the whole of the local Christian community who can be encouraged and empowered to make an honest assessment of the community needs, not limited by the work they feel able to handle as individual Churches. Developing a real understanding of these needs must surely lead Churches to consider responses that make the most use of all of the available people and building resources in the Christian community. To make such decisions and see them through to fulfillment, a church needs to be strong, confident and energetic for the timescale might cover several years. This requires:

- Helping individuals gain a fuller understanding of the breadth of responsibility they take on in agreeing to take some form of leadership within the Church family. This should emphasise the need to be visionary and to understand that much may have to be given up to facilitate a response
- Encouraging Churches to become less self preserving and to leave behind the inherited desire to maintain and protect the establishment they inherited.
- Developing a real desire for reaching out through a healing and caring ministry
- Understanding how the processes of reaching out and Church development works in individual Churches. Once understood, buildings and projects can be shaped to support this process
- Churches either choose to address and respond to the significant community and social needs or become ever more introverted and reinforce their buildings to separate themselves from the impact of these problems.

We realise that this approach is radical and challenging and do not mean to claim that all other traditional approaches must be jettisoned. However the kind of cultural change the think tank is advocating would benefit from a strong call to a creative and daring view of local mission, and we believe that this should form the context for our denominations' messaging in the coming years.

2.4 PARTNERSHIP

In addition to a shared discernment by the Christian community to establish local mission needs this can be carried out in partnership with:

- The community
- Mission enablers and training officers from the denominations involved
- Christian agencies experienced in this field, who may be able to provide particular help in realising shared solutions
- Local service providers and Social Services who may become partners in resulting projects, bearing in mind that the Church has always been the largest national supplier of 'social services'
- Schools and education authorities
- Local employers
- Police

As well as being an intrinsic part of fulfilling our Churches' mission in the community, a partnership approach has the advantage of preventing the development of introspective Church cultures leading to entrenched positions and reluctance to face changing contexts. It is often the case that this culture of reinforcement becomes the main focus of attention. This can go on for an extended period during which the church continues to decline to the point when it is too late, and there is insufficient membership, resource or energy left to consider anything radical.

In areas where the Christian community is represented by a single Church family or a geographically wide spread presence this process is still relevant, the greatest difference may be in the resulting response which may generate more radical approaches to being Church, perhaps approaches which will free the Church family of the burden of building 'ownership' or share the buildings available with the community or other agencies.

2.5 JOINT IMPLEMENTATION OF MISSION STRATEGIES

Having developed a local mission strategy in partnership it will be for the local Churches to work together to develop a response. This can take a variety of forms, for example:

- A coordinated response where each Church family develops an agreed area of work, remaining as independent families linked by a common shared project. This approach may struggle to justify sufficient funding to enable each family to develop their buildings as required and maintain them all as sustainable institutions.
- A shared response where the Churches jointly develop a buildings and facilities development plan to facilitate the ministry which will then be implemented over time and will probably involve a degree of rationalisation and recycling of funds from disposal of buildings or parts to develop a sustainable Christian community.

2.6 FROM DECLINE TO REVIVAL

We view the potential for local, mission-fired sharing is as central. All decisions about what to do with Church buildings are made locally rather than centrally. For example, the Methodist Church has always held the view that building activity must be in support of local mission; and its 2008 Conference resolved that consent to any proposals will also be made in the local District. So, the notion of central regulation has been abolished and so any hint at compulsion from 'The Centre' would be most unwelcome in Methodism. It would be equally unwelcome in the URC for similar reasons.

This leads us to underline the need for more support for those individuals who can influence local decisions, such as ministers and (in The Methodist Church) District Development Enablers. These Local Church Leaders could help managing trustees and Elders to make bolder decisions about property development, or in some cases, closure. It is often the case that in the absence of a major traumatic event such as a collapsing roof, fire, or financial crisis, local churches feel comfortable in their existing situation and it is easier to drift than face up to a radical change, until it is too late.

The way that Churches can move beyond confining attitudes will differ according to local circumstances, and the think tank is not in a position to make specific recommendations. However, we note for further consideration the work that Blyth URC Church has done with the assistance of One Church 100 Uses, which has transformed the situation and created a viable community enterprise, , and we recommend that Methodism consider the possibility of this kind of approach. Discussion with community partners, organisations like OneChurch100Uses and relevant training will be important parts of our Churches' growth towards a freer and more dynamic response to their mission.

2.7 FACILITATING AND SUPPORTING SHARED MISSION:

The kind approach we recommend that our denominations take to Churches, based on encouragement and empowerment, will vary according to local context, but we hold that it will enable congregations to think about certain key issues (amongst others):

- An understanding of why we reach out. Arguably, if it is for 'us' - to grow our Church family and keep it viable - then it will be very difficult to generate true sharing as others join on our terms with no expectation of change as a result. If it is for those we serve locally, then we have already developed an acceptance that the Church family has to change each time another joins. This is a fundamental building block in the process of true resource sharing.
- Tapping into local congregations' genuine desire for a healing and caring ministry, which as it is naturally shared can grow spontaneously.
- Encouragement to break down the existing barriers through shared local support structures, shared ministry, shared financial support
- Explorations of denominational harmony, covenant or even unity
- A move away in all departments of the denominations from seeing local mission as only doing what we are able or have facilities to do. What is seen as the holistic mission of the Church at Denominational level must be continued through into the local Church. A Churches mission then becomes their response to the mission of the Church
- Encouraging a 'do what you do do well' approach and the satisfaction which grows from that. It will be important not to raise the guilt complex to another level.

*(He couldn't move a mountain
Or pull down a big oak tree
But my daddy became a mighty big man
With this simple philosophy*

*Chorus
Do what you do, do well boy
Do what you do, do well
Give your love and all your of heart
And do what you do, do well)³*

2.8 ELEMENTS OF SHARED NATIONAL AND LOCAL WORK:

As this work develops organically, we see the potential for our denominations to assist its wider reach through establishing a shared National and local programme

- To make joint assessments of the local social needs and problems requiring Christian healing and caring ministry. This must include the major social issues which we normally discount as being too big to address.
- Provide real shared denominational help to the groups of Churches to develop a mission programme as a response which utilises the shared people and financial resources.
- Provide assistance to develop a long term strategy for developing and achieving the shared

³ Do What You Do, Do Well (Ned Miller)

- property which will provide the facilities required.
- Put into place means by which funds can be released from 'redundant' local and other buildings and create the circumstances where they can be invested where needed. This will enable the offer of really significant financial support for shared projects, particularly those that involve rationalisation to enable Church families to believe that they can dare to dream.
- Actively discourage any investment in Church families who do not fully embrace this process where possible.

This will require the unlocking of denominational trust barriers featured elsewhere to enable assets to be combined and investments made in other denominations buildings. This may require a reasonable time scale for the principles to be accepted and so work should start now.

The joint follow-on group whose existence is proposed in The Way Forward, Section C, would logically take responsibility for comparing and contrasting the different governance issues to do with property ownership in both denominations, and develop recommendations for harmonising our processes into an effective shared system

3. CREATING SUSTAINABLE CHURCH FAMILIES

3.1 TOWARDS VIABLE MODELS OF SUSTAINABILITY

We have recommended that more work is carried out in gathering and compiling financial information in Section 1.4 of the main report. Amongst other advantages, this would help meet the widely held desire to achieve a situation where all Churches who occupy their own buildings can achieve full sustainability. This would mean they were able from their own income to properly maintain and alter in response to needs and for this process to account for a portion of the total income which allows them to properly fund ministry and their mission and outreaching.

As the governance structure of both denominations assumes that this process will be determined locally and therefore it is difficult for the national Church to be able to plan or unduly influence this process to achieve a sustainable distribution if this were to be considered desirable.

As membership of our two denominations has declined over several years, similarly to other Churches, the funds charged as a levy on sale proceeds and therefore available for redistribution through grants has grown faster, than demand. This process does mean that significant funds from the sale of redundant buildings have become available to help with funding for mission projects anywhere in the Church, not necessarily the location where property has been sold.

Over time and with longer term planning buildings and sites of Methodist, URC and other denominations will become available for disposal and the proceeds will become available for reinvestment in creating Sustainable Christian communities.

The way in which local sharing will direct the reinvestment of resources is hard to predict at this stage. The natural result of Churches being viewed as superfluous to collective requirements and funds becoming available will not necessarily result in reducing the number of Churches, but probably involves new patterns of

- More sustainable buildings
- Fewer sole-owned buildings, as sharing develops

The full implications of sustainability are complex and go beyond our current remit, but a simplistic view of an approach based on these principles would suggest the following steps:

1. Church families growing and joining to create sustainable communities.
2. Recognising that particular ministries may need to be funded from wider sources to achieve sustainability

3. Assessing the sustainability of Fresh expression ministries which may not initially be self financing.
4. Finding methods of placing the proceeds that will become available over time through the sale of Methodist, URC and other sites.
5. Over time and with longer term planning buildings and sites of Methodist, URC and other denominations will become available for disposal and the proceeds will become available for reinvestment in creating Sustainable Christian communities.

And it will imply

6. A wider acceptance of the principle of resource sharing within and between Denominations for the benefit of the Kingdom.

(The current localised recycling reflecting property values and Church distribution will lead to a patchy result. We hold that denomination-wide procedures for recycling funds be further investigated, as outlined in Sections 4 and 5 of Appendix 4. This will enable a fairer approach to taking a slice of this money to fund manse and retired housing and pension).

3.2 SUSTAINABILITY AND THE USE OF BUILDING FUNDS FOR EXTERNAL PURPOSES

The think tank was concerned that current mechanisms whereby pensions, building maintenance and revenue funding are topped up by a levy on the proceeds of property sales is effectively living off our capital. As well as undermining faith in the energy of our congregations' ability to finance their own mission and investment in the wider Church, this policy is probably unsustainable for the denominations in the longer term.

We suggest that funds released from investments should be applied to premises and project pump priming rather than revenue. This needs to be connected with a major review of giving to establish a course towards a better balance between funding and running costs. We consider that this involves:

- creating a picture of a Church community achieving this balance as a target for others
- moving support for mission projects from investment funding to revenue funding as soon as is practical without endangering worthwhile initiatives.

4. IDEAS AND APPROACHES RELEVANT TO CULTURAL CHANGE

The think tank anticipates that the shared forum advocated in Section 4.2 of the main report will make the sharing of expertise and wisdom easier, and offers some preliminary perspectives to contribute to this work below.

4.1 FIRST QUESTION: BEING MINDFUL OF THE PURPOSE OF OUR BUILDINGS

As noted in Section 5 of the main report, we recommend that Churches ask themselves "what is our building for?" and even "do we need a building?"

Owning a building is a corporate statement and offers the opportunity for control over the shaping influences of the buildings we all occupy. Most nomadic Churches seem to naturally move towards creating their own 'temple' so building ownership and what comes with it seems to be a natural 'corporate' desire.

A building can be a powerful statement and resource for the community and the Kingdom. However there are issues related to ownership which should be recognised as Churches think through their work:

- National and locally across the denominations the significant investment of time and money in buildings and its resulting fragmentation needs to be challenged: is it the most effective use of limited resources?

- There are some outreach projects where the association with a Church building is too great a barrier to the effectiveness of the work.
- The ongoing capital and emotional investment in buildings can generate resistance to alter and change particularly in relation to relocation. Are we tying ourselves to dead stone to the detriment of our living mission?
- Buildings and establishment issues can be a significant barrier to greater ecumenical partnerships and local growing together.

Various potential gains from congregations adopting a more flexible approach to procuring the facilities are mentioned in this report. Two of the most obvious and encouraging to local Churches may be

- Buildings that are more responsive to change
- Capital may be freed up for the further resourcing of mission.

4.2 WORKING WITH CHURCHES

'We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us': Winston Churchill.

The think tank noted that, just as our understanding of being Church and how we organise ourselves as a Church family is shaped by our inherited structures and denominational theology our approach to mission, patterns of Worship and reaching out are strongly shaped by the location and nature of the buildings we occupy. This section offers some preliminary thoughts to assist Churches to become conscious and thus freer to choose whether to adopt the traditional approach or not in each case, rather than imitate blindly.

The majority of Church families occupy buildings largely constructed and shaped to suit previous generations of Christians who may in some cases have had an understanding of being Church that was different from ours. We can be restricted in what we do and shaped in our understanding of Church and our continuing mission by the location, accommodation and nature of these buildings. It is widely accepted that we need to recognise these influences when planning alterations or new buildings.

We set out below some of the aspects of Church buildings which we suggest need to be recognised when seeking to achieve effective and responsive buildings.

- **The nature of our process of reaching out and growing as a Church:** If we make a conscious effort to understand how this process works in our Church family we can then review the layout and nature of the building to establish if it hinders or assists. Many Churches now develop social spaces to increase the opportunity to bump into, welcome or interact with the community through activities and by the way the building is entered and used, but this only works if this process is understood and lies at the heart of the way the Church reaches out.
- **Location:** Much of our distribution and geographical location within communities is inherited, perhaps driven by factors and community shaping which no longer exists. Continued ill-considered investment in particular locations can be less beneficial and an honest and perhaps painful assessment needs to be made of the right location for each aspect of the work of the whole Church locally before further investment maintains the inertia. Data is available within each denomination about the sizes of worshipping communities and the buildings they occupy. This could be used to create joint assessments of the nature and scale of potential duplication of buildings in some locations.
- **What the building is saying:** We are all very used to judging individuals and organisations by the nature of the buildings they occupy. The nature of the building and the way it is looked after can speak much louder than the communication efforts of local Churches. We suggest that the following are relevant areas to consider:

- The state of repair and nature of the building can be seen as a reflection upon the nature and conviction of the Church family.
 - Does the building and particularly the worship space speak of a response to God's love which is relevant today?
 - Does the building speak of an outreaching community in the way it welcomes, confuses or resists visitors?
 - Does *the* building look closed or the access unwelcoming during the week when the surrounding area is open for business. Is the Christian faith only relevant on a Sunday morning?
 - Does the nature of the building, its state of repair and its furnishings speak of the past or does it speak of a faith still relevant today?
 - Are building users aware that this is the Church family home, or is it a public hall? Seriously consider the communication process what you may be saying when looking upon letting the community use the buildings as outreach. Community access via the back door speaks volumes although often not to us.
 - Does the building speak of hope or despair?
 - Is the building a beacon of hope and refuge or a blot?
- **Change:** Change is a significant factor and opportunity in the Christian journey. Flexibility in layout, ease of adaptation to new uses will improve the opportunities for accommodating future changes in the Church. (It is widely recognised that the Church is in a period of significant change and this will impact upon all aspects of Church life)
 - **Expert advice:** It should be recognised that building technology and planning advice is not always the same as building design and theological advice. Property advice therefore falls into two categories:
 - Maintenance, repair and asset protection or facility management. This needs to be supported by good technically qualified advisors (but it is often difficult to recognise when you are perhaps out of your depth)
 - Building design, theology and development advice which may not need to be offered by the same personnel as the first category.

4.3 TRADITION AND HERITAGE

The roots and heritage of both the Methodist Church and the URC are expressed in many of their buildings. There is both a need to preserve the important part of this heritage to enable the story to be seen and interpreted whilst enabling buildings also to be responsive to current needs.

Church buildings are often associated with community, family and Church family memories, particularly relating to significant milestones and the association with past family members. We all relate to different and particular aspects of Church buildings and furnishings. The slow to evolve Church building can be seen as a refuge in an ever changing world and we are tempted to hold onto the statement of stability longer and more possessively than we perhaps should.

- If the building you occupy has a recognised heritage role to play or if it embodies historic fabric and fittings which are protected by 'Listing', which aspects are helpful and facilitate the Church family and which do not (setting aside the potential difficulties in responding to this which can be used as a reason not to consider change)?
- Do you see your mission as holding onto a building as a community resource and pattern of being Church which is an unchanging refuge?
- If so is this sustainable in the longer term?
- Are the building and furnishing elements that the Church family feel they need to

preserve purely a family matter. Will their preservation become a barrier to others joining the family or do they make a positive contribution to reaching out. Be objective?

- What are you prepared to give up, to achieve your needs as described elsewhere?

4.4 COLLECTIVE THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

- We would encourage a greater understanding of the theology of Church buildings as this is almost always lacking in any programme addressing outreach and planning for the future. This needs to be provided in conjunction with outreach and mission advice and we would urge a much greater emphasis placed upon creative and well considered building Theological advice. It may be that training schemes for those involved with offering local advice would be beneficial.
- We recognise that there may perhaps be as many theologies of Church buildings as there are theologians. However that supports the need for our Churches to engage theologically with buildings. The think tank's desire is that any building used by our Churches reflects and expresses the local Church's understanding of itself and its mission

5. THE ROLE OF REDUNDANT BUILDINGS

Beyond the process of recycling which we envisage as developing naturally from local sharing, we considered cases in which buildings become genuinely redundant.

5.1 SHARING AND DECLINE

We recognise decline; and planning for it ('managed decline') as the 'negative' aspect of this process. And whilst we foresee the potential of great growth in Church families through fresh expressions and less conventional ways of being Church, this may not produce a greater need for the existing building stock, nor the income to sustain extensive buildings of their own.]

Generating a suitable approach to redundant building disposal:

- The message of an empty Church or an unsuitable change of use should be avoided if possible.
- It is not easy to see how buildings can be 'gifted' to suitable community users and still maintain the recycling of funding. Unless this approach has real mission advantages.
- Does the Church become a developer of housing and commercial buildings? Is the developers risk too great for the Charity to accept or should we with good advice be able to benefit from this approach?

Think tank participants noted that moves towards our denominations becoming commercial developers raise challenging issues, and we were reluctant to pursue this area in depth. However, we recognised that it is important to remember that this is an option that may have a significant role in an entrepreneurial culture which interacts with our communities in contemporary and relevant ways.

5.2 SHARING WITH THE COMMUNITY

We have discussed the broader issues of locating our mission in the local community, and also the possibilities for an entrepreneurial attitude to our buildings and resources, in Section 5 of the Main Report. We gave careful consideration to the motivations and practicalities of such gifting, but concluded that further work was needed before any clear principles could be discerned.

The Church holds its buildings in trust for the charitable purposes of the Church. Gifting parts of Church buildings for community use can be considered in what is perhaps a small minority of cases, just as raising income from buildings by community lettings may be a necessary part of the journey to sustainability. However, the part this plays in responding to the mission strategy must be carefully and critically considered: if the Church plays no part in touching the lives or meeting with those who use

the buildings in such ways, we must question the relevance of this process to the mission-focus we are advocating in this report.

Moving to a position where Church buildings are only used for reaching out in loving and healing service in whatever form this takes must be considered to be a key aim.

There is significant external funding available that can help building work but almost inevitably the main purpose of the Project must be 'Community Use' rather than Church, which perhaps underlines the importance of some of what is said above.]

6. ISSUES FOR OUR SHARED BUILDINGS EXPERTISE

We have identified the potential of sharing property expertise within the URC and Methodist Churches. There are several specific points we would like to note:

Property advice falls into 2 categories:

- Maintenance, repair and asset managers. There is a danger of offering well meaning but perhaps unhelpful advice at local level. Advice needs to be supported by good technically qualified advisors and does suffer from the commonly held belief that a DIY grasp of building technology and a real understanding of building fabric, particularly more historic fabric is all that is needed.
- Building design and theology advice to Churches which enable the full potential of existing and new buildings to be achieved.

In line with the collective mission –led approach we have advocated, we note the need for advisors who have developed a sense of buildings theology and can work with Churches locally and encourage visionary thinking. Inappropriate concepts and initial briefing information can prevent visionary thinking: these would restrict the work of the Church for another generation.

REVIEW OF THE METHODIST/UNITED REFORMED NATIONAL RURAL OFFICER POST

Basic Information

Contact Name and Details	Rev. Elizabeth Caswell , Chair of the Review Group (URC) email: ecaswell@btinternet.com Claire Herbert, Head of CCEA, tel: 020 7467 5277 email: herbertc@methodistchurch.org.uk
Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	Discussion and Decision
Draft Resolution	The Councils accept the recommendations in the review report, but in addition agree to undertake an earlier review of the post where any developments give rise to significant changes in the current funding arrangements and model, or in the bilateral and/or ecumenical partnership arrangements.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	The Role of National Rural Officer of the Methodist/URC National Rural Officer has been reviewed by evaluating the rural mission project against the work programme established by the Arthur Rank Centre; the Objectives of the project; the Priorities for the Methodist Church; and the Vision 2020 project of the United Reformed Church
Main Points	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The post of National Rural Officer for the Methodist and United Reformed Churches be continued, as a joint full-time post, to run from September 2011-August 2016; 2. The National Rural Officer continues to be based at the Arthur Rank Centre; 3. Within the United Reformed Church no structural changes are made to the positioning of the post; 4. Within the Methodist Church the National Rural Officer remains part of the Connexional Team within the Christian Communication, Evangelism and Advocacy Cluster. The research findings be further considered by the Rural Strategy Group over the next two years; 5. A further review of the post be initiated in September 2014 to be completed no later than June 2015.
Background Context and Relevant Documents	The Methodist Team Focus process led to a decision not to continue with a Rural Officer post within the Connexional Team from 2011. In the light of the current review the current Methodist Strategic Leaders believe it is right to reverse that decision.
Consultations	Office holders across both Methodist Church/URC (Rural Officers, Training Officers, Development Officer, District Chairs, Moderator and Synod Clerks) Ministers in Rural appointments across both churches.

Summary of Impact

Financial	Ongoing implications for Methodist Connexional Team and URC budgets.
Personnel	This review paper proposes to link the NRO to the Connexional Team via the Joint Public Issues Team.
Wider links	The NRO maintains and develops a network of District/Synod Rural Officers.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	The NRO works out of the Arthur Rank Centre at Stoneleigh as part of a team with the Church of England's National Rural Officer, led by the Centre Director; the ARC is a partnership between the Rank Foundation and the Royal Agricultural Society of England (RASE) and the churches.
Risk	Implications of not continuing to engage in the rural agenda via an ecumenical team.

Review of the Methodist/United Reformed National Rural Officer Post

June 2010

Review Group Membership

Methodist: Revd Dr Gordon Gatward, Revd Graham Horsley, Revd Graham Thompson
United Reformed: Revd Peter Ball, Ms Francis Brienen, Revd Elizabeth Caswell
In attendance: Revd Graham Jones and Ms Isabel Taylor

Elizabeth Caswell chaired the group and Isabel Taylor took the minutes and co-ordinated the research and documentation.

Activity

The Review Group met on three occasions - 16th April, 21st May and 8th June 2010. Group members took responsibility for providing papers on how the post:

- fulfils its own objectives;
- fits within the Arthur Rank Centre (ARC) work programme;
- meets the *Priorities for the Methodist Church*;
- meets the URC's *Vision 2020* mission priorities.

Research into the post's perceived value was undertaken, funded by the Methodist Church. Over 260 responses were received.

All the papers and research findings are attached as appendices to this report, together with a glossary and budget.

Findings

The Review Group has come to a unanimous view that the post of National Rural Officer (NRO) for the Methodist and United Reformed Churches is of continuing and clear value to both churches as they support rural and market town congregations in relevant mission, and as they participate ecumenically in giving the Church a voice in the setting of government rural policy and the response to contemporary social issues in the countryside. It is our belief that, for two denominations who find their numerical strength in town and suburb, a specialist post is the most realistic way of engaging with the rural agenda and supporting rural congregations. The post has proved its value and the work is continuing to evolve. It is a cost-effective way of meeting the churches' responsibilities to the rural constituency.

a) Local Mission

The NRO maintains and develops a network of District/Synod Rural Officers, supporting them collectively, in conjunction with their Church of England counterparts and individually, as needed. Through materials provided via e-mail, Rural Officers and other network members are kept abreast of developments that affect their pastoral and communication role (e.g. updates on foot and mouth, blue-tongue, bovine tuberculosis and other disease outbreaks). Seasonal worship material is made available and mission training material is provided and commended (*Presence* and *Presence Papers*, *Making Connections*, articles in *Country Way*).

Through the NRO and the network of Rural Officers, local churches and ministers receive information and advice about the use of church premises (e.g. to host post office and shop facilities) and are encouraged to work with others to serve the needs of changing rural communities - everything from affordable housing to tourism, farmers in crisis to migrant workers.

Congregations, which may be numerically and financially vulnerable, are being encouraged to engage in holistic mission. The current post-holder's initiatives in ongoing projects on social entrepreneurship and local collaborative ministry give hope of more confident and self-sustaining congregational life.

b) Training

One of the priorities of the role is to encourage ministers to understand rural ministry. For many years the ARC has run two rural ministry courses each year for those moving into this work. The courses are highly valued - they are usually over-subscribed and evaluated positively by participants. The NRO has a critical role in delivering these courses.

In recent years the NRO has been able to make input into initial ministerial training courses at two colleges (in Birmingham and Durham) and, through the Cambridge Theological Federation, an increasing number of rural placements have been organised for students.

There are regular gatherings of Rural Officers and major conferences at the ARC which provide ongoing encouragement and education for all involved in rural ministry, ordained and lay.

c) Wider Mission

The employment of a staff member to focus on rural concerns enables the two denominations to participate in the consultations about policy affecting rural life that government instigates. The NRO is able to bring a specifically Christian voice to such discussions and the churches are recognised as knowledgeable and respected partners across a wide spectrum of issues. Expertise is critical for this level of engagement. The present NRO took the lead role in the campaign to protect rural post offices, in which many of our churches participated.

This experience enables the NRO to represent the churches' viewpoint in discussions about the many areas of rural life which affect the whole community, urban as well as rural: food security, bio-fuels, use of the countryside, affordable housing, local sourcing and migrant communities. The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) does not have the capacity to absorb this volume of extra and specialised issues and relies on the NRO to lead on rural concerns. The Review Group would like to see enhanced collaboration and collegiality between JPIT and the NRO.

d) The Arthur Rank Centre (ARC)

The NRO works out of the Arthur Rank Centre at Stoneleigh as part of a team with the Church of England's National Rural Officer, led by the Centre Director. The ARC is a partnership between the Rank Foundation, the Royal Agricultural Society of England (RASE) and the churches. The churches' main contribution to this joint enterprise is the provision of staff members. It is worth noting that

the Church of England recently reviewed its National Rural Officer post and affirmed both that it should continue and that it should still be located at the ARC.

Working collaboratively, not only as the churches' Rural Officers, but also through the ARC with numerous other charitable groups (e.g. Rural Stress Helpline), enables the churches to share expertise and representation across a much wider range of concerns than any one Officer could engage with alone. It is a model of ecumenical partnership which, to a growing extent, is affecting the working style of District/Synod/Diocesan Rural Officers at regional level. It is hoped that this way of working will encourage effective ecumenical ministry and mission locally.

For the Methodist and United Reformed Churches to withdraw from the ARC would send an unfortunate signal to the government and the farming community about our lack of interest in rural life and concerns. It would be a sad end to twenty-five years of shared endeavour and, a needless end, given the relatively light cost and the major benefits and economies of shared working at the ARC. The effectiveness of the post and the location of the post are intimately connected.

The above findings are based on the attached research and documents.

Recommendations

The Review Group commends the work done within the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church on rural mission. With at least 60% of Methodist churches and 25% of United Reformed churches in rural and/or market town settings, we believe that the role of the National Rural Officer is crucial to supporting them and we, therefore, urge both the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church to remain committed to this work.

The Review Group recommends that:

1. the post of National Rural Officer for the Methodist and United Reformed Churches be continued, as a joint full-time post, to run from September 2011 to August 2016.

The attached papers indicate that the National Rural Officer role provides essential and cost effective support for the rural mission of both denominations. It maintains and develops the District/Synod network of Rural Officers, offers lay and ministerial training resources, connects with government and other rural agencies, enabling the churches' voice to be heard and a church contribution to policy to be made.

The review reports indicate the breadth as well as the detail of this work and how it has developed during the tenure of the present Officer. We do not believe that this work could be done as effectively in any other way. A half-time appointment for each denomination secures an involvement in a remarkably effective ecumenical venture. The rewards of this involvement far outweigh the costs which - in 2009-10 - were just under £50,000, shared between the two denominations.

2. the National Rural Officer continues to be based at the Arthur Rank Centre.

The arrangement by which the National Rural Officers of the Church of England and the Methodist and United Reformed Churches work together with the Director of the Arthur Rank Centre creates a strong ecumenical team in which varied skills and expertise allow for shared working and specialisation, benefiting all three denominations.

The ARC team is a healthy model of effective ecumenical co-operation which encourages similar co-operation in rural work locally and regionally, as well as in the areas of worship material, rural mission, campaigning, ministerial training and international and national rural policy. By working together the team enables each partner denomination to benefit from the full range of knowledge and expertise. The loss of the post would cut our two churches off from the ARC, substantially diminish its work and undermine ecumenical collaboration in rural settings. It would also compromise the ability of our two denominations to engage with rural policy at a national level.

3. within the United Reformed Church no structural changes are made to the positioning of the post.

The National Rural Officer is part of the Mission Team, which is accountable to the General Assembly Mission Committee. Within the Mission Committee support is provided to the NRO by a Link Member, who is also part of the Rural Strategy Group. These arrangements have proved to be crucial in supporting the current NRO in his work and for ensuring that rural mission is fully integrated within the work of the United Reformed Church.

4. within the Methodist Church the National Rural Officer remains part of the Connexional Team within the Christian Communication, Evangelism and Advocacy cluster.

The Review Group realises that the re-structuring of the Connexional Team is still recent, but we believe that there are good reasons for this matter to be re-addressed. With at least 60% of Methodist churches being defined as rural and/or market town, it seems appropriate that this missional role should be resourced by the Connexion. Remarkable cost effectiveness is demonstrated by the internal evaluation of the post and by the survey of those involved in rural ministry. Furthermore, it would be unfortunate if the NRO's standing in the two denominations is substantially different. The Review Group believes that the re-positioning of the post within the Methodist Church, without ecumenical consultation with the URC and without consideration of the implications for the post, is another reason for revisiting the decision.

We propose that the NRO should link to the Connexional Team via the Joint Public Issues Team and that this relationship should be strengthened by ensuring that the NRO's link person within the Connexional Team is also a member of the Rural Strategy Group.

5. the research findings should be further considered by the Rural Strategy Group over the next two years.
6. a further review of the post be initiated in September 2014 to be completed by no later than June 2015.

Review of the Role of the Methodist/URC National Rural Officer

Appendices

Evaluation Papers

One of the central objectives of the Review of the Role of the Methodist/URC National Rural Officer was to review the historic achievements of rural mission work. Appendices A to D detail the findings from this work, which was done by evaluating the rural mission project against:

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Further background information gathered and used to inform the recommendations of the review can be found in appendixes E – G:

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**Evaluating the Role of the Methodist/URC National Rural Officer against
the work programme established by the Arthur Rank Centre**

Established in 1972, the Arthur Rank Centre (ARC) is a charity with three founding partners, the Royal Agricultural Society of England, the Rank Foundation and the national churches, and the stated objective 'to serve the rural community and its churches'.

Based at the National Agricultural Centre at Stoneleigh, the ARC has direct contact with the other organisations on site and has established close working links with the National Farmers Union, the National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs, etc. and is widely acknowledged by them as the rural voice of the churches. The ARC has established a strong chaplaincy ministry to a number of these organisations as well as to the wider farming/rural community.

The strength of the ARC's ecumenical credentials is represented in the membership of the board of trustees, its wide range of project partners and activities and the use of its resources by most of the churches and church organisations active in the countryside. It is widely recognised across the denominations as the churches' national rural resources unit.

The Methodist/URC NRO works as part of the ARC's closely knit ecumenical team. This includes the NRO for the Church of England as well as a number of project and administrative staff.

The basing of the Methodist/URC NRO at Stoneleigh not only extends the range of skills represented in the team but also enables the two denominations to have direct access to all of the ARC's resources and to be directly involved in its governance, policy and strategy.

The oversight of the post is exercised by the Rural Strategy Group (RSG), membership of which is drawn from both denominations. The RSG meets at the ARC and nominates a trustee for appointment to the board. The Director of the ARC is a member of the RSG.

The ARC's current work programme runs from 2009-2013 and illustrates the spread of activities with which the NRO is involved, in addition to denominational responsibilities. Copies of the work programme are available from the ARC. Although compiled by ARC staff, the programme has the full backing of the ARC trustees who exercise overall responsibility for monitoring its progress.

1. NRO's Direct Responsibilities and Roles:

- **International representation**
The NRO represents the ARC on the Churches European Rural Network (CERN) and the International Rural Churches Association (IRCA) as well as having responsibility for leading on the ARC's international links. The NRO will be attending the four yearly IRCA conference in Germany in September 2010.
- **National representation**
The NRO represents the ARC on the following bodies (in some instances the NRO is the only rural and/or church voice):
 - Rural Support England
 - Rural Community Buildings Network

- Get Fair Coalition
 - Places of Worship at The Heritage Alliance
 - Churches' Regional Network
 - Farm Crisis Network (serving as a Trustee)
- **Project responsibilities:**
 - The Rural Church Entrepreneurs Project
The NRO is responsible for the project and is currently working with the Churches' Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber to construct a regional leadership development programme re entrepreneurial skills. The project:
 - encourages greater social entrepreneurship amongst lay and ordained rural practitioners, as well as encouraging the churches to value entrepreneurial skills more highly
 - provides training in entrepreneurial skills
 - is looking to encourage the churches to include entrepreneurial skills in their recruitment criteria and formation processes.
 - Local Collaborative Ministry (LCM)
With all denominations experiencing a shortage of ordained ministers, there is a very real need to explore and develop new forms of sustainable ministry in rural areas. Defined as "*The development of self-sustaining congregational life built on the ministry of all the baptised*", LCM is clearly one such form. The NRO is responsible for progressing the project, this includes:
 - promoting LCM across the churches as well as the good practice and experience of churches already engaged in LCM
 - producing and promoting resources for rural churches
 - convening an ecumenical group of interested parties seeking to promote and develop LCM in the rural church
 - editing a paper on the theology of LCM to be presented as a seminar at the *Faith and the Future of the Countryside* national conference in November 2010
 - staging an LCM training event (£4000 has been secured to fund the event)
 - developing a working partnership with the Foundation for Church Leadership to further strengthen the role of LCM across the churches
 - Migrant Workers Project
The NRO represents the ARC on all matters regarding migrant workers' issues and is responsible for all information and resources on the ARC website regarding this area of work.
 - The Rural Stress Helpline (RSH)
The NRO provides pastoral support for the RSH Manager/operator. This is a much valued and crucial role as the RSH receives many difficult calls involving financial, business and personal issues.

2. NRO's involvement in other ARC activities includes:

- **Rural Ministry Course**
A twice yearly course for those entering rural ministry for the first time. It is regularly over-booked and always highly rated on the evaluation forms. The NRO is one of the key leaders of the course.

- ***Country Way***
A magazine produced three times a year by the ARC that is a highly valued resource for both rural churches and rural communities. The NRO is a member of the editorial board and a frequent contributor.
- ***Liturgy, Prayers, etc.***
One of the most requested and well-used resource areas produced by the ARC relates to rural services and especially prayers and liturgies for special occasions in the life of the rural church and community. The NRO provides a large proportion of the wide-ranging and extensive worship resources available on the ARC website.
- ***Making Connections***
The NRO is co-author of the recently published workbook encouraging and helping rural churches to engage effectively with their communities.

Overall, and as has already been expressed, the NRO for the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church is an integral member of the ARC team. Working closely with the NRO for the Church of England, the NRO provides the capacity, expertise and ability without which the ARC would be unable to fulfil a large part of its work programme.

**Evaluating the Role of the Methodist/URC National Rural Officer against
the objectives of the project itself**

The objectives were set out in section 5 of the document *Proposal for Continuing a Post*, the report of the review conducted into rural mission work in 2005. The objectives 1 to 5, as set out in bold type below, are those that were highlighted in 5.1 to 5.5 of that report.

1. *Developing, strengthening and resourcing the networks of District/Synod Rural Officers together with enabling links with other people, as appropriate*

This objective has remained a top priority throughout the four years of the current National Rural Officer (NRO) who has maintained effective contact with District and Synod Rural Officers (ROs) by e-mail, a planned number of visits (always exceeded) and an annual gathering at the Arthur Rank Centre, Stoneleigh (ARC), jointly organised with the Church of England. The NRO also exercises a degree of pastoral care amongst the Rural Officers' network. The total network of the three Churches includes 93 Officers, a few of whom are full or part-time paid, most of whom are voluntary.

A report on the *Roles, Responsibilities and Resources of Rural Officers* by Revd Jonathan Still was published in 2007 and has given useful encouragement in the support of this network. It showed that ROs rely heavily on the briefing papers sent out from the ARC and the networking it maintains. The team at the ARC work collaboratively and the NRO is a highly valued team member, without whose time and expertise the ARC work would be greatly diminished.

This collaborative working has contributed to the development of regional ecumenical networks which increase the confidence and effectiveness of the denominational ROs who are involved. Groups currently exist in Cornwall, the South West, the North West, Cumbria, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, the North East, the South East and East Anglia. They are at different stages of development.

One of the chief concerns of this network is that officers feel under-resourced and under-valued. It remains a priority of the national role to encourage Districts and Synods not only to make these appointments but to resource them appropriately and to give them a clear route for reporting and accountability. It has, therefore, been important that the NRO has created and maintained regular contact with the Chairs' Rural Group and the Synod Moderators. Moderators and Chairs new in post are invited to the ARC and the NRO is invited as a speaker at Synods, which further encourages and raises the profile of the District/Synod Rural Officers.

2. *To enable rural congregations to rediscover their confidence in the Gospel and be an effective Christian presence in their communities by such means as:*

- *providing and advocating worship and training materials*
- *helping churches to access information relating to regional funding*
- *providing a support and consultancy service to local congregations taking new initiatives in ministry and mission*

- ***providing appropriate information for use in ministerial education***

Jonathan Still's research confirmed that rural congregations have a distinct character, with theological emphases and mission opportunities that differ from the suburban norm. The provision of distinctive worship and training materials therefore continues to be important. As part of the ARC team, the National Rural Officer has provided such material, frequently by e-mail to the whole network of interested people but also through printed material: *Presence*, the new publication *Making Connections* and the regular journal *Country Way*. Special opportunities (e.g. *British Food Fortnight*, *Year of Food and Farming* and *Open Farm Sunday*) are highlighted on the website and by e-mail, and prayers are provided for the Methodist Church website. Substantial articles have been published in *Reform*.

The NRO has given significant assistance in the development of the ARC's Rural Faith and Life Project. The publication of *Making Connections* provides local churches with a high quality study and work material for developing mission in a village context. Work continues in the resourcing of changed uses for church buildings as part of an incarnational model of mission. A growing number of churches now host post-offices and shops, helping to maintain community cohesion. The NRO has been the team's lead person in the rural post-office campaign. In conjunction with the Church of England and Post Office Ltd., the NRO has drawn up a set of Guidelines for churches wishing to host outreach post offices.

Recent research done through DEFRA (the government's Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs) confirms that, in secular circles, the local church is recognised as one of the five most important features of healthy village life. The continuing provision of staff time to resource rural churches is critical, especially as government - national, local and regional - recognise the Church as an effective partner. The NRO is an active participant in the Rural Community Buildings Network (established by DEFRA in July 2006) where he represents the Arthur Rank Centre and the URC (the Methodist Church has an additional member).

An emphasis on ministerial education has continued with the NRO having direct input into courses at The Queen's Foundation (Birmingham) and Wesley Study Centre (Durham). A creative relationship with the Cambridge Theological Federation has seen a steadily growing number of students undertaking rural placements. Contact has been made with the URC Resource Centre for Learning in Manchester.

The ARC organises two rural ministry courses each year which are always fully subscribed. Participants' evaluations show an average value rating of 'four out of five'.

In addition to availability to speak at Synods, the NRO helps to organise and speaks at conferences and training events and hosts visitors to the ARC. He also has regular contact with local congregations as they contact the Centre or during visits to Districts or Synods.

3. To enable both denominations to contribute effectively to the development of UK rural policies and to engage in informed political debate at a time when rural issues are high on the UK and European agenda

The staff team at the ARC work collaboratively, each developing their expertise and areas of responsibility, thus enabling each denomination to benefit from the full spectrum of engagement. The NRO has been the lead member for the work on migrant workers and rural post offices; other ongoing areas of involvement, concern and campaigning include animal welfare, supermarkets, poverty and the *Get Fair* campaign, Care Farms, the Rural Stress Helpline and a developing international and European involvement and networking.

The ARC provides an excellent model for effective ecumenical collaboration and the added value it provides for each of the participating denominations. Team members are often the only specifically Christian voice in political discussions of rural matters. Without continuing active membership in the ARC team, the Methodist and United Reformed Churches would cease to have ready access to government and the benefits of ARC's research and campaigning.

Moreover, with the removal of a key staff post, the ARC's capacity would drop and much valuable work would have to be abandoned. The ARC's credibility with both government and the farming community would be seriously damaged and the role of the churches as partners with the Royal Agricultural Society of England and the Rank Foundation in the work of the Centre would be put in question.

4. To act as a rural advocate within the denominations

At the commencement of the present six year period of this post, the NRO was a member of the Connexional Team of the Methodist Church and a member of the Life and Witness Committee of the United Reformed Church. Both Churches have subsequently undergone restructuring.

In the Methodist Church the NRO is now a member of the Christian Communication, Evangelism and Advocacy Cluster (CCEA) and links into the cluster via the Coordinator of Evangelism, Spirituality and Discipleship (ESD); he also has links with the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT). The absence of formal CCEA meetings since restructuring and the meeting pattern of ESD and JPIT (both have regular one hour meetings in London) have made it difficult for the NRO to link in well. The NRO's role in working with the Chairs' Rural Group is therefore of heightened importance. A recent development has seen the NRO become a member of the Chaplaincy Sub-cluster within the Discipleship & Ministries Cluster, attending meetings three or four times a year. There is no London based Connexional Team member on the Rural Strategy Group.

In the United Reformed Church the NRO has become a member of the Mission Team. He attends regular team meetings, Mission Committee, the Mission Council and the biennial General Assembly. A member of the Mission Committee is tasked with supporting the NRO's role and advocating rural work to the committee. The same committee member is one of the URC members of the Rural Strategy Group. The NRO is thus connected structurally to the denomination with two-way lines of communication.

Within Methodism the NRO finds a voice chiefly through the Chairs' Rural Group, which highly values his work, and the *Methodist Recorder*, which seeks contributions from him several times a year.

5. *To model sound ecumenical practice by bringing a skills balance to the Arthur Rank Centre team and the wider areas of its work and by maintaining a distinctive free-church voice and presence in all it does and says*

The ecumenical working of the ARC has been described above under point 3.

The NRO is part of a team that includes many groups which work from the ARC and are supported by the NRO's work. The Church of England has recently reviewed its National Rural Officer post and has confirmed that it should continue, and be based as at present, at the Arthur Rank Centre.

The current Director of the ARC, the Revd Dr Gordon Gatward, is a Methodist minister and will be retiring at the end of 2012. The Director's post will then be subject to open advertisement appointment. If the post of NRO is discontinued, the possibility arises that the Free Churches will cease to have any connection with the rural work of the ARC and the Church of England, severing the tie with this unique vehicle of rural mission and the excellent model of ecumenical working that it offers.

**Evaluating the Role of the Methodist/URC National Rural Officer against
the Priorities for the Methodist Church**

The *Priorities for the Methodist Church* were agreed by the Methodist Conference in 2004 and adopted as the guiding principles for future work. They were the focus of the church's strategic plan for 2005-08 and continue to shape the direction and decision making of the denomination. This review is focussed on the period since September 2005 and, therefore, the work needs to be considered and assessed in the context of the *Priorities*.

As well as making the *Priorities* central to strategic planning for 2005-08, the Methodist Church also embarked on a process of review called *Team Focus* which sought to make the Connexional Team fit for purpose in the twenty-first century. *Team Focus* was a three year programme leading to the establishment of a reconfigured Connexional Team with effect from 1st September 2008. When the process began, the post of National Rural Officer (NRO) was part of the Connexional Team. The outcomes of *Team Focus* now mean that, with effect from 31st August 2011, the post will no longer be part of the Connexional Team.

The Methodist Church states as its first priority:

'To proclaim and affirm its conviction of God's love in Christ, for us and for all the world; and renew confidence in God's presence and action in the world and in the Church.'

Every aspect of the work of the NRO is directed towards this objective, in the context of rural communities. The highlighting of God's engagement with both the Church and the wider world lies at the heart of the work. There is a clear focus on renewing confidence in God's presence and action in rural churches and communities. The emphasis is on exploring new and creative ways in which an effective Christian presence can be sustained and promoted in rural communities, which are often small and vulnerable. Evidence for this can be seen in the following examples:

- promotion of *Presence* and the *Presence* papers
- hosting of post offices and/or community shops
- Local Collaborative Ministry (LCM)
- Rural Church Entrepreneurs (RCE)
- the *Making Connections* workbook
- *Country Way*
- development of tourism and heritage initiatives

The five subsequent priorities, through which this first one is to be realised, all find expression in the work of the National Rural Officer.

1. Underpinning everything we do with God-centred worship and prayer

Training is offered in providing contextualised worship and churches are encouraged to think creatively about worship and how to make connections with the wider community, for example,

- through seasonal worship, rogation and harvest
- through offering worship at a variety of times, at significant community events and in places other than the church

Worship, Bible study and rural theology resources are developed and offered and a wide selection of publications made available through networks, at events, courses, Synods and meetings and through the Arthur Rank Centre (ARC) website.

Currently the NRO is promoting *Open Farm Sunday* (an annual event organised by LEAF - Linking Environment and Farming) which encourages people to visit their local farms in order to learn about farming and food production and *British Food Fortnight* which celebrates all that is great about food produced in Britain. In both cases, the NRO has developed worship materials to encourage local churches to get involved.

2. Supporting community development and action for justice, especially among the most deprived and poor - in Britain and worldwide

Engaging in community development and action for justice is central to this area of work, in particular through

- resourcing the work of local churches
- rural-proofing church strategy and policy at local and connexional levels
- contributing to the development of government rural policy
- liaising with the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT)

Rural poverty and disadvantage present particular challenges as they are often hidden and less concentrated than in urban areas. The needs of such people and communities were highlighted in a report to the government entitled, *Tackling rural disadvantage through how public services are reformed* published in November 2008 by the Commission for Rural Communities which states:

"We know that there are many rural people who do not have the wherewithal to choose. Primarily, they are the relatively poor, those with disabilities, and those affected by financial poverty, access poverty and 'network poverty' (i.e. a lack of informal contact with, and help from, friends and neighbours). The most vulnerable groups today are children and families, the elderly, women, and minorities. The causes of their disadvantage have been thoroughly researched and well documented (for example, in our 2006 study into rural disadvantage). Targeting and addressing the problems of these groups is made more difficult because much rural deprivation is hidden and masked by the affluence of many rural areas."

The work of the NRO enables both denominations to explore ways in which churches in rural communities can provide a faithful and effective Christian presence and, in so doing, seek to meet

the needs of the most deprived. A number of activities and resources have been developed to encourage and resource local churches in rural areas for mission. These include:

- the creative use of buildings
- Local Collaborative Ministry
- learning modules for rural mission
- Rural Church Entrepreneurs
- *Presence* and the *Presence* papers
- the *Making Connections* workbook
- *Country Way*

Establishing and maintaining a network of Rural Officers has been a key instrument in equipping local churches for mission and engagement with the rural poor. The research on *The Roles, Responsibilities and Resources of Rural Officers*, undertaken by Jonathan Still, analyses the work of the ecumenical network of Synod, District and Diocesan Rural Officers and highlights the importance of the network in supporting rural mission in the Methodist Church. As a representative figure for Rural Officers and Agricultural Chaplains, the NRO has recently become a member of the Chaplaincy Sub-cluster in the Discipleship and Ministries Cluster.

The fact that the NRO currently has a connexional role means that a more consistent and informed approach can be made. Particular examples of this would be the time given to establish a programme for the hosting of post offices by churches and ways in which the issue of migrant workers has been tackled. Work is currently underway to establish guidelines for churches wishing to host community shops.

3. Developing confidence in evangelism and in the capacity to speak of God and faith in ways that make sense to all involved

The needs of the rural church are easily overlooked and the NRO seeks to address these so as to make the response of the church as relevant and appropriate as possible. The response involves being and doing, listening and speaking with confidence and in ways that make sense to all involved throughout the community.

This work also seeks to make the church more credible in its context, thus increasing its capacity to speak of faith more effectively. Much of this is achieved through training and the dissemination of good practice and creative ideas. The recent publication, *Making Connections*, provides an important resource in support of these aims.

Making sense to communities - many of which still believe the Church is central to their life - is a challenge that rural churches are facing. Programmes such as Local Collaborative Ministry, the *Making Connections* workbook, *Presence* and *Presence* papers and Rural Church Entrepreneurs help to gain credibility for the Church and, thereby, the right to speak of faith in Christ and the love of God to communities that may previously have been unresponsive. Again, in being a member of the Chaplaincy Sub-cluster and supporting the work of Rural Officers and Agricultural Chaplains, the NRO has an important role to play in facilitating this work.

4. Encouraging fresh ways of being church

Promoting and sustaining an effective Christian presence in villages, which has characterised much of recent Methodist mission in rural communities, requires at its heart a willingness to explore fresh ways of being church, such as

- the creative use of church buildings (e.g. the hosting of post offices)
- innovative ecumenical arrangements
- Local Collaborative Ministry
- Rural Church Entrepreneurs
- the pooling of resources
- the development of tourism and heritage initiatives

Fresh Expressions in a rural context are also encouraged and the NRO contributes to the 'rural-proofing' of the *Fresh Expressions* agenda.

A connexional role encourages new and creative thinking and facilitates the effective communication of good practice and fresh ideas, through, for example, *Country Way*.

5. Nurturing a culture in the Church which is people-centred and flexible

The publication *Presence* openly advocates the understanding that an effective Christian presence may or may not require a building and will necessarily be flexible in adapting to the huge changes and challenges facing rural churches and communities. In some contexts this requires a significant cultural shift to a more people-centred approach and this area of work is committed to such a shift. The development of a series of *Presence* papers has been overseen by the NRO so that rural communities can be helped to make relevant changes. The topics covered by the *Presence* papers are:

1. Stories of how Christian congregations have made a difference in their rural communities
2. The Pulse-Rate of Presence - Your Church's "Health" Checklist
3. Presence and Buildings
4. Presence in New Housing Areas
5. One Church - Several Congregations: Multi-locational Church
6. Presence with Purpose

The NRO is currently engaged in facilitating the creation of a *Presence* interactive website to promote the agenda of the rural church to a wider audience and is involved in a conversation relating *Presence* to discipleship.

The work undertaken by the NRO on migrant workers' issues has encouraged greater engagement by rural churches. The ARC website provides resources that can be offered to migrant workers by rural churches, enabling them to be relevant and responsive.

Country Way also keeps churches informed of the rural social justice agenda.

The NRO provides training and information on a wide range of matters - some of it in close co-operation with JPIT - such as:

- biofuels
- changes in agriculture
- environment
- farming help
- food - including food ethics and promoting greater church engagement with food issues
- housing
- migrant workers
- poverty
- service provision

The NRO has also promoted the *Get Fair* campaign and *Faith in Affordable Housing* which provides churches with advice about the use of church land and buildings for affordable housing. He recently supplied a rural issues page for CTBI's *Faith in Politics* resource and responds to government consultation papers.

The NRO is a trustee of Farm Crisis Network and serves as a chaplain to the Rural Stress Helpline.

Until very recently the work of 'Eco-congregation' was based at the ARC and is still being promoted by the NRO and other members of the ARC team, enabling local churches to make their buildings and practices more eco-friendly.

The beginning of the Priorities states that:

'In partnership with others wherever possible, the Methodist Church will concentrate its prayers, resources, imagination and commitments on this priority:

'To proclaim and affirm its conviction of God's love in Christ, etc.'

This being so, partnerships are also seen as an essential part of the strategy of the Methodist Church and the work programme of the Connexional Team. The very fact that the NRO post is shared with the United Reformed Church shapes the many partnerships involved. The engagement with the Joint Public Issues Team further makes the point.

Ecumenical Partnerships

The NRO post plays a crucial role in developing ecumenical partnerships through the work programme of the ARC and by supporting the

- Rural Officers' Network
- Rural Strategy Group
- Churches' Rural Group
- Churches' Regional Network

Two of the ongoing projects - Rural Church Entrepreneurs and Local Collaborative Ministry - support the development of ecumenical partnerships. Both have been initiated by the NRO and he continues to be central to the way in which they develop.

World Church Partnerships

The NRO is engaged in particular partnerships in Europe and New Zealand and is helping to develop the ARC's involvement in the European and international rural church networks.

The NRO is actively involved in the International Rural Churches Association and will soon be attending its conference, held every four years.

The NRO's sabbatical in 2008 focused on Local Collaborative Ministry in New Zealand and relationships have strengthened since then such that colleagues in New Zealand have embraced the concept of *Open Farm Sunday* from the NRO.

**Evaluating the Role of the Methodist/URC National Rural Officer against
the United Reformed Church's Vision 2020**

The period under review (from mid-2005 till the present) spans two phases of strategic mission development in the United Reformed Church, *Catch the Vision* (2003-2007) and *Vision2020* (2008-present). Whereas *Catch the Vision* focused on restructuring the church for mission, *Vision2020* provides a ten year strategic framework for the development of mission action at local, Synod and Assembly level. The initial proposals for the *Vision2020* framework have been widely discussed within the URC and a final proposal has now been submitted for consideration and adoption by the General Assembly in July 2010.

A key part of the *Vision2020* strategic framework are the so called statements of mission and purpose, which are based on the *Five Marks of Mission* but have been expanded to reflect more accurately the priorities of the United Reformed Church at all levels. It is these priorities that form the basis for the evaluation of the Rural Mission Project from the perspective of the United Reformed Church. This will enable the reviewers to look forward as well as backward and may contribute to the second objective of the review: *to identify any new priorities and future needs for rural mission work.*

The ten statements of mission purpose in *Vision2020* are listed below. Each statement is followed by a brief description of how the Rural Mission Project/the work of the National Rural Officer (NRO) is contributing to the realisation of this priority. This description is based on a review of workplans and appraisals of the work of the NRO in recent years.

1. **Spirituality and Prayer:**

We will grow in our practice of prayer and spirituality, nurturing strength for our witness to Jesus Christ, and developing our discernment of where God is and what God is calling us to do by reading and studying the Bible and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

A focus of the Rural Mission Project has been on providing worship, Bible study and rural theology resources for use in local congregations. These have been made available through the Arthur Rank Centre (ARC) website, *Country Way* and other publications, network meetings, events, courses and meetings. Training is offered to enable churches to connect creatively with their local communities through worship and the NRO is available to lead worship in local churches and at special community events.

2. **Identity:**

The URC will be a church where every local congregation will be able to say who they are, what they do and why they do it.

A key focus of *Vision2020* is to enable churches to articulate an identity that is firmly rooted in God's mission. The work of the NRO is crucial in exploring ways in which churches in rural communities can provide a faithful and effective Christian presence. A number of activities and

resources have been developed to encourage and resource local churches in rural areas for mission. This includes:

- Resources to encourage the creative use of buildings
- Developing Local Collaborative Ministry (LCM)
- Developing learning modules for rural mission
- Producing the *Making Connections* workbook
- *Country Way*

The network of Rural Officers has been a key instrument in equipping local churches for mission and strengthening this network is a major part of the work of the NRO. The research on *The Roles, Responsibilities and Resources of Rural Officers* analyses the work of the ecumenical network of Synod, District and Diocesan Rural Officers and highlights the importance of the network in supporting rural mission in the URC and delivering the resources of the ARC to the local church.

3. **Christian Ecumenical Partnerships:**

We will be more confident in our identity, valuing the treasures of our tradition, discerning when to seek ecumenical partnerships, and when and how to seek the further unity of the church.

Seeking a wide variety of ecumenical partnerships at local and national level is integral to the URC's vision to seek further Christian unity. The NRO post, itself the result of ecumenical co-operation, plays a crucial role in expressing and developing such partnerships: through the overall work programme of the ARC, supporting the Rural Officers' Network, the Rural Strategy Group (RSG), the Churches' Rural Group and the Churches' Regional Network.

Two projects particularly support the development of Christian ecumenical partnerships: Rural Church Entrepreneurs (see below) and Local Collaborative Ministry in a Rural Context (LCM). Both have been initiated by the NRO who continues to play a driving role in their strategic development.

4. **Community Partnerships:**

We will be a church that is more active in the life of local neighbourhoods.

Enabling rural churches to be more active in their local communities and to contribute to their development is a central part of the work of the NRO. This has been done through a range of initiatives, such as promoting the creative use of church buildings through the Rural Officers' network (including publishing guidelines for churches wishing to host post offices and working on similar guidelines for hosting community shops), encouraging local church mission through training, the production of resources such as the *'Making Connections'* workbook, which encourages rural churches to engage with their communities in proactive and creative ways, and in particular through Rural Church Entrepreneurs. Within the wider work programme of the Arthur Rank Centre the NRO takes the lead on this initiative and collaborates with the Churches'

Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber, exploring how entrepreneurial skills can be encouraged and developed within the lay and ordained leadership in the rural church and creating a leadership development programme. The NRO also promotes *Open Farm Sunday* (an annual event organised by LEAF - Linking Environment and Farming) and *British Food Fortnight* (celebrating all that is good about British food), in both cases developing worship materials to encourage local churches to get involved.

5. **Hospitality and diversity:**

We will be a church committed to becoming even more welcoming and hospitable, and embracing all people equally.

The URC is a multicultural church, seeking to be a church that includes, affirms and welcomes all. The NRO's work on migrant workers' issues has promoted greater engagement with diversity issues in rural churches. Through the ARC website, resources and services for migrant workers provided by rural churches and other agencies are publicised and promoted. *Country Way* also keeps churches informed of the rural social justice agenda and the situation of migrant workers in Britain's rural areas. Stories of specific projects in rural churches focusing on migrant workers have been widely disseminated in order to promote good practice and inspire others.

6. **Evangelism:**

We will be more confident to engage in evangelism, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God with friends, families and strangers, through story and action.

Reclaiming an understanding and practice of evangelism at all levels of the church are ongoing concerns for the URC. The work of the NRO supports this by encouraging local church mission and developing Local Collaborative Ministry. Sharing good practice and creative ideas are effective ways of equipping churches for evangelism. The NRO supports and resources the Rural Officers, who provide training for rural churches and facilitate the sharing of good news stories and creative ideas. Furthermore, through this network, ideas for the imaginative use of rural church buildings are promoted, which enable churches to reach their communities in new ways. A recent example is the URC in Belford, Northumberland which is now home to a cinema, showing films on a monthly basis. Written resources have been provided through the ARC website, *Country Way*, the *Making Connections* workbook and the *Rural Life and Faith Project*, which will ensure that relevant and accessible training materials are available to the rural church.

7. **Church Growth:**

We will be a growing church with an increasing membership.

The URC seeks to be a growing church in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Encouraging churches to explore new/fresh ways of being church is at the heart of seeking to realise this priority. The work of the NRO in the areas of encouraging local church mission, developing new models of church leadership through Local Collaborative Ministry and Rural Church

Entrepreneurs continues to make an important contribution to the growth of the church. Rural *Fresh Expressions* are also encouraged and the NRO contributes to the 'rural-proofing' of the *Fresh Expressions* agenda.

8. **Global Partnerships:**

We will be a church that is an active partner in God's global mission with other churches around the world.

The URC is an active partner in the world church, sharing its resources for mission with others and discerning together God's action and call. The NRO contributes to this through seeking to re-connect the ARC to the European and international rural church networks and developing new links, working closely with the URC's Secretary for World Church Relations. The NRO plays an active part in the International Rural Churches Association and will shortly be attending its four-yearly conference. Through the Churches' European Rural Network the NRO is also looking to increase rural input into the work of the Conference of European Churches. Following his sabbatical in 2008, which focused on Local Collaborative Ministry in New Zealand, the NRO has developed strong links with this country and one of the results of the continuing exchange has been the adoption of *Open Farm Sunday* there.

9. **Justice and Peace:**

We will be a church committed to peacemaking and reconciliation that keeps faith with the poor and challenges injustice.

The NRO's work to equip and enable the church to respond effectively to rural social justice issues is an important part of the church's social justice work. The NRO has provided training and information on issues such as Food, Migrant Workers, Poverty, Housing, Environment, Service Provision and Farming Help, co-operating closely with the Joint Public Issues Team. The NRO has promoted the *Get Fair* campaign through his networks and *Faith in Affordable Housing*, providing churches with practical and technical advice about the use of church land and buildings for affordable housing. The NRO also rural-proofs church strategy at local, Synod and Assembly levels and, as part of the ARC team, contributes to the development of government rural policy. He recently supplied a rural issues page for CTBI's *Faith in Politics* resource and occasionally responds to government consultation papers. The NRO is a trustee of Farm Crisis Network and acts as chaplain to the Rural Stress Helpline.

10. **The Integrity of Creation:**

We will be a church that has taken significant steps to safeguard the integrity of creation, to sustain and renew the life of the earth.

Taking steps to safeguard the integrity of creation is high on the agenda of the URC and is an area of work in which the NRO is playing a vital role. The NRO has produced work on food ethics, promoting greater church engagement with food issues, biofuels and on changes in agriculture. Before its recent move to A Rocha 'Ecocongregation' was based at the ARC and is

still being promoted by the NRO and other members of the ARC team, enabling local churches to make their buildings and practices more eco-friendly. Active efforts have also been made to provide a rural pilot congregation for the *Living the Future* programme. Service provision in rural areas is another focus of the NRO's work. Information has been produced and provided through the ARC website and *Country Way*.

Resources

The NRO has played an active part in producing materials for the ARC website, *Country Way* and the *Making Connections* workbook, which are appropriate to the majority of *Vision2020* statements. The ARC's three-year *Rural Life and Faith* project also contributes to a number of *Vision2020* priorities. The NRO was involved in the formation of the project and continues to support and facilitate it.

Review of the Role of the Methodist/URC National Rural Officer

Rural Mission Research Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1. An ecumenical post dedicated to rural mission across the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church has been in existence since the mid 1990s. Currently, a National Rural Officer (NRO) working for both denominations is based at the Arthur Rank Centre.
- 1.2. As specified in the job description for the NRO, the purpose and objectives of this post are:
 - To enable rural congregations to engage with their communities with renewed confidence.
 - To enable the rural voice to be heard in both the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church.
 - To enable the denominations to contribute effectively to the development of UK rural policies.
- 1.3. This survey was undertaken as part of the review of the Methodist/URC National Rural Officer. The findings from this research will help to shape the recommendations of this review and future work on rural mission within both denominations.

2. Research Methods & Report Outlook

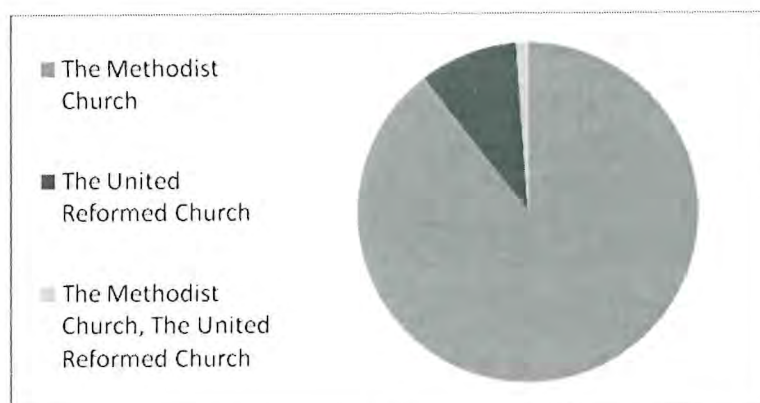
- 2.1. This report contains evaluation of the results of a survey conducted across two weeks in May/June 2010. Two different groups of contacts were invited to take part in this work. It should be noted that due to the tight deadlines for this work, those contacted were asked to complete the survey within a two week period. This impacted some potential respondents' ability to contribute to this research.
- 2.2. Firstly, 139 office holders across both the Methodist Church and the URC (including Rural Officers, Training Officers, Development Officers, District Chairs, Moderators and Synod Clerks) were invited to complete the survey. They were also given the opportunity to complete the survey online or over the telephone with a specially employed researcher. The response rate (counted as those who successfully took the questionnaire) was 30%.
- 2.3. Secondly, ministers in rural appointment across both Churches were invited to complete the survey using the same method. Open invitations were issued to 1117 Ministers and 182 responded, thereby a response rate of 16%. Their responses in particular will be helpful to inform the needs for rural mission going forwards.
- 2.4. This method was employed to attempt to gain the views of a wide variety of people whose work involves, to varying extents, rural mission. The respondents had wide ranging experiences of ministry, and particularly rural mission, across both Churches. They were asked to specify the focus of their Church and/or mission so to allow the findings to be analysed according to the needs of different types of churches.
- 2.5. The survey aimed to measure the impact of rural mission work across the Methodist Church and the URC and to gather information on future requirements for work in this

area. These findings are intended to inform the review group as it formulates proposals for future work in this area.

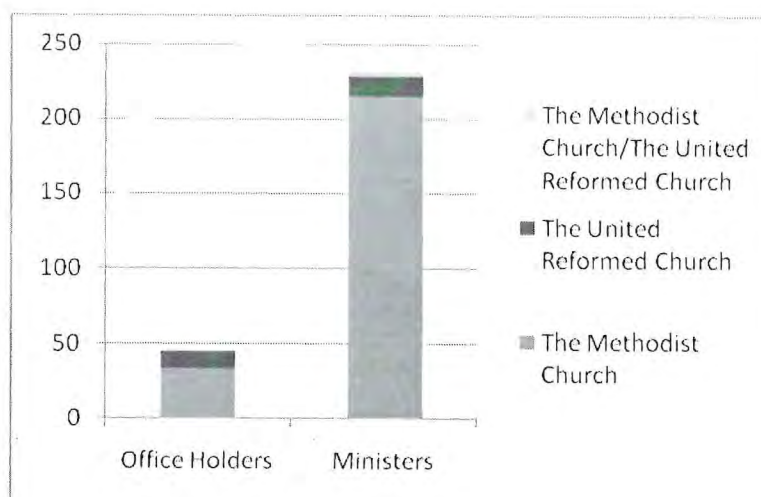
- 2.6. During the course of this research, anyone contacted who requested further information on rural mission was directed to the Arthur Rank Centre website as well as the web resources of the Methodist Church and URC.

3. Demographic Information

- 3.1. The first section of the questionnaire was designed to gather demographic information of those completing the survey.
- 3.2. The vast majority of respondents were from within the Methodist Church. This is partly because a larger number of Methodist Ministers were invited to take part in the survey as more information was available within the Methodist Church to help to identify ministers in rural appointments. However, it should be noted that there are 1500 churches within the URC in Britain and approximately 25% of these are in rural and market town settings compared to over 60% of approximately 6000 churches in the Methodist Church.
- 3.3. Therefore, this meant that, overall, there were many more Methodist (248) than URC (36) respondents to the survey. In addition, 3 respondents identified themselves as being linked to both the Methodist Church and the URC through a Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP):

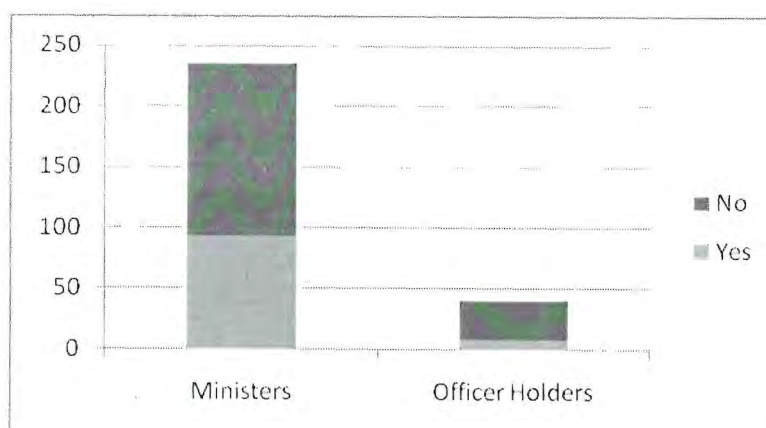


- 3.3 However, the sample of office holders who participated in the survey was more equally spread albeit a much smaller sample due to the number of Ministers contacted in the Methodist Church and invited to take part in the research:



3.4 When asked if they saw rural mission as the main focus of their work, the majority of respondents (174 or 63%) said that they did not.

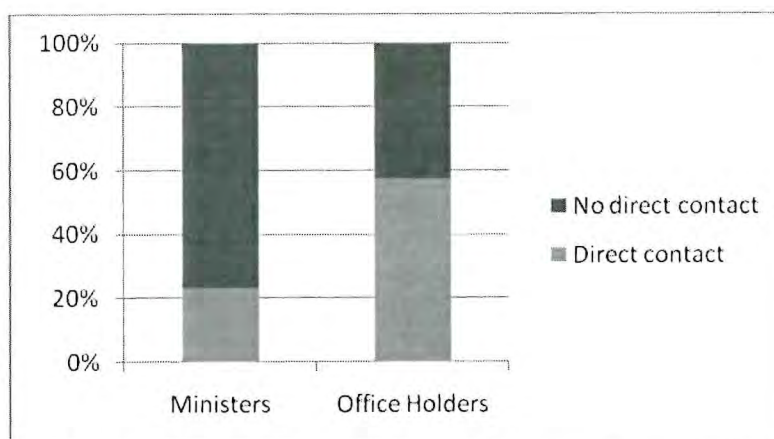
3.5 However, the results for only the ministers asked to take part in this survey were slightly more equally spread. Whilst only 20% of office holders canvassed saw rural mission as the focus of their work, almost twice as many (39.6%) of Ministers considered their primary focus to be rural mission:



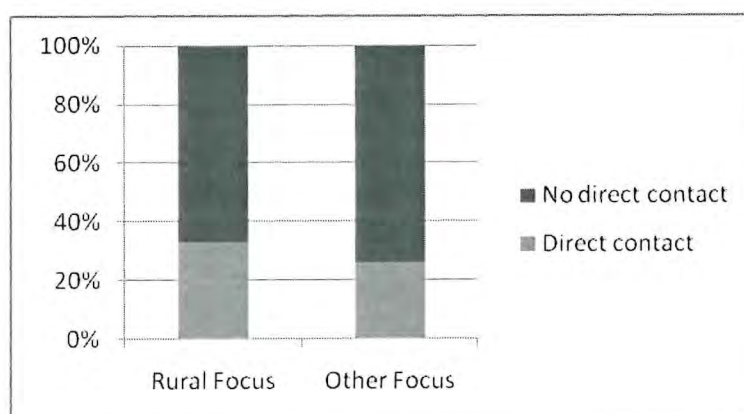
3.6 Those who did not feel that rural mission was the main focus of their work were asked to specify what they felt this was. Many saw this as one aspect of a mixed and varied remit.

4. Contact with the National Rural Officer

- 4.1. Respondents were asked to comment on the contact they have had in the past with the National Rural Officer. Graham Jones was named as the current postholder to ensure that those who knew Graham Jones but not his official title within the Churches were able to answer these questions as accurately as possible.
- 4.2. Less than a third of those surveyed (78 respondents or 28%) indicated that they had had direct contact with the NRO.
- 4.3. Office holders canvassed were almost twice as likely as Ministers taking part in this research to have had direct contact with the NRO (23.3% compared to 57.5%):



- 4.4. However, there was much less discrepancy between those who see rural mission as the focus of their work and those who did not; a third of those who stated rural issues as their mission focus stated that they had been in direct contact with the NRO whilst 25.9% of those whose work was dedicated to different or more diverse issues had experienced such contact:



5. Methods of Contact

- 5.1. Written resources and electronic communication proved to be much more popular than face-to-face or telephone contact. Although we did not ask why respondents used particular media, it is clear that many more people benefit from regular usage of the website, published resources and email contact than from telephone contact or face-to-face meetings with the NRO:

	Face-to-face	Telephone	Email	Printed Publications	Website/ Electronic Resources
Weekly	0	0	5	1	5
Monthly	1	3	20	8	8
Quarterly	19	6	12	24	19
Annually	30	21	13	27	26

Never	67	83	68	58	61
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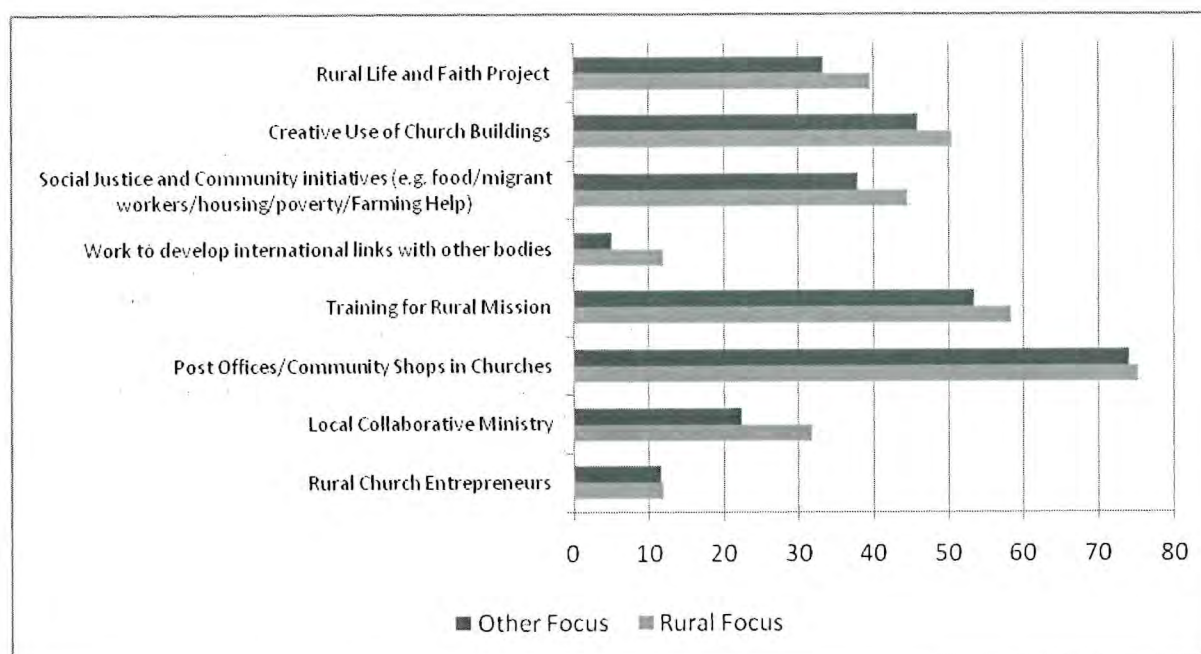
- 5.2. Very few respondents reported weekly contact with the NRO in any form, however, email and other forms of electronic communications were recorded most often. This suggests that respondents have regularly utilised the printed and electronic publications produced by the NRO.

6. Engagement in Past and Ongoing Programmes and Initiatives

- 6.1. A list of programmes and initiatives on which the National Rural Officer has worked was given to respondents who were asked to indicate if they knew about any of this work. The number of respondents (out of a total of 277) who had heard of each programme or initiative is shown in the table below:

Rural Church Entrepreneurs	32
Local Collaborative Ministry	71
Post Offices/Community Shops in Churches	205
Training for Rural Mission	153
Work to develop international links with other bodies	21
Social Justice and Community initiatives (e.g. food/migrant workers/housing/poverty/Farming Help)	111
Creative Use of Church Buildings	131
Rural Life and Faith Project	98

- 6.2. These findings can be broken down between those respondents who do and do not see the main focus of their work as being rural mission. Whilst all initiatives were better known amongst respondents who see rural mission as the main focus of their work, there is little disparity between these figures for a number of programmes and initiatives, particularly the work to promote post offices and community shops in churches.
- 6.3. However, work to develop links with international bodies was not well known amongst the respondents and particularly not those whose work was not dominated by rural mission and there were larger differences in the level of knowledge between those with and without a rural focus dominating their work on the question of Local Collaborative Ministry.



6.4. They were also given the opportunity to add to this list any other programmes or initiatives of which they were aware. This included work to support parish nursing, planning in rural areas and elderly people who live alone as well as the Farm Crisis Network.

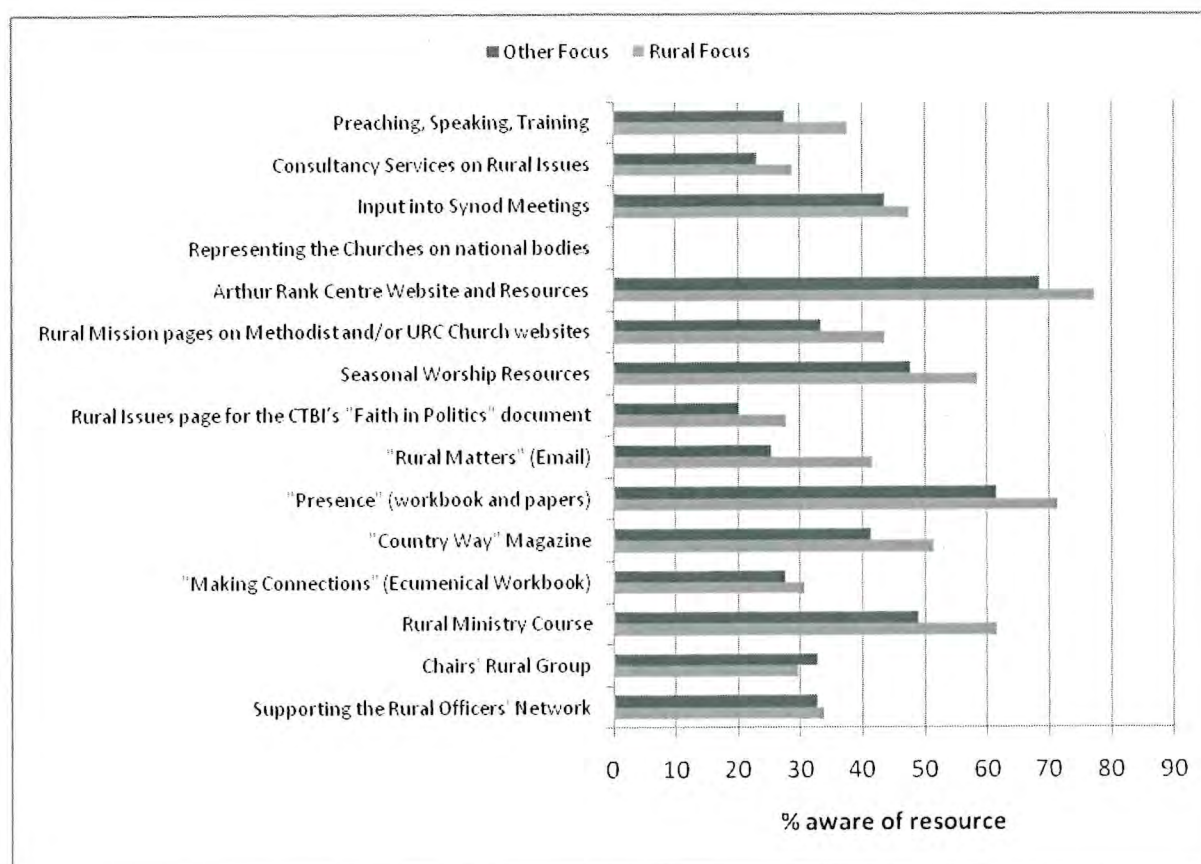
7. Resources, Events and Networks that Support Rural Mission

- 7.1. Respondents were asked if they had experience of any of a list of resources, events and networks supporting to rural mission which the National Rural Officer has produced, encouraged or promoted.
- 7.2. It is evident from their responses that many initiatives were well known and often well used. Over half of the respondents were aware of the top 4 resources, and all listed resources apart from the NRO's work to represent the Methodist Church and URC on national bodies was known by over 22% of those surveyed.
- 7.3. However, the findings show that while resources such as 'Presence', 'Country Way' magazine and seasonal worship resources have been used by the majority of people who knew of them others, including the ARC website, rural ministry course and service to offer input into synod meetings, were well known but not as well utilised.

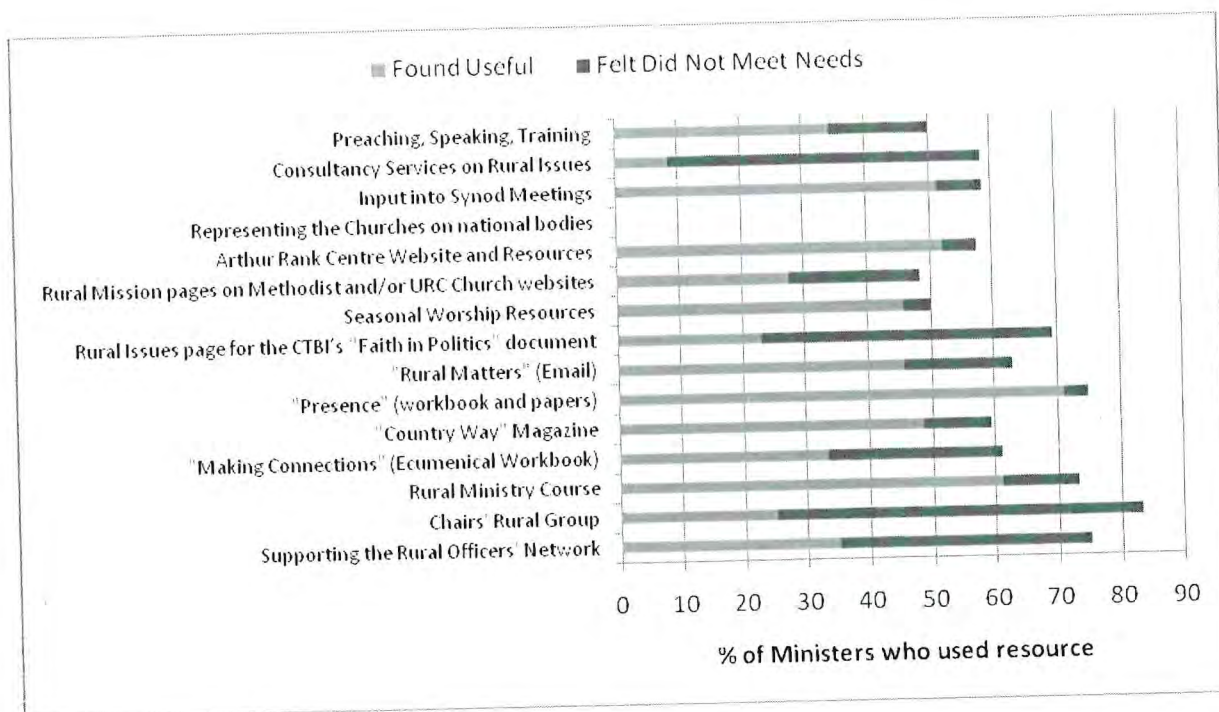
	Aware of	Used
Arthur Rank Centre Website and Resources	198	94
"Presence" (workbook and papers)	179	125
Rural Ministry Course	147	52
Seasonal Worship Resources	142	82
"Country Way" Magazine	124	79

Input into Synod Meetings	124	52
Rural Mission pages on Methodist and/or URC Church websites	102	39
Supporting the Rural Officers' Network	91	30
Chairs' Rural Group	87	26
"Rural Matters" (Email)	86	53
Preaching, Speaking, Training	86	37
"Making Connections" (Ecumenical Workbook)	79	26
Consultancy Services on Rural Issues	69	19
Rural Issues page for the CTBI's "Faith in Politics" document	63	21
Representing the Churches on national bodies	0	0

- 7.4. Conversely, other aspects of the NRO's work were not well known amongst those responding to the questions asked. This is particularly obvious regarding the NRO's work representing the Methodist Church and URC on national bodies as no respondent indicated that they were aware of this part of the NRO's remit. Those resources offering a more direct service to practitioners on the ground were much better known amongst the respondents.
- 7.5. When the sample was split between those who said their main focus was and was not rural mission it was clear that most resources were better known amongst those who saw their work focussing in this area. Only the Chairs' Rural Group, focused at officer holders rather than Ministers in circuit, was better known amongst those who did not see rural mission as their focus:



- 7.6. The survey also asked if respondents felt that these resources met their rural mission needs or not. Amongst those completing this survey who had used these resources, there was endorsement of the usefulness of most resources. In particular, the ARC website and resources, seasonal worship resources, "Presence" and the Rural Ministry Course were endorsed by substantially more users than those who felt they did not meet their needs.
- 7.7. However, more users felt that consultancy services on rural issues and contributions to the CTBI's Faith in Politics document did not meet their needs than those who felt these services were useful. However, as the chart above displays, these resources were used by the 2nd and 3rd least number of respondents.
- 7.8. These results can also be broken down according to respondents' position within the churches; Ministers who indicated that they had used the resources showed particular support for the usefulness of the NRO's input into Synod meetings, the Arthur Rank Centre website, the rural ministry course and, in particular, the "Presence" workbook and papers. In contrast, they indicated that consultancy services on rural issues and the Chairs' Rural Group (which is a service provided for particular office holders) did not meet their needs.



- 7.9. None of the rural officers who responded to the survey indicated that any of the resources which they had used were not useful in their work. However, both the rural ministry course and the ARC website received particularly high support; 75 % of rural offices who had used them found them to be useful.

8. Duplication of Work

- 8.1. The survey asked if respondents felt that any resources or services offered by the National Rural Officer could be provided from elsewhere. About 9 out of 10 ministers and office holders (90.2 and 90% respectively) stated that they did not believe that any services offered or resources produced by the National Rural Officer duplicated those that they could or should receive from other sources.
- 8.2. Those who did indicate that they believed such resources could be obtained from other sources were asked to specify from where they could or would expect to receive such support. Those who indicated that they felt they got the information from other sources generally cited services offered at district and local level, as well as other work undertaken by the ARC not purely under the label of the NRO's work.
- 8.3. However, many of those responding to this question did not necessarily perceive any overlap of work to be a problem, with one Methodist respondent suggesting that:

"It is inevitable there will be some duplication - most of us receive information from a variety of different networks - some local, some from other denominations. I don't think this really matters. It is a bit like hearing two sermons preached on the same passage by different preachers. It is important for someone to have a national overview. I think it is also important for the URC to be involved. There is a danger that the denomination/synods might withdraw from rural areas because of the expense of putting ministry into

small churches which cannot 'sensibly' be grouped with others as they can in towns and cities."

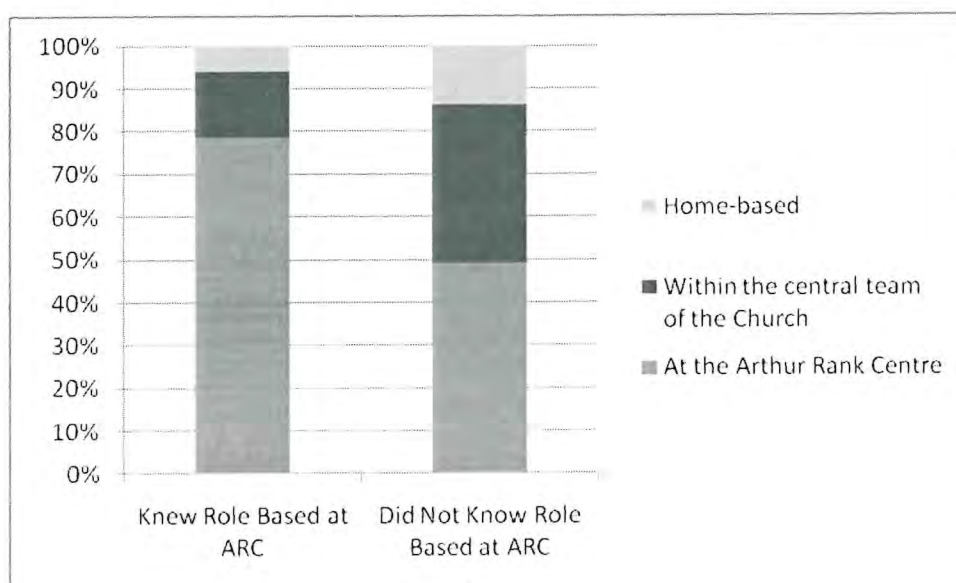
- 8.4. Nonetheless, concern was shown by some of those who completed the questionnaire who were not based in England but other parts of the UK. They indicated that the resources made available to them by the NRO were not always as relevant to their work.

9. Links to the Arthur Rank Centre

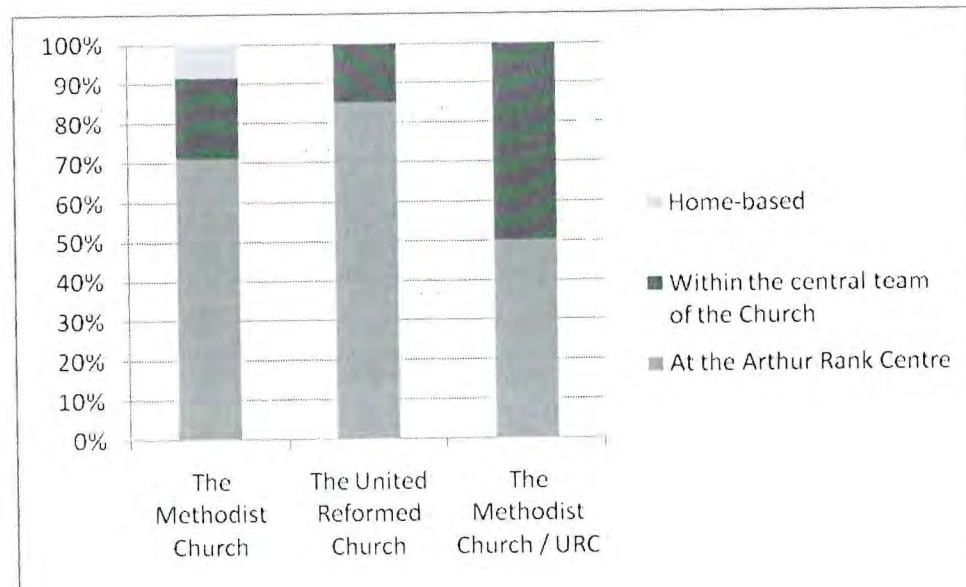
- 9.1. Questions as to work carried out by the Arthur Rank Centre, where the National Rural Officer is based, were also included in the survey. This was designed to ensure that the impact of the NRO's work as part of the ARC team was reflected in responses to this research.
- 9.2. The survey asked if the respondents knew that the NRO post was based at the ARC. The vast majority (208, just over three quarters of those asked) did know of this link.
- 9.3. Those surveyed were also asked where it would be most useful for the NRO to be based in future. They were given three options (the ARC, within the central team of their church or as a home-based position) and most asserted that the role should continue at the ARC:

At the Arthur Rank Centre	168
Within the central team of the Church	47
Home-based	18

- 9.4. Of those who did know that the post was currently based at the ARC, almost 80% supported a continuation of this arrangement:



- 9.5. Although the majority of respondents from each individual denomination supported the post remaining at the ARC, a greater proportion of respondents from the URC believed the post should continue to be based there. However, there was no support from URC respondents to this research for the post to be home-based:



10. Success Stories

- 10.1. As well as the quantitative information gathered from the above questions, respondents were also asked if they wished to share news of any success stories relating to the work of the National Rural Officer or the ARC. A wide range of anecdotal evidence was offered to support the work of the NRO and the ARC.
- 10.2. In particular, the Presence resources, Rural Ministry Course and ARC website were once again highlighted by a number of people who responded to the survey. In addition, updates offered on rural issues (at both the national and international level), networking opportunities that are co-ordinated by the NRO and tailored work on particular issues affecting rural communities (such as the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease) were also cited as success stories for the ARC.
- 10.3. However, some comments also displayed the perceived limitations of the post of the NRO including calls for there to be more courses in more diverse locations, criticism that the focus of the NRO is too limited to farming rather than more general rural issues and the belief that the NRO's remit is "*too big and too vague*" to be effective.

11. Future Needs

- 11.1. As the review is largely focused on future needs of those involved in rural mission, the survey asked those involved in this work if there were any specific resources and/or services which they anticipate will be required in the future.
- 11.2. A number of practical issues were highlighted by numerous respondents. Many of these concerned issues relating to small church congregations meeting in rural communities.

This included questions as to how the Church could have an effective presence without a dedicated building, positive ways to amalgamate smaller congregations (both geographically and ecumenically) and the creative use of Church buildings. Work on Fresh Expressions in rural areas was also frequently identified.

- 11.3. A number of social issues, particularly rural unemployment as well as transport, youth services and working with older people were also highlighted. Farming matters were mentioned by a number of people (in particular with relation to food production and local produce within the UK), along with the lack of understanding within urban communities of the farming sector.
- 11.4. A number of respondents also listed a number of resources that are already in place as important future needs. These included seasonal worship resources, dedicated training for rural mission, representing views to national and local government and work on existing projects such as Local Collaborative Ministry.
- 11.5. A number of respondents highlighted the fact that many churches deal with rural issues even when they were not based in a purely rural area. They called for cross-over(?) resources to address general issues but with a rural focus that could be used in a wider range of situations.
- 11.6. A number of particular issues to specific circumstances were also raised by respondents. These included concerns from the Isle of Man as to the needs of its rural community which sits outside UK and EU jurisdictions, issues recruiting volunteers with appropriate skills in rural Churches and protection of the sea.

12. Additional Comments

- 12.1. A number of respondents lodged additional comments about rural mission work. Some of these were specifically aimed towards the NRO and/or the ARC asking for particular help, guidance or contact on a specific issue. These will be passed on to the NRO along with the complete findings of this research.

13. Conclusions

- 13.1. Overall, there are a number of patterns that can be identified within this research.
- 13.2. Over a third of those canvassed saw rural mission as the main focus of their work. Many more saw it as one aspect of a varied focus highlighting the impact of rural mission across both Churches.
- 13.3. The majority of office holders across both churches enjoyed direct contact with the NRO. In particular, email contact along with the production of written and electronic resources was recorded as happening much more frequently than face-to-face and telephone contact.
- 13.4. Most initiatives were well known both amongst those who do and do not feel that rural mission is the focus of their work. High profile initiatives that have a stronger presence on the ground, such as work on post offices and community shops in churches and the creative use of church buildings were better known amongst respondents and the NRO's

work to develop international links with other bodies was the least recognised part of this work.

- 13.5. Likewise, the NRO's work to represent the Methodist Church and URC on national bodies was not identified by any respondent to this questionnaire suggesting that such work is not well recognised by, or communicated to, people Ministers and office holders.
- 13.6. Many resources were endorsed by those who had used them with the "Presence" workbook scoring particularly well. However, other services such as consultancy services offered by the NRO, contributions to CTBI's web pages and the Chairs' Rural Group were considered not to meet many users' need.
- 13.7. The vast majority of respondents (over 90%) did not feel that they could obtain the resources or services provided by the NRO from elsewhere.
- 13.8. The majority of respondents, particularly the majority of those who knew of the existing links between the NRO and the ARC, believed that the post should continue as part of the Arthur Rank Centre.

Review of the Role of the Methodist/URC National Rural Officer**Outline Budget for 2011-16**

EXPENDITURE	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Salary	24,436	25,169	25,924	26,702	27,503
NI and Pension	7,186	7,402	7,624	7,852	8,088
Office, travel etc	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Housing	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000
Miscellaneous	178	229	252	246	209
Total Expenditure	48,800	49,800	50,800	51,800	52,800

An inflation figure of 3% per annum has been assumed for the salary and pension costs

Office and housing costs fluctuate and, therefore, they are shown here as being the average expected costs over a five year period.

Review of the Role of the Methodist/URC National Rural Officer

Glossary and Bibliography

Arthur Rank Centre (ARC) is a charity established in 1972 with three founding partners, the Royal Agricultural Society of England, the Rank Foundation and the national churches. Its stated objective is 'to serve the rural community and its churches'. It is based at the National Agricultural Centre in Warwickshire.

British Food Fortnight is the annual national celebration of all that's great about British food.

Care Farms are farms providing social, educational, therapeutic and development opportunities for a wide range of client groups through the use of land based activities. The national network is supported by the National Care Farming Initiative of which the ARC is one of the four founding partners.

Catch the Vision is a process by which the United Reformed Church focused on restructuring the church for mission between 2003 and 2007.

Churches' Regional Network brings together those working on behalf of the churches in the English Regions.

Churches' Rural Group is a coordinating group of Churches Together in England, bringing together a wide range of denominations and organisations involved in rural mission.

Commission for Rural Communities is a government quango that was established 'to promote awareness of the social and economic needs of people who live in rural areas.' The lead officer is Revd. Dr. Stuart Burgess who also serves as Rural Advocate to the Prime Minister.

Country Way is a magazine published three times a year by the Arthur Rank Centre.

CTBI is Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.

DEFRA is a department of national government with the full title of the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs.

Eco-congregation is an A Rocha UK project seeking to help churches begin to address environmental issues in all that they do. It is suitable for all kinds of churches to use.

Faith in Affordable Housing is a web-based resource (www.fiah.org.uk) that provides churches with practical and technical advice about the use of church land and buildings for affordable housing. Hard copies of a promotional leaflet are available from the ARC.

Farm Crisis Network is a UK network of groups of volunteers drawn from the farming community and rural churches providing practical and pastoral help to farming families and businesses. FCN volunteers are there to 'walk with' and support farming people and families as they seek to resolve their problems, whatever they may be.

Get Fair Coalition brings together over 50 organisations in campaigning for an end to poverty in the UK by 2020

Joint Public Issues Team has been created by some of the Free Churches to effectively to engage with current public issues, mainly in Great Britain. The Team is based at Methodist Church House.

Local Collaborative Ministry - an approach to ministry which empowers the laity and is bearing much fruit in churches as far a field as New Zealand and Canada. It has a strap-line of 'the ministry of the baptised' and encourages local teams of people to take responsibility for the mission and ministry of the church in the local context, resourced by an external 'enabler'.

'Making Connections' workbook encourages rural churches to engage with their communities in proactive and creative ways.

Methodist Recorder is a weekly newspaper targeted and members and friends of the Methodist Church

National Agricultural Centre at Stoneleigh is where the Arthur Rank Centre is located and is the home of many of the major organisations in the agricultural industry, including the Royal Agricultural Society of England, the National Farmers Union, the National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs and the Agricultural and Horticultural Development Board.

Open Farm Sunday (an annual event organized by LEAF - Linking Environment and Farming) which encourages people onto their local farms to learn about farming and food production). In 2010 over 450 farms were open to the public, attracting in excess of half a million people.

Presence is a workbook published in 2004 to help promote and sustain an effective Christian presence in villages. A series of Presence papers have been prepared to further support and sustain rural ministry.

Priorities for the Methodist Church is a document agreed by the Methodist Conference in 2004 and adopted as the guiding principles for future work. The *Priorities* were the focus of the church's strategic plan for 2005-08 and continue to shape the direction and decision making of the denomination.

Reform is the United Reformed Church's monthly magazine.

Roles, Responsibilities and Resources of Rural Officers by Revd Jonathan Still was published in 2007 and has given useful encouragement in the support of the network of Rural Officers. A copy can be obtained from the ARC.

Rural Church Entrepreneurs - an initiative in collaboration with the Churches' Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber, to encourage rural churches to engage with their communities in proactive and creative ways, exploring how entrepreneurial skills can be developed in the rural church.

Rural Community Buildings Network was established by DEFRA in July 2006 in order to ...

Rural Life and Faith Project is a three-year ARC project seeking to further develop the range of appropriate training materials available to rural churches and practitioners and addressing the barriers to learning.

Rural Ministry Course is fully ecumenical and is held twice a year at the ARC for those entering rural ministry for the first time.

Rural Strategy Group (RSG) consists of members drawn from both the Methodist and United Reformed Churches. The RSG meets at the ARC and exercises oversight of the NRO post.

Rural Stress Helpline is a confidential listening service, based at the ARC, for rural people who are anxious, worried or stressed.

Team Focus is a process of review which sought to make the Methodist Church's Connexional Team fit for purpose in the twenty-first century. It was a three year programme leading to the establishment of a reconfigured Connexional Team with effect from 1st September 2008.

Vision2020 is a document produced by the United Reformed Church in order to provide a ten year strategic framework for the development of mission action at local, Synod and Assembly level. The final proposals will be considered by the General Assembly in July 2010.

Year of Food and Farming (September 2007 - July 2008) aimed to reconnect children and young people with the food that they eat and to promote healthy living by giving young people direct experience of countryside, farming and food.

Better Together Joint Council 13th-15th October, Swanwick - Event Feedback Form

Rating Key: 1=least positive 5=most positive

1) What organisation are you a participant of?

Methodist () United Reformed Church ()

2) What is your gender?

Male () Female ()

3) Are you lay or ordained?

Lay () Ordained ()

4) Is this your first Council meeting?

Yes () No ()

5) How would you rate the individual sessions on a scale of 1-5?

1() 2() 3() 4() 5()

6) How would you rate the joint sessions on a scale of 1-5?

Session 2

1() 2() 3() 4() 5()

Session 3

1() 2() 3() 4() 5()

Session 4

1() 2() 3() 4() 5()

Session 5

1() 2() 3() 4() 5()

Session 6

1() 2() 3() 4() 5()

Session 7

1() 2() 3() 4() 5()

Session 10

1() 2() 3() 4() 5()

7) How would you rate the plenary sessions on a scale of 1-5?

Releasing Ministers Potential

1() 2() 3() 4() 5()

Developing Ecumenical Local Visions

1() 2() 3() 4() 5()

Growing Local Leadership

1() 2() 3() 4() 5()

Articulating & Communicating Faith

1() 2() 3() 4() 5()

Finding the Missing Generation

1() 2() 3() 4() 5()

Making Buildings Assets

1() 2() 3() 4() 5()

Mission Shaped Structures

1() 2() 3() 4() 5()

Big Society – An Opportunity?

1() 2() 3() 4() 5()

Big Society – How the Local Church Engage

1() 2() 3() 4() 5()

Spending Cuts - Bias to the Poor

1() 2() 3() 4() 5()

8) Do you feel that you have learnt anything from the denomination (i.e. URC or Methodist Church) that you are not a part of?

1() 2() 3() 4() 5()

9) Did you feel that the amount of worship was appropriate?

Yes() No()

10) Did you enjoy the style of worship?

Yes() No()

11) How valuable an opportunity was this event to network on a scale of 1-5?

1() 2() 3() 4() 5()

12) How happy were you with the event location on a scale of 1-5?

1() 2() 3() 4() 5()

13) Did you feel that the event was:

too long () too short() just right? ()

14) Do you have any comments?

The Role of the Synod Moderator
URC Mission Council October 2010

Terms of Reference for the Review Group

1. Develop a new role description for the synod moderator.
2. Draft resolutions to amend the Structure of the United Reformed Church as appropriate.
3. Make recommendations regarding the role of the Moderators' Meeting in relation to the councils of the church.
4. In undertaking the review:
 - a. consider the issues of responsibility, leadership, authority, authorisation and episcopacy;
 - b. consider possibilities arising from collaborative working;
 - c. consider and take note of ecumenical work on the issues in 4(a), including episcopate under the Church of England/Methodist Covenant and the Welsh explorations into an ecumenical bishop, and assess their relevance for the United Reformed Church;
 - d. consider and take note of 'The Role of the Synod Moderator' paper presented to Mission Council October 2010;
 - e. consult widely across the councils of the church and other appropriate groups.
5. Identify wider issues arising from the review in liaison with the Moderators' Think Tank so that these may be referred for further work as appropriate.
6. Report [progress] to Mission Council in November 2011.

Some thoughts on the consequences of the Equality Bill

1. Whilst it is thought that the Bill will be rushed into law before the election, it may not do so. In that event it seems to me that the Assembly will not need to do anything. However, saying nothing is hardly an option. We would need to say what process will be followed if the Bill in its amended form does become law.
2. If the Bill has become law, the Assembly can hardly ignore the fact. There are three possible ways to proceed.
3. The first is for the Assembly to resolve that local churches should be allowed to hold civil partnership ceremonies on their premises, leaving the decision to each local church on the same basis as Mission Council has already agreed that services of blessing can be held.
4. The second is for the Assembly to decide that local churches should not be allowed to hold civil partnership ceremonies on their premises, perhaps adding that this is for the time being while the theological implications of allowing the ceremonies is considered. A timescale could be inserted.
5. The third is for the Assembly to decide that, in order to remain faithful to its 2007 Commitment, it will not make a decision either way for the time being. Again a timescale could be inserted.
6. Option 1 will line us up with the Society of Friends and others, Option 2 with the Church of England and the Catholics and others, Option 3 could be lonely!
7. My view is that all three options will arouse significant opposition. It is arguable that, if we opt for either of the first two we shall have to accept that the Commitment no longer holds.
8. There is a question as to how far consensus decision-making should be applied in this matter. It seems to me unfair that pressure should be applied on whomever is the minority to come into line on what is a matter of deeply divided conviction.
9. It may be worth recalling the process used in 1999, when the Assembly took an in-principle decision on human sexuality and then referred it to synods (and local churches?) with the understanding that a 1/3 vote against would stop the decision – which it did. This would avoid the charge that a small Assembly decided something which was contrary to the views of the general membership. But it would also mean that the discussion of a sensitive issue possibly dominated the agenda of the councils of the church.
10. Whilst I am sure that the Human Sexuality task group should discuss the matter, the members are likely to be as divided as the Assembly will be. So there is a question where the leadership on this key question should come from.
11. I hope this helps as a first stab at the question.

John Waller

30 MARCH 2010

RESOLUTION

BT 10/05

The Methodist Council and URC Mission Council meeting together noted that:

- Despite being the fifth wealthiest country in the world, in the UK almost 1 in 4 adults and 1 in 3 children live in poverty.
- Income inequality in the UK has risen to its highest level since the Second World War.
- All are created to experience life in all its fullness, and that for those in poverty lack of resource is an often insurmountable obstacle to this.
- Relative poverty impacts on life chances, in terms of lower educational attainment, health, and life expectancy.
- Inequality is increasingly a barrier to the relationships within society and it is clear that the impact of inequality makes us all poorer economically, socially and spiritually.
- 20th October 2010 the government will announce reductions in spending expected to have lasting effects on the poorest and most vulnerable in society.

The Methodist Council and URC Mission Council meeting together resolve:

- To promote just distribution of income by confirming our commitment to the Living Wage and by calling for benefit and wage policies that provide the opportunity for all to live and work in dignity.
- Through the work of the Joint Public Issues team and others, to challenge the causes of poverty and inequality inherent in our society
- To stand alongside those worst affected by the government spending review and to demand that the burdens of the current economic situation are not unfairly put on the poor and the vulnerable.
- To challenge those who would stigmatise the poor and portray those in poverty as "lazy", or "having made a bad lifestyle choice" or being "scroungers".
- To listen to and tell the real stories of those who struggle on low incomes.

The Other Story

On the last occasion when the Mission Council heard the report of the liaison group for Moira Kerr she was unable to attend but her prepared statement was read by her husband. She had prepared this statement against the advice of her medical consultant and protested that it had been produced under stress and that the Church should have provided more support to her in its production. It was, nevertheless, a fluent and persuasive account of a promising young woman minister who was the victim of abuse from which the Church had failed to protect her. No other account was presented, setting out what the Church had attempted to do, indeed, the meeting was persuaded that the more the Church tried to find solutions or offer palliatives, the more it became part of the problem. Listening to the account I recognised immediately that some of it was factually incorrect and that it gave no real sense of the hurt experienced by the many people in the Church who had used their best efforts to help Moira. I therefore offered the General Secretary my services to try to chart some of the other side of the story. I have deliberately avoided reading the voluminous material held at Tavistock Place. Thereby I have left out some parts of the other story, where the people concerned are either dead or so long retired that it seems intrusive to re-interview them; this material could be added if it becomes necessary to explain some of the courses of action taken by the Church over the years.

Two things stand out for me as I review what I have learnt. The first is that the Church has been singularly fortunate that a great many people have borne with Moira's incessant phone calls and manipulative behaviour with Christian fortitude. The law has only been used as a last resort to restrain her. The second is that where the due processes of the Church might have been expected to resolve the matter in ways unacceptable to Moira the national officials of the Church and national committees and councils have always made exceptions or put a stop on processes out of consideration for Moira's health. The Church is fortunate that individuals and subsidiary councils of the Church have not sought to pursue the matter in the civil courts beyond seeking injunctions against Moira. Some representatives of the Church probably have a stronger case to make than Moira when it comes to the Church exposing them to abuse.

Moira's account of her life tells of a bright young graduate who, while not being understood by Westminster College, was a rising star of her generation. She even claims to have preached the Cambridge University sermon while an undergraduate. This is untrue, but the explanation is that she may well have preached at a service in Great St Mary's by invitation, since such invitations to students were given from time to time in the 1970s. Her academic record in Cambridge was not impressive; she had to retake one paper of her course and the Principal's final report said of her that she was a mediocre student who "Finds the discipline of study uncongenial." The only college prize she was awarded was a half-share in the elocution prize. This is consistent with Moira's account that the college did not help her and she was more at home with the Anglicans.

She also maintains that, with the exception of Dr Buick Knox, she found little pastoral support in the college. This is at odds with the memory of the staff at the time, who recall giving her a great deal of time, and her fellow students, who also recall her being a demanding companion. It is said that the break-up of the marriage of the senior student who counselled her at length was partly due to his wife's resentment of this. I have not pursued this with him in person, out of consideration for his present position, though this might be necessary in the event of some legal challenge to the Church. Part of the problem must have been that Moira was a glamorous young woman in an old-fashioned institution which still thought women students were the exception rather than the rule.

The course at that time provided short placements for students, rather than the present extended

internships. What was intended as Moira's final placement, in the East End, did not go well, Moira blaming the ministerial supervisor and he blaming her. In view of the doubts that the Board of Studies entertained about her satisfying their requirements they invoked a procedure which was then applied to students about whom there were questions. They sought to place Moira in a church for a year to gain experience and to see if her vocation was confirmed. The record does not show that an initial approach was made to me at the newly formed URC and Methodist church at Sutton in Surrey, the ecumenical situation there being thought especially appealing for Moira. My Methodist colleague was unwilling for us to take on the extra work involved and so David Geddes, who was on the Board of Studies, offered to provide a placement at Woodford Green.

The formal minutes of the Board of Studies are as follows:

“The Board agreed to the suggestion of the Senatus that Miss Kerr's preparation for the ministry might best be forwarded if she were to spend two terms of her final year as an assistant to a minister in a congregation. Provisional arrangements were in hand and the Grants Committee were willing to make financial arrangements for her. The Reverend David Geddes offered to receive Miss Kerr as an assistant and it was left to the Senatus to act in their wisdom, there being some urgency in the matter.” 6 June 1974

“The Revd D P C Geddes reported that Miss M H Kerr had now been in residence in his congregation for ten days and appeared to have settled well. He outlined the work she was so far engaged in. She was living now in the Manse. The Chairman expressed the thanks of the Board to Mr Geddes for undertaking this work of supervision..” 16 October 1974

Part of the urgency arose because the college, far from making life difficult for Moira, had made an unusual concession in the Spring of 1974 by allowing her to apply for a post with the British Council of Churches Youth Unit. The Senatus minute for 14 March 1974 reads:

“Moira Kerr

Professor Cressey submitted the following minute.

Re her final year of training for the ministry:

There were three possibilities which had been considered:

- (a) A year at an American college. The Senatus ruled out this possibility.
- (b) Service as Field Officer of the Youth Unit of the B.C.C. With the first year treated as an assistantship. The Senatus was willing to recommend to the Board of Studies the granting of leave of absence for the three-year period of this appointment but could not at this juncture recommend to the Board or the B.C.C. a plan to make this formally a part of the course. At the end of the period there would be an obligation to complete the course as then prescribed before she could be recognised as qualified for U.R.C. Ordination. On these terms she had applied for the B.C.C. Post and had been short-listed. Professor Cressey was one of the referees.
- (c) An attachment for two terms to a local church followed by the Easter Term 1975 back in college. The Senatus preferred this alternative. If Miss Kerr did not receive the B.C.C. appointment, Dr Mayor would negotiate with possible churches and would report to the Senatus at the beginning of the Easter term.”

The misgivings which the college entertained are clearly to be seen in this minutes. The preference for a local church attachment is plainly stated, and the American option ruled out. The BCC appointment is clearly not regarded as more than an interruption in a ministerial preparation which will still need to be completed. However, Moira had argued a persuasive case to be allowed to apply for the BCC post and the Senatus had assented. It was the failure to secure it which led to the hurried arrangements made in the Easter term. The Church had already begun to make exceptions.

By June 1975 Moira had completed her outstanding academic requirements and her assistantship with David Geddes to the satisfaction of the Board of Studies, who awarded her a leaving certificate. Although Principal Macleod's final report was dismissive of her academic achievements it did express some qualified hope that with the right support she might make an effective minister.

“Her conduct of worship is a helpful combination of liveliness and devotion, and her preaching is stimulating, even if not all would share her social convictions. She has a great sense of pastoral responsibility, not always matched by an imaginative appreciation of other people's susceptibilities. Occasionally shows signs of stress. She needs to find a place with sympathetic people, either in a team ministry or with a congregation which would give her understanding and support.”

In the event she returned to Woodford Green, which in itself rather undermines her case that the Church placed her in a vulnerable position. If an abusive relationship had already begun there was an opportunity to end it. It is clear that over the next few months events took place which led to the resignation of David Geddes from the ministry. Moira claims she was raped by him; he later admitted to inappropriate sexual relations. No formal church disciplinary process was followed and no criminal prosecution took place. Moira sees this as a cover-up by the Church. The moderator who dealt with this case, Revd Richard Hall, had been David Geddes's predecessor in Cambridge but was a very different character, franker and more approachable. His handling of the case was in conformity with the then practice. Subsequent experience has shown that if a ministerial resignation is substituted for a disciplinary process then those who have to consider the application to be readmitted to the Roll of Ministers are placed in an invidious position. In the light of David Geddes's own admissions, let alone her own contention, Moira was entitled to be offended by his restoration to the Roll and a question mark must hang over this decision, even if David Geddes's account of things is true. Moira effectively went into exile in Sierra Leone with the Methodist Missionary Society, returning with her husband to Derby, where he had obtained an academic post. She was then called to serve as an assistant minister at Derby Central.

There is a full record of the events which led to the Derby Central church meeting terminating Moira's ministry in the Lawson Report and I have not troubled Bernard Chart to give me his account again. I became aware of the situation at the point CEM moved its offices to Derby, barely 200 yards from Central. The General Secretary, Bernard Thorogood, contacted me to say that Moira was a minister on full pay who needed to be deployed in some useful work following the termination of her ministry by the local church. I met with Moira to discuss what she might be able to do in the short term with CEM. She subsequently told me that she didn't feel any of the work we had considered appealed to her and that in any case her psychiatrist was advising her against taking up any new work for the present. There then followed a period where Moira became the responsibility of the moderator and the Pastoral Welfare Committee. This became more adversarial over the months, especially as Moira felt she was still morally one of the ministers of Central. She continued to attend the church and the District Council from time to time, occasions which people began to dread, since she always took the opportunity to argue her case, either privately or publicly.

Ministers at Central came and went; the moderator changed; the officers of the District Council rotated. I accepted the post of President. Attending a conference at Swanwick I was approached by Ruth Clarke, who was then trying to help Moira, to see if I could facilitate a reconciliation between Moira and the District Council, in order to make it possible for her to resume ministry. I arranged to visit Moira. She and Alan entertained me to supper and told me the whole story from their point of view. I told them of my personal acquaintance with David Geddes and rather longer association with Dick Hall, who had presided at my wedding and my induction to Welwyn Garden City. Moira

grew unceasingly intense as the evening wore on and was especially insistent that the Church should acknowledge its guilt in what had happened to her. I recall being particularly struck by this and advising against this as a way of proceeding. Against the background of the disappointment and frustration experienced when trying to establish corporate guilt after major accidents I argued that it was counter-productive to pursue an abstract oppressor, "the United Reformed Church", rather than particular individuals. We parted in reasonable amity and Moira attended the next District Council, making a valid contribution to the debate on some routine item. At the end of the meeting she confronted the District Secretary and myself, demanding to know why she had not been welcomed back formally. I explained that I had felt it better to keep matters low key. There followed an extraordinary sequence on the pavement outside in which Moira alternatively assailed me verbally as one of the oppressors of women and warmly invited me to come for a drink. I had a plane to catch at an early hour the next morning and politely explained that I needed to get away, which I eventually succeeded in doing with great difficulty.

I was now added to the list of people Moira phoned, usually late at night, and always in a wheedling and manipulative manner. Any number of former Moderators of General Assembly, synod moderators and officers, denominational officials, District Council officers and so on have been subjected to this regime. The normal reaction is to go into pastoral counselling mode. If one persists in this there is no end to it. My own experience is typical. After the first few times my wife began to express first concern and then irritation. When Moira reminded me that I had talked of returning her hospitality I told her bluntly that my wife was unwilling to receive her at our house. This had the effect of halting the calls for a short while. When they resumed I had the bizarre experience of an apparently distraught Moira ringing me one morning threatening to take an overdose. In the middle of the conversation her doorbell rang and she broke off, saying that her neighbour was calling to go shopping with her. I overheard her telling the neighbour in a quite normal voice that she was busy on the telephone and would have to postpone the trip. She then returned to agonise with me. This strengthened my resolve to tell her that if she chose to take the overdose that was her decision, there was nothing I was prepared to do. She rang off and has never contacted me by telephone since. Comparing notes I find others who have found this tactic worked. Unfortunately there is also a group of people who went on listening and responding until they were quite broken by the experience. I was to see her once more, years later, in the college at Cambridge, when she dropped by at college coffee time and chatted with me and a few other people.

I was succeeded as President of the District Council by a lay woman. Moira took this opportunity to revisit meetings and to intervene dramatically to raise her grievances. Two meetings had to be suspended. At the second of these the synod moderator persuaded Moira to go to a side room with a few members of her own selection to try to resolve matters. I was invited to be part of this group but declined. Two women elders from our Melbourne church, where Moira still preached on supply, went with the moderator and were subject to verbal and physical abuse by Moira. I was still on the District Pastoral Committee, which had to consider what we did next. I recall one member, a head teacher, saying that Moira's behaviour was reminiscent of a frustrated infant; giving in to it was not the way forward if you had their best interests at heart. Over a series of meetings with the moderator the Pastoral Committee moved to a position where they felt disciplinary procedures should be invoked, especially after the incident in which Moira went to Central just before a communion service was due to begin and, having assaulted the minister, swept the elements from the table. Central eventually consulted a solicitor and took out a civil injunction forbidding Moira to enter the premises. The moderator resisted the move to a disciplinary process, on the grounds that this was fundamentally a pastoral problem and that Moira was not always responsible for her own actions. When, eventually, a disciplinary process was begun it was suspended for the same reason. The District Council, however, had had enough and felt it was not being supported or protected by the

wider Church. It also took independent legal advice, leading to an injunction. It also resolved to remove Moira from the Roll of Ministers. She appealed to the Synod against this decision, and the decision of Central to remove her from the roll of members, but failed to attend the hearing of her case. The decision now rests in limbo, waiting for a central committee of the Church to confirm it.

Moira herself invoked the grievance procedure against two of the ministers in the District. They were called in by David Cornick and assured that the cases would not proceed. To this day they have the formal letters of complaint on file but no corresponding exoneration in writing. Where Moira is concerned the due processes of the Church always get frozen. Whatever the nature of her illness or disorder, for which I have found nothing but profound sympathy on all sides, it prevents her appearing in person at a court of the Church to secure the justice she seeks. It is as if to take away her suit is to destroy her as a person. Since the Church said there was an end to any process of resolution and that all future communications must be through the Church's solicitors (a route she has still to use) she has been in hospital. This is the saddest aspect of the whole matter, as if her conviction that the Church is itself the ultimate abuser has been verified.

In speaking to people I have asked for their reflections on what has happened to them and to the Church and what would they have done differently. One strong theme has been the denomination's duty of care to the people other than Moira who have been distressed by the various events and confrontations. Did the denomination's concern to protect its central offices against incidents and itself against a ruinous lawsuit distract it from giving the support which was needed at a local level? This runs together with a feeling that due process had been followed, albeit reluctantly, at a local level, but thwarted at the centre by executive action on the part of people like the General Secretary. This was compounded by the confidential nature of a pastoral approach, which seems also to have precluded the church equivalent of a medical case conference, in which the various practitioners compare notes and plot the way forward. The absence of a co-ordinated approach left Moira to follow her preferred method of working through sympathetic individuals. They had a part to play, but their role compounded the confusion of pastoral and disciplinary methodology. The local councils of the Church felt that the Lawson enquiry addressed their concerns for the first time and were dismayed that subsequent actions actually re-opened questions which had been closed. There are still numbers of people who bore some of the hurts of Moira's case whose own grief has not been addressed. In some cases the people concerned feel somehow "tainted" and spoken against when considered for further service in the Church. There was a general agreement that in deploying pastoral care for Moira we had made two grave errors. First, we had always met the costs of professional care of her own choosing, without deploying our own choice of consultant and, second, we had sent in new teams of pastoral carers without acknowledging the failure of the basic method we were employing. Like Great War generals sending loyal infantry over the top repeatedly in an attempt to break the German line we were unable to make radical changes of policy, even when the Lawson report proposed them.

The lessons for the future:

Pastoral support:

The treatment of inappropriate sexual relationships and actual sexual assault by the official councils of the Church has changed dramatically since the 1970s. What needs still to be addressed is the training, support and de-briefing of those who are required to exercise pastoral care in serious cases of a disciplinary nature and those cases which do not fall within the disciplinary process but offer intractable problems. One assumes that the peer group of synod moderators addresses this issue internally, but whether synod moderators and the various other people who are drawn into fraught circumstances are given sufficient personal support by the Church is open to question.

Due process:

There are clearly defined processes now within the Church for dealing with disciplinary matters and grievances. The nature of church people mean that such processes are always tempered by pastoral sensitivity. That sensitivity may sometimes be misplaced and pervert the process. We cannot afford to take people for granted in these circumstances. Observing that due process has been followed is pastorally affirmative for some participants in difficult situations. Pastoral support must be clearly seen to be outside the disciplinary process and those charged with conducting that process cannot afford to let their personal pastoral sensitivities influence the case. In particular, the Church seems to have no equivalent of victim support schemes in the secular sphere. These schemes check that victims and witnesses in disturbing cases have been offered personal support, even if they choose not to take it. The Church should not do less.

Children & Youth joint session

Title - Which way now?

Minutes	Activity	Action
1	<p>Welcome & context for session</p> <p>Doug – welcome to this session – Introduce Self</p> <p>Rob – Introduce self and the aims of the session –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explore approaches for this work appropriate for the 21st century context • To understand the strategic plans of each denomination, recognising uniqueness alongside opportunities for collaborative working <p>Explain we will be doing this thorough group work, case studies and to help us to do this we have working together -</p> <p>Doug - introduce Methodist team</p> <p>Rob - introduce URC team</p> <p>Before we do anything else - let's watch this</p>	
5	Aim Lower	JW (bring dvd)
2	<p>Doug</p> <p>Join the dots within the box exercise – People need to join the dots with four lines without lifting their pen off the page. You do it by drawing outside the box. (see below)</p>	JW (Prepare paper)
5	<p>Rob</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not starting with a blank sheet of paper - Children and Youth is historically an aspect of work that Methodist and URC have collaborated together on and with other partners. - URC & Methodist have worked together on a number of projects – Spectrum, Core and Peace builders. (Peace builders may be part of Roots) Baptism materials 	DS & RW

Doug

- The Churches are facing a difficult challenge, they have the highest age profiles, children and young people in society have little knowledge or interest in Christian religion (Gen Y).
- our desire is to share the Gospel message with children and young people.
- we are to engage children and young people meaningfully in the mission and ministry of our churches

Rob

- we want to do this because we believe:
 - Children are equal partners with adults in the life of the church
 - Learning is for the whole church
 - Mission and Ministry is for and with children as well as adults
 - The call to evangelism comes at whatever age
 - The concept of priesthood of all believers includes children
 - The Holy Spirit works through children as well as adults then:

Doug

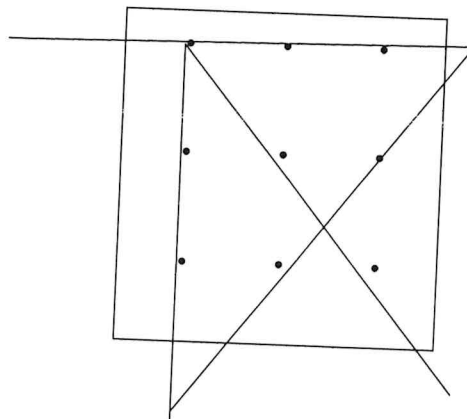
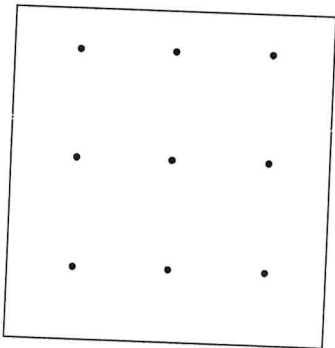
As a church we need to think outside the box, not be constrained by how we used to do things and recognise that children's and youth ministry is a whole Church responsibility.

So let's hear about the strategies that our two churches have adopted to help us think outside the box - Mike.

4	Connect - the Five year strategy for Methodist children and youth	MS
4	URC - Strategy	JB
	Case studies	
3-4	Consultative Group for Ministry amongst Children	PF/ KB
	Child friendly Church	JW
3-4	The Well - Methodist network for Children and Youth workers	MP
3-4	Fury/ YPS	JB/ MS

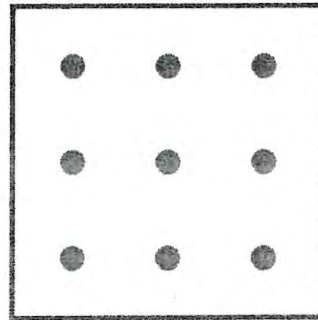
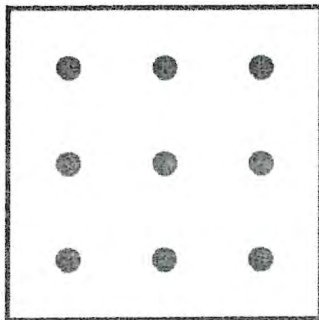
3-4	Pilots	
3-4		KB
5	<p>Rob</p> <p>We hope that gives you an idea of the kind of work that we are engaging in – both together and in our own unique ways</p> <p>After coffee we want you to gather back in your groups and discuss the questions written on the bottom of the sheet you have –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What opportunities do children and young people present to the 21st century church?? 2. What are the challenges that are presented? 3. How can they be addressed? <p>Write down on the back of the sheet your thoughts and then we can use these as we move forward with our strategies.</p> <p>Back together by 1130 am</p> <p>Doug</p> <p>Exercise during coffee break</p> <p>As individuals think about children and young people. We want you to be specific on your piece of paper – count up how many children and young people, and their ages groups you have in your:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Families – children, grand-children, nieces, nephews, God children.. ▪ The children and young people in your street ▪ Schools in your neighbourhood – where are they, how many etc.. <p>Think about their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interests, ▪ Needs ▪ Involvement with the Church <p>These children and young people are not just random numbers they are individuals with stories, needs hopes and dreams. The Church is as much for them as it is for each one of us.</p> <p>Off you go.</p>	
30	Group work (back together by 1130)	

10	<p>Rob</p> <p>We have all your written answers and these will be useful - but is there anything that you feel should be said whilst we are meeting jointly as 2 Councils in relation to the conversations you had?</p> <p>Doug</p> <p>Suggest resolutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commit both denominations to the crucial work of re-engaging with children & young people in Britain through the widest variety of mediums - Commit both denominations to do those things together that they are able to and to continually seek new areas of co-operation <p>Rob - thanks - to all and staff</p>	



Which Way Now?

Engaging with children and young people



Methodist Church Connect Strategy

- Valuing
- Think, talk and be with God
- 21st Century Church
- Equipping the Equippers
- Teaching and challenge
- Participation
- Speaking Out

United Reformed Church Children's and Youth Strategy

- Worship
- Talking about God
(Theology)
- Growth
- Telling our stories
- Community

Discussion questions for small groups

- **What opportunities do children and young people present for a 21st century Church?**
- **What are the challenges that face us?**
- **How can they be overcome?**