

Minutes of the Mission Council Meeting at The Hayes, Swanwick

16th – 18th November 2009

Monday November 16th

Preceding the opening of Mission Council a briefing session was held for those new to council meetings.

Session 1

The Moderator, the Revd John Marsh, constituted the meeting and invited the Chaplain, Revd Mary Buchanan, to lead opening worship during which he gave the address.

Present: 57 Members and 25 Staff members and visitors.

New members were welcomed: Mrs Barbara Bruce Synod of Scotland
Rev Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor Southern Synod Clerk; Mrs Linda Harrison, Eastern Synod (as alternate for Joan Turner, she will succeed Mick Barnes as Synod Clerk in 2010); Ms Gill Nichol Press and Media Development Officer; Mrs Val Phillips, West Midlands Synod; Rev Shelagh Pollard Synod of Wales, Clerk; Rev Jane Rowell, Secretary for World Church Relations; Rev David Tatem, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations .

Also in Attendance

Rev Elizabeth Nash Consensus Adviser; Rev Alison Tomlin, Representing the Methodist Church, the President-Elect of the Methodist Conference.

Apologies were received from:

Rev Kay Alberg, Rev Adrian Bulley, Rev Jane Campbell, Miss Elaine Colechin, Rev Dr Peter Cruchley-Jones, Revd Martin Hazell, Rev Maggie Hindley, Rev John Humphreys, Revd Peter Noble, Ms Kay Parris, Mrs Val Philips, Mr Josh Thomas, Mr Justice Semuli and Ms Joan Turner

09/27 Minutes

The minutes of the Mission Council held on May 15 – 17th 2009 were agreed and signed by the Moderator.

09/28 Matters arising

09/15 Hope in God's Future. Mr Frank Kantor presented Paper L. on the work of the Mission Committee since the previous Council meeting.

09/29 MCAG vacancy due to resignation of Morag McClintock. The Deputy General Secretary requested nominations by Tuesday morning. The vacancy was for a Committee Convenor.

09/30 How the pieces fit together – General Assembly 2010.

The General Secretary presented paper P.

Revd Roberta Rominger referred to seven themes which she believed are emerging in the life of the church and invited groups to discuss these and any omissions. She offered two questions for discussion.

1 Do you think the thematic approach will work? What has been missed?

2 What about the Synods? Should there be written reports? Could Synods have input to General Assembly via the theme headings?

Group discussion followed.

Session 2

Reports were received from the group discussions.

There was widespread agreement for the use of "themes" at Assembly, but less unanimity about the number required, or if those mentioned were the most appropriate. Too many would be overwhelming. At a time of change this would be a sensible opportunity to try something new and many agreed that Synods could contribute from their own experience in helping to make presentations. Mission Council could receive reports from the Synods at intervals, this may lessen the tendency to be competitive and provide an honest account of successes and difficulties.

The General Secretary thanked everyone for their helpful contributions. In the light of responses received she asked whether Synods should produce written reports for the coming Assembly in July 2010. A show of orange cards indicated that there was a large majority favouring no written reports from Synods to the next Assembly

09/31 Communications Report.

Revd Kirsty Thorpe presented Paper K

The communications team have the dilemma of trying to use the most up to date forms of communication alongside the ongoing demand for hard copy. She praised both the team and the members of the committee for their dedication and skills. She paid tribute to Stuart Dew, as he retires, for his work and welcomed both Gill and Gen. She welcomed positive comments about the new website and its up to date information and explained that the bookshop needs to trade at a profit if it is to survive. In an effort to secure this, a post is soon to be advertised for the promotion and marketing of the bookshop. The new database is slowly coming together, but needs standardised recording approaches arrived at by agreement not imposition. Keeping information up to date is also a difficulty.

09/32 Wessex Synod Item

Peter Pay, Wessex Synod Clerk spoke to the resolution. Cobham is currently on the fringe of Wessex Synod and relates to other churches within the Southern Synod. Church meeting, Pastoral Committee and Synod Executive had already given approval.

Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly agrees to the transfer of Cobham United Reformed Church from the Wessex Synod to the Southern Synod on December 1st 2009.

Resolved by unanimous vote.

09/33 The Deposit of Essential Records.

Revd Stephen Orchard presented Paper O. Synods have the responsibility to make sure that former District Council records are kept safely for the future. Some information of a significant nature concerning individuals should be kept safely within synods and not deposited in the Record Offices. The clerk advised that careful notes should be kept in contemporary records as to the location of those deposited. Work is ongoing with the Archivist at Church House to prepare advice about future storage of electronic records.

The Chaplain conducted evening prayers.

Tuesday November 17th. Session three.

Mission Council was led in worship by the Chaplain, during which Revd Jane Rowell was inducted as Secretary for World Church Relations and Revd David Tatum as Secretary for Ecumenical Relations.

09/34 The Role of Mission Council.

The Deputy General Secretary, the Revd Richard Mortimer, spoke to Paper A. Mission Council discussed the paper in 'buzz groups'

A number of concerns were expressed and noted. Mission Council resolved by consensus that the process outlined by the Clerk be set in motion with the intention of bringing draft structural changes to the next meeting of Mission Council.

09/35 Nominations Committee.

Revd Malcolm Hanson spoke to Paper N.

In view of the change to biennial Assemblies, it will be necessary to appoint a new Clerk at General Assembly 2010. However, the term of service will not begin until after the end of Assembly 2012. It is being suggested that the Clerk's term of service should be changed from the 5 plus 5 year pattern to a 6 plus 4 year pattern.

Revd Malcolm Hanson proposed:

Mission Council agrees that the next Clerk to General Assembly be appointed for six years from Assembly 2012 (to serve the Assemblies of 2014 - 2018 inclusive) with the possibility of re-appointment for a further four years, subject to review and to the revision of the relevant Rules of Procedure.

Resolved by consensus

Other committee vacancies recently filled are set out in Appendix 1.

Resolution: Mission Council agrees to appoint the committee officers as set out in the Nominations Committee report, was withdrawn as unnecessary.

Mr. Hanson presented a proposed resolution for General Assembly:

“General Assembly agrees that the power to appoint Assembly staff members, other than officers of Assembly and synod moderators, shall be delegated to appointing groups duly appointed so long as appropriate processes and employment criteria have been met. All such appointments shall have effect from the date determined by the appointing group, and shall be reported to the next meeting of Mission Council or General Assembly.”

Mr Ellis suggested a change of wording to remove any suggestion that Ministers are employees to which Mr Hanson agreed

“General Assembly agrees that the power to appoint Assembly staff members, other than officers of Assembly and synod moderators, shall be delegated to appointing groups duly appointed so long as appropriate processes and employment and related criteria have been met. All such appointments shall have effect from the date determined by the appointing group, and shall be reported to the next meeting of Mission Council or General Assembly.”

Mr Hanson proposed:

Mission Council agrees to forward the resolution concerning the authority of Appointing Groups to General Assembly.

Resolved by consensus

Session Four

The Moderator invited Revd Michael Jagessar to make an announcement. He indicated that those not yet signed up for the Multi-cultural celebration on December 5th should do so as numbers are limited.

The Deputy General Secretary reported that as two Nominations had been received for the member of MCAG, an election would be necessary.

09/36 Guidelines for Ministries

Revd Peter Poulter spoke to Papers B, B1, B2, B3

The committee believed that the papers prepared were ready for General Assembly to be accepted as documents of the church.

Following considerable discussion and comments, Missions Council resolved by agreement that the papers should be forwarded to General Assembly.

09/37 The Ministry of Evangelists

Revd Peter Poulter spoke to Paper J.

Ministries Committee wishes to open up discussion and exploration of the ministry of Evangelists via a ‘Pilot process’ (Appendix 2). Following a number of questions and comments, Mission Council discussed the proposal in table groups and indicated encouragement by showing a large number of orange cards.

09/38 Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee

The Deputy General Secretary spoke to Paper M.

Following comments the Clerk proposed that:

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, adopts the new terms of reference of the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee. (Text at Appendix 3) Resolved by consensus.

09/39 Enabling Resolution, North Western Synod.

On behalf on North Western Synod, the Clerk proposed:

Mission Council acting on behalf of the General Assembly appoints the Director of the Windermere Centre and the URC members of the teaching staff of Northern College Manchester to be members of the North Western Synod. Resolved by agreement.

Session Five

09/40 Ministerial Incapacity Procedure and Disciplinary Process Advisory Group. (MIND)

The Clerk spoke to Paper C.

Mission Council acting on behalf of the General Assembly adopted the proposed Terms of Reference for MIND (Appendix 4i). Resolved by majority vote.

Changes to wording in the Part Two of the Disciplinary and Incapacity Procedures were moved by the Clerk (Text at Appendix 4ii). Resolved by majority vote.

09/41 Local Church Constitution

After definitive advice received from Charity Commission in July, a final version is in preparation.

09/42 Safeguarding,

The Deputy General Secretary introduced Paper D, which updated the Mission Council about ongoing work in relation to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Work continues to provide an up to date portfolio of documents.

09/43 Declaration of a Safe Church,

The Deputy General Secretary spoke to Paper D2, which has been updated to include issues of abuse of trust. He moved the adoption of Paper D2.

In response to a number of constructive comments, Mr Mortimer suggested that the paper be withdrawn for further work and Mission Council agreed.

09/44 Vetting and Barring

Revd Craig Bowman spoke to Paper D1. He explained that further Government advice is awaited which would lead to a revised paper in the New Year. He emphasised that Vetting and Barring would be a legal requirement with which the URC would need to comply.

The Moderator invited Mr Malcolm Johnson to express a personal opinion on the church's compliance with recent legislation and then led the meeting in prayer.

09/45 Finance

The report given by Mr John Ellis, the treasurer.

He moved the Resolution:

Mission Council acting on behalf of the General Assembly, receives the Trustee's Report and adopts the Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2008.

Resolved by majority vote.

Thanks are recorded to all who have worked hard to produce the accounts.

Mr Ellis then spoke to Paper E.

He gave an update of work since the last Mission Council and outlined the Budget for 2010 and also actions to be taken to support the Minister's Pension Fund.

He brought the recommendation:

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, agrees to amend *The Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration* by:

(i) amending paragraph 6.3.4 to read:

Travel: the costs of travel on church business shall be met as follows. Although these options are available, environmental issues should be taken into account.

(ii) Amending paragraph 6.3.4.1 by the underlined insertion:

....The MoM Sub-Committee shall distribute annually the rates of reimbursement for mileage undertaken on church business, including rates for motorcycles and bicycles, which must not be exceeded...

Resolved by consensus.

He spoke to Paper E1, the Budget for 2010

Session Six

The Moderator welcomed the Revd John Waller, the convenor of the Human Sexuality Task Group, to Mission Council.

09/45 continued

The Moderator invited the Treasurer to respond to comments and questions for further information then Mission Council discussed in 'buzz groups'.

Mr Ellis then responded to questions and comments relating to the Pension Fund deficit.

Mr Ellis proposed the recommendations from the Finance Committee.

1 Saluting the work of those who give themselves to God and the Church in service as Ministers of Word and Sacraments and as Church Related Community Workers, Mission Council requests Synods to meet the challenge of supplementary support for the Ministers' Pension Fund by committing to provide the sums indicated in Appendix 3 for 2010-12.

Resolved by consensus

2 Mission Council requests every Synod to consider a commitment to give a percentage of the proceeds of property sales to the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund. Resolved by consensus

3 Mission Council, noting the suggestion of the Board of Directors of the URCMPF that honouring the ethical investment policy of the Church may have resulted in a reduction in the value of the Fund by £644,000 over the period 2006-8, agrees that this sum should be transferred to the URCMPF as part of the additional funding under the Recovery Plan in 2010. Resolved by consensus

4 Mission Council supports an increase in member contributions to the URCMPF to 7.5% of stipend with effect from 1 July 2010. Resolved by consensus

5 Mission Council approves the budget for 2010, noting that it includes income of £0.5m from Synods for pensions support. Resolved by consensus

In response to a question the treasurer explained that if Synods were not willing or able to contribute substantial sums to assist the fund it would mean that the informal covenant between them would be deemed to be broken down and the only ways forward would be to seek outside help with fund raising, cut the number of ministers and/or make draconian cuts to central programmes of the church.

09/46 Resource Sharing

Revd David Grosch Miller spoke to Paper H

He underlined the difficulty in challenging economic times of maintaining the mutuality between the Synods as was exercised in earlier years.

The Moderator invited Revd Rob Weston to respond to the earlier statement from Professor Malcolm Johnson. Mission Council was invited to discuss the subject around their tables.

09/47 Human Sexuality Task Group.

Revd John Waller spoke to Paper F

Following discussion and comments Mission Council agreed with the general direction of the Task Group's work towards their report to General Assembly.

Paper F1 Civil Partnerships, advice to churches.

The task group had made some changes to the document received by Mission Council in 2004. The full text of the Commitment made at Assembly 2007 was included and the check-list for services of blessing has been simplified.

Considerable discussion followed.

It was finally resolved by agreement that the document should be produced under the auspices of Mission Council and made available to the churches.

Paper F2 Advice to the Governors of Westminster College.

Following a number of comments and questions the advice offered in Paper F2 was supported by consensus.

Paper F3 Guidelines for the open session.

Guidance was offered for the conduct of the optional evening session.

Mr Waller thanked everyone who had contributed. He said that the task group members shared much of the pain evident within the meeting because they too were of differing theological understandings. He believed it to be vitally important that we commit to working together to come to better understanding of each others' viewpoints so that eventually a decision might be reached.

This concluded the business of the day. An optional session took place in the evening.

Wednesday 18th November

Mission Council met together to share Holy Communion, led by the Moderator, who gave the address, and the Chaplain.

Session 7

09/48 MCAG Vacancy

The Deputy General Secretary announced that one nominee for the vacancy on MGAG had withdrawn, leaving the other nominee, Revd Elizabeth Nash as the new member of MCAG

09/ 49 Youth and Children's Work.

The Revd Robert Weston gave a verbal report.

The staff team plan to work with focus synods through a rolling programme beginning in 2010. Jo Williams, Karen Bulley and John Brown will each visit a number of Synods to help share good practice and expertise. Mr Weston also explained that the oversight of the 25% of the CYDO's time for General Assembly work has been clarified with line managers. May 15th 2010 will be a major Pilots event at Warwick Castle. Small cards have been produced as an aide-memoire of good practice for all volunteer workers with children.

09/ 50 Energy for Life report

Revd. Terry Oakley spoke to Paper G. Thanks were offered to the Moderator, the General Secretary and Daleep Mukarjee, of Christian Aid, for the work they had put into the event.

09/51 Joint Mission Council with the Methodist Council meeting October 13th - 15th 2010.

The General Secretary explained that the two bodies will meet together on the first two days and complete their separate business on the third day. The officers of the two churches are planning the event. Plans will also be made for a contingency day for Mission Council in November 2010, should business demand it.

09/ 52 Church of England – United Reformed Church Bilateral Dialogue

The Deputy General Secretary gave notice of a forthcoming report, which will be a focus of discussion in 2010 in both the Church of England and the United Reformed Church. 2010 –11 would be time for discussion and decisions could follow in 2012. It could be a significant time of healing of the hurts of 1662 and the possibility of recognising each other as churches.

09/53 Emergency resolution on Financial Crisis

Peter Pay introduced the resolution on behalf of the Mission Committee.
Frank Kantor spoke to it.

Peter Pay proposed the resolution:

Following discussion in which warm support was displayed , the wording was slightly amended to:

Mission Council of the United Reformed Church:

Noting the following concerns

- **The impact of the economic recession on those least responsible for the financial crisis – the poor and vulnerable- and the shift in public discourse of this crisis from private to public finances in the UK over the past year.**
- **Potential cuts to social benefits and public services being advocated by political parties in the lead up to the General Election and the negative impact this will have on vulnerable households and individuals in the UK, and**
- **The likely impact of the enormous deficit in public finances on the UK's commitments to international development and climate change adaptation and mitigation.**

1. Warmly welcomes the Prime Minister's proposal for a financial transaction levy of half a basis point (0.05%) to be imposed globally as an innovative means of raising finances to offset this deficit and to create "a better economic and social contract between financial institutions and the public based on trust and a just distribution of risks and rewards".

2. Calls on other leaders of the G20 economies to grasp the opportunity to redress the inequity in the current financial system by supporting the proposal.

3. Agrees to pursue with our ecumenical partners consideration of appropriate ways of responding to the issues raised in this resolution to ensure that the voice of faith communities and the church is heard on this critical moral imperative.

Resolved by consensus.

09/53 Electronic /Paper distribution of Council Papers

The Moderator ruled that this matter would be discussed by MCAg.

09/ 54 Thanks and Farewells

The Moderator thanked all those whose service to Mission Council was complete: Ms Adella Pritchard, West Midlands; Mick Barnes, Eastern Synod Clerk; Mrs Janet Gray, South Western Synod; and Mrs Joan Turner, Eastern Synod.

Revd Kirsty Thorpe thanked Stuart Dew for his work in Church and Society and the Joint Public Issues team, as well as for his recent work as Press and Media Development Officer, as he moved into retirement.

The Moderator then thanked the 'front of house' and the 'back of house' teams. He invited the Chaplain to lead the closing worship.

Mission Council next convenes on March 9 – 11th 2010, at All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney.*

Work of the Nomination Committee Appendix 1

Review/Appointing Group Convener

The Revd Nanette Lewis-Head has agreed to convene the Review/Appointing Group for the Moderator of Mersey Synod

The Revd Dr Stephen Orchard, as a former Moderator, has agreed to convene the nominating group for the Clerk to General Assembly. The following eight members, four of whom have been drawn from the Panel for the Appointment and Review of the Synod Moderators, the General Secretary and the Deputy General Secretary, have also been invited to serve:

Panel members: Revd Mary Buchanan, Dr Graham Campling, Revd Lesley Charlton,
Revd Raymond Singh

General Secretary: Revd Roberta Rominger

Former Moderator: Mrs Wilma Frew

Synod Clerk: Revd John Durell

Convener – Assembly Arrangements Committee: Dr David Robinson

For information

Officers of Committees

The following have agreed to serve:

Mission Committee (Deputy Convener)

Mr Peter Pay

From Assembly 2010 until Assembly 2012

International Exchange Reference Group (Convener elect)

Mr Chris Wright

From Assembly 2010

3.1.3 Ministries – Leadership in Worship Sub-Committee (Convener elect)

Mrs Judith Johnson

From Assembly 2010

Education and Learning Committee (Convener elect)

Revd John Smith

From Assembly 2010

Windermere Management Committee (Convener)

Revd Howard Sharp

From July 2009 until 30 June 2013 (to be reviewed January 2011)

Pilots Management Sub-Committee (Convener elect)

To be confirmed

From Assembly 2010

Communications and Editorial Committee (Convener elect)

Revd Richard Bittlestone

From Assembly 2010

Pastoral Reference Committee (Convener elect)

Revd Sheila Maxey

From Assembly 2010

Work of Ministries Committee Appendix 2

Pilot Process

1 The Ministries Committee believes that there is a distinctive ministry of evangelists to be exercised in the United Reformed Church and proposes to encourage and develop it in the following way:

2 Initially we would seek to identify ministers of word and sacrament who are currently serving in local pastoral situations who may be gifted and called to the ministry of an evangelist.

3 We would dedicate 3 Special Category Ministry posts in 2009/2010 for the ministry of evangelists.

4 We would invite synods or team pastorates to create and apply for these posts as a pilot process. We recognise that this may mean creating posts for people who have already been identified as gifted or called to this ministry, although the Special Category Ministry rules normally preclude this.

5 The process would be reviewed by the Ministries Committee and the synods involved after 18 months appointment to see what lessons have been learned and to determine whether to move towards creating a process of specific recruitment, assessment and training for evangelists within the United Reformed Church. At this time we are not proposing establishing an order of evangelists.

Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee Appendix 3

1 Functions:

1a The Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee (PRWC) considers the cases of United Reformed Church (URC) Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Church Related Community Workers (*hereafter, those exercising either ministry are included in the term `ministers`*) which are referred to it by the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary, Synod Moderators, Synod Pastoral Committees or Mission Council, on account of perceived pastoral need. Such response maybe needed:

- i) when there is a perceived breakdown in relationship between the minister and the wider United Reformed Church;
- ii) when Synod officers feel the need for wider help;
- iii) when the continuation of a minister`s service within the existing pastoral charge, or the URC itself, is in question;
- iv) when financial assistance is sought from Welfare funds.

1b The committee will seek to resolve problems both by consideration of the issues and by consultation with the parties involved, where appropriate. It will further seek to enable the person`s service within the URC to be continued if that is seen to be appropriate. To this end it may consider financial support for courses of re-training, therapy or counselling.

1c The committee may initiate discussion about alternative forms of service for a minister, within or outside the URC, and may seek help (practical, financial, professional) – in consultation with the person involved – to make this possible.

1d The committee has overall responsibility for the administration of Welfare funds.

To this end, the Senior Finance Officer will attend meetings to advise on applications and to implement administration of agreed policy.

1e The committee may authorise the Maintenance of Ministry (MoM) sub-committee to provide stipend or part-stipend, and may authorise the Chief Finance Officer to pay – for a specific period – other necessary expenses (including accommodation costs) to a minister not in pastoral charge. Such period will not exceed six months, in the first instance, but may be renewed by the PRWC. The MoM sub-committee (or such other body as shall in future carry its functions) or the Chief Finance Officer will accept this authority for payment.

1f In each case the committee will make clear to the minister concerned the period for which payments will be made and whether or not it may be extended.

2 Limitations

2a The committee does not have authority to delete the name of a minister from the Roll of Ministers, nor to take any other disciplinary steps against him/her. The committee does not have to be consulted about and does not have authority over the process of ending the appointment of a minister in pastoral charge, which process is a matter for minister, Church Meeting and Synod.

2b The committee may not be involved with, and must withdraw from, any ongoing discussions, counselling or any other direct pastoral involvement with any case in which the disciplinary procedures of the Church are being applied against a minister. The committee may, however, authorise financial payments allowed under its Terms of Reference (see 1e).

3 Confidentiality

The work of the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee will be both confidential and pastoral. It will, though, need to keep a record of its meetings. The committee's conclusions should be recorded, given to the person concerned and shared with others directly involved who need to know the outcome. It will be inappropriate for the committee as a body, or individual members of it, to divulge any additional information about ministers or churches concerned.

4 Attendance

4a If circumstances require, the committee may invite a minister whose case is being considered to meet some or all of its members. In that case the person may be accompanied by a friend if he or she so wishes.

4b The committee shall have discretion to invite other parties involved in a case to meet it.

5 Composition

A former Moderator of General Assembly shall be Convener; the General Secretary; two lay people; one minister with experience of pastoral charge; one Synod Moderator; the Honorary Treasurer; the Deputy General Secretary who will act as Secretary.

6 Relationship to General Assembly

The committee will report to each meeting of General Assembly. However, the report will deal only with general matters or changes in procedure and will not refer to, nor may the committee be questioned on, individual cases.

Appendix 4i

1. MIND Terms of Reference:

To oversee the Ministerial Disciplinary Process (Section O) and the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure (Section P);

To receive reports (from which all details which might serve to identify the minister or CRCW involved have been removed) following each case in order that any lessons may be learnt;

To propose any changes to Mission Council.

Membership: Convener, Secretary, the General Secretary, the Clerk, the Secretary for Ministries, the Convener and Secretary to the Assembly Commission, the Secretary of the Review Commission of the Incapacity Procedure, the Legal Adviser, the Procedures Consultant(s), the Training Coordinator.

N.B. The group is an Advisory Group to Mission Council.

Apart from scrutiny of anonymised reports, the Group does not consider any specific cases in the Disciplinary Process or Incapacity Procedure.

Disciplinary Process Appendix 4ii

Following changes to Section O (Part I changes will need to be taken to General Assembly. The Clerk has advised that Part II changes can be made on behalf of the General Assembly with immediate effect.):

PART I

7.2 After the words "**case law**" add "**and/or official statements of good practice issued by a government department or agency**".

PART II

A.4 The existing A.4 to become A.4.1. Also add the following sentence at the end of the paragraph:

"In this connection, the expression "the framework of the Section O Process" shall be regarded as covering not only the immediate confidentiality forum existing within the Section O Process during and beyond the continuance of the case, but shall extend to include any statements and information passed on to any person or body not directly involved in the case in the course of the implementation of any part of the decision of the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission or any recommendations or guidance appended thereto, on the basis that the recipient thereof is made fully aware that he/she/it is

bound by the confidentiality existing within the Section O Process in respect of such statements/information".

A.4.2 Add a new A.4.2 as follows:

"Should either (i) a formal request for information concerning any case dealt with under the Section O Process be received from the Independent Safeguarding Authority or any other public body with the requisite statutory authority to insist upon production thereof or (ii) circumstances arise which create a statutory requirement to supply such information, then in either case the supply to that body of such information shall not be deemed to be a breach of confidentiality under the Section O Process".

E.4.2 At the end insert the following:

"and at the same time supply this information to the Synod Moderator and, if the case arises under Paragraph B.3.2, the Deputy General Secretary".

E.5.1.2 At the end remove the fullstop and insert the word **"and"**.

E.5.1.3 Add a new E.5.1.3 as follows:

"A discretion to allow the parties to lodge an agreed written statement(s) as to those facts which are not in dispute, on the basis that such facts shall be taken as proved without the need for personal verification by witness testimony at the Hearing."

F.2.4 After the words **"appropriate guidance"** insert **".... in its written statement (see Paragraph F.3.3)"**.

G.10.2 At the end insert the following:

"and at the same time supply this information to the Synod Moderator and, if the case arises under Paragraph B.3.2, the Deputy General Secretary".

G.13.5 Change the paragraph reference in the text from **"F.3.3"** to **"G.13.3"**.

3. Incapacity Procedure

Mission Council is asked to make the following changes to Section P (Part I changes will need to be taken to General Assembly. The Clerk has advised that Part II changes can be made on behalf of the General Assembly with immediate effect.):

PART I

1.1 The existing Paragraph 1 to become 1.1.

1.2 Add a new paragraph as follows:

"The Review Commission may also decide to make a recommendation/referral in accordance with Part II Section H. The Review Commission or, in the event of an appeal the Appeals Review Commission, is also able to make recommendations (other than recommendations under Part II Section H) and offer guidance, but only within the limits prescribed in Part II Sections K and L"

2 After the words "Appeals Review Commission" insert ", the Special Appeals Body".

7 After the words "case law" insert "and/or official statements of good practice issued by a government department or agency".

PART II

A.1.1 Widen the current definition of the **Secretary of the Review Commission** as follows: between the words "Review Commission" and "in accordance with" insert "**and the Standing Panel**"

A.3 Add the following sentence at the end of the paragraph:

"In this connection, the expression "the framework of the Incapacity Procedure" shall be regarded as covering not only the immediate confidentiality forum existing within the Incapacity Procedure during and beyond the continuance of the case, but shall extend to include any statements and information passed on to any person or body not directly involved in the case in the course of the implementation of any part of the decision of the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission or any recommendations or guidance appended thereto, on the basis that the recipient thereof is made fully aware that he/she/it is bound by the confidentiality existing within the Incapacity Procedure in respect of such statements/information".

A.4.1 The existing Paragraph A.4 to become A.4.1.

A.4.2 Add a new paragraph as follows:

"Should either (i) a formal request for information concerning any case dealt with under the Incapacity Procedure be received from the Independent Safeguarding Authority or any other public body with the requisite statutory authority to insist upon production thereof or (ii) circumstances arise which create a statutory requirement to supply such information, then in either case the supply to that body of such information shall not be deemed to be a breach of confidentiality under the Incapacity Procedure".

- A.5** After the words **"Review Commission"** insert **", Appeals Review Commission or Special Appeals Body"**.
- After the words **"Appeals Review Commission"** insert **"or a Special Appeals Body"**.
- B.3** The existing B.3 to become B.3 1. Also, after the words **"the Minister"** insert **"in writing"**.
- B.3.2** Add a new **B.3.2** as follows:
"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.6** Replace the last sentence with the following:
"S/he shall also send a written Notice countersigned by the Secretary of the Review Commission to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission informing him/her of the initiation of the Incapacity Procedure so that a declaration can be issued as provided under the Disciplinary Process to the effect that that Process is thereby concluded."
Then add a new final sentence as follows:
"In the event that the Consultation Group decides that the Incapacity Procedure should not be initiated, the Synod Moderator or the Deputy General Secretary as the case may be shall give written Notice of that decision to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission to enable the Disciplinary case to be resumed".
- D.1** After the words **"Appeals Review Commission"** insert **"or the Special Appeals Body"**
- D.2** After the words **"servicing of"** insert **"the Standing Panel and"**
- G.4.2** At the end of this paragraph remove the full stop and add the word **"and"**.
- G.4.3** Add a new paragraph **G.4.3** as follows:
"take all such actions, including the commissioning of specialist advice and guidance, as seem to it desirable and appropriate in the proper conduct of its enquiry".
- H.1** Remove the words **"or the Appeals Review Commission"**.
- H.2** Remove the words **"or the General Secretary as the case may be"**
Replace the word **"intention"** with **"decision"**
After the sentence ending with the words **"such recommendation"** insert a new sentence as follows:

"This notice shall contain a statement of its reasons for reaching its decision to refer back and it may indicate what papers, if any, should be passed to the recipient of the notice"

Remove the words **"(or the General Secretary if the reference back is proposed by the Appeals Review Commission)"**

After the words **"received"** add **"(time being of the essence for this purpose)"**

At the end of H.2 add the following sentence:

"The Notice shall draw the attention of the recipient to the strict time limit for serving a Notice of Appeal in response to a notice served under this Paragraph."

H.3 Replace the words **".....the Secretary of the Review Commission or the General Secretary as the case may be"** with **"the case within the Incapacity Procedure shall stand adjourned during the course of the appeal and the Secretary of the Review Commission....."**

H.6 Replace the opening words up to **"in response thereto"** with **"The Special Appeals Body shall consider the decision of the Review Commission to refer the case back and any representations made in connection therewith...."**

H.9 After the words **"request for a formal hearing"** insert **"which is accepted by the Special Appeals Body"**

H.12 Remove the words **"or the General Secretary as the case may be"** and the words **"/Appeals Review Commission"**

H.13 Remove the words **"/General Secretary"**

H.14 Remove the words **"/General Secretary"**

Replace the expression **"Paragraph H.11"** with **"Paragraph H.2 or Paragraph H.11 as the case may be"**

H.17 Remove the words **"/General Secretary"**
Replace the words **"decision of the Special Appeals Body on the appeal"** with **"decision of the Review Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Special Appeals Body"**

Remove the words **"signed by the Convener"**

Replace the expression **"Paragraph H.11"** with **"Paragraph H.2 or Paragraph H.11 as the case may be"**

H.18 Remove the words **"/General Secretary"**
Add the following sentence at the end of the paragraph: **"The Secretary and Convener of the Review Commission may in exceptional circumstances allow a short extension of this period"**

H.19 Remove the words **"/General Secretary"** from the first line.

H.20 Remove the words **"or the Appeals Review Commission as the case may be"**.

H.21 Remove the words **"/General Secretary"**.

- K.8.3** After the opening words "If by the" insert "28th day after the".
- L.11.2** Add a new paragraph L.11.2 as follows:
"If the decision is that the name of the Minister shall remain on the Roll of Ministers, the Appeals Review Commission may in its decision record append such recommendations to its decision as it considers will be helpful to Moderators of Synods, local churches, the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary, the Press Officer, the Secretary for Ministries, the PRWC and others within the Church and also to any relevant outside organisation. It is emphasised that any such recommendations must relate to the future ministry of the Minister only and that they are of an advisory nature and do not form part of the decision"
- L.11.3** Add a new paragraph L.11.3 as follows:
"If the decision is to delete the name of the Minister from the Roll of Ministers, the Appeals Review Commission is particularly requested to include appropriate guidance concerning any restrictions which he/she considers ought to be placed on any activities involving the Minister after his/her deletion with the object of assisting Moderators of Synods, local churches, the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary, the Press Officer, the Secretary for Ministries, the PRWC and others within the Church and also to any relevant outside organisation. It is emphasised that any such recommendations must relate to the future ministry of the Minister only and that they are of an advisory nature and do not form part of the decision. It is emphasised that any such guidance is of an advisory nature and does not form part of the decision."
- L.11.4** The existing L.11.2 to become L.11.4
- L.11.5** The existing L.11.3 to become L.11.5



The
United
Reformed
Church

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

28th September 2009

Mission Council: Monday – Wednesday: 16 – 18 November 2009
The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire, DE55 1AU
Telephone: 01773 526000; Fax: 01773 540841; Email: office@cct.org.uk

Dear Colleague

I am writing to remind you that Mission Council will meet at The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick from 16 – 18 November 2009. To ensure that our arrangements are completed in time, I would ask you to supply us with the information we need about your requirements for accommodation and meals.

It would be very helpful if you could reply immediately (and by 8th October at the latest) 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.

Some preliminary papers are enclosed:

- directions to The Hayes
- a list of members and representatives (to help people plan to share transport). If taking a taxi, please try to use Alfreton Cars - 01773 521991 or 07783 429580
- an expenses slip (to be completed and handed in at the end of the meeting)
- a Reply Form about your accommodation and meal requests, and certain other necessary information.

All rooms are en-suite.

Approximate timings for Monday 16th, subject to minor adjustments, are

Registration 16 th :	12.00 – 12.45 p.m. and 1.30 – 2.00 p.m.
Lunch:	12.45 – 1.45 p.m. (definite)
Briefing session:	2.00 – 3.45 p.m.
Tea:	3.45 – 4.15 p.m.
1 st business session:	4.15 – 6.15 p.m.
Evening meal:	6.45 – 7.45 p.m. (definite)
2 nd business session:	7.45 – 9.00 p.m.
Evening Prayers:	9.00 – 9.15 p.m.
Bar	9.15 - 10.30 p.m.

Breakfast is served at 8.30 a.m.

Morning refreshment is served at 10.45 a.m.

Mission Council will close with lunch on Wednesday 18th November.

We invite all those attending Mission Council for the first time, and any others who would be interested, to the Briefing Session to be held at 2.00 p.m. on Monday 16th November. Further details will be sent with the second mailing which you should receive approximately 7 days prior to the meeting.

The next meeting dates are:

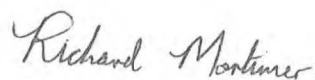
Days	Dates From / To	Venue
Tuesday – Thursday	9 th – 11 th March 2010	All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney
Wednesday - Friday	13 th – 15 th October 2010 (replacing 19-21 Nov 2010) PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF DATE AND VENUE	The Hayes, Swanwick
Tuesday – Thursday	17 th – 19 th May 2011	High Leigh, Hoddesdon
Friday – Sunday	25 th – 27 th November 2011	The Hayes
Wednesday – Friday	21 st – 23 rd March 2012	High Leigh
Friday – Sunday	30 th November – 2 nd December 2012	The Hayes

The change of date for the October 2010 meeting is a result of it having become a shared meeting with the Methodist Council, as an outworking of the resolution jointly agreed by General Assembly and Methodist Conference in 2008.

Please note that the requested paper on the role of Mission Council has been on the website since July. Members of Mission Council are invited to suggest amendments to the text before Monday 19th October.

With good wishes

Yours sincerely



The Revd Richard Mortimer
Deputy General Secretary



MISSION COUNCIL

16 – 18 NOVEMBER 2009

Monday - Wednesday

MEMBERS & REPRESENTATIVES

The Moderator
General Secretary
Deputy General Secretary
Clerk
Legal Adviser

Rev John **Marsh**
Rev Roberta **Rominger**
Rev Richard **Mortimer**
Rev James **Breslin**
Mr Andrew **Middleton**,
Towns Needham Solicitors

Past Moderator
Moderators Elect
Treasurer

Rev Dr Stephen **Orchard**
Rev Dr Kirsty **Thorpe**
Mrs Val **Morrison**
Mr John **Ellis**

Assembly Standing Committees

Assembly Arrangements
Communications & Editorial
Education & Learning
Equal Opportunities
Finance
Ministries
Mission
Nominations
Youth & Children's Work

Dr David **Robinson**
Rev Dr Kirsty **Thorpe**
Prof Malcolm **Johnson**
Ms Morag **McLintock**
Mr John **Ellis**
Rev Peter **Poulter**
Rev Ed **Cox**
Rev Malcolm **Hanson**
Rev Rob **Weston**

FURY Advisory Board Representatives

Mr Josh **Thomas** - Moderator
Miss Jane **Hoddinott**

URC Trust

Mr Alan **Small** - Chair

13 synod Moderators, plus 3 representatives from each synod

1 N Rev Rowena **Francis**
2 N.W Rev Richard **Church**
3 Mer Rev Howard **Sharp**
4 York Rev Kevin **Watson**
5 E.M Rev Terry **Oakley**
6 W.M Rev Roy **Lowes**
7 E Rev Paul **Whittle**
8 S.W Rev David **Grosch-Miller**
9 Wex Rev Adrian **Bulley**
10 Th.N Rev Dr Andrew **Prasad**
11 S Rev Nigel **Uden**
12 Wal Rev Peter **Noble**
13 Scot Rev John **Humphreys**

Miss Elaine **Colechin**
Mr George **Grime**
Miss Emma **Pugh**
Rev Kay **Alberg**
Rev Jane **Campbell**
Mr Tony **Jeans**
Revd Catherine **Ball**
Mrs Janet **Gray**
Rev G Cliff **Bembridge**
Mr Simon **Fairnington**
Rev Derrick **Dzandu-Hedidor**
Rev Dr Peter **Cruchley-Jones**
Mrs Barbara **Bruce**

Rev John **Durell**
Rev Rachel **Poolman**
Rev A. Gordon **Smith**
Mr Roderick **Garthwaite**
Mr Duncan **Smith**
Mrs Val **Phillips**
Mr Mick **Barnes**
Rev Roz **Harrison**
Mrs Margaret **Telfer**
Rev Maggie **Hindley**
Rev Chris **Parker**
Rev Shelagh **Pollard**
Miss Irene **Hudson**

Mr Justice **Semuli**
Ms Marie **Trubic**
Vacancy
Mrs Val **Morrison**
Vacancy
Vacancy
Mrs Joan **Turner**
Rev Stephen **Newell**
Mr Peter **Pay**
Rev David **Lawrence**
Rev Zam **Walker**
Mrs Iris **Williams**
Rev John **Sanderson**

In attendance

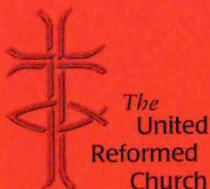
Minute Secretary
Moderator's Chaplain
Children's Work Dev't Officer
Church & Society
Church Related Community Work

Communications
Ecumenical Relations
Education & Learning
Finance
Human Resources

Mrs Irene **Wren**
Rev Mary **Buchanan**
Miss Jo **Williams**
Mr Frank **Kantor**
Mrs Suzanne **Adofo**/
Mr Stephen **Summers**
Rev Martin **Hazell**
Rev David **Tatem**
Rev Fiona **Thomas**
Mr Andrew **Grimwade**
Ms Michelle **Marcano**

Ministries
Mission
Pilots Development
Press Officer
Racial Justice & Multicult
'Reform' Editor
Rural Consultancy
Windermere Centre
World Church Relations
Youth Work
Methodist Representative

Rev Craig **Bowman**
Ms Francis **Brienen**
Mrs Karen **Bulley**
Mr Stuart **Dew**
Rev Dr Michael **Jagessar**
Ms Kay **Parris**
Rev Graham **Jones**
Mr Lawrence **Moore**
Rev Jane **Rowell**
Mr John **Brown**
Rev Alison **Tomlin**



The
United
Reformed
Church

MISSION COUNCIL
16 - 18 November 2009

GROUPS

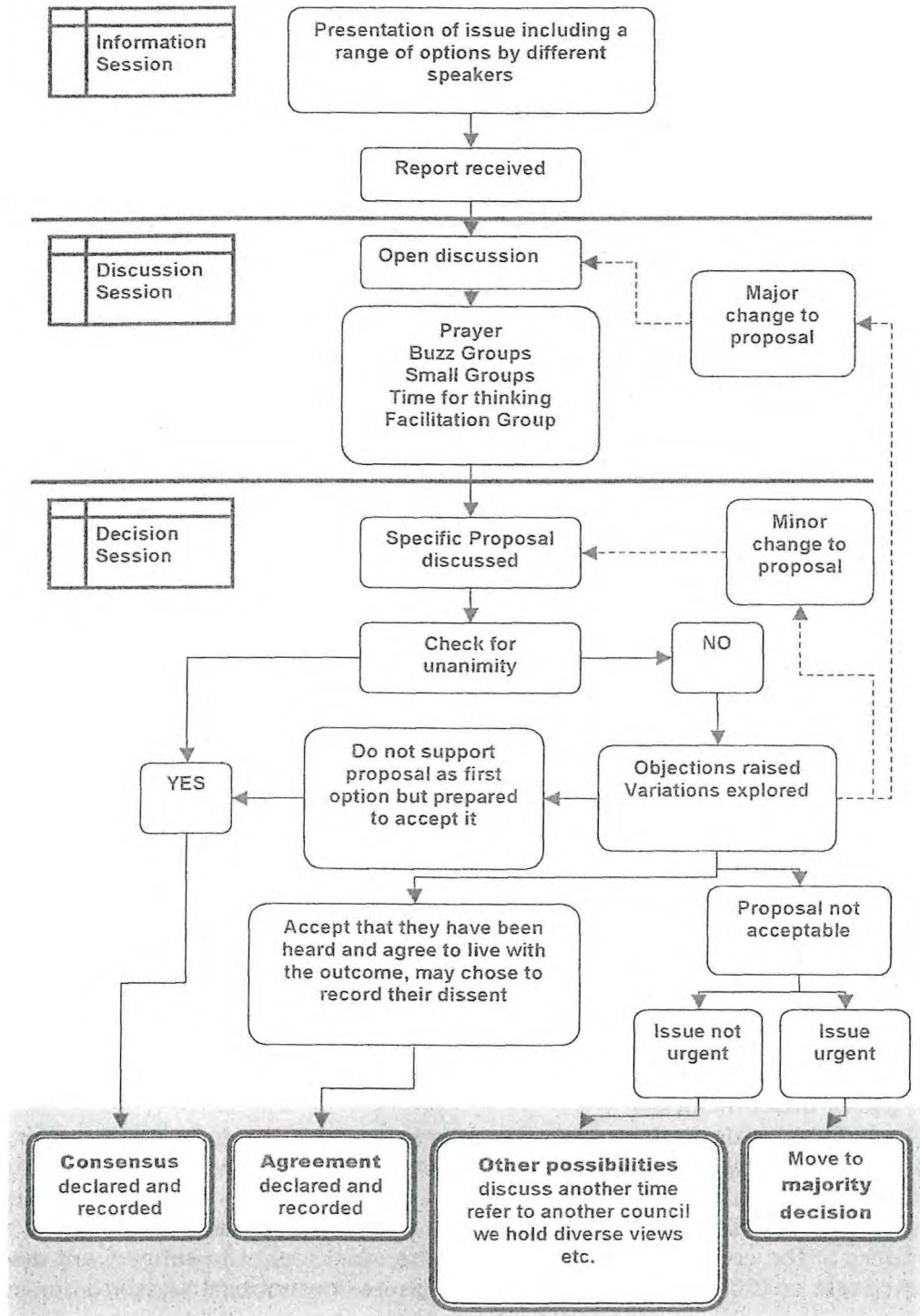
The first named person is asked to act as group leader and the second named person in each group as reporter

A	B
<p><i>John Brown</i> <i>Morag McLintock</i> Simon Fairmington David Grosch-Miller John Marsh Chris Parker Peter Poulter Alison Tomlin Marie Trubic Zam Walker</p>	<p><i>John Durell</i> <i>John Ellis</i> <i>arr late. Appoint?</i> Suzanne Adofo <i>Reporter</i> Craig Bowman James Breslin Mary Buchanan Ed Cox Roderick Garthwaite Irene Hudson Emma Pugh</p>
<p><i>Fiona Thomas</i> <i>not Monday</i> <i>Richard Church</i> Cliff Bembridge Karen Bulley Graham Jones Richard Mortimer Elizabeth Nash Duncan Smith Kirsty Thorpe <i>Reporter</i> Nigel Uden</p>	<p><i>Kevin Watson</i> <i>Roz Harrison</i> Janet Gray Malcolm Johnson Roy Lowes Lawrence Moore Roberta Rominger John Sanderson Gordon Smith Jo Williams</p>
<p><i>Catherine Ball</i> <i>Stephen Orchard</i> Francis Brienen Stuart Dew Derrick Dzandj-Hedidor Jo Kennedy Gill Nichol Peter Noble Howard Sharp Alan Small Iris Williams</p>	<p><i>Stephen Newell</i> <i>Peter Pay</i> Barbara Bruce Rowena Francis Linda Harrison Martin Hazell Frank Kantor Michelle Marcano Val Morrison Andrew Prasad David Robinson</p>
<p><i>David Lawrence</i> <i>George Grime</i> Mick Barnes Jane Hoddinott Michael Jagessar Val Phillips <i>late ap</i> Shelagh Pollard Jane Rowell Steve Summers Rob Weston</p>	<p><i>David Tatem</i> <i>Tony Jeans</i> Kay Alberg <i>late ap</i> Andrew Grimwade Malcolm Hanson Andrew Middleton Terry Oakley Rachel Poolman Justice Semuli <i>late ap</i> Margaret Telfer Paul Whittle</p>

whose speech was interrupted.

2e.(4) Personal explanation – a member feeling that some material part of their former speech has been misunderstood or is being grossly misinterpreted by a later speaker may ask to make a personal explanation.

2e.(5) Objection – a member may raise an objection if the remarks of a speaker are deemed offensive or derogatory. On such an objection being raised the Moderator shall immediately rule as to whether the remarks are offensive or derogatory and if the ruling is in favour of the objection may require the speaker to withdraw the remark. Should the speaker refuse to do so the Moderator may require the speaker immediately to terminate their speech.





THE

HAYES

Conference Centre



Swanwick, Alfreton
Derbyshire DE55 1AU

Telephone (01773) 526000

Facsimile (01773) 540841

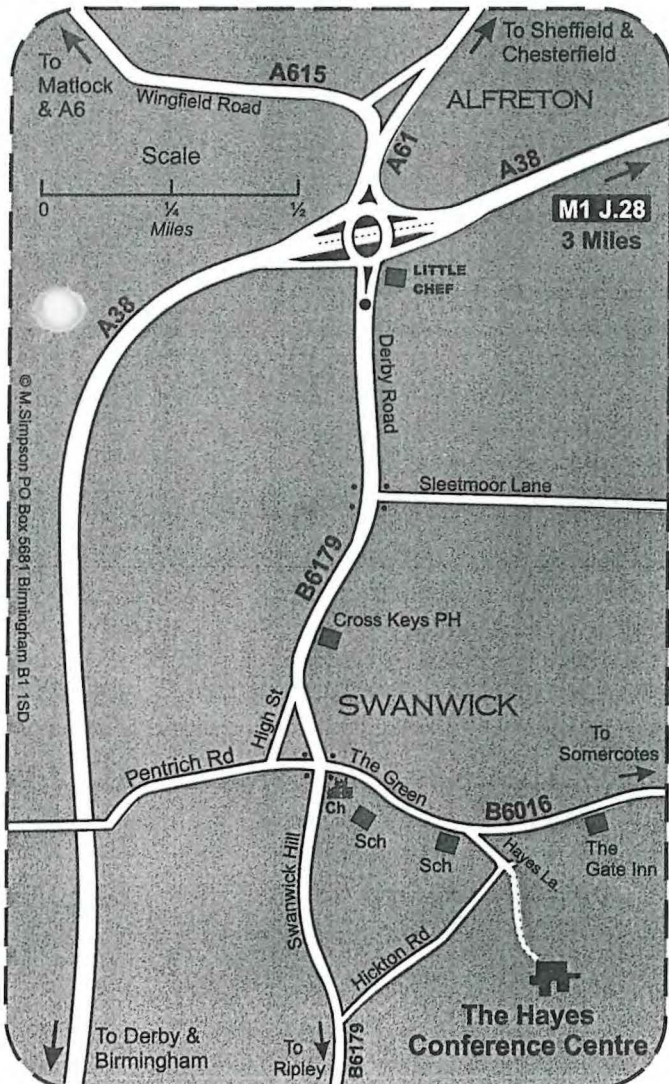
office@cct.org.uk

Email: *pete@thehayes.fsbusiness.co.uk*

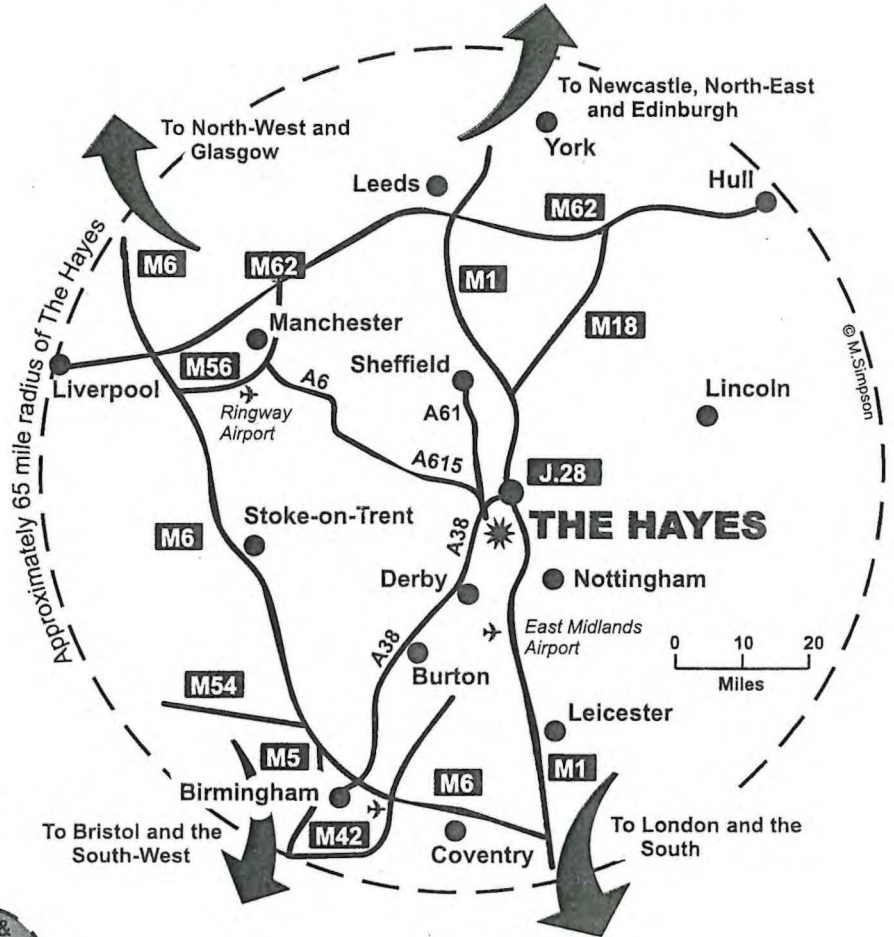
Centre Manager: Peter Anderson

MAP TO GET YOU TO OUR DOOR

(This map to be used in conjunction with the spherical Regional Map)



MAP TO SHOW THE HAYES CONFERENCE CENTRE IN THE HEART OF THE UNITED KINGDOM



TRAVEL DIRECTIONS

By Road

We are only 5 miles from the M1. From Junction 28, take the A38 towards Derby. Leave the A38 at the marked exit for A615 Matlock/A61 Chesterfield and then take the B6179 towards Swanwick and Ripley at the island. At the traffic lights by the church in Swanwick, turn left towards Somercotes (B6016), then after 500yds, just past school buildings, turn right (sign posted 'Conference Centre') into Hayes Lane. The Conference Centre is straight ahead.

By Rail

Our local British Rail Station, which is 3 miles from the centre, is Alfreton Station on the Sheffield-Nottingham line. As trains are limited, it may be easier to travel to Derby Station and then journey on by bus or taxi from there. Enquire at the centre on how to pre-book taxis which is the recommended option.

By Bus

From Derby, take the 91 or 92 to Mansfield and ask to be let off opposite the 'Gate Inn', Swanwick. Then walk down Hayes Lane; the Conference Centre is straight ahead - a 5 minute walk!

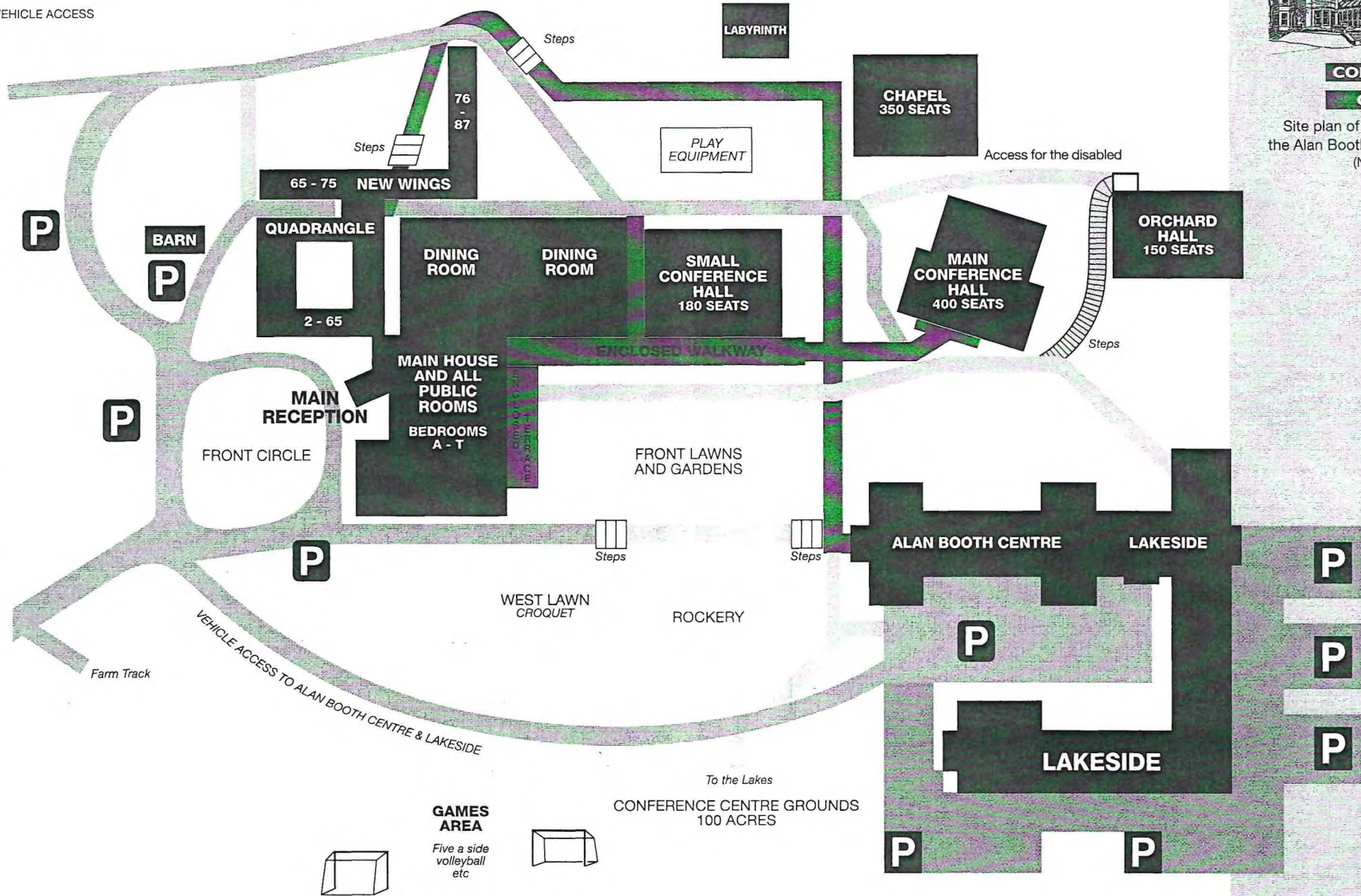
By Air

East Midlands International Airport - Tel: 01332 852852

Birmingham International Airport - Tel: 08707 335 511

Manchester International Airport - Tel: 0161 489 3000

-  COVERED WALKWAYS
-  EXTERNAL FOOTPATHS
-  VEHICLE ACCESS




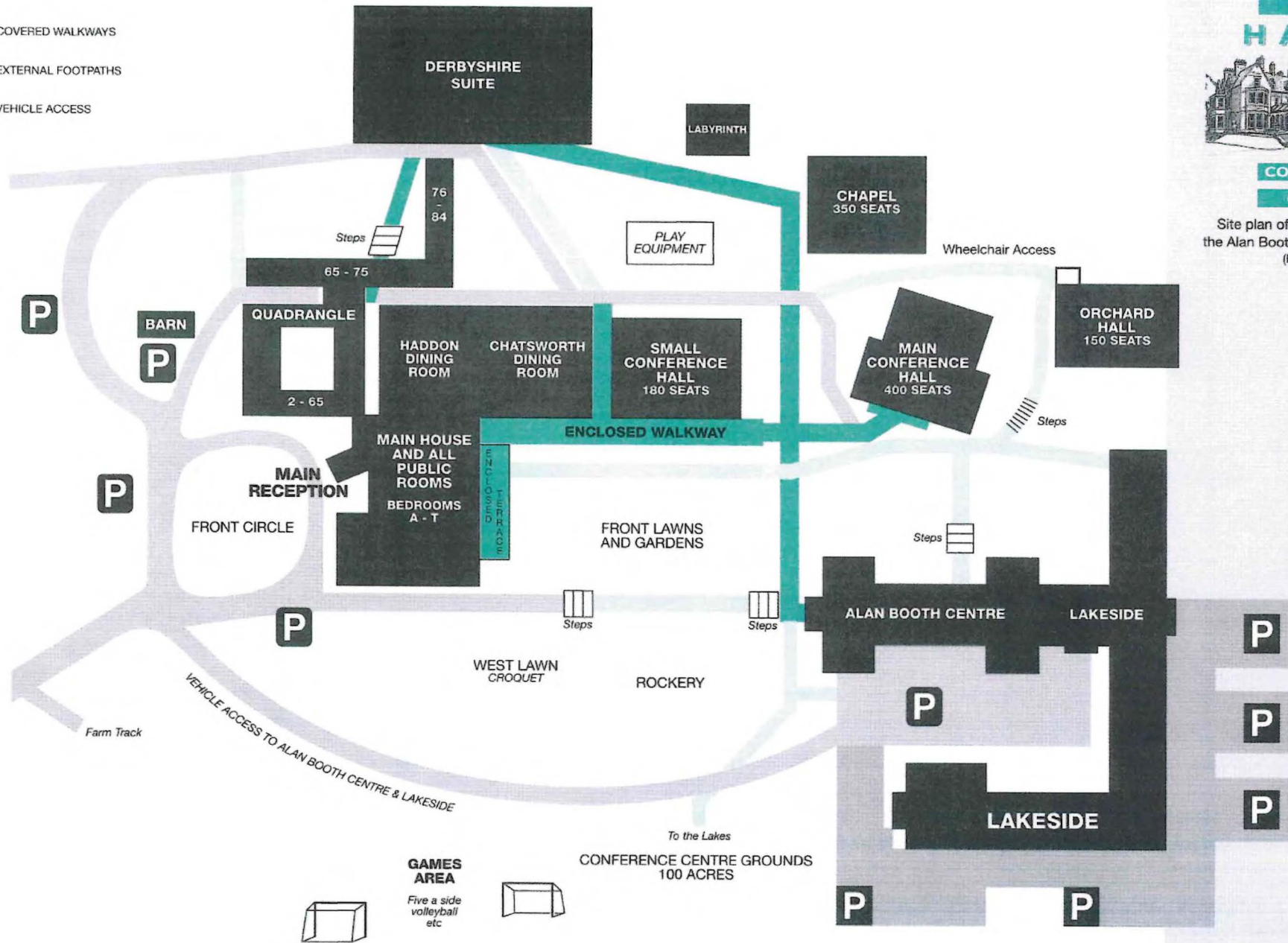
THE HAYES



CONFERENCE CENTRE

Site plan of the Hayes, including the Alan Booth Centre and Lakeside. (Not to scale)

-  COVERED WALKWAYS
-  EXTERNAL FOOTPATHS
-  VEHICLE ACCESS



THE HAYES



CONFERENCE CENTRE

Site plan of the Hayes, including the Alan Booth Centre and Lakeside. (Not to scale)



MISSION COUNCIL
16th - 18th November 2009

A Note re the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund:

At the May Mission Council the Treasurer explained that we would need to make some decisions about the deficit in the Ministers' Pension Fund at the November meeting, The Board of Directors of the Fund have agreed the detailed assumptions and calculations to settle the agreed size of the deficit. These calculations are complex and highly technical but they are the foundations on which the policy choices that the Mission Council will have to address rest.

Mission Council Advisory Group (MCAG) agreed with the Treasurer that it would not be a sensible use of Council time to work through these calculations with the full Mission Council. However MCAG also agreed with the Treasurer that it would be good practice if some representatives of the Council who have had no previous involvement in the debates about these calculations were to scrutinise them on behalf of the Council. They would then be able to give an independent view to the Council. If therefore you are a member of Mission Council who has the relevant experience and background to assess such calculations and would be willing to act in this way for us, please let the Deputy General Secretary know by Monday 19 October. I would then arrange for relevant papers to be sent to you so that they can be studied prior to our meeting.

Many Thanks,

Richard Mortimer

*Deputy General Secretary
United Reformed Church*



The
United
Reformed
Church

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

28th October 2009

Mission Council: Monday 16th – Wednesday 18th November 2009
The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. DE55 1AU
Telephone: 01773 526000; Fax: 01773 540841; Email: office@cct.org.uk

Dear Colleague

This is the second mailing of papers for Mission Council which meets at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick from Monday 16th November. My previous letter, dated 28th September, contained information about accommodation and meals, transport and directions to the Hayes and a list of members. If you did not receive these, please contact Krystyna Pullen immediately – krystyna.pullen@urc.org.uk – or tel: 020 7916 8646.

Registration will take place from 12.00 to 12.45p.m. and from 1.30 to 2.00p.m. The Hayes have asked us to register at Lakeside. Please consult the site map. Lunch will be served at 12.45p.m. All the accommodation which is en-suite, will be in Lakeside.

At the request of the Hayes we shall be meeting throughout in the Derbyshire Suite. At 2.00 p.m. we shall hold a briefing session principally for those attending Mission Council for the first time. However, as this is a new departure anyone who wishes to attend believing they might find it helpful is welcome to join us. The first formal business session will begin at 4.15p.m.

Please find enclosed the following papers:

- o The Agenda
- o A list of Discussion Groups
- o Updated Site Plan
- o Trustees' Report & Accounts 2008
- o Papers A, B, B1, B2, B3, C, D, D1, D2, E, E1, F, F1, F2, F3, G, H, J, K, L, M, N, O, P

Members of Mission Council will note that the occasion after the evening meal on Tuesday 17th December, timed to commence at 7.45p.m. is *entirely optional*. You are perfectly free to do something else instead. At the request of the Human Sexuality Task Group, we are attempting something a little different. The rationale is explained in Paper F3, which I would urge you to read carefully. Within proper constraints of care for one another, avoidance of misunderstanding and hurt, and recognition of the need to avoid incriminating oneself or laying oneself open to a charge under the ministerial disciplinary process, everything shared will be regarded as confidential. No notes or Minutes will be taken. The Minutes of Mission Council will simply record words to the effect that 'after the evening meal the Human Sexuality Task Group initiated a discussion which was followed by closing worship for the day'.

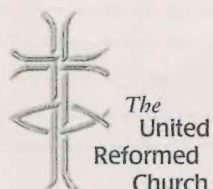
We look forward to welcoming a number of new synod representatives to Mission Council. We hope that the balance in the agenda of worship, presentations, formal and informal discussions will give everyone the opportunity to feel that they have contributed and learned from each other, as we all share our experience of faith and our insights about the life and mission of the Church.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard Mortimer".

The Revd Richard Mortimer
Deputy General Secretary



**MISSION COUNCIL
16 - 18 November 2009**

**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?

Monday 16th November		
12.00 – 12.45pm	Registration	
12.45 – 1.45pm	Lunch	
1.30 – 2.00 pm	Registration (continued)	
2.00 – 3.30pm	Briefing session (particularly for new members but all welcome)	
3.45 – 4.15pm	Tea Break	
4.15 – 6.15pm	SESSION 1	
	Opening Worship Bible Study	
	Minutes	
	Matters Arising Update on 'Hope in God's Future' – Frank Kantor MCAG Vacancy	PAPER L
5.30pm latest	'How the pieces fit together' - The General Secretary	PAPER P
	Groups	
6.45 – 7.45pm	Evening Meal	
7.45 – 9.00pm	SESSION 2	
7.45 – 8.10pm	Group Feedback	
8.10 – 8.40pm	Communications Report	PAPER K
8.40 – 8.50pm	Wessex Synod item: Cobham The Deposit of Essential Records	PAPER O
8.50 – 9.00pm	Closing Worship	

TUESDAY 17TH NOVEMBER

8.30 – 9.15am	<i>Breakfast</i>	
9.15 – 10.45am	SESSION 3	
9.15 – 9.45am	Worship Inductions of Jane Rowell as Secretary for World Church Relations and David Tatem as Secretary for Ecumenical Relations	
9.45 – 10.15am	Role of Mission Council	PAPER A
10.15 – 10.45am	Nominations Committee Report	PAPER N
10.45 – 11.15am	<i>Coffee Break</i>	
11.15 – 12.45 pm	SESSION 4	
11.15 – 12.00 noon	Guidelines: Ministries	PAPERS B, B1, B2, B3
12.00 – 12.30pm	Evangelists: Ministries	PAPER J
12.30 – 12.45pm	Pastoral Reference & Welfare Committee: Terms of Reference	PAPER M
12.45 – 1.45pm	<i>Lunch</i>	
2.00 – 3.45pm	SESSION 5	
2.00 – 2.30pm	MIND Report	PAPER C
2.30 – 2.45pm	Local Church Constitution: verbal Report by James Breslin Enabling Resolution: North Western Synod - verbal Report, then moved by James Breslin	
2.45 – 3.45pm	Safeguarding Declaration of a Safe Church Vetting and Barring Ministries	PAPER D PAPER D2 PAPER D1
3.45 – 4.15pm	<i>Tea Break</i>	
4.15 – 6.15pm	SESSION 6	
4.15 –	Finance	PAPERS E, E1
- 5.15pm	Resource Sharing Task Group	PAPER H
5.15 latest – 6.45pm	Human Sexuality Task Group	PAPERS F, F1, F2, F3
6.45 – 7.45pm	<i>Evening Meal</i>	
7.45 – 9.00pm	OPTIONAL Human Sexuality Task Group: PLEASE READ PAPER F3 EXPLAINING RATIONALE	
9.00 – 9.15pm	Closing Worship	

WEDNESDAY 18TH NOVEMBER 2009

8.30 – 9.15am	<i>Breakfast</i>	
9.30 – 10.45am	Communion	
10.45 – 11.15am	<i>Tea Break</i>	
11.15 – 12.45pm	SESSION 7	
	Youth & Children's Work Verbal Report - Robert Weston	
	Energy 4 Life Report	PAPER G
	Joint Mission Council / Methodist Council Meeting – October 2010: The General Secretary	
	Church of England – United Reformed Church Bilateral Dialogue: The Deputy General Secretary	
	Any Remaindered Business	
	Farewells	
12.30 – 12.45pm	Closing Worship	
12.45 – 1.45pm	<i>Lunch</i>	
	Departures	



**MISSION COUNCIL
16 - 18 November 2009**

**AGENDA AND
TIMETABLE**

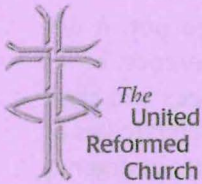
The General Assembly has agreed that every agenda should be headed with the question,
what are the ecumenical implications of this agenda?

Monday 16th November	
12.00 – 12.45pm	Registration
12.45 – 1.45pm	Lunch
1.30 – 2.00 pm	Registration (continued)
2.00 – 3.30pm	Briefing session (particularly for new members but all welcome)
3.45 – 4.15pm	Tea Break
4.15 – 6.15pm	SESSION 1
	<p>Opening Worship Bible Study Welcome to New Members: Mrs Barbara Bruce Synod of Scotland Rev Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor Southern Synod Clerk Mrs Linda Harrison Eastern Synod (as alternate for Joan Turner now, will succeed Mick Barnes as Synod Clerk in 2010) Ms Gill Nichol Press and Media Development Officer Mrs Val Phillips West Midlands Synod Rev Shelagh Pollard Synod of Wales Clerk Rev Jane Rowell Secretary for World Church Relations Rev David Tatem Secretary for Ecumenical Relations</p> <p>Also in Attendance Rev Elizabeth Nash Consensus Adviser Rev John Waller Convenor, Human Sexuality Task Group Rev Alison Tomlin Representing the Methodist Church, President-Elect</p> <p>Apologies (Richard will give these) Rev Adrian Bulley, Rev Jane Campbell, Miss Elaine Colechin, Rev Dr Peter Cruchley-Jones, Rev Maggie Hindley, Rev John Humphreys, Ms Kay Parris, Mr Josh Thomas, Ms Joan Turner <i>Rev Kay Alberg, Rev Peter Noble, Rev Justice Semmler, Rev Martin Hazell, Mrs Val Phillips</i></p>

	Minutes	
	Matters Arising Update on 'Hope in God's Future' – Frank Kantor MCAG Vacancy The Deputy General Secretary to explain	PAPER L
5.30pm latest	'How the pieces fit together' - The General Secretary	PAPER P
	Groups The Deputy General Secretary will advise re venues	
6.45 – 7.45pm	Evening Meal	
7.45 – 9.00pm	SESSION 2	
7.45 – 8.10pm	Group Feedback	
8.10 – 8.40pm	Communications Report Kirsty Thorpe to speak	PAPER K
8.40 – 8.50pm	Wessex Synod item: Cobham Peter Pay, Wessex Synod Clerk to speak to this The Deposit of Essential Records Stephen Orchard to speak to this	PAPER O
8.50 – 9.00pm	Closing Worship	
TUESDAY 17TH NOVEMBER		
8.30 – 9.15am	Breakfast	
9.15 – 10.45am	SESSION 3	
9.15 – 9.45am	Worship Inductions of Jane Rowell as Secretary for World Church Relations and David Tatem as Secretary for Ecumenical Relations	
9.45 – 10.15am	Role of Mission Council The Deputy General Secretary	PAPER A
10.15 – 10.45am	Nominations Committee Report The Rev Malcolm Hanson, Convenor	PAPER N
10.45 – 11.15am	Coffee Break	
11.15 – 12.45 pm	SESSION 4	
11.15 – 12.00 noon	Guidelines: Ministries The Rev Peter Poulter, Convenor and the Rev Craig Bowman, Secretary	PAPERS B, B1, B2, B3
12.00 – 12.30pm	Evangelists: Ministries The Rev Peter Poulter, Convenor and the Rev Craig Bowman, Secretary	PAPER J

12.30 – 12.45pm	Pastoral Reference & Welfare Committee: Terms of Reference The Deputy General Secretary	PAPER M
12.45 – 1.45pm	Lunch	
2.00 – 3.45pm	SESSION 5	
2.00 – 2.30pm	MIND Report James Breslin	PAPER C
2.30 – 2.45pm	Local Church Constitution: verbal Report by James Breslin Enabling Resolution: North Western Synod - verbal Report, then moved by James Breslin	
2.45 – 3.45pm	Safeguarding The Deputy General Secretary Declaration of a Safe Church The Deputy General Secretary Vetting and Barring The Rev Craig Bowman for Ministries	PAPER D PAPER D2 PAPER D1
3.45 – 4.15pm	Tea Break	
4.15 – 6.15pm	SESSION 6	
4.15 –	Finance The Treasurer	PAPERS E, E1
- 5.15pm	Resource Sharing Task Group The Rev David Grosch-Miller, Convenor	PAPER H
5.15 latest – 6.45pm	Human Sexuality Task Group Moderator to welcome John Waller if John not here on Monday. John Waller will then present the papers.	PAPERS F, F1, F2, F3
6.45 – 7.45pm	Evening Meal	
7.45 – 9.00pm	OPTIONAL Human Sexuality Task Group: PLEASE READ PAPER F3 EXPLAINING RATIONALE John M, John W, Mary B, Roberta R, James B and Richard M round table at front Suggest John M prays, then asks Richard M to introduce, John M then announces that if anyone is upset by anything said they may speak to the Chaplain or a member of her team, makes clear that if discussion goes seriously off course in any way he will bring it to a close, and states that at the end – say 8.45/8.50. – there will be a brief discussion of the effectiveness of the experience and whether or not it would be helpful for something similar to be held in other fora and then invites first Zam Walker and then Lawrence Moore to speak. After which floor declared open. Anyone may come to a microphone and share. John, it is your decision, with those on the table around, a) whether to intervene or call a halt if we start getting very hurtful stuff or overt speech making, b) when to	

	call a halt. At 8.45 / 8.50 feedback session as above	
9.00 – 9.15pm	Closing Worship	
WEDNESDAY 18TH NOVEMBER 2009		
8.30 – 9.15am	Breakfast <i>collect colls</i>	
9.30 – 10.45am	Communion	
10.45 – 11.15am	Tea Break	
11.15 – 12.45pm	SESSION 7	
	Youth & Children's Work Verbal Report - Robert Weston, Convenor	
	Energy 4 Life Report Terry Oakley	PAPER G
	Assembly Arrangements Committee verbal report by the General Secretary	
	Joint Mission Council / Methodist Council Meeting – October 2010: The General Secretary	
	Church of England – United Reformed Church Bilateral Dialogue: The Deputy General Secretary	
	Any Remaindered Business	
	Farewells Ms Adella Pritchard West Midlands (already gone) Mick Barnes Eastern Synod Clerk Stuart Dew Press and Media Development Officer (to retirement / TLS & preaching) Mrs Janet Gray South Western Synod Mrs Joan Turner Eastern Synod (in absentia)	
12.27pm	Mission Council refers uncompleted business to MCAG (if necessary)	
12.30 – 12.45pm	Closing Worship	
12.45 – 1.45pm	Lunch	
	Departures	



MISSION COUNCIL 16 - 18 November 2009

A

The new role of Mission Council

From the reflections of the Deputy General Secretary to the final morning of the May 2009 Mission Council:

- 1) Mission Council did not like receiving two different papers about its future, which it found confusing.
- 2) The title of Paper A2 "The Government of the United Reformed Church at the highest level" raised concerns about the nature of authority and where it lies within the councils of the Church, and the suspicion of hierarchy.
- 3) On Friday afternoon we came across an elephant in the room – the deliberate ambiguity written into our founding documents in 1972 to glide over ecclesiological differences between Congregationalists and Presbyterians. Seeing General Assembly and Mission Council as together representing a single council of the Church opened this up and at best was a challenge to grasp nettles and at worst deeply scary. **BUT**
- 4) It was recognised that the logic of decisions already taken about the move to a biennial General Assembly and the hope to have no more than eighteen or so Resolutions at each future biennial General Assembly did tend strongly towards Mission Council having to take more responsibility for the running of the United Reformed Church. **THEREFORE**
- 5) It is probably safer to affirm the unique status and authority of General Assembly whilst recognising that in the new circumstances of a biennial General Assembly it devolves more of that authority than before to Mission Council. Resetting the notch of the degree of authority Mission Council possesses so as to give it more is acceptable, provided that authority is seen as devolving from its unique setting in General Assembly. We prefer this to the alternative that says Mission Council has the authority of its own right, because it represents a single council of the Church with General Assembly.
- 6) On that basis we shall return to you with another paper in November.

So if Mission Council is to receive more devolved authority than before from General Assembly, what might that look like? If General Assembly is now to meet once every two years, handling no more than eighteen resolutions on each occasion, Mission Council becomes effectively the principal derivative body charged with dealing with those matters which can no longer come to General Assembly as in the days when it would have fifty to sixty resolutions before it each year. General Assembly will retain its overview and ultimate authority and will have power to reverse decisions of Mission Council. It will equally be open to Mission Council to declare something so important that it must be decided by General Assembly alone.

Mission Council, then, will continue to undertake the work it has always carried out. It will undertake pieces of work on its own behalf under its general terms of reference or as specifically instructed by General Assembly. It will act as a broker where Committees find clash or overlap with other Committees, and it will advise when it is unclear where a mandate lies or what policy should be followed. It will act on behalf of General Assembly on matters of urgency between meetings of the Assembly. It will appoint Groups to carry out the initial work in handling appeals, applications for secession and other matters where individuals or groups feel aggrieved. It will appoint Advisory Groups, and Working Groups and Task Groups which are either task or time limited.

In addition, rather than confining itself to determining if work is ready to go to General Assembly or not, Mission Council will, on an agreed cycle, receive and decide upon reports and resolutions from all Assembly Standing Committees, Synods, and (particularly in relation to legal and disciplinary matters) the Clerk. While every Assembly Committee will submit a written report to the General Assembly Mission Council will determine which Committees shall report verbally and where they have business which requires a formal resolution of Assembly. In the run-up to a General Assembly this work will be carried out in tandem with the Assembly Arrangements Committee. This is to help limit the business coming to General Assembly to manageable proportions.

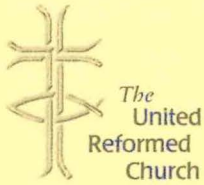
Mission Council will receive the complete list of nominations from Nominations Committee, but the election of Moderators of Assembly, Clerks of Assembly and Directors of the United Reformed Church Trust will remain with the General Assembly.

Where proposals to change the Basis and Structure of the United Reformed Church or other constitutional changes currently require two votes in General Assembly, Mission Council will be able to act once on General Assembly's behalf. Proposed changes will require a two thirds majority, whichever way round first and second votes are taken.

Mission Council will share responsibility for hearing appeals with General Assembly. Where at present, with the consent of the parties, an appeal may be dealt with by a Commission, in future such appeals will be dealt with by Mission Council.

Simply for purposes of cross-reference, General Assembly will remain the place where:

- a) Moderators and Clerks of General Assembly and Directors of the URC Trust are elected,
- b) Closure of Churches and admissions of new Churches are marked, and representatives of new Churches are received,
- c) Ministerial Jubilees are recognised and all Ministers who have died since the previous General Assembly are remembered,
- d) Newly ordained Ministers and newly commissioned CRCWs are received,
- e) All Assembly Standing Committees and all Synods report in writing,
- f) The General Secretary reports on the work of the Disciplinary Panel and
- g) All appeals which as at present have to be taken to General Assembly are heard.



MISSION COUNCIL 16 - 18 November 2009

B

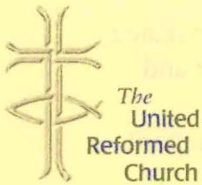
Introduction to the Standards of Conduct

These three documents have been produced in response to concerns regarding the expectations churches have of those appointed to provide leadership, particularly ministers, both of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers, and elders. These papers are an attempt to draw attention to the implications of the promise made by ministers 'to live a holy life', outline what duty to colleagues may look like, and define the type of activities that may damage the well-being, purity and peace of the United Reformed Church.

Considerable time and thought has been given to the status these papers should have within the church with regard to whether they should be lists of proscribed activities or guidelines marking out the boundaries, for the crossing of which an individual can be held accountable. In the light of various discussions and contributions submitted to the Ministries Committee, the latter understanding has been adopted recognising that it would be impossible to detail adequately every behaviour which would be inappropriate, but knowing that there are clear areas of concern which need to be drawn to the attention of those who provide leadership and seek to hold it to account.

Those candidating for the ministries of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Work will be expected to be aware of the content of these papers and this will be included in the assessment process of the United Reformed Church. It is to be hoped that the content of these documents will be discussed with those who are being prepared for ordination as elders within the United Reformed Church, and that they will be a valued resource for those already ordained as they reflect on their role as elders.

September 2009



MISSION COUNCIL 16 - 18 November 2009

B1

Guidelines for Ministers of Word and Sacraments

1. Introduction

This paper sets down expectations of Ministers of Word and Sacraments within the United Reformed Church. Parallel papers about the expectations of Church Related Community Workers and elders and Local Churches are to be read alongside this document.

2. Basis of Union

The foundation for the conduct of ministers is in the Basis of Union, summarised in Schedule E paragraph 2,

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

The relevant promises in Schedule C are a) ‘to live a holy life and to maintain the truth of the Gospel whatever trouble or persecution may arise’, b) ‘to fulfil the duties of your charge faithfully, to lead the church in worship, to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments, to exercise pastoral care and oversight, to take your part in the councils of the Church, and to give leadership to the Church in its mission to the world, and c) as a minister of the United Reformed Church ‘to seek its well-being, purity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church’.

3. Standards of Professional Behaviour

3a Personal integrity and health

- To live a Christian life as a person of prayer and integrity.
- To be aware of the need to have appropriate boundaries that safeguard personal health and welfare and which promote healthy relationships with others.
- To maintain strict confidentiality of all matters shared with them in confidence, except when required by law to do otherwise, e.g. with regard to the safety of children.
- To exercise care and sensitivity in seeking counsel from colleagues and to protect the identity of third parties unless permission has been granted.

- To recognise the need for and have concern for a healthy lifestyle, to balance availability and accessibility to ministry demands with time for family and friends, personal renewal and rest and spiritual growth.
- To attend meetings, respond to correspondence and keep appropriate records efficiently and effectively, having regard to the Data Protection Act.
- To account carefully for expenses and any funds held on behalf of others.
- Not to undertake duties whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs or when medically advised not to do so.
- To refrain from using privilege or power for personal advantage or gain, whether financial, emotional, sexual or material.
- Not to do anything to undermine the spiritual health of another.

3b *Relationships with ministerial colleagues*

All ministers:

- To strive to protect colleagues from prejudicial discrimination on the basis of gender, race, age, disability or sexual orientation.
- To consider very carefully taking any position of responsibility in a pastorate served by another minister and to support the direction of church life initiated through the leadership of the pastorate.
- To respect the work of predecessors and successors and deal honourably with their record.
- To consider carefully the location of retirement housing and try to avoid living in the immediate area of past pastorates.

Ministers in pastoral charge:

- To support the ministry of other ministers and not interfere with the conduct of ministry or the direction of church life of other pastorates.
- To sever all professional ties with a previous pastorate and refer any requests or enquires of previous pastorates to the interim moderator or new minister.
- To welcome retired colleagues and those ministers serving the wider church as members and worshippers in the pastorate.

3c *Relationship with elders, members and others*

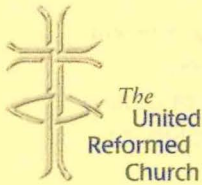
- To regard all persons with equal love and concern.
- To work collaboratively and safeguard the contribution of the whole church in decision-making processes.
- To share leadership and pastoral care with others called to these purposes.
- To seek advice from colleagues or other professionals who may offer specialist advice if in doubt about one's competence to deal with any issue or situation.
- To consult with colleagues, elders and others as appropriate when considering taking on extra work.
- Not to seek to influence inappropriately a pastorate in the call of a new minister.
- Not to be with a child or children or young people in a place quite separate from others.

- Not to enter a sexual relationship with anyone within a professional relationship who is not their partner.

3d *Relationship with Councils of the church*

- To be active in the councils of the Church.
- To accept the oversight of Synod and the pastoral care of Synod Moderators.
- To submit to disciplinary procedures when initiated by the councils of the church and to inform as soon as possible the Synod Clerk and Synod Moderator, or where appropriate the Deputy General Secretary, when involved in legal proceedings (civil or criminal).
- To participate in accompanied self-appraisal and review as appropriate.
- To work to the agreed terms of settlement
- To be aware of the guidelines for on-going ministerial training issued by the Education and Learning Committee.

September 2009



MISSION COUNCIL
16 - 18 November 2009

B2

Guidelines for Church Related Community Workers

1. Introduction

This paper sets down expectations of Church Related Community Workers within the United Reformed Church. Parallel papers about the expectations of Ministers of Word and Sacraments and elders and Local Churches are to be read alongside this document.

2. Basis of Union

The foundation for the conduct of Church Related Community Workers is in the Basis of Union, Paragraph 22,

'Some are called to the ministry of church related community work. After approved preparation and training, they may be called to be church related community workers in a post approved by the United Reformed Church, are then commissioned and inducted to their office to serve for a designated period. This commissioning and induction shall be in accord with Schedules D & F. Church related community workers are commissioned to care for, to challenge and to pray for the community, to discern with others God's will for the well-being of the community, and to endeavour to enable the church to live out its calling to proclaim the love and mercy of God through working with others in both church and community for peace and justice in the world. Their service may be stipendiary or non-stipendiary, and in the latter case their service is given within the area of a synod and in a context it has approved.'

CRCWs make promises as laid out in Schedule F, in particular they promise, 'to live a holy life, and to maintain the truth of the gospel, whatever trouble or persecution may arise; to care for, to challenge and to pray for the community, to discern with others God's will for the well-being of the community; to take their part in the councils of the Church and to enable the church to live out its calling to proclaim the love and mercy of God through working with others in both church and community for peace and justice in the world, and as a Church Related Community worker of the United Reformed Church to seek its well-being, purity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.'

3. Standards of Professional Behaviour

3a *Personal integrity and health*

- To live a Christian life as a person of prayer and integrity.

- To be aware of the need to have appropriate boundaries that safeguard personal health and welfare and which promote healthy relationships with others.
- To maintain strict confidentiality of all matters shared with them in confidence, except when required by law to do otherwise, e.g. with regard to the safety of children.
- In seeking counsel from colleagues care and sensitivity will be exercised and the identity of the person shall not be revealed unless permission has been granted.
- To recognise the need for and have concern for a healthy lifestyle, to balance availability and accessibility to ministry demands with time for family and friends, personal renewal and rest and spiritual growth.
- To attend meetings, respond to correspondence and keep appropriate records efficiently and effectively, having regard to the Data Protection Act.
- To account carefully for expenses and any funds held on behalf of others.
- Not to undertake duties whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs or when medically advised not to do so.
- To refrain from using privilege or power for personal advantage or gain, whether financial, emotional, sexual or material.
- Not to do anything to undermine the spiritual health of another.

3b *Relationships with colleagues*

- To support the ministry of other CRCWs and Ministers of Word and Sacraments and not interfere with the conduct of ministry or the direction of church life of other pastorates.
- To strive to protect colleagues from prejudicial discrimination on the basis of gender, race, age, disability or sexual orientation.
- To sever all professional ties with a previous post and refer any requests or enquires of previous posts to the interim moderator or new CRCW.
- To respect the work of predecessors and successors and deal honourably with their record.
- To consider carefully the location of retirement housing and try to avoid living in the immediate area of past posts.
- To welcome retired colleagues as members of the pastorate.

3c *Relationship with elders, members and others*

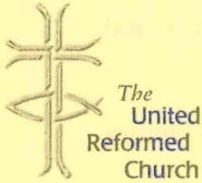
- To regard all persons with equal love and concern.
- To work collaboratively and safeguard the contribution of the whole church in decision-making processes.
- To share leadership and pastoral care with others called to these purposes.
- To seek advice from colleagues or other professionals who may offer specialist advice if in doubt about one's competence to deal with any issue or situation.
- To consider very carefully taking any position of responsibility in a pastorate served by another CRCW or a Minister of Word and Sacrament and to support the direction of church life initiated through the leadership of the pastorate.
- To consult with colleagues, Local Management Group and others as appropriate when considering taking on extra work.
- Not to seek to influence inappropriately a pastorate in the call of a new minister.

- Not to be with a child or children or young people in a place quite separate from others.
- Not to enter a sexual relationship with anyone within a professional relationship who is not their partner.

3d *Relationship with Councils of the church*

- To be active in the councils of the Church.
- To accept the oversight of Synod and pastoral care of Synod Moderators.
- To submit to disciplinary procedures when initiated by the councils of the church and to inform as soon as possible the Synod Clerk and Synod Moderator when involved in legal proceedings (civil or criminal).
- To participate in accompanied self-appraisal and review as appropriate.
- To work to the agreed terms of settlement
- To be aware of the guidelines for on-going training issued by the Education and Learning Committee.

September 2009



The
United
Reformed
Church

MISSION COUNCIL
16 - 18 November 2009

B3

Guidelines for Elders

1. Introduction

This paper prepared by the Moderators' meeting sets down expectations of elders in relation to Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs) within the United Reformed Church. Parallel papers about the expectations of Ministers and CRCWs are to be read alongside this document.

2. Basis of Union

The foundation for the conduct of ministers is in the Basis of Union, summarised in Schedule E paragraph 2,

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

The relevant promises in Schedule C are a) 'to live a holy life and to maintain the truth of the Gospel whatever trouble or persecution may arise', b) 'to fulfil the duties of your charge faithfully, to lead the church in worship, to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments, to exercise pastoral care and oversight, to take your part in the councils of the Church, and to give leadership to the Church in its mission to the world, and c) as a minister of the United Reformed Church 'to seek its well-being, purity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church'.

Elders 'share with ministers of the Word and Sacraments in the pastoral oversight and leadership of the local churches, taking counsel together in the elders' meeting for the whole church and having severally groups of members particularly entrusted to their pastoral care. They are 'associated with ministers in all the councils of the church'. Elders promise at their ordination to 'accept the office of elder of the United Reformed Church' and promise 'to perform its duties faithfully'.

Elders and members receive ministers at their induction or CRCWs at their commissioning 'as from God' to serve among them and with them in the world. They promise to pray for the minister/CRCW, to seek together the will of God and 'give due

honour, consideration and encouragement, building one another up in faith, hope and love'

Members promise, 'in dependence on God's grace, to be faithful in private and public worship, to live in the fellowship of the Church and to share in its work', and to give and serve, as God enables them, 'for the advancement of his kingdom throughout the world' They also promise 'by that same grace, to follow Christ and to seek to do and to bear his will' all the days of their life'

3. Standards of Christian Behaviour

3a *Personal integrity and health*

- To live a Christian life as persons of prayer and integrity.
- To be committed to growing in faith and discipleship and developing the gifts each has been given.
- To be aware of the need of ministers, elders and members to have appropriate boundaries that safeguard personal and spiritual health and welfare, to promote healthy relationships with others and not to do anything to undermine the spiritual health of another.
- To maintain strict confidentiality of all matters shared in confidence, except when required by law to do otherwise, e.g. with regard to the safety of children, and to respect ministers' needs to maintain that same confidentiality.
- To exercise care and sensitivity when seeking counsel from others and in discussion about pastoral concerns, in order that the identity of any person shall not be revealed unless permission has been granted.
- To recognise the need for ministers, elders and members to have a healthy lifestyle and to balance demands on ministers/CRCWs availability and accessibility with respect for ministers'/CRCWs' time for family and friends, personal renewal and rest and spiritual growth.
- To refrain from using privilege or power for personal advantage or gain, whether financial, emotional, sexual or material.

3b *Relationships with ministers*

- To work collaboratively with ministers/CRCWs and elders and members in all aspects of the life of the pastorate.
- To support the ministers/CRCWs, through prayer, encouragement and partnership, including honouring the terms of settlement with regard to holidays, financial benefits and continuing training.
- To honour the ministers/CRCWs currently called to serve and not invite or encourage other ministers to be involved in the life of the church or to offer pastoral care without the ministers'/CRCWs' consent.
- To regard all persons with equal respect and concern and not discriminate against anyone on the basis of gender, race, age, disability or sexual orientation, including ministers/CRCWs.
- To refrain from raising pastoral issues with a previous minister/CRCW.

- To respect the work of previous ministers/CRCWs and deal honourably with their record.
- To welcome retired ministers/CRCWs as members and worshippers in the pastorate.

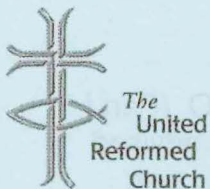
3c *Relationship with elders, members and others*

- To regard all persons with equal love and concern.
- To work collaboratively and safeguard the contribution of the whole church in decision-making processes.
- To share leadership and pastoral care with others called to these purposes.
- To seek advice from others if in doubt about one's competence to deal with any issue or situation.
- To consider very carefully taking any position of responsibility and to support the direction of church life initiated through the ministers/CRCWs, elders and church meetings.
- Not to be with a child or children or young people in a place quite separate from others.
- Not to enter a sexual relationship with anyone in their care.

3d *Relationship with Councils of the church*

- To recognise that the pastorate is part of the wider United Reformed Church and that the ministers/CRCWs are committed to play their part in the wider councils of the Church and in ecumenical relationships.
- To engage positively with all the councils of the church.
- To participate in Synod's consultation and review of the pastorate as appropriate.

September 2009



MISSION COUNCIL
16 - 18 November 2009

C

**The Ministerial Incapacity Procedure and Disciplinary Process
Advisory Group**

(MIND)

1. Terms of Reference:

The General Secretary presented draft terms of reference for the Advisory Group, and Mission Council is asked to approve the following:

The Ministerial Incapacity Procedure and Disciplinary Process Advisory Group

(MIND)

To oversee the Ministerial Disciplinary Process (Section O) and the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure (Section P);

To receive reports (from which all details which might serve to identify the minister or CRCW involved have been removed) following each case in order that any lessons may be learnt;

To propose any changes to Mission Council.

Membership: Convener, Secretary, the General Secretary, the Clerk, the Secretary for Ministries, the Convener and Secretary to the Assembly Commission, the Secretary of the Review Commission of the Incapacity Procedure, the Legal Adviser, the Procedures Consultant(s), the Training Coordinator.

N.B. The group is an Advisory Group to Mission Council.

Apart from scrutiny of anonymised reports, the Group does not consider any specific cases in the Disciplinary Process or Incapacity Procedure.

2. Disciplinary Process

Mission Council is asked to make the following changes to Section O (Part I changes will need to be taken to General Assembly. The Clerk has advised that Part II changes can be made on behalf of the General Assembly with immediate effect.):

PART I

- 7.2 After the words "case law" add "and/or official statements of good practice issued by a government department or agency".

PART II

- A.4 The existing A.4 to become A.4.1. Also add the following sentence at the end of the paragraph:

"In this connection, the expression "the framework of the Section O Process" shall be regarded as covering not only the immediate confidentiality forum existing within the Section O Process during and beyond the continuance of the case, but shall extend to include any statements and information passed on to any person or body not directly involved in the case in the course of the implementation of any part of the decision of the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission or any recommendations or guidance appended thereto, on the basis that the recipient thereof is made fully aware that he/she/it is bound by the confidentiality existing within the Section O Process in respect of such statements/information".

- A.4.2 Add a new A.4.2 as follows:

"Should either (i) a formal request for information concerning any case dealt with under the Section O Process be received from the Independent Safeguarding Authority or any other public body with the requisite statutory authority to insist upon production thereof or (ii) circumstances arise which create a statutory requirement to supply such information, then in either case the supply to that body of such information shall not be deemed to be a breach of confidentiality under the Section O Process".

- E.4.2** At the end insert the following:
“and at the same time supply this information to the Synod Moderator and, if the case arises under Paragraph B.3.2, the Deputy General Secretary”.
- E.5.1.2** At the end remove the fullstop and insert the word **“and”**.
- E.5.1.3** Add a new E.5.1.3 as follows:
“A discretion to allow the parties to lodge an agreed written statement(s) as to those facts which are not in dispute, on the basis that such facts shall be taken as proved without the need for personal verification by witness testimony at the Hearing.”
- F.2.4** After the words **“appropriate guidance”** insert **“.... in its written statement (see Paragraph F.3.3)”**.
- G.10.2** At the end insert the following:
“and at the same time supply this information to the Synod Moderator and, if the case arises under Paragraph B.3.2, the Deputy General Secretary”.
- G.13.5** Change the paragraph reference in the text from **“F.3.3”** to **“G.13.3”**.

3. Incapacity Procedure

Mission Council is asked to make the following changes to Section P (Part I changes will need to be taken to General Assembly. The Clerk has advised that Part II changes can be made on behalf of the General Assembly with immediate effect.):

PART I

- 1.1** The existing Paragraph 1 to become 1.1.
- 1.2** Add a new paragraph as follows:
“The Review Commission may also decide to make a recommendation/referral in accordance with Part II Section H. The Review Commission or, in the event of an appeal the Appeals Review Commission, is also able to make

recommendations (other than recommendations under Part II Section H) and offer guidance, but only within the limits prescribed in Part II Sections K and L"

- 2 After the words "Appeals Review Commission" insert ", the Special Appeals Body".
- 7 After the words "case law" insert "and/or official statements of good practice issued by a government department or agency".

PART II

- A.1.1 Widen the current definition of the **Secretary of the Review Commission** as follows: between the words "Review Commission" and "in accordance with" insert "and the Standing Panel"

- A.3 Add the following sentence at the end of the paragraph:

"In this connection, the expression "the framework of the Incapacity Procedure" shall be regarded as covering not only the immediate confidentiality forum existing within the Incapacity Procedure during and beyond the continuance of the case, but shall extend to include any statements and information passed on to any person or body not directly involved in the case in the course of the implementation of any part of the decision of the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission or any recommendations or guidance appended thereto, on the basis that the recipient thereof is made fully aware that he/she/it is bound by the confidentiality existing within the Incapacity Procedure in respect of such statements/information".

- A.4.1 The existing Paragraph A.4 to become A.4.1.

- A.4.2 Add a new paragraph as follows:

"Should either (i) a formal request for information concerning any case dealt with under the Incapacity Procedure be received from the Independent Safeguarding Authority or any other public body with the requisite statutory authority to insist upon production thereof or (ii) circumstances arise which create a statutory requirement to supply such information, then in either case the supply to that body of such information shall not be deemed to be a breach of confidentiality under the Incapacity Procedure".

- A.5 After the words "Review Commission" insert ", Appeals Review Commission or Special Appeals Body".

After the words "Appeals Review Commission" insert "or a Special Appeals Body".

- B.3** The existing B.3 to become B.3 1. Also, after the words **"the Minister"** insert **"in writing"**.
- B.3.2** Add a new **B.3.2** as follows:
"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.6** Replace the last sentence with the following:
"S/he shall also send a written Notice countersigned by the Secretary of the Review Commission to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission informing him/her of the initiation of the Incapacity Procedure so that a declaration can be issued as provided under the Disciplinary Process to the effect that that Process is thereby concluded."
Then add a new final sentence as follows:
"In the event that the Consultation Group decides that the Incapacity Procedure should not be initiated, the Synod Moderator or the Deputy General Secretary as the case may be shall give written Notice of that decision to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission to enable the Disciplinary case to be resumed".
- D.1** After the words **"Appeals Review Commission"** insert **"or the Special Appeals Body"**
- D.2** After the words **"servicing of"** insert **"the Standing Panel and"**
- G.4.2** At the end of this paragraph remove the full stop and add the word **"and"**.
- G.4.3** Add a new paragraph **G.4.3** as follows:
"take all such actions, including the commissioning of specialist advice and guidance, as seem to it desirable and appropriate in the proper conduct of its enquiry".
- H.1** Remove the words **"or the Appeals Review Commission"**.
- H.2** Remove the words **"or the General Secretary as the case may be"**
Replace the word **"intention"** with **"decision"**
After the sentence ending with the words **"such recommendation"** insert a new sentence as follows:
"This notice shall contain a statement of its reasons for reaching its decision to refer back and it may indicate what papers, if any, should be passed to the recipient of the notice"
Remove the words **"(or the General Secretary if the reference back is proposed by the Appeals Review Commission)"**

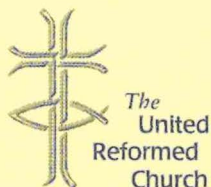
After the words "received" add "(time being of the essence for this purpose)"

At the end of H.2 add the following sentence:

"The Notice shall draw the attention of the recipient to the strict time limit for serving a Notice of Appeal in response to a notice served under this Paragraph."

- H.3** Replace the words ".....the Secretary of the Review Commission or the General Secretary as the case may be" with **"the case within the Incapacity Procedure shall stand adjourned during the course of the appeal and the Secretary of the Review Commission....."**
- H.6** Replace the opening words up to **"in response thereto"** with **"The Special Appeals Body shall consider the decision of the Review Commission to refer the case back and any representations made in connection therewith...."**
- H.9** After the words **"request for a formal hearing"** insert **"which is accepted by the Special Appeals Body"**
- H.12** Remove the words **"or the General Secretary as the case may be"** and the words **"/Appeals Review Commission"**
- H.13** Remove the words **"/General Secretary"**
- H.14** Remove the words **"/General Secretary"**
- Replace the expression **"Paragraph H.11"** with **"Paragraph H.2 or Paragraph H.11 as the case may be"**
- H.17** Remove the words **"/General Secretary"**
Replace the words **"decision of the Special Appeals Body on the appeal"** with **"decision of the Review Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Special Appeals Body"**
Remove the words **"signed by the Convener"**
Replace the expression **"Paragraph H.11"** with **"Paragraph H.2 or Paragraph H.11 as the case may be"**
- H.18** Remove the words **"/General Secretary"**
Add the following sentence at the end of the paragraph: **"The Secretary and Convener of the Review Commission may in exceptional circumstances allow a short extension of this period"**
- H.19** Remove the words **"/General Secretary"** from the first line.
- H.20** Remove the words **"or the Appeals Review Commission as the case may be"**.
- H.21** Remove the words **"/General Secretary"**.
- K.8.3** After the opening words **"If by the"** insert **"28th day after the"**.

- L.11.2** Add a new paragraph L.11.2 as follows:
"If the decision is that the name of the Minister shall remain on the Roll of Ministers, the Appeals Review Commission may in its decision record append such recommendations to its decision as it considers will be helpful to Moderators of Synods, local churches, the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary, the Press Officer, the Secretary for Ministries, the PRWC and others within the Church and also to any relevant outside organisation. It is emphasised that any such recommendations must relate to the future ministry of the Minister only and that they are of an advisory nature and do not form part of the decision"
- L.11.3** Add a new paragraph L.11.3 as follows:
"If the decision is to delete the name of the Minister from the Roll of Ministers, the Appeals Review Commission is particularly requested to include appropriate guidance concerning any restrictions which he/she considers ought to be placed on any activities involving the Minister after his/her deletion with the object of assisting Moderators of Synods, local churches, the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary, the Press Officer, the Secretary for Ministries, the PRWC and others within the Church and also to any relevant outside organisation. It is emphasised that any such recommendations must relate to the future ministry of the Minister only and that they are of an advisory nature and do not form part of the decision. It is emphasised that any such guidance is of an advisory nature and does not form part of the decision."
- L.11.4** The existing L.11.2 to become L.11.4
- L.11.5** The existing L.11.3 to become L.11.5



MISSION COUNCIL 16 - 18 November 2009

D

Update on Safeguarding Issues from the Deputy General Secretary

Members of Mission Council will recall that at our last Meeting in May I indicated that concerns had been raised about gaps in and between processes, specifically in respect of the Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults, CRB Disclosures and the new Vetting and Barring regulations, and training for Sexual Ethics Advisors. I undertook to bring all this work together and report back.

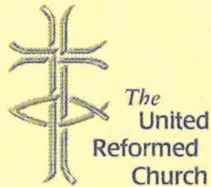
Although the presenting issue which led to the concerns focussed on training, it became clear that the far deeper need was to bring together policies on Safeguarding, given that the United Reformed Church did have an existing policy on the Safeguarding of Children, but this needed updating, and that it did not have and badly needed a policy on the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults. (I would also like at this juncture to pay tribute to the work of the Sexual Ethics Advisory Group, and particularly the Revd David A L Jenkins, to address the problems which had arisen over training). I was strongly encouraged to try to produce one integrated Safeguarding Document covering both Children and Vulnerable Adults.

In September the expert I had been advised to consult returned from sabbatical and we met. She strongly cautioned against one integrated document, on the grounds that this would produce insuperable difficulties over differing definitions of abuse and over serving as a basis for training. She suggested a portfolio or folder of documents containing three separate policies: Safe Recruiting (to cover Vetting and Barring), Safeguarding of Children, and Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults. When this was reported back to them, all interested parties who had previously requested one integrated document declared themselves content with this revised approach.

We already have a policy on the Safeguarding of Children and a Group which has been set up through the Youth and Children's Work Committee is working on updating it. The Methodist Church and the Church of England are in the process of formulating a policy on the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults based on a document produced by the Churches' Forum for Safeguarding. We have a copy of that document and I am trying to negotiate us a place on the Joint Committee producing the new policy. Work on Safe Recruiting is not so far advanced because further guidance on Vetting and Barring has both been issued in the last week (circa October 15th) and yet more is still expected from the Government, in the light of which policies can then be drawn up.

It will be necessary to rework our Core Declaration of Safe Church to include something on the abuse of trust so that it comprehends all the areas it needs to cover and a draft is currently with our legal advisor.

I apologise that all this work is not yet complete, but we have made progress.



MISSION COUNCIL 16 - 18 November 2009

D1

Vetting and Barring and Criminal Records Bureau

With the introduction of the Vetting and Barring Scheme from 12th October 2009 the Youth & Children's and Ministries offices have been considering the scheme and the impact on the United Reformed Church.

There are two significant questions:

What does the URC need to do to be compliant with the VBS?

What does this mean for the URC with regard to CRB disclosures?

What does the URC need to do to be compliant with the VBS?

The Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS) requires those involved in Regulated Activity to be ISA Registered and puts a legal duty on those who appoint people to undertake that activity to check that they are registered. It is also a criminal offence to seek to undertake Regulated Activity if you have been barred from working with children or vulnerable adults or knowingly employ such a person to undertake Regulated Activity.

Regulated Activity involves contact with children or vulnerable adults that is of a specified nature (e.g. teaching, training, care, supervision, advice, guidance, assistance, treatment, or transport) or in a specified place (e.g. schools, children's homes & hospitals, juvenile detention facilities, adult care homes) and is undertaken 'frequently (once a month), intensively (3 or more occasions in a period of 30 days) and/or overnight (between 2-6 am)'.

An examination of the work undertaken in the United Reformed Church, both in local churches and in the wider church, has produced a list of those people who will need to be ISA Registered in order to carry out the work they do. Some of these are reasonably obvious, e.g. youth workers, but others have been identified due to the definition of what is Regulated Activity and because certain offices require the holder to be ISA Registered, e.g. trustees of children's charities.

The list contains those whose activity is authorised across the denomination, e.g. Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers, whilst others are active in a more local setting, e.g. elders and Local Leaders. With the former General Assembly can confirm that no one will be eligible to fill such a post or office without first being ISA Registered and that registration being checked. In the latter case the duty of complying with the law will fall to the appointing body, which in most cases will be the local church. Whilst we cannot compel these other appointing bodies to undertake the necessary checks this understanding of the VBS indicates they are likely to be acting illegally if they fail to do so. There may be a few cases where this is not so but they would be rare exceptions.

What does this mean for the URC with regard to CRB disclosures?

The system of Criminal Record Bureau disclosures was used primarily for the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults, and it was for this reason that the URC originally chose to use it. With the introduction of VBS a decision has to be made as to whether we continue to seek CRB disclosures when the new scheme is fully operational. One effect of the CRB system has been to reveal convictions which will not normally be taken into consideration under the new scheme, which is more selectively directed toward the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults, yet which could have a bearing on whether someone should undertake other work for the church. An example of this could be a conviction for fraud which should be considered when someone is being appointed a trustee, and most of our serving ministers act as trustees. The United Reformed Church therefore needs to decide whether it wishes to continue the practice of seeking a fresh CRB disclosure every 5 years for those holding certain posts or offices, or on the change of post, and it is the recommendation of the CAS/CRB Reference Group that it should. Those posts for which the disclosures should be sought have been included on the list and includes one post, Church Treasurer, which does not of itself require an ISA Registration but is usually held by someone who is an elder, a role for which registration is required.

September 2009

**Vetting and Barring and Criminal Record Bureau
Who to check Guidance for URC use**

		Legal Requirement		URC Requires a new CRB disclosure on change of post and/or every 5 years
		ISA	ISA	
		VA	C	
Ministers, stipendiary/non-stipendiary and Church Related Community Workers	Serving	X	X	X
Ministers, stipendiary/non-stipendiary and Church Related Community Workers	Non-serving and Retired	X	X	
Ministers of other denominations employed by the United Reformed Church		X	X	X
Others in Special Category Ministry Posts		X	X	X
Ministers and CRCWs in training		X	X	X
URC Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers		X	X	
Senior Assembly Appointed Staff & Relevant Church House Support Staff		X	X	X
Synod recognised Lay Pastors / Local Leaders / Interim Moderators / Interim Ministers		X	X	X
Trustees	see note z	X	X	X
Elder - Serving	see note z	X	X	X
Treasurer	see note y			X
Children & Young People's Group Leaders (Paid/Voluntary)			X	
Children & Young People's Group Helpers (Paid/Voluntary)			X	
Organised visiting schemes: visitors to specific groups e.g. elderly, housebound, ill, those with mental health difficulties etc		X		
Transport organised on behalf of the Church/group/project for specific groups either children or vulnerable adults		X	X	
Choirmaster, music leader, tower captain, bell ringing		X	X	
People in Education and Learning (teaching) roles e.g. choirs, bell ringers, music, drama, membership classes		X	X	
Formal roles of responsibility providing outreach functions such as Eucharistic Ministers, Extended Communion. Visiting people in their homes		X	X	
Supervisors, leaders of drop in/day centre, lunch clubs		X	X	
Creche, carers and toddler leaders			X	
TLS Students studying the 'Gateways into Worship' or 'Gateways into care' courses		X	X	
Safe Church Advisers		X	X	
Pastoral Response Team members		X	X	
Pastoral visitors who make home visits but not to any specific groups, rather the whole congregation		X	X	
URC Non Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers and URC Worship Leaders		X	X	
Other denomination's Lay Preachers/Worship Leaders and where the requirement under "frequent" is met		X	X	
Other denomination's Lay Preachers/Worship Leaders and where the requirement under "frequent" is NOT met (give URC information leaflet)				

**Vetting and Barring and Criminal Record Bureau
Who to check Guidance for URC use**

	Legal Requirement		URC Requires a new CRB disclosure on change of post and/or every 5 years
	ISA	ISA	
	VA	C	
Festival organisers, helpers and speakers where the requirement under "intensive" may be met but the events are not for specific groups but the whole congregation	X	X	
Those bringing youth & Children's choir/groups from abroad and then mingle with our own children and Young people -	<i>Please consult the Exchange Pack which is available</i>		
One-off emergency help within a children's, young persons or vulnerable adult group, under supervision and with the exercise of reasonable caution			
Casual visiting by those with positions of responsibility in the church but not to any specific group			
Choirs, bell ringers, music, drama, membership class members			
Secretaries, cleaners, caretakers, cooks on church premises			
Community drop-in project organisers or workers where the drop-in is social/recreational and not targeted at specific groups			
Transport - private/casual either organised independently or not relating to specific groups			
Welcomers, door stewards			

NOTES:

- * **The person carrying out the check should also be registered**
- * **If in doubt check**
- * **For individuals coming from abroad please see URC Overseas leaflet**
- * **For Church / International link projects - enforce the same rules to the overseas activity to those applied here**
- * **For residential events please look carefully at the requirement under "intensive" and/or "overnight"**
- * **Churches have to assess their own homeless, asylum and refugee work**

Note Z

At time of appointment/election and the individual is ISA registered, a CRB application should be completed, when 'clear' the appointment/ordination/induction can proceed. If no ISA registration has been made, do so as this will include a CRB check. This is the responsibility of the local church.

Note Y

Before appointment/election a CRB application should be completed, when 'clear' the appointment/election can proceed. This is the responsibility of the local church.

Declaration of a Safe Church A Charter for Action

This church accepts that sexual harassment and abuse is a serious problem which occurs in the family of the church as well as in wider society, and recognises that sexual harassment and abuse is always unacceptable and must be stopped.

This church also accepts that abuse of trust is a serious problem which occurs in the family of the church as well as in wider society, and recognises that abuse of trust is always unacceptable and must be stopped.

We are all made in the image of God and Christ came that we should have life in all its fullness. Therefore everyone has the right to find nourishment for their Christian pilgrimage in a safe place.

This means that:

- dignity should be respected
- abusive behaviour will not be tolerated
- there will be sufficient support for those who need it
- allegations will be taken seriously
- trust should not be abused

This church is rightly the place of loving pastoral care and concern which, by its very nature, makes it possible for inappropriate behaviour to go unrecognised and unacknowledged. It is, therefore, the responsibility of everyone in this church to challenge inappropriate sexual behaviour and the wider abuse of trust.

This church will:

- inform itself about support agencies available locally, publicise them and learn from them
- in all areas of its life, by teaching and example, emphasise that sexual harassment and abuse, and the wider abuse of trust are a sin. This sin must be repented of on an individual and community level before healing can begin
- take the necessary steps to investigate all allegations of sexual harassment or abuse of trust and ensure that appropriate action is taken
- put in place a reporting mechanism to receive any allegation or complaint and take appropriate action

Every church will operate this Charter For A Safe Church.



MISSION COUNCIL
16 - 18 November 2009

E

FINANCE UPDATE

1 This paper reports various matters to Mission Council for information and confirmation.

Ministerial Stipend

2 After listening to the advice of the Ministries Committee, the Finance Committee and the URC Trust agreed, under the powers delegated to them, to set the full-time ministerial stipend for 2010 at £22,416. This is an increase of 2.35% on the 2009 figure.

3 As in previous years, the increase is based on the average of the rise in prices over a twelve month period and the rise in earnings over the same period. The figure may seem high given that the headline rate for inflation has been negative for some months. However when considering the stipend, the price index used is not the widely publicised Retail Prices Index (RPI) but a similar index, RPIX, which excludes the effect of housing costs. In the exceptional economic circumstances of 2008-9, RPI and RPIX have moved very differently from each other and RPIX has remained positive even when RPI has turned negative.

Use of Bicycles

4 After an energetic debate, featuring Synod Moderators of various sizes, Mission Council in May asked for further work to be done on the possibility of providing greater incentives for bicycle use, perhaps by a cycle purchasing scheme.

5 Material from Mission Council members and elsewhere has been examined, initially by the Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee under a Convenor who is a keen cyclist. However the schemes whereby an employer purchases bicycles for staff were not found to be efficient for the number of staff involved in the URC context.

6 The current mileage rate for bicycle use is 20p per mile. This was felt to be a fully adequate incentive given that it provides an element of reimbursement for the cost of the machine. In future, this should be more widely publicised and noted specifically in *The Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration*.

7 Individual ministers are free, if they so wish, to seek to negotiate with their pastorate or Synod for a loan for purchasing a bicycle.

Priority of Environmental Policy

8 Mission Council also asked what could be done to encourage the environmental implications of transport choices to be factored in when decisions are made. The Finance Committee suggests that most of the work on raising awareness has to be done locally not centrally. However the amendment below is proposed in the *Plan for Partnership* so that our official document makes the point.

Recommendation

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, agrees to amend *The Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration* by:

(i) amending paragraph 6.3.4 to read:

Travel: the costs of travel on church business shall be met as follows. Although these options are available, environmental issues should be taken into account.

(ii) Amending paragraph 6.3.4.1 by the underlined insertion:

...The MoM Sub-Committee shall distribute annually the rates of reimbursement for mileage undertaken on church business, including rates for motorcycles and bicycles, which must not be exceeded...

Retired Ministers Housing

9 In 2008 General Assembly adopted new guidelines for calculating the potential maximum benefit for a minister at the point of retirement from the Retired Ministers Housing Society. One key element in the calculation was the number of years' service the minister had given to the Church. Several members of Assembly expressed the view that the years spent in training should be included in the calculation not just the years after ordination. The mind of the Assembly was not tested on this point but an assurance was given that the issue would be looked at again and sympathetically.

10 After further study of the implications of various options, the Society has agreed to respond to this concern by changing its guidelines forthwith. The minimum period of service to qualify for help for the Society will remain at 15 years. However once a minister has completed 15 years, an additional three years will automatically be added to his or her entitlement calculation. Thus a minister ordained in 2000 who retires in 2020 will have their housing support calculated on the basis of $20+3=23$ years of service.

11 Given the many varieties of training for ministry, the three years will be a standard addition and not adjusted for the precise nature of an individual's training pattern.

12 As was stressed at the 2008 Assembly, all these calculations are in relation to the normal guidelines. The Society retains a commitment to finding a way of housing any qualifying minister who would otherwise be homeless, even when that means overriding the normal formula.

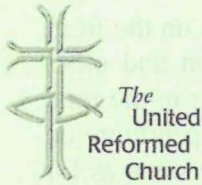
Our Investments

13 At the December 2008 Mission Council a report was given on the impact of the economic collapse on the URC central finances. It was noted that the stock market fall in 2008, and related factors, had reduced the paper value of our financial investments from around £105m in June 2008 to around £91m at the time of the meeting.

14 By the beginning of October 2009 these investments had recovered to a paper value of £100m.

John G Ellis
Treasurer

16 October 2009



MISSION COUNCIL 16 - 18 November 2009

E1

2010 BUDGET AND PENSIONS SUPPORT

Introduction

1 The last Mission Council of the year needs to agree a budget for the following year. This year the task is inextricably linked with the need to respond to the actuarial deficit in the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund (URCMPF). This paper from the Finance Committee draws together material on both aspects, taking note of our professional advice and extensive discussions in the URCMPF Board of Directors. The URC Trust has endorsed the approach taken in this paper.

2 The statutory timetable for addressing the URCMPF deficit requires this meeting of Mission Council to reach a decision on the way forward.

The Budget

3 The proposed budget for 2010 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.

Table 1: 2010 Budget

	2009 Budget	2010 Budget
	£m	£m
Income		
M&M Contributions	20.6	20.4
Pensions Support	-	0.5
Other Income	1.2	1.1
	-----	-----
Total	21.8	22.0
Expenditure		
Local Ministers/CRCWs	15.7	16.5
Other Expenditure	6.2	6.2
	-----	-----
Total	21.9	22.7
Deficit	0.1	0.7

4 As ever, by far the largest expenditure item is the stipends of the ministers on the front line in local pastorates. Sensitive to the tightness of the economic situation and other demands on Church members, this budget incorporates no increase whatever in the total cost of all the other items funded from the central budget. So the £6.2m of expenditure on Assembly programmes, the Church's infrastructure and administration is the same as for 2009. The Finance Committee is grateful to budgetholders and committees who have co-operated to make this significant achievement possible, despite increases in staff salaries and numerous other items.

5 On the income side, the latest estimates for contributions to the Ministry and Mission Fund (M&M) suggest there will be a fall compared with 2009. If this becomes a trend over future years it has serious implications for the scale of expenditure on ministers and programmes that will be possible.

The Predicted Deficit

6 The most obvious difference between this budget and those for recent years is the large projected deficit of £719,250. The increase in the deficit from the £0.1m expected for 2009 can be explained as in Table 2.

Table 2: Causes of Deficit

	£m
2008 Deficit	0.1
Add Reduced Income	0.3
Add Minister Numbers	0.1
Add Payment to URCMPF	0.2
2009 Deficit	0.7

7 While the Finance Committee would not normally wish to recommend a deficit of this size, the factors in Table 2 are all to some degree abnormal. Income is particularly difficult to predict in the present economic climate and the reduction in 2010, even if it occurs, may be temporary. It would be premature to cut back regular expenditure until the longer term can be glimpsed more clearly.

8 The number of stipendiary ministers has been on a marked downward trend in recent years but 2010 is likely to be an exception with almost the same number as in 2009. Therefore the rise in stipends is not offset by falling minister numbers in 2010. Retirements in 2011 and subsequent years will make this pause in the downward trend temporary, so again drastic action in 2010 does not seem sensible.

9 The payment to URCMPF is for the period April to June 2010, as explained below and will not be repeated in this way in future years.

10 Therefore the Finance Committee recommends that a large deficit be tolerated for 2010 on an exceptional basis, rather than seek more dramatic reductions in expenditure. But the deficit is only constrained to £0.7m if the new item of Income called Pensions Support materialises; the next sections of the paper explain this.

Pension Fund Deficit

11 At the May Mission Council the preliminary results of the triennial valuation of the URCMPF were explained. A large deficit was certain and various ways of addressing it were discussed. The views of members of Mission Council were noted carefully. The situation as at that time was summarised in a briefing paper which is reproduced as Appendix 2.

12 Since May, a substantial amount of further work has been done. The proposals that are described below have been shared with the statutory Pensions Regulator, as promised in advance, but no response of any substance has been received. There is therefore a risk that they will be rejected by the Regulator at a later date.

13 Highly technical work on the assumptions behind the future estimates of the URCMPF's funding needs into the far distant future has been completed. The Board of Directors has accepted assumptions that mean the deficit we are needing to address is computed as being £22.8m.

Responding in Partnership

14 Mission Council warmed to the proposal in May that the response to the challenge of meeting this deficit should be a partnership between different parts of the Church. The proper care of our retired ministers is a concern of all. Therefore there are now firm proposals in three areas discussed in outline in May.

15 First, work is in hand to set a formal legal "charge" over certain central Church assets valued at around £15m. This essentially means they continue to be used for their present purposes but also provide a guaranteed source of capital for the Pension Fund in extreme circumstances such as the total collapse of the United Reformed Church. The main advantage of having such a charge in place is that it allows us to spread out paying off the Pension Fund deficit over 20 years and therefore cause the minimum disruption to other work.

16 Secondly, the budget incorporates a proposal that the central Church funds should bear the cost of the necessary additional payments into the URCMPF for the period from April to June 2010. We are required legally to have a Recovery Plan for the Fund in place by 1 April 2010. However the processes we shall want to honour within the URC structures for agreeing contributions will struggle to be ready by then. Therefore we propose contributions from the wider Church shall not start until 1 July. There would be an exception to this general approach where a College or other body acts as the

“employer” of a minister: the “employer” would become responsible for the higher contributions from 1 April.

17 Thirdly, Mission Council did not object to the arguments for the ministers who are members of the Fund increasing their contributions. The firm proposal is now that they should increase their contributions with effect from 1 July 2010 from 5.75% of stipend to 7.5%. In a full year this will add £0.2m to the income of the Fund.

Synods and Local Churches

18 With these arrangements in place, the additional contributions needed from the wider Church are much less than they would otherwise have been but still on the scale foreshadowed in May: an additional £0.5m is needed in 2010 and an additional £1m in each of 2011 and 2012. At that point there will be a further valuation of the URCMPF which might well reduce the calculated deficit and the special demands on the wider Church.

19 After careful consideration of the options in the light of the comments at the May Mission Council, the Finance Committee recommends that Mission Council requests a specified amount from each Synod, but leave individual Synods to decide how to achieve that amount.

If a Synod wishes simply to add the extra money needed for the support of retired ministers to the regular M&M assessments it could do so. Some Synods have indicated they would not want to add this burden to certain churches so they could divide the sum in other ways. Some Synods have the option of making some contributions out of Synod funds or of diverting some Synod income to this purpose for the relevant period. Others might want to explore more imaginative ways of making an appeal. We would hope that every Synod would present this as principally an issue about caring for those servants of God who have served the Church as its ministers and who have trusted that the Church will spare them unfair financial anxieties.

20 The URCMPF Board and the Finance Committee would also recommend Mission Council urges every Synod to consider, as part of its response, the possibility of agreeing a specified percentage of property sales as a donation to the Pension Fund. The definition of a qualifying property sale would be for the Synod to determine. Most Synods have already agreed something of this sort to provide capital for the Retired Ministers Housing Society and one already donates 10% to the Pension Fund. Although income from such a levy will be unpredictable, a firm commitment of this type is particularly helpful in assuring the Pensions Regulator that the Synods understand the importance of supporting the Pension Fund.

21 The Finance Committee proposes that the total contribution needed from across the Church as the supplementary URCMPF support money should be divided between the Synods on the basis of latest published membership numbers. This would produce the numbers in Appendix 3 for 2010-2.

22 If Mission Council goes down this route, it would be important to have an indication of the likely response from every Synod as early as possible in 2010. It is appreciated that a formal response may not be possible before Spring Synods. If the Synods prove unwilling to meet this commitment then emergency measures would need to be prepared for the 2010 General Assembly.

Impact of Ethical Investment Policy

23 The investments supporting the URCMPF are invested as far as possible in line with the General Assembly's policy on ethical investment. This affects the range of investments the Fund can use, which sometimes means it misses out on financially attractive investments and on other occasions is spared unexpectedly poorly performing ones.

24 The Board of URCMPF prompted a Resolution at the 2005 Assembly whereby the Church promised to reimburse the Pension Fund if their professional advisers believed that the ethical stance on their investments had adversely affected the value of the Fund. It should be noted that this policy is not symmetrical: if the Fund gains from the ethical stance it does not reimburse the surplus to the Church.

25 Over the three year period 2006-8, the Fund actuary has calculated that the URCMPF may have lost a cumulative £644,000 as a result of its ethical policy. This very approximate number is already incorporated in the overall calculations of the Fund deficit of £22.8m. Clearly the ethical "cost" is a very small factor in the overall Fund position and it would be quite wrong to suggest that the ethical policy has been a major cause of the present problem.

26 The Board of URCMPF have indicated that they would be content that the Assembly resolution had been honoured if the first £644,000 of the additional payments into the Fund after 1 April 2010 were deemed to be in response to this ethical policy point. The Finance Committee recommends that designation to Mission Council.

Recommendations

1 Saluting the work of those who give themselves to God and the Church in service as Ministers of Word and Sacraments and as Church Related Community Workers, Mission Council requests Synods to meet the challenge of supplementary support for the Ministers' Pension Fund by committing to provide the sums indicated in Appendix 3 for 2010-12.

2 Mission Council requests every Synod to consider a commitment to give a percentage of the proceeds of property sales to the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund.

3 Mission Council, noting the suggestion of the Board of Directors of the URCMPF that honouring the ethical investment policy of the Church may have resulted in a

reduction in the value of the Fund by £644,000 over the period 2006-8, agrees that this sum should be transferred to the URCMPF as part of the additional funding under the Recovery Plan in 2010.

4 Mission Council supports an increase in member contributions to the URCMPF to 7.5% of stipend with effect from 1 July 2010.

5 Mission Council approves the budget for 2010, noting that it includes income of £0.5m from Synods for pensions support.

John G Ellis
Treasurer

16 October 2009

APPENDIX 1: 2010 BUDGET

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Draft 2010 Budget

	2008	2009	2010	
	Actual	Budget	Draft Budget	Comments
	£	£	£	
Income				
Ministry and Mission contributions	(20,624,604)	(20,642,000)	(20,467,000)	per Synod guesstimates
Pensions - additional funding	0	0	(500,000)	Budget proposal
Investment and other income				
Dividends	(433,950)	(650,000)	(609,000)	Some reduced during 2009
Donations	(27,997)	(14,000)	(14,000)	
Specific legacies	(548)	0	0	
Grants - Memorial Hall Trust	(385,000)	(385,000)	(385,000)	
Grants/Interest - New College Trust /Fund	(292,594)	0	0	
Net interest (external and internal)	(193,178)	(100,000)	(50,000)	2009 expected to be below £50k
Other	(9,839)	(20,000)	(20,000)	
	(1,343,107)	(1,169,000)	(1,078,000)	
Total income	(21,967,711)	(21,811,000)	(22,045,000)	
Expenditure				
A Ministry				Stipend increase 2.35%
Local and special ministries and CRCWs	15,480,248	15,683,000	16,556,000	Numbers steady, pension cost increase
Synod Moderators - stipends, housing and expenses	682,371	636,000	647,500	
Ministries department	273,801	308,600	313,400	
Pastoral & welfare	1,276	2,000	2,000	
	16,437,697	16,629,600	17,518,900	
B Education & Learning				2010 ordinations high
Initial training for ministry	808,583	843,350	798,000	Lower Synod subsidies
Continuing training for ministry	207,402	185,600	210,500	
Resource Centres support	280,582	297,000	330,000	
	1,296,566	1,325,950	1,338,500	
Training for Learning & Serving - net support	118,364	122,400	122,200	
Lay preachers support	1,674	55,000	25,000	
Windermere Centre - net support	110,227	91,900	99,700	
Education & Learning department	115,447	153,500	150,900	
	1,642,278	1,748,750	1,736,300	
C Youth & Children's Work				
Youth and Children's work programme	252,806	298,300	292,400	
Children & Youth development officers	128,748	154,500	155,400	
Pilots development	95,971	114,550	113,100	
	477,525	567,350	560,900	
D Mission				Some use of legacy fund
Mission programmes and team	808,687	870,400	849,900	100% funded by CWM grant
God is Still Speaking Programme (from autumn 2009)	0	0	0	
Grants to local churches (ex Grants & Loans group)	81,841	70,000	55,000	
	890,528	940,400	904,900	
E Governance				Cost spread over two years
General Assembly	403,376	150,000	155,000	
Mission Council	75,011	52,000	52,000	
Professional fees	76,818	97,500	102,000	
Other	67,193	39,000	34,500	
	622,399	338,500	343,500	
F Administration & Resources				Two temporary posts
Central Secretariat	282,085	395,500	409,800	
Equal Opportunities	1,333	3,000	2,000	
URC House costs	279,915	294,500	293,700	
I.T. Services	119,582	130,100	134,400	
Finance	453,879	453,700	460,600	
Communications & Editorial	370,696	411,050	399,250	
	1,507,490	1,687,850	1,699,750	
Total expenditure	21,577,916	21,912,450	22,764,250	
NET (SURPLUS)/DEFICIT	(389,795)	101,450	719,250	

APPENDIX 2: MAY 2009 BRIEFING ON THE PENSION FUND

Statement by the Treasurer after Mission Council May 2009

1 At Mission Council on 16 May, I explained the position we have reached in reviewing the recent Valuation of the Ministers' Pension Fund. Mission Council requested that a statement be provided which Council members and others could draw on in answering questions about this topic around the Church. This statement is being sent to all Council members and Synod Treasurers.

The Fund

2 The Ministers' Pension Fund (URCMPF) is a defined benefit scheme which provides pensions for stipendiary ministers and Church Related Community Workers. It is a strong, well-managed Fund with assets of around £80m. It is well able to meet all its current obligations and there is no threat whatever to pension payments in the immediate or medium term.

3 The URCMPF income comes from the income on its investments, the contributions of ministers and CRCWs who are members of the Fund (currently 5.75% of stipend) and the contributions of the Church through Ministry and Mission Fund giving (currently 17.25% of stipend).

The Valuation

4 Every three years the law requires a formal Valuation of the Fund. This took place as at 1 January 2009.

5 The Valuation is a highly complex set of calculations. Essentially it compares an estimate of the likely payments due from the Fund into the far distant future with an estimate of the likely income from (a) the Fund's assets and (b) the contributions being paid into the Fund. These estimates are all highly approximate, but using very cautious assumptions, it currently looks as if the Fund may have a shortfall as high as £25m relative to its possible expenditures.

6 The main reasons for this deficit are:

- (i) ministers are living longer; the higher likely expenditure this causes accounts for at least £5m of the gap;
- (ii) the general economic situation looks much more bleak than at the time of the last Valuation so we have reduced our estimates of the likely income from our assets;
- (iii) the Government's Pensions Regulator requires much more cautious assumptions on a variety of technical points than previously, partly because we are a Church and not structured like a company pension scheme.

Our Response

7 The Finance Committee and the Pension Fund Board are working on our response to this deficit and will be consulting in detail with the Pension Regulator. We hope to bring a firm set of proposals to the November Mission Council. Some of the likely building blocks are as follows.

- (i) As a community of Hope, we shall address this issue as a problem we expect to solve and shall solve together, with all parts of the Church playing their part.
- (ii) As a Church expecting to be around for the long term, we shall spread the costs over a lengthy period to minimise the disruption to other key mission work.
- (iii) To demonstrate to the Pensions Regulator that we are resolutely committed to the care of our retired ministers, we shall put a legally enforceable charge over some of the Church's assets so that in the most unlikely event that the URCMPF one day did run out of money, it could take over those assets.
- (iv) The central reserves of the Church might make a one-off contribution to the Fund.
- (v) The members of the Fund will be asked to increase their contributions to a higher percentage of stipend, perhaps around 7.5%.
- (vi) A review of the benefits provided by the Fund should be undertaken before the 2012 Valuation.

8 Even if all these proposals were to come to fruition, there would still be a gap of at least £10m to cover, which is equivalent to at least an extra £1m per year being required if we seek to cover the deficit over 10 years. Options for raising this additional money include:

- (i) Giving each Synod a target amount to raise and leaving each Synod to decide how to raise it;
- (ii) Asking Synods to provide money from their own resources;
- (iii) Asking local churches to pay a Pensions Levy on top of their regular M&M contributions;
- (iv) Reducing the number of stipendiary ministers in order to release funds to divert into the URCMPF.

9 Mission Council recognised that all these options are difficult and wanted some combination that does the least damage to our mission priorities.

Questions and Feedback

10 Any comments in the light of this statement are welcome and can be sent to the Treasurer c/o the Finance Office at 86 Tavistock Place. They will all be considered as the work progresses but it is not possible to guarantee all will receive a personal reply.

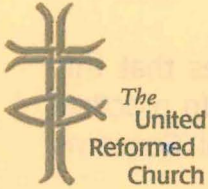
John G Ellis
Treasurer
United Reformed Church

21 May 2009

APPENDIX 3: CONTRIBUTIONS TO SUPPLEMENTARY PENSIONS SUPPORT

If Mission Council were to agree to the proposals in this paper, the suggested distribution of the extra £0.5m needed in 2010 and the extra £1.0m needed in each of 2011 and 2012 would be as follows.

Synod	2010 £k	2011 £k	2012 £k
Northern	26	52	52
North Western	51	102	102
Mersey	31	62	62
Yorkshire	31	62	62
East Midlands	31	62	62
West Midlands	43	86	86
Eastern	39	78	78
South Western	31	62	62
Wessex	54	108	108
Thames North	48	96	96
Southern	65	130	130
Wales	21	42	42
Scotland	29	58	58
	-----	-----	-----
	500	1000	1000



MISSION COUNCIL 16 - 18 November 2009

F

Human Sexuality Task Group (2008)

At the May Mission Council concern was expressed that the task group should not overlook the importance of the eleven issues which needed further exploration following the acceptance of the Commitment by the 2007 Assembly. What follows is an interim report on the stage reached on each of the issues.

Theology. The request was for a coherent and comprehensive theology of same-sex partnerships. The task group believes that a specifically United Reformed Church theology is not required, and that the need therefore is to identify existing theological statements which will satisfy the request and be reasonably easily accessible. It has asked the Faith and Order Group for advice.

Advocacy. The request here is for clarity about the church's teaching on matters of sexual relationships. The task group is responding in three ways: by encouraging non-confrontational methods of discussing such relationships, by widening such discussion from concentration only on same-sex relationships, and by encouraging the celebration of sexuality as a gift rather than seeing it only as a problem.

Standards in ministry. The Ministries Committee is already working in this general area and the task group has asked it to consider whether issues of sexuality can be included within this work.

Discipline. This also has been referred to the Ministries Committee as the body which oversees matters of discipline.

Legal implications. The group is not aware of any issues that require legal advice at the moment, and it does not recommend seeking such advice unless specific issues do arise. However, noting that the Methodist Church has done work in this area, the group has asked if it can share any relevant outcomes.

Blessing of partnerships. The group has looked at the current advice produced by Mission Council and is submitting a revised version for consideration at this meeting. It has also received a request for advice from Westminster College, Cambridge, and it is offering a draft response for Mission Council to consider.

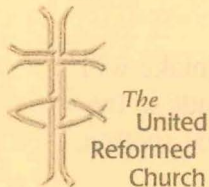
Unity. Very early in its discussion the group recognised that this is a key issue. Some initial papers have been shared and the group believes that, as the church takes up the opportunity for general discussion of the wider issue of sexuality, it will need to be in the context of a biblical and theological understanding of unity.

Practical implications of diversity. The task group recognises that this issue is closely linked to the previous one on a theological level. In practical terms it has considered this issue under the heading of Pastoral Concerns (see below).

Conscience. The group does not see this as an issue that needs further work at the moment. The rights of personal conviction are already accepted in the Basis of Union and, although this will be difficult to apply in some circumstances, further study is unlikely to make it any easier. That having been said, the group does not rule out returning to the issue in future if changed circumstances arise.

Stereotyping. The group is aware that this is a danger in all human relationships, and not only in regard to sexuality. The clothes a person wears, the way they speak, or the colour of their skin can as easily lead to stereotyping as can their perceived theological position. The group believes that this is not an issue which needs further study or debate. It requires each of us constantly to look at ourselves, our attitudes and our behaviour, and to ask whether we are seeing in the other a person made in the image of God. In the church we should not assume that difference makes another person less a follower of Jesus.

Pastoral issues. The task group realised at an early stage that the Commitment was bound to result in practical and pastoral questions, some of which could be very serious indeed. With that in mind it has asked the Moderators to indicate their experience without actually quoting any particular cases. This showed that the number of issues that have arisen so far is fairly small, that some are complex and stressful, and that sometimes what was a problem in one instance proved quite straightforward in another. Overall it does not seem that there is need for further action at the present time. However, the group wants to observe that any ethical position taken by the church will inevitably produce practical consequences for which provision had not (and maybe could not have) been made, or which require pastoral judgements to be made in the light of the particular circumstances. No amount of definition is going to be able to alter this fact. It is therefore of primary importance that the church in all its councils has those to whom such situations can be referred, and that such persons and groups are accorded the trust of the whole body. This seems to the group to be part of the essential nature of a Christian community, and therefore it does not propose to take this particular issue any further unless it becomes clear that there are aspects which are causing serious damage or difficulty.



MISSION COUNCIL 16 - 18 November 2009

F1

Human Sexuality Task Group (2008) Report

The task group recommends that Mission Council should, as soon as possible, issue revised guidelines on Services of Blessing for Civil Partnerships. This is chiefly to take account of the decisions of the Assembly in 2007.

The draft below is submitted for consideration. It follows the original text to a considerable degree but it uses the Commitment made by Assembly in 2007 as the basis on which local churches should come to their decisions. However, the opportunity has been taken to make one or two minor textual changes, and it is suggested that the guidelines for preparing an order of service should be published separately and in a simpler form than before.

The task group has considered the question of whether the Assembly should be asked to approve the guidelines. It recommends that, as this is only guidance, and as it can only be interim, such approval need not be sought.

An alternative, which would give the text wider circulation, would be to send it to synods and invite comment by a specified date.

Civil Partnerships, Advice to Churches

1. Introduction

The Civil Partnership Act 2004 came into force on 5 December 2005. It enables same-sex couples to obtain legal recognition of their relationship by signing a civil partnership document in the presence of each other, a registrar, and two witnesses. Although publicity has largely been about the commitment gay or lesbian couples make by entering into a civil partnership, it is important to note that the Act leaves open the nature of the commitment made; the partnership does not pre-suppose the intention to engage in a sexual relationship. A summary of the legal position can be found in the Section 5 below. As with a civil marriage, no religious service can take place as part of the civil registration. A document from the Registrar-General spells out what this means. The registration may not include extracts from an authorised religious marriage service or from sacred religious texts, may not be led by a minister or other religious leader, may not include hymns or chants, or any form of worship. However, it may include readings, songs or music that contain an incidental reference to a god or deity in an essentially non-religious context.

One consequence of this is that churches will be and have been approached to hold services of blessing for same sex couples entering into civil partnerships. In the United Reformed Church the decision whether or not to allow such a service lies with the Local Church and this paper is designed to assist Church Meetings in making this

decision. Church Meetings should be assured that whatever decision they make will receive the full support of the United Reformed Church, so long as it is made in the spirit of the Commitment made by Assembly in 2007 and set out in the next section.

A Local Church being asked to allow a service of blessing does not have to concern itself with the legalities of registering a civil partnership except that should a church agree to hold or allow the holding of a service of blessing it must ensure that it is made clear that this service does not constitute the partnership but is an act of thanksgiving following the legal contract entered into in the presence of the Registrar. It will be wise for the person presiding to ask to see that document.

2. The present position of the United Reformed Church on same-sex relationships: the Assembly Commitment

In 2007 the Assembly entered into a Commitment in which it set out a summary of the variety of views on same-sex relationships held within the United Reformed Church and its agreement to continue to pray and work together within the all-important grace of God. Church Meetings discussing whether or not to authorise a service of blessing of a civil partnership should use the Commitment as the starting point for their discussion.

As the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church,

we recognise that –

- *Many of the issues and views surrounding human sexuality can seem to be intractable and irreconcilable;*
- *Despite lengthy debates, much study and many reports, opinions have not changed sufficiently for us to be of one mind;*
- *This is a deeply emotive and potentially divisive issue;*
- *Human sexuality and the language we use about it raises many complex questions, not least in the area of biblical interpretation.*

While it is not possible to do full justice to the variety of views represented within the church, we recognise that the range includes –

Some people who feel that the debate on human sexuality has become a wrong focus and has received too much attention, believing that:

- *Faithful living and worship should take priority over controversy about human sexuality;*
- *Participation in God's mission and Christ's ministry in the world demands all the energy of God's people;*
- *This is not a matter over which policy decisions imposing a universal rule are necessary or appropriate;*
- *The church's existing assessment procedures are appropriate for discerning the call of God;*
- *Responses to pastoral situations involving people in same-sex relationships are best determined within the local church;*

- *Working and sharing fellowship with people of very different views can create painful tensions, though it may also offer opportunity for growth and development.*

Some other people who feel that this debate is a necessary focus because it concerns the Word of God, and for them is a passionately held matter of holiness, purity and obedience to God's commands in scripture, believing that:

- *God's creation plan is for the complementarity of man and woman, and that sexual relations apart from that are therefore disordered;*
- *Scripture and the traditions of the church teach that the only legitimate pattern for sexual relations is between a man and woman within the commitment of marriage;*
- *All scriptural references to same-sex activity are explicit in their condemnation;*
- *Same-sex activity is an affront to Christian morality and offensive to many people of other faiths and of none;*
- *People in sexually active same-sex relationships should not be accepted for ministry;*
- *The acceptance of same-sex (civil) partnerships on the part of society and the state is a matter to be resisted;*
- *The character and teaching of Jesus requires that both grace and truth must be embodied in dealing with this issue and with the people concerned;*
- *Working and sharing fellowship with people of very different views and practice creates painful tensions.*

Some others again who feel that this debate is a necessary focus because it is a passionately held matter of God's unbounded grace, justice, the work of the Spirit and faithfulness to God's revelation in Christ and in scripture, believing that:

- *God's will is for newness of life for all people in Christ, regardless of any human distinctions, including sexual orientation;*
- *It is God's creative intent that there are people whose innate sexual orientation and its fulfilment are directed towards others of the same sex;*
- *Some people are called by God into committed, loving, same-sex relationships, including their sexual consummation, and that such relationships can be judged by the fruits of the Spirit that result;*
- *Whilst most scriptural references to same-sex activity seem negative, they are not relevant to the contemporary understanding of same-sex relationships; emphasis needs to be given to the scriptural themes of grace, love and faithfulness;*
- *Where vocations to ministry of those in committed same-sex relationships are discerned through the processes of the church to be the work of the Holy Spirit, such vocations should be upheld;*
- *This is an issue of justice, and the church should celebrate changes made to address unjust structures in society as, in part, the work of the Spirit;*
- *The church should welcome the creation of civil partnerships and support such unions pastorally;*
- *Working and sharing fellowship with people of very different views and practice creates painful tensions.*

Recognising this very wide range of views, we –

- *Acknowledge this diversity;*
- *Accept that these views are all held with integrity and often with passion;*
- *Acknowledge that those who are sisters and brothers in Christ are so through God's calling rather than personal choosing;*
- *Believe that Christ calls us to strive to live together;*
- *Realise that this can only be done by reliance on the grace of God to enable mutual respect, love and continuing exploration together;*
- *Agree to continue to explore these differences in the light of our understanding of Scripture and under the Holy Spirit's guidance for our individual and shared life in today's world.*

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.

Church Meetings should be aware that the Commitment, and the report that supported it, is of an interim nature. A task group has been set up to look at some of the implications of the Commitment and to promote wider discussion of some of the issues involved.

3. Questions of Conscience

It will be important for Church Meetings to take into consideration the views of the Ministers in their pastorate. No Minister should be asked to act contrary to his or her conscience and therefore where a minister feels unable to participate in a service of blessing this position should be respected.

Equally, Ministers must respect the conscience of their Church Meetings. Where a Church Meeting is not prepared to allow services of blessing a Minister should not agree to conduct such a service in another place without the knowledge and consent of the elders. Where a Church Meeting is prepared to allow a service of blessing but the Minister feels unable to participate, suitable arrangements may be made for a colleague Minister to do so. It is possible that in a Joint Pastorate or a Group of Churches the different Church Meetings will come to different decisions. This has occurred on other matters and should it happen here each Church Meeting should respect the integrity of the other and recognise that their Minister needs to work with both decisions.

Whatever decision a Church Meeting comes to on the question of allowing a service of blessing for a civil partnership, it is most important that every effort is made to make this decision in such a way that the whole meeting can feel that this was a proper decision. In an ideal world the Church Meeting would come to a common mind with every member in agreement with the final decision but particularly in matters that deal with emotions and sensitivities, this is asking a great deal.

4. What next

It is important to remember that whatever decision a Church Meeting makes the matter does not end there. Where a Church Meeting has come to the conclusion that either as a general rule, or in a particular case, it is not appropriate to allow a service of blessing for a civil partnership there will be pastoral questions to be addressed. If the Church Meeting has been discussing the question because of an approach from individuals seeking such a service of blessing there will be a need to address them sensitively and pastorally. Important in all circumstances, this will be particularly so if one or both partners is a church member or part of the wider family of the church. Even if the discussion has not been prompted by a specific request there may be members of the congregation who feel hurt by the decision that has been reached and they will need to be cared for and supported in their understanding of the Gospel. When the decision is that such a service is appropriate then a suitable service will need to be designed and some notes to help with this are attached. However, it should be recognised that just as some members of the church may be hurt in Church Meetings that say no, the same is true in Church Meetings that say yes. Care for them and an affirming of their understanding of the Gospel is equally important and should not be forgotten.

If a Church Meeting agrees to a Service of Blessing the form of that service should be agreed between the Minister conducting it and the parties involved. It will need careful preparation and it may be that the Elders' Meeting will wish to be advised of the content of this service.

5. The legal status of Civil Partnerships

The registration of a civil partnership is a legal matter and there are a number of requirements laid down by law affecting those seeking to enter into a civil partnership. For instance, there is normally a fifteen-day waiting period between application and registration although this can be waived in special circumstances eg. the terminal illness of one partner. The Act applies in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Couples are not eligible to register if they are not of the same sex, if either is already married or already has a civil partner, is under 16, or if the couple are within prohibited degrees of relationship for marriage (eg. brothers or sisters).

A civil partnership can only be ended by death, dissolution or annulment. The grounds for dissolution are similar to those for ending a marriage: unreasonable behaviour, two years separation (with consent), five years separation (without consent), or where one partner has deserted the other for two years.

In a civil partnership the partners assume legal rights and responsibilities for each other and to other parties, including the State. They will have the same rights as a married couple in areas like tax, social security, inheritance and workplace benefits.

The Adoption and Children Act 2002, which came into force on 30 December 2005, gives same-sex couples – including civil partners – the right to make application jointly to adopt a child. Courts handling adoption applications may see a civil partnership as evidence of the stability of a same-sex relationship.

A checklist for those preparing services for the blessing of civil partnerships

What is the purpose of the service?

- it is to seek God's blessing on a loving relationship already entered into by legal agreement
- it is not a marriage
- it is not of itself a legal agreement
- these things should be made clear in the introduction to the service

Who should be involved in the preparation of the service?

- The Minister and the two people concerned should have the main responsibility. They may want to consult others.
- In some situations the Elders' Meeting, with its responsibility for worship, will need to be involved

What are the essential elements of the service?

- A statement of the purpose of the service
- Readings from the Bible
- The exchange of promises of mutual love and commitment
- Prayer for God's blessing on the partnership
- Prayer for others involved (family, friends, etc)

Are there models that can be consulted?

- It will be possible to find models but this is a chance to create something unique and specific to this one occasion
- One possible guide may be services for the blessing of civil marriages
- Prayers and readings suggested for such services, or for marriage services, may be helpful but will need some redrafting to fit the circumstances

Are there practical issues to be remembered?

- The main question is whether any certificate is given to the people concerned, and whether the church keeps any form of record of such services. (The clue here may be the practice followed in services of blessing for civil marriages.)
- How is the service to begin and end? Will there be any sort of procession?
- Who will make their promises first?
- It is to be hoped that there will not be any issues of publicity and security, but if any are anticipated it will be wise to decide how they will be dealt with.

And a prayer:

*May the God who created us out of love,
whose son loved us even unto death,
and whose Spirit warms us with holy friendship,*

*bless and keep us,
now and forever,*

Amen,

(More information is available from an HM Government booklet Civil Partnership – legal recognition for same-sex couples. This can be downloaded from www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk



MISSION COUNCIL 16 - 18 November 2009

F2

Westminster College and the Blessing of Civil Partnerships

The Human Sexuality Task Group (2008) has received a request for advice from Westminster College. It believes that the matter is of such importance that the advice should come with the authority of Mission Council. What follows is a statement of the situation, followed by a summary of the advice which the task group believes should be given. It is important to emphasise that the advice is recommended on the basis of principle: the task group was not given details of the situation described, nor did it believe such details to be relevant to it or to Mission Council.

Outline of the request

During the summer a student who was about to enter a civil partnership asked if a service of blessing could be held in the college chapel on the same day as the civil ceremony. The teaching staff, who were aware of the varying views in the student body, discussed this. The request was then referred to the Governors, who advised that the service should not take place in the college chapel, but who were supportive of it being held in a local Cambridge church – which in the event it was. The reason for their refusal was that they did not want the College to come down on one “side” of a continuing debate. However, this was a sufficiently difficult decision for the Governors to agree to seek advice as to how it should deal with further requests of this kind.

Factors to be taken into account in giving advice

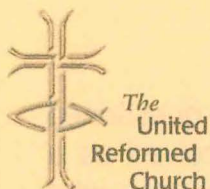
- Normally such Services of Blessing, if they have the agreement of a Church Meeting, will take place in the local church of which one or both of the couple are members
- Westminster College is in a unique situation. It is not a local church. It is under the authority of the Assembly, unlike Northern College. It does have a regular and consistent worshipping congregation, unlike Windermere. It is not possible to regard any other body in the United Reformed Church as exactly parallel.
- Because it is under the authority of the Assembly, the College must follow its policies; in this case the resolutions of 2007 and the advice of Mission Council concerning Services of Blessing of Civil Partnerships.
- The Governors are the appropriate body to make any decision, having taken account of the views of the student body and teaching staff, because they are the people accountable to Assembly.
- The Governors also need to be aware of the position of the College within the Cambridge Federation, but equally the Federation needs to be aware that the College is part of the United Reformed Church.

- The Commitment agreed by Assembly logically allows a decision either way, since it recognises different convictions on the matter of same-sex relationships. This means that the pastoral needs of each situation will have a powerful influence on any decision

Suggested advice to the College Governors

The Governors can with confidence take responsibility for making a decision if such a situation arises again. The main factors to be taken into account are set out above, but because the college community is a changing one, and because the pastoral situation is likely to be different in each case, each should be decided separately. In the present situation the setting of precedents is not recommended.

Mission Council believes that in the case before the Governors this summer, they acted in accordance with the advice above.



MISSION COUNCIL 16 - 18 November 2009

F3

Guidelines for an open session at Mission Council

The Human Sexuality Task Group has been struck by how wide the landscape of human sexuality is, involving those of us of heterosexual as well as homosexual orientation in joys and sorrows and perplexities. It has also observed how frequently people do not find themselves addressed by the opportunities that exist to talk about this dimension of our common humanity.

The formal discussions in the councils of the church have been dominated, quite understandably, by the issues our sexuality raises for the church in its teaching and discipline. However, this way of speaking quickly narrows the subject, easily becomes confrontational, and prevents the individual story from emerging. Yet it is that story which can enrich our understanding, deepen our compassion, and draw us together in the recognition of each other's experiences.

The group believes that people need to be helped to a situation where they feel comfortable enough to speak honestly because they know that those around them are listening with an equal honesty and openness.

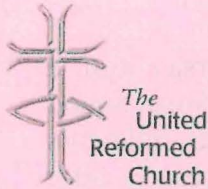
This is not an easy situation to create. However the task group has been impressed by the practice of the Methodist Conference in creating a safe space in a controlled environment for people to tell their stories and to be listened to without interruption. It feels that such a practice might be helpful to the United Reformed Church as a means of appreciating the diversity of individual experience which lies beneath much of what has been written on the subject of sexuality. But not only that: this is a different way of speaking and listening, and a new way needs to be found if we want to be able to listen for the guidance of the Spirit together.

The task group believes that Mission Council, as those entrusted with leadership in the United Reformed Church, ought to have the first opportunity to experience this way of speaking. This will mean that those who feel able can share whatever they wish of their own experiences, joys and dilemmas in this safe space, with the aim of deepening fellowship and enriching understanding. If this is found helpful, the method could be used in other places – provided it is properly controlled and supported.

The pattern of the meeting will be that, after introduction by the Moderator, two people will give prepared testimonies in the area of human sexuality. Then members of Mission Council will be invited, if they wish, to speak for up to three minutes each of their own experience. It is personal experience, not the raising of issues that is sought.

Every speaker may be assured that what they say will neither be questioned nor criticised in the meeting, but simply their words will be received as a statement of how it is for them both as a sexual being and as someone who is seeking to be faithful to God in this as in other areas of life.

Contributions are confidential to those present, and no notes will be taken of this part of Mission Council.



MISSION COUNCIL
16 - 18 November 2009

G

Energy4Life

Reflections - a Report to Mission Council on behalf of the Planning Group

The Actual Event

On Sunday morning, 12th July, in Loughborough United Reformed Church over 200 people gathered for a worship celebration. There were some children and a few young people but most were adults. Early arrivals were greeted with refreshments and a 'goodie' bag, prepared by Christian Aid East Midlands which contained a fair trade carton of orange juice, a Geo Bar, energy saving light bulbs, a water saving device for the cistern, an origami Ark Petition, a Christian Aid envelope and a book mark. The morning was in three parts. The first was *Discovering Energy*, a time of all age worship led by the Revd Roberta Rominger, General Secretary. It included items from 'Godspell' and 'Billy Elliot' presented by the Marlpool Theatre Group – associated with Marlpool United Reformed Church ; an illustrated Biblical reflection on the vision to Ezekiel of the valley of dry bones and the prophecy of new life; prayers and songs. The second section *Generating Energy* was cafe-style groups led by members of the Christian Aid team exploring aspects of Climate Change – featuring Noah's Ark, food, tax and reducing carbon emissions. This including making personal commitments to participating in the campaigns, which were offered in an 'Ark' in the final worship section. Daleep Mukarji also visited each group and told stories to illustrate the issues. The third section, *Sharing Energy*, included communion led by the host church minister, the Revd David Featonby, and presided over by the Moderator of General Assembly, the Revd John Marsh.

The Original Vision

The idea was generated in debate at General Assembly 2007 when the decision to hold bi-annual Assemblies was taken. The concept was to have a celebration event for the whole church in the year when there is no General Assembly. However, immediately it was agreed the then General Secretary announced that no Assembly staff could be expected to give their time to such a project. Nothing happened until a discussion in the Moderators' meeting that autumn, which led to four Synods agreeing to explore possibilities for an event in July 2009. A planning group representing Thames North, Eastern, West Midlands and East Midlands synods was established. Each Synod was asked to contribute to a fund for the event, and nearly all gave £1,000. The Planning Group explored venues and dates and settled on Loughborough University over the weekend of 10th – 12th July 2009 for an all-age event to include worship, celebration, workshops and entertainment. East Midlands Synod offered to be the lead agent holding funds and employing a part-time administrator. The Financial Officer of Eastern Synod acted as treasurer. CYDOs from three synods became involved in ensuring that the event would be suitable for all ages.

Evolution of the Event

It became clear however, that despite helpful assistance from the University staff, a fully residential weekend would be too expensive for families. Thames North Synod withdrew over concerns about finances. It also became clear that the children's Assembly and FURY would be organised at a different times and places. So after initial publicity in Reform and to all Synod meetings, it was agreed to hold the event over Saturday and Sunday at a cost of £30 per adult and £15 for children without accommodation. Further publicity was prepared and distributed to Synods and items appeared in Reform. A web-site was created with details of venue, times, workshops, programme and booking form. A deadline for bookings was set for 31st May 2009. A wide range of workshops were offered including drumming, dance, exploring the Bible, bell ringing, prayer etc. The General Secretary, the Moderator of General Assembly and the Director of Christian Aid were booked. Saturday evening 'fringe' events were planned including a performance by the Saltmine Theatre Company. Details of Bed & Breakfast, hotels, camp sites were also made available via the website and telephone from the East Midlands Synod office.

Re-focussing

By the beginning of May 2009 plans were in place with worship, workshops and celebration elements all provided for. The university sports hall, capable of holding over 400 people was booked. Partnership with the East Midlands team of Christian Aid had led to the planning of an exciting world-focussed worship celebration on Sunday morning in cafe-style. However, bookings were very slow in appearing and at the point when a contract had to be signed with the University, it was evident that the risk was too high that there would be too few people attending and thus too little funding to meet the costs. It was therefore decided to make the event simply a Sunday morning at Loughborough United Reformed Church, with celebration worship and cafe-style workshops led by the Christian Aid team. The General Secretary would still offer a bible study, the Director of Christian Aid would still make a contribution and the Moderator of General Assembly would still preside at communion. The Saltmine Theatre Company was still invited to present their production of 'Finding God in unexpected places on Saturday evening.

It was a good production and people enjoyed the fellowship but only about 90 people attended.

Reflections

What was worth doing?

Sunday was an uplifting experience event for most of the 200 people who attended. Most were from the East Midlands, but seven synods were represented. Some found the final communion service long, rather formal and not sufficiently all-age. Not all appreciated the images of the dry bones coming to life and lilies of the field. Others, who had not been involved in Assembly events before, were impressed. The partnership with Christian Aid was very fruitful and many people learned more about climate change and made personal commitments to engage with the issues. However, there were logistical challenges in producing the 'goodie bags' and arranging the groups. Daleep Mukarji spoke to each group and in the final communion. But perhaps he could also have been invited to respond to questions in a plenary. Over £1,000 was raised for Christian Aid's work. The final cost was in the region of £3,750, which meant that £662 has been refunded to those synods who contributed £1,000.

What could have been better?

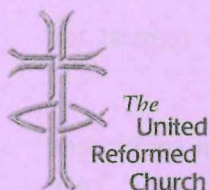
The publicity clearly did not reach all of the members of the church. Perhaps from the beginning there was not enough time to get the concept into the life of the URC. The vision was not caught. Though leaflets were distributed at Synod meetings and a website was created, members of the church still did not know the event was happening. Articles and adverts did appear in Reform, though there were gaps at significant times. The planning groups met regularly and were excited about the possibilities of such an event. Perhaps there could have been a larger group and more staff time for administration and advocates for each Synod. One of the key factors was the lack of bookings at the time of commitment to significant expenditure. There is anecdotal evidence of people being reluctant to book well in advance, and still being unwilling to pay the costs necessarily involved in such an event. Loughborough is fairly central in the country, but still there seemed to be a reluctance to travel.

Is it worth trying again?

Pilots have managed to attract large numbers to their events, though the numbers have declined in the most recent day at Longleat. Synod Days have been well supported in the past but whether people will travel beyond their synod boundaries remains a question. If an event could be tied in to 'God Is Still Speaking' as part of Vision4Life, there may be a case for believing it would catch the imagination of the whole church. Perhaps a good indicator might be the support for 'Praying the Kingdom' conferences for the launch of the second year of Vison4Life.

**Terry Oakley,
October 2009**

on behalf of the Planning Group



MISSION COUNCIL 16 - 18 November 2009

H

DRAFT REPORT FROM RESOURCE SHARING TASK GROUP

Resource Sharing continues to be a significant part of the life of the United Reformed Church. During the coming year it is anticipated that over £420,000 will be redistributed from some of the Synods with greater assets towards those with the least.

The Consultation which includes representatives from all the Synods remains committed to the idea of sharing resources across the Synods. We are however mindful that in order to ensure greater sharing that there must be greater clarity about how we both compare the capital assets that we each have and how we remain accountable to one another for our expenditure.

In this last year we have tried to ensure transparency and accountability in groups of four or five Synods where budgets are shared, plans made clear and a genuine sharing about hopes and expectations for the future.

The trends we have begun to see emerge in recent times is that the actual capital assets held by Synods have moved together. This is largely accounted for by some of the larger Synods having to spend capital assets in order to maintain their programmes.

The actual number of Synods asking for support has reduced, in other words; there is an increase in the number of Synods who in terms of Resource Sharing are neutral, being neither contributors nor receivers. This has led us to consider again the objectives and direction of Resource Sharing.

One area where there has been considerable discussion has been around the area of Capital Assets. The extreme positions are that in one Synod when any building is sold, be that church or manse, then the capital funds transfer entirely to the Synod. The Synod then considers requests from individual churches for help towards projects. In other Synods when a building is sold, if there is a continuing congregation the whole of those funds transfer to the continuing church. In between those extremes there are different models for instance where the capital assets are divided between the Synod and the continuing church. Members of Mission Council will recognise that the difference in those processes means that the way in which different Synods accrue capital assets varies considerably.

The Consultation in September 2009 has agreed that each Synod would go back to its own finance committee and ask for consideration to be given to whether we can move to a common policy. The easiest common policy being that at the sale of any building that the assets transfer to the Synod, the Synod then considers a request from any church, continuing or not, for capital funds to help with a project. Synods are also

being asked to share the guidelines which they operate in assessing any request for funding from churches within the Synod.

It is our belief that as we gradually move towards common policies in such areas that we will facilitate greater sharing across the Synods. Resource Sharing Task Group looks forward to reporting to future Mission Councils of even greater sharing.



MISSION COUNCIL 16 - 18 November 2009

J

The United Reformed Church *The Ministry of Evangelists*

The 2001 General Assembly endorsed the 'urgent missionary challenge facing the church (and affirmed) the importance of evangelism for the church and its ministry at every level'. It also 'directed the Life and Witness Committee to initiate discussions with other committees of the Church, so that together they might recommend ways for people to exercise their ministry as evangelists, and suggest ways of supporting them in their ministry'. (Resolutions 26 and 27). Attention was focussed away from this task as the United Reformed Church sought to catch a vision of God's future and develop that reflection towards a Vision4Life.

Ministries committee believe that it is now right to revisit the question and explore to what degree there is an enthusiasm for the development of a specialist ministry of evangelists as an important contribution to the ongoing life and work of the Church at this time.

This paper offers i] a biblical reflection on the ministry of evangelists in the United Reformed Church, ii] a proposal for a pilot project to enable the recruitment and appointment of a limited number of evangelists and subsequent reflection on the process, and iii] an appendix with part of a minute of the Life and Witness Committee meeting in February 2005, which may have elements helpful in planning the pilot process.

Evangelism & the Gift of the Evangelist

There is a clear distinction between this general call and specific gift. Every Christian is called to be a witness (Acts 1:8), to share their unique story (the 5th Gospel) with others, and to give a reason for the hope that is in their hearts (1 Peter 3:15). Clearly the Holy Spirit has a unique role in this process as He comes upon us and gives us power to witness confidently and well. There is no doubt that most Christians need encouragement and help in this area to share their story and its vital that every local Church provide this if we are to grow and impact the community that we serve. The Bible lists three kinds of gifts: Romans 12:6-8 Natural Gifts that all have but are quickened by the Holy Spirit, 1 Corinthians 12: 7-11 Spiritual Gifts given to all Christians to continue doing the things Jesus did, and Ephesians 4: 11-13 People Gifts given by Jesus to the Church to mature and equip the Saints for the work of Ministry. The Gift of Evangelist (along with Pastors, Prophets, Teachers & Apostles) is a person given to the Church to 'Evangelise', to share the Good News about Jesus in an arresting fashion that leads to hearers responding and committing their lives to Christ. However their task/calling is not just to do, but to equip others to do. The Evangelist should also be equipping others to evangelise and also should spot those who might be being raised up as Evangelists too and help encourage and equip them. The Gift of an Evangelist is just that: a gift. You can't train someone to be an Evangelist but you can make more effective the gift they have through further training.

Pilot Process

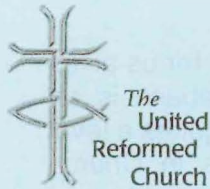
1 The Ministries Committee believes that there is a distinctive ministry of evangelists to be exercised in the United Reformed Church and proposes to encourage and develop it in the following way:

2 Initially we would seek to identify ministers of word and sacrament who are currently serving in local pastoral situations who may be gifted and called to the ministry of an evangelist.

3 We would dedicate 3 Special Category Ministry posts in 2009/2010 for the ministry of evangelists.

4 We would invite synods or team pastorates to create and apply for these posts as a pilot process. We recognise that this may mean creating posts for people who have already been identified as gifted or called to this ministry, although the Special Category Ministry rules normally preclude this.

5 The process would be reviewed by the Ministries Committee and the synods involved after 18 months appointment to see what lessons have been learned and to determine whether to move towards creating a process of specific recruitment, assessment and training for evangelists within the United Reformed Church. At this time we are not proposing establishing an order of evangelists.



MISSION COUNCIL 16 - 18 November 2009

K

Communications and Editorial Committee

A year ago we asked Mission Council whether you supported our investment in modernising the United Reformed Church's communications, both in terms of relating to one another and to the wider world. The responses to our questions were predictably varied. Some people encouraged us to keep raising our sights and our standards, while others were more concerned about the cost of this. The intervening 12 months have called for belt tightening across the board, and the department is playing a part in reducing expenditure. Even so there are a number of reasons why, despite the new financial realities, the Committee remains convinced that we must continue to invest significantly in our communications structures if we believe God still has work for the URC to do.

On the one hand the world is becoming ever more dependent on electronic media. Official statistics show that 2009 has seen an 11% rise in households having internet access compared with 2008, so 70% of the nation's homes are now covered. At the same time a denomination like ours, having a higher than average age profile within an aging Church scene, contains many people who still expect us to continue producing materials on paper. This means that we encounter both the costs of equipping ourselves with up to date resources like the new website, and the costs of continuing to print, parcel up and post out printed resources. Doing mailings like this efficiently calls for an up to the minute and reliable database, another resource which not only requires investment to set it up but also continued staffing to ensure it is reliable and worthwhile.

It can easily feel as though the department is experiencing a double whammy – both needing to invest in new technology and traditional forms at the same time, while simultaneously saving money. If you add to this the fact that our department's services are offered to all parts of the Church, yet mainly appear under the budget heading of communications, this may help to explain why the department's staff believe our budget is actually money very well spent.

The past year has seen a consolidation of the new look established for *Reform*, as Kay Parris and the team have maintained a high standard of reporting and design. Free copies taken to different events throughout the year have been eagerly snapped up. More of a challenge is to build up our list of regular subscribers. There is commercial pressure for more people to receive the magazine direct by post, and we're trying to balance this against the loyalty and grassroots significance of our church-based distributors, whose work we value.

Our new national **website** is almost a year old, and has proved a major asset in extending our work as well as raising our profile. Each week it is updated with two news stories, as well as providing a showcase for the work of the central departments and discussion opportunities for those who like web-based conversation. Many of us are familiar with the frustration of visiting unmaintained websites, where all the information is out of date. To keep our website current and topical requires a significant input in terms of staff time, but we believe this is necessary if our initial investment is to be worthwhile.

Progress on completing a new national **database** is now a major priority for us all as many new initiatives will depend on this resource. An efficient database is an absolute necessity for any contemporary communications network. It requires a level of co-ordination and co-operation between the different departments in Church House that has not previously been asked of anyone. Moving from a system of departmental records to one shared system, accessible to everyone, is proving both time-consuming and demanding. The long-term benefits are so clear, however, that the Committee totally supports Martin Hazell in this venture.

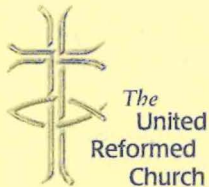
In the area of our relations with the national media and wider world, Stuart Dew's time with us as Press Officer has been invaluable. He retires this month and hands over to Gill Nichol and Alex Klaushofer, who will each work 3 days a week as **Press and Media Development Officers**. They will also build on our growing work in encouraging examples of good communications at Synod and local level, where churches are learning to publicise their activities in the local media. Stuart will still edit the publication of minister's obituaries, an important record of the URC's contribution to the life of our communities.

One continuing concern is the future of the **URC Bookshop**. As a surviving retail outlet in a much reduced field, the bookshop should have potential to increase sales and move into profit. In order to explore this, and with the approval of our finance department, Martin Hazell will be recruiting a specialist bookshop manager to promote this area of our work. The intention is to market and possibly re-brand the bookshop to appeal across denominational boundaries.

As well as continually trying to improve our standards of communication from and within Church House, the department also keeps abreast of the communications element within many other things we do as a denomination. Our hope is that we will be able to offer downloadable film clips of edited events at General Assembly in Loughborough 2010 on the website while that meeting is in progress next July. The website is an ideal tool for increasing the visibility of **General Assembly**.

Finally, Martin Hazell is building a good working relationship with his opposite numbers in the Methodist and Baptist denominations, with a view to exploring how much we can do together in the future. Christian communications is too small a field for us to do this alone – we need collegiality and support from others who share our strong desire to raise the profile of the Church, so the good news gets out from our congregations and wider activities.

Kirsty Thorpe (convenor)



MISSION COUNCIL 16 - 18 November 2009



Hope in God's Future Progress Report

1. Mission Council meeting at Ushaw College, Durham in May adopted a resolution on *Hope in God's Future* (HIGF) report following vigorous discussion and debate. Since this meeting a number of follow-up actions have been taken which are outlined below.
2. Mission Committee considered the HIGF report at their meeting at Church House on 21 May 2009 and the following points emerged from group discussions:
 - The HIGF report adopted by Mission Council will need more work on making it accessible for local churches. It was noted this was not the original remit of the group. Conversations from Mission Council will be fed into this process.
 - The report has strong implications for finances. It was made clear that this is not an optional item but integral to each decision. "What are the implications of what we are doing re climate change?"
 - The impact on the local church: whilst measuring energy output is recommended, is there not a case for inspiration leading to a faith response?
 - We need to get on with this now and think about the process later.
 - The role of the consultant agreed for one day a week for six months would need to look at wider strategy of linking together economic, social and environmental issues.
 - The plethora of resources available was noted.
3. A study guide has now been produced to make the HIGF report more accessible to local churches and small group discussions, and is available in both PDF and booklet form at the cost of £5 per copy (printed and sold by Methodist publishing). Copies of this booklet are available for sale at Mission Council – see Francis Brienens or order directly from Methodist Publishing.
4. Two meetings have been held with the Project Team of the Methodist Church to discuss closer collaboration between our two denominations on monitoring our carbon reduction programme in response to the recommendations of the HIGF report. We have agreed that the newly appointed Carbon Reduction Policy Officer of the Methodist Church and URC Consultant will collaborate closely on assessing the carbon footprint of General Assembly and Methodist Conference and Methodist and Mission Council meetings.
5. In consultation with the Mission Team we decided on the following set of outputs for a climate change consultant/s based on the recommendations of the HIGF report:
 - a. Consulting with members of the Mission Team to bring together all activities and resources to date.

- b. Review and redraft the URC environmental policy in the light of the *Hope in God's Future* report (to inform other policies in the URC e.g. transport manse adaptation etc.)
 - c. Develop a strategy based on HIGF report and two past resolutions on climate change (General Assembly 2007 and Mission Council 2009) to provide practical tools and guidelines for Church House, Synod offices and Local churches/manses.
 - d. Develop a workplan for implementation of the strategy to include communication e.g. websites (URC Mission page and Creation Challenge), publications, synod energy pilot (Mersey), effectiveness of Green apostles network, ecumenical links, campaigning etc.
 - e. Develop a project for a low carbon living to be piloted in one or two URC congregations to provide a model for Christian discipleship in the context of climate change.
6. Discussions were subsequently held with Ann Pettifor and Mark Dowd of Operation Noah and Martin Carr of Energise Oxford regarding this project and it was proposed that both organisations be appointed to assist the Mission Team with different components of this project. This proposal was reported to the Mission Committee at their recent meeting in Birmingham, and it was agreed that these consultants be appointed on the terms of reference outlined below.

'Working in close collaboration with the Mission Team of the URC the consultants represented by Ann Pettifor and Mark Dowd from *Operation Noah* and Martin Carr from *Energise Oxford* shall be appointed on a fixed term contract not exceeding six months to deliver the following outputs within the allocated budget:

- i. Identify and resource a URC community to pilot the 'Living the Future' project outlined in Operation Noah's concept note to act as a catalyst for other churches within the URC to engage in low carbon lifestyles which honour God and safeguard the integrity of creation to sustain and renew the life of the earth (as outlined in Mission Statement 10).
 - ii. Review the policies and programmes of the URC in close collaboration with the newly appointed Carbon Reduction Policy Officer of the Methodist Church to give effect to the Assembly 2007 resolution on climate change and the recommendations of the *Hope in God's Future* report adopted by Mission Council this year.
 - iii. Provide regular update reports to the Mission Team during the course of the project and a final report with recommendations on how to integrate climate change into the mission of the URC based on the findings and outcomes of points 1 and 2 above.'
7. This approach is an endeavour to balance the inspirational and administrative dimensions of this project to provide creative opportunities for local churches to engage in this important aspect of mission and to ensure that we are able to track our year-on-year progress in reducing our carbon footprint as a denomination. Due to the length of time this consultation process has taken, the Mission Team has obtained authorisation to extend this project to March 2010 based on the same budget agreed at the outset of the project. An update report will be brought to Mission Council in March 2010.



MISSION COUNCIL 16 - 18 November 2009

M

Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee

Terms of Reference - agreed by 2007 Assembly.

1a The Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee will consider the cases of URC ministers which are referred to it on account of some pastoral need by Mission Council, district councils or synods or their committees or moderators of synods, and when the continuation of a minister's service: (i) within an existing pastoral charge or (ii) within the URC is in question.

1b The Committee will seek to enable the minister's service within the URC to be continued if that is seen to be appropriate, and to this end may consider financial support for a course of retraining or therapy or counselling.

1c The Committee may initiate discussion about alternative forms of service for a minister, within or outside the URC, and may seek help (practical, financial, professional) in consultation with the minister to make this possible.

1d The committee may authorise the MoM sub-committee to provide stipend or part-stipend and may authorise the Secretary for Finance to pay other necessary expenses (including accommodation costs) to a minister not in pastoral charge, for a specific period. Such period will not exceed six months in the first instance but may be renewed by the Pastoral Reference Committee. The MoM sub-committee (or such other body as shall in future carry out the functions of the MoM sub-committee) or the Secretary for Finance will accept this authority for payment.

Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee

Draft Revised Terms of Reference

1 Functions:

1a The Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee (PRWC) considers the cases of United Reformed Church (URC) Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Church Related Community Workers (*hereafter, those exercising either ministry are included in the term 'ministers'*) which are referred to it by the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary, Synod Moderators, Synod Pastoral Committees or Mission Council, on account of perceived pastoral need. Such response maybe needed:

- i) when there is a perceived breakdown in relationship between the minister and the wider United Reformed Church;
- ii) when Synod officers feel the need for wider help;
- iii) when the continuation of a minister's service within the existing pastoral charge, or the URC itself, is in question;
- iv) when financial assistance is sought from Welfare funds.

1b The committee will seek to resolve problems both by consideration of the issues and by consultation with the parties involved, where appropriate. It will further seek to enable the person's service within the URC to be continued if that is seen to be appropriate. To this end it may consider financial support for courses of re-training, therapy or counselling.

1c The committee may initiate discussion about alternative forms of service for a minister, within or outside the URC, and may seek help (practical, financial, professional) – in consultation with the person involved – to make this possible.

M

1e In each case the committee will make clear to the minister concerned the period for which payments will be made and whether or not it may be extended.

MISSION COUNCIL
18 - 18 November 2009

1d The committee has overall responsibility for the administration of Welfare funds.

To this end, the Senior Finance Officer will attend meetings to advise on applications and to implement administration of agreed policy.

1e The committee may authorise the Maintenance of Ministry (MoM) sub-committee to provide stipend or part-stipend, and may authorise the Chief Finance Officer to pay – for a specific period – other necessary expenses (including accommodation costs) to a minister not in pastoral charge. Such period will not exceed six months, in the first instance, but may be renewed by the PRWC. The MoM sub-committee (or such other body as shall in future carry its functions) or the Chief Finance Officer will accept this authority for payment.

1f In each case the committee will make clear to the minister concerned the period for which payments will be made and whether or not it may be extended.

2 Limitation on powers:

2a The committee does not have authority to delete the name of a minister from the Roll of Ministers, nor to take any other disciplinary steps against him/her. The committee does not have to be consulted about and does not have the authority over the process of ending the appointment of a minister in pastoral charge, which process is a matter for minister, church meeting and district council.

2b The committee may not be involved with, and must withdraw from, any ongoing discussions, counselling or any other direct pastoral involvement with any case in which the disciplinary procedures of the Church are being applied against a minister. Nevertheless, the committee may authorise any financial payments allowed under its terms of reference (see 1d).

2 Limitations

2a The committee does not have authority to delete the name of a minister from the Roll of Ministers, nor to take any other disciplinary steps against him/her. The committee does not have to be consulted about and does not have authority over the process of ending the appointment of a minister in pastoral charge, which process is a matter for minister, Church Meeting and Synod.

2b The committee may not be involved with, and must withdraw from, any ongoing discussions, counselling or any other direct pastoral involvement with any case in which the disciplinary procedures of the Church are being applied against a minister. The committee may, however, authorise financial payments allowed under its Terms of Reference (see 1e).

3 Confidentiality

It is evident that the work of the Pastoral Reference Committee will be confidential and pastoral. Nevertheless it will need to keep a record of its meetings. The Committee's conclusions should be recorded, given to the person concerned and shared with others directly involved in the matter who need to know the outcome. It would be inappropriate for the committee as a body, or individual members of it, to divulge any additional information about ministers or churches concerned.

4 Composition

A former Moderator of General Assembly who shall be Convener; the General Secretary; two lay people; one minister with experience of pastoral charge; one Provincial Moderator; the Honorary Treasurer; the Deputy General Secretary who will act as Secretary.

5 Attendance

5a The minister whose case is being considered by the Committee may request a meeting with the Committee in person if he or she so wishes. Alternatively the Committee may invite the minister to meet some or all of its members. In either case the minister may be accompanied by a friend if he or she so wishes.

5b The Committee shall have discretion to invite other parties involved in a case to meet it.

6 Relationship to Structure

The committee will report to the Assembly each year. However, the report will only deal with general matters and the Committee will not report on, nor may it be questioned on, individual cases.

3 Confidentiality

The work of the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee will be both confidential and pastoral. It will, though, need to keep a record of its meetings. The committee's conclusions should be recorded, given to the person concerned and shared with others directly involved who need to know the outcome. It will be inappropriate for the committee as a body, or individual members of it, to divulge any additional information about ministers or churches concerned.

4 Attendance

4a If circumstances require, the committee may invite a minister whose case is being considered to meet some or all of its members. In that case the person may be accompanied by a friend if he or she so wishes.

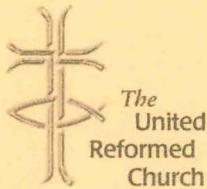
4b The committee shall have discretion to invite other parties involved in a case to meet it.

5 Composition

A former Moderator of General Assembly shall be Convener; the General Secretary; two lay people; one minister with experience of pastoral charge; one Synod Moderator; the Honorary Treasurer; the Deputy General Secretary who will act as Secretary.

6 Relationship to General Assembly

The committee will report to each meeting of General Assembly. However, the report will deal only with general matters or changes in procedure and will not refer to, nor may the committee be questioned on, individual cases.



MISSION COUNCIL 16 - 18 November 2009

N

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

1. Review/Appointing Group Convener

The Revd Nanette Lewis-Head has agreed to convene the Review/Appointing Group for the Moderator of Mersey Synod.

2. Clerk to General Assembly Nominating Group

The term of service of the current Clerk to Assembly will be completed at the end of Assembly 2012.

Section C5, the Rules of Procedure, para 5, says -

5.1 The General Assembly may appoint a Clerk of Assembly as distinct from the General Secretary. In that case the Nominations Committee shall submit a name to the General Assembly for appointment as Clerk, for five years in the first instance, renewable for a maximum additional period of five years, but ensuring an overlap with a period of service of the General Secretary.

In view of the change to biennial Assemblies, it will be necessary to appoint a new Clerk at General Assembly 2010. However, the term of service will not begin until after the end of Assembly 2012. It is being suggested that the Clerk's term of service should be changed from the 5 plus 5 pattern to a 6 plus 4 pattern.

The Revd Dr Stephen Orchard, as a former Moderator, has agreed to convene the nominating group for the Clerk to General Assembly. The following eight members, four of whom have been drawn from the Panel for the Appointment and Review of the Synod Moderators, the General Secretary and the Deputy General Secretary, have also been invited to serve:

Panel members: Revd Mary Buchanan, Dr Graham Campling, Revd Lesley Charlton,
Revd Raymond Singh
General Secretary: Revd Roberta Rominger
Former Moderator: Revd Elizabeth Welch
Synod Clerk: Revd John Durell
Convener – Assembly Arrangements Committee: Dr David Robinson

It is recommended that the appointment be for six years with the possibility of re-appointment for a further four years.

Resolution: Mission Council agrees that the next Clerk to General Assembly be appointed for six years from Assembly 2012 (to serve the Assemblies of 2014 - 2018 inclusive) with the possibility of re-appointment for a further four years, subject to review and to the revision of the relevant Rules of Procedure.

3. Officers of Committees

The following have agreed to serve:

- 2.1 Mission Committee (Deputy Convener)
Mr Peter Pay
From Assembly 2010 until Assembly 2012

- 2.1.2 International Exchange Reference Group (Convener elect)
Mr Chris Wright
From Assembly 2010
- 3.1.3 Ministries – Leadership in Worship Sub-Committee (Convener elect)
Mrs Judith Johnson
From Assembly 2010
- 3.3 Education and Learning Committee (Convener elect)
Revd John Smith
From Assembly 2010
- 3.3.1 Windermere Management Committee (Convener)
Revd Howard Sharp
From July 2009 until 30 June 2013 (to be reviewed January 2011)
- 3.4.1 Pilots Management Sub-Committee (Convener elect)
To be confirmed
From Assembly 2010
- 4.2 Communications and Editorial Committee (Convener elect)
Revd Richard Bittlestone
From Assembly 2010
- 4.6 Pastoral Reference Committee (Convener elect)
Revd Sheila Maxey
From Assembly 2010

Resolution: Mission Council agrees to appoint the committee officers as set out in the Nominations Committee report.

3. United Reformed Church Trust

Procedures have been commenced to appoint three new Trustees on a rotation basis, plus one from FURY. Synod Clerks and FURY have been asked to submit nominations by 20 November. After consultation with the present Board, and having ensured a proper balance of skills and personnel, names will be brought to the March meeting of Mission Council for transmission to the General Assembly.

4. Assessment Board

Owing to a reduction in the number of ministerial and CRCW candidates, members of the Assessment Board are not being fully used. Accordingly it is proposed that the panel be reduced gradually from 20 members to 15.

5. Authority of Appointing Groups

The attached paper sets out the reasoning behind a proposed resolution to enable nominating groups actually to complete an appointing process in certain circumstances.

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

THE AUTHORITY OF APPOINTING GROUPS IN RELATION TO SOME ASSEMBLY APPOINTMENTS

1. This paper suggests a change in the way some Assembly appointments are made. It is not dependent on other potential changes in the relationship between Mission Council and General Assembly.

2. We had difficulty recently when a prospective staff appointment would have been seriously delayed if ratification had had to wait for the next meeting of MC. In that case it was ratified by MCAAG. Stephen Orchard has made the helpful suggestion that the power to appoint might actually be given to the nominating group which interviews and presents a name.

3. The appointment of Moderators of Assembly, the General Secretary, the Clerk and Moderators of synods is spelt out in section C3-7 of the Manual. All these appointments of officers, and the appointment of synod moderators, are made by GA or by MC in its name. There seems no reason to change this procedure.

4. But there may be good reason for reviewing how we handle other appointments. Part of the issue is about authority - the right of GA to appoint those answerable to it. Part of the issue is about trust of those commissioned to do GA's (in this case appointing) work for it. Part of the issue is about due process.

5. Taking the last of these, with the appointment of General Secretary, moderators of synods and other (listed in the Manual) posts, the process is –

- (a) GA decides to have such a post and determines eligibility;
- (b) nominating group is appointed by Nominations Committee (sometimes in consultation, or with members also appointed by synod, for instance) making use of the panel of previously named people whom GA trusts to do this;
- (c) the nominating group brings a name through Nominations Committee to MC or GA, which resolves to appoint.

6. For those staff posts not specifically listed in the Manual the process is similar, though not the same -

The Staffing Advisory Group reviews the existing post (or GA/MC agrees a new post), determines continuity and eligibility;
 a nominating group is appointed by Nominations Committee (sometimes in consultation);
 the nominating group reports its recommendation to Nominations Committee which brings the name to MC or GA, which resolves to appoint.

7. It is arguable that in the latter case, due process has been completed by the time the nominating group has made a nomination.

8. If GA/MC were now to decide that authority to appoint could be devolved to an appointing (rather than nominating) group, that group would have full powers to act on behalf of GA, and the matter would simply be reported to the next meeting of GA/MC. This would not involve double delegation, since GA would simply delegate the power to the appointing group under a general rubric.

9. The advantages of this would be that those nominated -

- would not need to wait for potentially up to six months for confirmation of their appointment;
- would not therefore be placed in a potentially difficult situation with regard to confidentiality and their present post;
- might be able to take up their appointment at a time suitable to them and to the church, instead of having to make only provisional arrangements over a longer period;

Also -

- there would be no need for ad hoc procedures to deal with ratification of appointments in situations of urgency;
- those commissioned to act on behalf of GA would be trusted in their fulfilment of process and decision.

10. The disadvantage would be that authority to appoint would no longer rest directly in GA/MC. However, GA/MC has never, or only in very distant memory, challenged a group's nomination. If a challenge were to be made, it could in any case prove difficult to handle, with the possibility of questions of unfair treatment being raised.

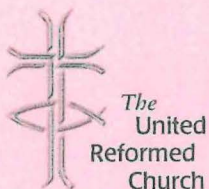
11. To activate this change a resolution might be necessary along the following lines -

“General Assembly agrees that the power to appoint Assembly staff members, other than officers of Assembly and synod moderators, shall be delegated to appointing groups duly appointed so long as appropriate processes and employment criteria have been met. All such appointments shall have effect from the date determined by the appointing group, and shall be reported to the next meeting of Mission Council or General Assembly.”

12. There would then be a clear distinction between nominating groups for Assembly officers and synod moderators, and appointing groups for other Assembly staff posts.

13. It is recommended that -

Mission Council agrees to forward the resolution concerning the authority of Appointing Groups to General Assembly.



MISSION COUNCIL 16 - 18 November 2009



THE DEPOSIT OF ESSENTIAL RECORDS

Many essential records of the United Reformed Church are at risk of being lost with the dissolution of District Councils. These records will be needed in the resolution of any future disputes concerning ministerial status, disciplinary matters and the ownership of property. The advice of the United Reformed Church History Society to the denomination remains that the records of any council of the Church be deposited in a county record office, or equivalent, to be properly conserved. However, a question has arisen with respect to confidentiality and the conflicting demands of data protection and freedom of information. As a result the advice of the URCHS is qualified in one important respect. Some records, usually those of a pastoral committee, contain personal information which it is the duty of the Church to safeguard. Depositing such records in a public office may lead to the disclosure of information which the Church has a duty to safeguard. The following advice, secured from the Church's solicitors, gives the legal information which needs to be considered by synods when making deposits of records, since it has been argued by at least one County Record Office that the Freedom of Information Act supersedes any provisos made by the depositor about confidentiality or time limited disclosure.

The advice given by Andrew Middleton, on behalf of the Church's solicitors, is that as a result of the Freedom of Information Act the general 30 year rule in respect of disclosure has been removed. In saying this, the FoI Act does not apply to the United Reformed Church as the denomination is private as opposed to a public government body. The Church is however bound by the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the processing of personal data.

The DPA imposes an obligation on every Data Controller to process personal data in accordance with the eight data protection principals which are contained within the Act.

These being as follows:

- 1 Process fairly and lawfully.

- 2 Obtain personal data only for specified and limited purposes and do not process them further for incompatible purposes.
- 3 Ensure data is adequate and relevant and not excessive in relation to the purposes for which they are processed.
- 4 Ensure data are accurate and where necessary kept up to date.
- 5 Do not keep data longer than necessary.
- 6 Process data in accordance with data subject rights.
- 7 Take appropriate, technical and organisational measures against unauthorised processing or loss of or damage to personal data.
- 8 Do not transfer personal data to countries outside the European Economic Area which lack adequate protection for data subjects' rights.

The situation is not quite as frightening as it first appears. There is however a need to be aware of the DPA requirements so that the appropriate steps are taken to protect Synods when records are deposited with County Record Officer (CRO) so as to ensure that there is no unauthorised disclosure of the personal data within those records.

Personal data is that which

- i) is biographical in a significant sense and
- ii) the individual must be the focus of the information.

It is for the Data Controller to ensure that any personal data is processed in accordance with DPA and the eight principals.

The Act itself relates to information held within both automated and paper records. In order to ensure that no breach of the DPA occurs, it is therefore necessary to take care to ensure

that proper arrangements are in place before any records are deposited with the CRO to avoid inadvertent disclosure. To this end Synods should have policies and procedures in place which provide a risk assessment facility and the vetting of records so that decisions can be made before a deposit takes place to identify any personal information that there may be within the records, whether that personal information needs to be removed and retained or destroyed before a deposit is made.

As well as considering the information to be deposited it is also necessary to consider whether the Institution that is to receive the records is appropriate in order to comply with the seventh data principle regarding security and unauthorised processing. The Data Controller should ensure that a process of due diligence is followed even if the Institution is the CRO. Consideration should be given for e.g. as to whether they have appropriate facilities in place to ensure that the records will be held securely and that they have procedures to prevent unlawful processing e.g. whether the staff at the CRO have appropriate training. In addition to this an agreement should be entered into, I have a copy of an agreement from Kent County Council, which regulates the relationship between the Data Controller and the CRO or other organisations, and can be made available to synods. Within the agreement the particulars of the relationship between the Synod and CRO will be set out, particularly the arrangements regarding access to the records. It may for example be that it is appropriate for documents that contain personal information to be placed for restricted access only. Care will clearly need to be taken if there is intended to be general public access to records if they contain personal information. In the absence of consent from the individual concerned allowing general public access may well be considered to be unauthorised processing.

To be safe all personal information should be removed so as to avoid the potential for unlawful processing although this is a matter for each Synod.

It is important that the Synod's relationship with the CRO and the affect that this might have on the records themselves and control of them is clearly understood. It is sometimes the case that records deposited with the CRO are treated as being on loan. In such a situation the Synod will remain as the Data Controller and retain responsibility for access and observance of the requirements for the DPA with the CRO being the Data Processor. In such a situation should an individual make a request for access to personal information it will be expected this will be referred by the CRO to the Data Controller to be dealt with. On the other hand if records are given to the CRO it is expected that it will be the CRO that becomes the Data Controller and therefore takes responsibility for observance of the provisions of the DPA. In such a situation the CRO should attend to any data subject access requests directly. It should of course be remembered that they do not have the personal knowledge of particular situations that those from the Synod are likely to have and therefore although they will attend to access requests in accordance with the Act they will not be able to bring any personal knowledge to the situation, which may or may not be beneficial.

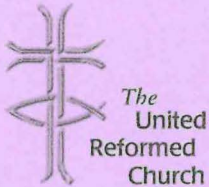
It will therefore be seen that before records are deposited it is necessary for there to be a process of organised thought for appropriate steps to be undertaken to ensure that Synods are protected and that there is a paper trail available to demonstrate that they have considered the issues. Despite this it is also suggested that the Synods also look at their insurance policies to check that in the event that an inadvertent breach/disclosure does occur an indemnity will be provided should a clam be made, as there is always a potential for errors to be made.

As a way of trying to provide for future deposits Synods could consider passing a resolution authorising the deposit of records. This will indicate a willingness within the Synod for deposits to be made. Where personal information is concerned consideration could be given as to whether to specifically seek the consent of those involved for the information to be

processed by way of a deposit and or disclosure. The obtaining of consent makes the situation clear.

It is expected that CROs will be able to help and provide a degree of guidance before records are deposited. If there is any doubt as to the appropriate steps to take then I would suggest that the Synods consider approaching their legal advisors for assistance. In addition to ensure that personal data is not process in an inappropriate way the following of a clear procedure should ensure that records which in addition to personal data contain confidential material whether of an individual private nature or otherwise is considered and provided for.

The Information Commissioners Website is a very helpful source of information and it would be worth looking at this as a 'first stop' choice.



The
United
Reformed
Church

MISSION COUNCIL 16 - 18 November 2009

P

GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

I GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2010

I invited the conveners of five "programme" committees (Ministries, Mission, Education & Learning, Communications & Editorial, and Youth & Children's Work) to meet with me on 24 September to share the items that they anticipated bringing to Assembly next summer. I reminded them of the guidance we had received from Mission Council in December 2008 that the Assembly agenda should focus on overall vision and direction, leaving "micro management" type detail to the committees and Mission Council.

The following themes emerged and I would welcome Mission Council's response to the list. These would be taken up both by the adults and the Children's Assembly with the intention that the two bodies will share in discerning future directions.

Vision 2020. The next version will take into account the feedback received from synods and local churches and will also incorporate youth and children's work. For decision.

Vision4Life and God is still speaking. We will experience the prayer year and look ahead to the evangelism year and plans for the launch of Stillspeaking. A Ministries initiative concerning an evangelism pilot project will fit here. For discussion, feedback.

Ecumenical relations. Discussion to contribute to a 2010 review.

Equipping people for service. Resource Centres for Learning, TLS, elders training, equal opps, Special Category Ministry, guidelines for ministers/CRCWs/elders, Nominations.

Human sexuality.

Church and Society. A climate change resolution for sure, probably more.

The role of Assembly and Mission Council.

Progress reports

- Methodist/URC collaboration
- Electronic media
- Reform
- Press officers
- Challenge to the Church
- Local Mission and Ministry Review
- Training Review implementation
- CYDOs

Other reports and business items

Pilots. It's their 75th anniversary in 2011. Warwick Castle DVD
Nominations including appointment of Assembly Clerk 2012-16
Finance – accounts and budget
Review of the Mission Department
Review of the Mission Committee grants procedures
Safeguarding. Vulnerable adults. Vetting & Barring Scheme.
New Memorandum & Articles for the URC
Amendments to the Disciplinary Process and Incapacity Procedure
Ministers' housing. To receive the report of the task group. For decision.
Inter Synod Resource Sharing

The moderators' theme for General Assembly is to be story telling, either "Telling the Story" or "Telling Our Story" or some combination of the two. They envisage local stories being interwoven with other Assembly business. The Bible studies, led by Gerard Kelly, will also take up this theme with reflections from the book of Acts.

For Mission Council consideration:

1. Can you see anything I have missed in my list of Assembly business?
2. A suggestion has been made that instead of synod presentations, individual synods should be invited to engage with particular Assembly themes and business items. For example, one synod could report on how it intends to integrate its synod mission strategy with Vision 2020. Another might reflect on how the Local Mission & Ministry Review is going. Another might have stories to tell about their experience of partnership with the Resource Centres for Learning. Synods would be chosen because of the challenge or insight they could bring to a particular theme. The purpose would be genuine feedback and challenge – whatever Assembly needs to hear in order to get policy right for the future. What do you think of involving the synods in this way?

II A joint Mission Council and Methodist Council meeting in 2010

The dates have now been confirmed – 13-15 October at Swanwick. I will bring a verbal report following a meeting with the Methodist senior leaders on 10 November.

III God is still speaking

a) Good news

The December 2008 Mission Council meeting authorised the submission of an application to the CWM Mission Programme Support Fund for a grant towards Stillspeaking. In July a letter arrived to say that £315,750 had been agreed for the three-year period 2009-12.

b) Integration with Vision4Life

As reported in May, there is an agreement that there should be coherence in the materials produced for Stillspeaking and the Vision4Life evangelism year (which begins in December 2010). Some churches that have participated in Vision4Life will want to complete the three years of V4L and ignore Stillspeaking. Others that have not been V4L churches will want to embrace Stillspeaking. For others, the experience of Vision4Life should flow seamlessly into participation in Stillspeaking. The two steering groups and the writers group working on the evangelism year are working on this challenge, which is partly about the production of resources and partly about presentation.

c) Relationship with Vision 2020

Stillspeaking will help deliver four of the ten Vision 2020 outcomes: identity, evangelism, church growth and diversity. Regular consultation with the Mission Committee will therefore be essential.

d) New steering group

Thus far the steering group has consisted primarily of Assembly appointed staff (Francis Brienen, Martin Hazell, Richard Mortimer, Dale and Roberta Rominger) with one Mission Committee member (Mike Walsh). They have been working alongside Ron Buford, the Stillspeaking Consultant, since early 2008. A new steering group will take over in January. Francis, Martin, Richard, Roberta and Mike will be joined by others from across the church bringing the necessary diversity, skills and experience in URC identity, evangelism, marketing and finance. Names have come from the current steering group in consultation with Lawrence Moore who was a key player in the two Windermere conferences that brought Stillspeaking to the URC. The final membership of the group will be reported to the Mission Committee and will appear in the 2010 Nominations report.

e) FURY and the Children's Assembly

FURY is one of the key driving forces behind Stillspeaking with its enthusiastic participation through FURY Assembly and the 2009 "What do you think" event. The 2009 Children's Assembly also took Stillspeaking as one of its themes and engaged with creating URC content for "16 ways to say I love my church".

f) Content of the campaign

The United Church of Christ U.S.A. has now authorised use of the words "God is still speaking" and several of the other familiar taglines, such as "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome." Now it is time to fill these containers with URC content. Ron Buford has filmed URC historians from England, Scotland and Wales telling the stories they consider fundamental to our history. From these stories and discussions that have already taken place at Mission Council and the Windermere conferences a list of core values and identity markers will be compiled. The plan is that these lists will be tested and fine-tuned through consultation with the "R & D" (research and development) churches. They will then form the submission to an advertising agency that will help to create the elements of a URC brand. It is not too late to join the R & D list. Please speak to me or Francis Brienen if you are interested or think your church might like to get involved.

g) Reporting structure

I see the God is Still Speaking campaign as reporting to Mission Council and Assembly through me, as happened with Catch the Vision. I will be co-chair of the steering group if the colleague approached to share this responsibility agrees. Day-to-day consultation will be primarily with the Mission Committee, who were given this responsibility by the December 08 Mission Council, and the Communications and Editorial Committee. However, Stillspeaking is bigger than evangelism and marketing. It already features prominently in youth and children's work and connections are being made with Education and Learning. The CRCW Development Workers have asked to be included for the role that Stillspeaking can play in bridging the gap between the worshipping life of the URC and its community outreach. There is enthusiasm in the Church House staff team to use Stillspeaking as a way of joining up thinking across the church, since all in their various ways work to create a church that is responsive to the Stillspeaking God.

h) Campaign Coordinator

Denese Chikwendu has been appointed the Stillspeaking Campaign Coordinator and will begin work in January. Ron Buford will make his final visit to the URC in January for the purpose of handing over to her. Denese is a Christian, though not a member of the URC. She has two degrees in design management, one with honours and the other with distinction. She has worked as a project manager for TMP Worldwide, an advertising agency specialising in HR recruitment, and the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, a charity serving over 5,000 member schools and dedicated to raising standards in secondary education. Her role will be to take the good ideas of the steering group and participating churches and make them happen. She will be based at Church House but will also travel around the synods to promote Stillspeaking and deliver training.

i) Website

A website for use by the R & D churches will launch soon, hopefully by the time Denese Chikwendu takes up her post. Although the website will be accessible to anyone who wants to visit, it will not be publicised until the launch of the Stillspeaking campaign in 2011.

j) Launch

Before Stillspeaking can go public, it will be necessary to have a good number of local churches trained and ready to welcome visitors, each with a website. Training will begin in conjunction with the Vision4Life evangelism year. Therefore, I envisage that the launch will happen sometime in the late spring or early summer of 2011. There is an idea at the moment for a celebration via video link that could take place across the church in a variety of venues. What do you think?

k) Mission Council said you were not to shorten the name to 'Stillspeaking'!

This is true, and the rationale was good – we so seldom mention God that it was felt the full name 'God is still speaking' should be used. I did not comment at the time, but my fear when this was suggested has indeed come to pass. People are using the acronym GiSS. They are calling it Giss. We have even been dis-gissed in one discussion. Stillspeaking is better. Not that I will cease to mention God as often as possible!

Roberta Rominger
October 2009