

MISSION COUNCIL

18 January 1997

MINUTES

Minutes of the Mission Council, held at the Arthur Rank Centre, National Agricultural Centre, Stoneleigh Park on Saturday 18 January 1997, which was constituted by the Moderator, Dr David Thompson, who presided. Worship was led by Revd Fleur Houston and Dr Thompson spoke on 'expectations.'

97/1 WELCOME

The Moderator welcomed members to the meeting, in particular those attending for the first time. Revd Simon Walkling (alternate for Mrs Susan Rand, Convener of the Equal Opportunities Committee), FURY representatives Miss Jenny Hale and Mr David Croaker (alternate for Miss Liz Burns), Mr Alan Hart (alternate for Mrs Ann Sutcliffe, North Western Province), Mrs Barbara Martin and Revd Peter Roche (Mersey Province).

97/2 ATTENDANCE

There were 65 members present with 14 staff members in attendance, Revd Fleur Houston, Chaplain, Mrs Christine Hardwick, Minute Secretary and Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith, Clerk Elect.

Apologies for absence were received from Revds John Edwards, Jeffery Evans, Bill Gathercole (whose last meeting before retirement this would have been), David Helyar, David Jenkins, John Sutcliffe, Bill Wright, Miss Liz Burns, Mrs Mary Eden, Mrs Susan Rand and Mrs Ann Sutcliffe.

97/3 MINUTES OF MISSION COUNCIL 1-3 OCTOBER 1996

The Minutes of the Mission Council held on 1-3rd October 1996, which had been circulated, were approved and signed with the following corrections.

96/66 & 67 (p.149-152) add sub-paragraphs (a), (b) etc

96/67a. (p.150) line 4 should read " until a review of the Church Related Community Work within the context of the wider development of diaconal ministries had been completed"

96/67d. (p.151) line " the Staffing Advisory Group does not recommend at this stage that the post should be continued, as they..."

96/73 (p.153) The resolution should read "Mission Council asks the Doctrine Prayer and Worship Committee"

96/74 (p.153) The resolution should read "Mission Council acting on the advice of the Ecumenical Committee, agreed to the request of the Scottish Congregational Church to re-open negotiations with a view to effecting the union of our two denominations as soon as possible. It was further agreed to recommend that the General Assembly confirm this decision."

96/79 (p.154) After "review body" add "(see 96/67)"

96/84 (p.156) the last appointment to "Ecumenical Assemblies" should read "Mr Peter Lyth."

96/85 (p.157) line 2 after "first day" add "of the 1997 Assembly"

97/4 MATTERS ARISING

- a. **REPLY FROM THE PATRIARCHAL VICAR OF JERUSALEM (96/61)** This was noted.
- b. **PENSIONS ACT 1995 (96/63)** The Legal Adviser informed Mission Council that a technical error in the paper that was circulated meant that it would be necessary to circulate an amended paper to members of the scheme.
- c. **SECRETARY FOR DISCIPLESHIP AND WITNESS (96/67d)** The General Secretary gave an interim report, indicating that consultations had taken place and that overlaps had been resolved and that collaboration with the Advocacy and Stewardship Committee may be included in the remit, with the new secretary working alongside the present Task Group Secretary. Proposals will be brought to the March Mission Council. The Council encouraged the General Secretary to bring proposals along these lines.
- d. **REMIT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE (96/62)** A statement of practice on overspending is still being prepared.
- e. **TRANSFER OF PROPERTIES IN THAILAND (96/64)** It was reported that the transfer document had been completed for which the church in Thailand is grateful.
- f. **DISCUSSIONS WITH THE SCOTTISH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH (96/74)** The General Secretary reported that there had been a meeting at which it had been agreed that, because of the degree of agreement to the 1988 proposals, these will be updated. It is hoped to reach a conclusion so that a report can be given to the Mission Council in March 1998 and proposals taken to the Assembly in 1998, with a final decision in 1999. A brief paper will be produced this summer and circulated within both churches, which will allow anyone to raise issues to be put to the negotiating committee.

- g. **CONCERN FELT BY THE DOCTRINE PRAYER AND WORSHIP COMMITTEE (96/83)** MCAG will take a view on whether the development of apparent parties of different theological persuasion within the church should be an item on the March Mission Council agenda.
- h. **FUTURE MEETINGS OF MISSION COUNCIL (96/88)** The timing of the March 1998 meeting will be confirmed later.

The Moderator left the chair while the remaining matters were discussed.

- i. **AFFIRMATIONS BY LAY STAFF (96/38)** The proposal from the Doctrine Prayer and Worship Committee that the affirmations in Schedule B (for Elders) be used with the appropriate amendment to question 4, was agreed.
- j. **PARTNERS IN LEARNING (96/70)** Revd Stephen Thornton reported that Mrs Rosemary Johnston will represent the URC on the Editorial Advisory Panel . It was agreed that the lead responsibility for Partners in Learning lies with the Discipleship and Witness Committee, in consultation with the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee and the Youth and Children's Work Committee.
- k. **PRESIDENCY AT THE SACRAMENTS IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS (96/73)** The Convener of the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee proposed that:

Mission Council agrees to advise the General Assembly that the concern expressed in the additional resolution in connection with resolution 45 of the 1995 Assembly Record (p.45) could be met by the addition of the following words as a footnote to paragraph 24 of The Basis of Union:

"The provisions of paragraph 24 are intended to establish the principle that worship should be led by representative persons recognised by the wider church as well as by the local church. The provisions do not prevent the congregation assembled for a baptismal or communion service from themselves appointing, as a church meeting, a suitable person to preside at the celebration of the sacrament in a case of emergency, for example if the expected president is taken ill or held up in travel. The provisions do not require such an action rather than a postponement of the baptismal or communion service if that seems preferable."

This was agreed as advice to the General Assembly for its decision.

97/5 REPORT OF THE MISSION COUNCIL ADVISORY GROUP

The report was presented by the Deputy General Secretary.

- a. **MULTIRACIAL DEVELOPMENT POST** It was reported that all regions of CWM had replied, some suggesting possible names. From 11 well-qualified applicants, 3 would be interviewed, and it is hoped to bring a name to the March Mission Council. Revd Sheila Maxey asked Provinces to tell her
 - (i) what existing networks the person could link in to.
 - (ii) the contact that will give them entry into the Provincial structures.
- b. **THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS BY REVD FLORA WINFIELD** Following comments by members of the Council, the Moderator asked whether members identified with the issues raised and then proposed that MCAG should look at the reflections, together with those by Dr Preman Niles at the previous Council meeting, and decide the way forward. This was agreed.
- c. **SIZE OF COMMITTEES** It was agreed to recommend to Assembly that

The Communications and Editorial Committee and the Training Committee should each be increased by two members because of the breadth of their concerns.

The Nominations Committee would seek names to propose to Assembly.

- d. **ELECTION OF MISSION COUNCIL ADVISORY GROUPS** Mission Council approved the following:

All these bodies should be called 'Group' to distinguish them clearly from Assembly Committees and indicate that they serve Mission Council. The Groups are listed below. Under each there is a statement of its remit, a list of the current members and the date on which their current service ends, and finally suggestions regarding eligibility and length of service. Where a length of service is specified the intention is that on completion of that term, the person be not normally eligible for re-election for immediate further service.

1. Mission Council Advisory Group

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

Moderator	David Thompson
Immediate Past Moderator	John Reardon
Moderator-elect	David Jenkins

2 Committee Conveners	Wilma Frew	1998
	John Sutcliffe	1999
Treasurer	Graham Stacy	
4 members of Mission Council	Angela Hughes	1997
	Julian Macro	2000
	Margaret McKay	1999
	Peter Poulter	1999
General Secretary (Deputy General Secretary in attendance)	Tony Burnham	

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

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

2. Resource Planning Advisory Group

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

Convener	Revd Duncan Wilson	2000
Secretary	Mr Dai Hayward	2000
4 members	Mr James Horton	1998
	Revd Peter Poulter	1998
	Revd Pat Nimmo	2000
	Revd Derek Wales	2000
General Secretary	Revd Tony Burnham	
Treasurer	Mr Graham Stacy	
Financial Secretary	Mr Clem Frank	
Secretary for Ministries	Revd Christine Craven	
Advocacy Secretary	Revd Bill Wright	

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

2.2 The Secretary may or may not be a member of Mission Council and should serve for 4 years.

2.3 Members should be members of Mission Council at the time of appointment but should serve for 4 years whether or not they remain members of the Council.

3. Staffing Advisory Group

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

Convener	Mr Geoff Lunt	1999
3 members	Revd John Maitland	1997
	Mr Dennis Earp	1998
	Revd Graham Maskery	2000

General Secretary in attendance

3.1 The Convener should be a member of Mission Council and should serve for 4 years or until s/he ceases to be a member of Mission Council, whichever is the shorter.

3.2 Members may or may not be members of Mission Council and should serve for 4 years.

4. Advisory Group on Grants and Loans

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

Convener	Mr Simon Rowntree	2000
Secretary	Revd Roger Whitehead	1999

Deputy General Secretary
CRCW Development Worker
Secretary for Church & Society
Secretary for Discipleship and Witness
Secretary for Ecumenical Relations
Secretary for International Church Relations
Secretary for Ministries
Youth Secretary or Children's Advocate

4.1 The Convener should be a member of Mission Council or be invited to attend. S/he should serve for 4 years.

4.2 The Secretary may or may not be a member of Mission Council and should serve for 4 years.

It was noted that four members of the Resource Advisory Group including both its officers are due to complete their terms in 2000.

It was pointed out by Revd Pat Nimmo that the Staffing Advisory Group was entirely male. The Deputy General Secretary replied that there was a vacancy on that group and members were asked to bear this in mind.

e. CWM Hong Kong Money

The Deputy General Secretary introduced the paper. After discussion the Advisory Group's amended recommendations were agreed:

- 1. That the criteria used by the Resource Sharing Task Group to assess relative wealth should also be used for the purpose of identifying East Midlands, Mersey and Wales Provinces as the primary recipients of the Hong Kong money.**
- 2. That each of the above Provinces be asked to submit proposals for a mission project which will be funded out of its proportion of the Hong Kong money. This should be work that could not otherwise have been funded out of their own resources.**
- 3. That the Mission Council in March or October 1997 will be invited to approve these proposals, or not. Once approved, occasional reports will be submitted to Mission Council for forwarding to CWM.**
- 4. In the event that any or all of the three Provinces are not able to submit an approved project by October 1997, Mission Council may wish to invite the next poorest, as identified by the Resource Sharing Task Group.**

f. Date of January 1998 meeting.

As the proposed date clashed with FURY Assembly, it was agreed to alter it to 24 January 1998.

97/6 REPORT OF THE TASK GROUP ON AUTHORITY IN THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

The General Secretary introduced the paper, indicating that it was Section 4 that the Council should consider in groups.

Lunch was taken at 12.30

After lunch the groups met and then reported back. Information on the origin of this paper was requested. Council were told that it originated in the Mersey Province in response to concerns expressed within that Synod. The report, prepared by a group from that Province, was sent to the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee who amended it. These amendments were considered by the Province. The current version was the work of MCAG, based on that paper. After a plenary discussion, somewhat hampered because of the short time that had been available for group discussion, the General Secretary suggested that MCAG should prepare a paper for the October Mission Council which would indicate areas of work that needed to be done and offer suggestions for the way ahead. Reporters were asked to send to the General Secretary the conclusions of their groups.

97/7 THE FUTURE OF THE POST OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S WORK TRAINING OFFICER (NYCTO)

The paper was introduced by the Deputy General Secretary who indicated that there was no legal reason why the post should not be discontinued but arrangements must be made to continue the Staff Development Policy. If management were to be transferred to the Provinces the programme would still need the support of the Assembly committees and staff. It would be necessary to ensure professional management and it might be necessary to pay a professional consultant which would be a new cost. Team meetings would continue three times a year and would include the National Youth Secretary and the Children's Advocate. A person would need to be appointed to manage the change. After prayer by the Chaplain, Mission Council divided into groups. After the questions raised by the groups had been answered a straw vote was taken, which indicated that there was overwhelming support for the discontinuation of the post, the following resolutions were passed:

Mission Council authorises the Assembly Officers to appoint a person to manage the changeover proposed in the report on the understanding that the person works in full co-operation with the Youth and Children's Work Committee, the Training Committee, the team and the Provinces.

Mission Council recognising the possibility that some alterations in detail and in process may be necessary as change is effected, calls for reports with necessary resolutions at its ensuing meetings.

Members were asked to communicate the decision regarding the NYCTO post to their YLTO/YCWT, indicating the manner in which it was arrived at.

The paper also considered whether a new national training post would be appropriate and advised that no immediate decision be taken. It was agreed that;

Mission Council accepts the recommendations of the report in relation to a possible post of National Training Officer and asks the Training Committee to advise the Council further when it judges the time to be appropriate.

The Moderator expressed thanks to the group who had undertaken the work.

97/8 REPORT OF THE STAFFING ADVISORY GROUP

SECRETARY FOR YOUTH WORK

The Convener, Mr Geoff Lunt, introduced the paper reviewing the post. The Committee felt that the post should be continued, but with an altered job description. An amendment to increase the life of the post from 4 to 5 years, with a possible extension for 5 years, was proposed by Revd Stephen Thornton and seconded by Revd Duncan Wilson. This was agreed.

With this amendment, it was agreed:

1. Mission Council authorises the continuation of the post of Secretary for Youth Work from 1 January 1998 or from when the post becomes vacant if earlier than this, and approves the following conditions:
 - a. that the post be open to lay people or ordained ministers
 - b. that the appointment be for five years
 - c. that the then post-holder may be offered an extension of post for a maximum of a further 5 years on completion of the initial 5 years.

2. Mission Council urges the Youth & Children's Work Committee to re-draft the Job Description in more precise and clear terms and, taking due note of the outcome of the FURY Review (which is currently in progress) and other relevant factors, to establish direct, attainable objectives for the 5 year tenure of the appointed postholder.

97/9 INTERIM REPORT OF THE RESOURCE SHARING TASK GROUP

The General Secretary presented an encouraging report which recorded the results of a consultation between the Provinces on the sharing of financial resources. The representatives agreed that each Province would contribute a minimum of 2% of their investment income which would then be redistributed in inverse proportion to their investment income. Members were asked to give active support when the proposal was considered in Synod. A full report will be given to the next Mission Council.

97/10 NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

The following report was presented by Revd Jessie Clare and appointments were confirmed:

Scottish Congregational Church/URC Conversations

Jennifer Shaffery was unable to serve.

Felicity Harris invited by officers because of time constraints

Wentworth Milton Mount Governors
Revd George Thomas in place of Revd P.E.J.McManus

Northern College Governors
Mr Jim Wilkinson to serve as a governor

Ecumenical Assemblies 11th CEC and 2nd EEA
Revd Philip Woods
Revd Meriel Chippindale

FCFC Education Committee
Revd Michael Powell

Vacancies outstanding from 1996 review
Equal Opportunities - Mr Paul Kidd
Advocacy and Stewardship - Mr Tom Hamilton

New College Trustees
Rev J.A. Pugh to serve for a further 4 years from March 1997

Appeal to General Assembly Commission has been set up under the
Convenership of Revd Alasdair Walker

Review for Secretary for Church and Society
Convener - Revd Bill Mahood

Review - Youth Secretary
Convener Revd John Reardon

Secretary of the Nominations Committee
Mr Desmond Curry from Assembly 1997

The General Secretary reported on behalf of Revd Dr Jack McKelvey, the Chairman of the Yorkshire Province Moderator Review Group. Following the retirement of the Revd Donald Hilton it was agreed that:

Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly appoints the Revd Arnold Harrison to be Moderator of the Yorkshire Province for 5 years from 1 September 1997 to 31 August 2002.

Mrs Wilrna Frew proposed on behalf of the North Thames Moderator Review Group and the Council agreed that:

Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly extends the term of office of the Revd Janet Sowerbutts from 1 September 1997 to 31 August 1998.

97/11 ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE

- a. The Convener, Mrs Wilma Frew, asked that Committees that wished to have time allocated to them at General Assembly should let her have their reports by 6 March.
- b. **Essential costs of attending General Assembly**

It was agreed these were:

1. The cost of direct travel between the representative's home and the Assembly venue, and home again.
2. The cost of daily travel between the representative's overnight accommodation and the Assembly venue.
3. The actual cost of meals taken during Assembly - assumed to be lunch and supper - breakfast being provided by the hosts.

Representatives will be asked to certify that the claim is for expenses actually incurred, and if the subsistence total exceeds £50, a schedule of expenses, with supporting vouchers, will be requested.

Expenses in connection with hotel/guest house accommodation will be met only if

- a. proper application has been made for hospitality, using the relevant form and
- b. the alternative accommodation has been booked by the Local Arrangements Committee, because of a shortfall in offers of local hospitality.

Representatives will be reimbursed after Assembly.

- c. Accommodation for FURY representatives.

The FURY Chair asked whether the cost of £90 for accommodation for FURY representatives in the YMCA hostel could be paid so as to enable them as a group in accommodation more suitable than a church hall. The decision on this was remitted to the Assembly Arrangements Committee meeting in March.

97/12 THE SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT OF LAY PREACHING

Revd Keith Forecast, Convener of the Ministries Committee, presented the paper. The following resolution was agreed, that:

a. A national Lay Preaching Commissioner be appointed to oversee and advocate the work and to liaise with the District and Provincial Commissioner and with the lay preachers themselves.

b. A sub-committee of the Ministries Committee be formed to co-ordinate the various interests and concerns, comprising up to four active nationally accredited lay preachers nominated by the annual Lay Preaching Commissioners' Consultation, together with one representative of each of the following Assembly Committees: Ministries, Training, Doctrine, Prayer and Worship and Discipleship and Witness: the national Lay Preaching Commissioner to act as Convener and organiser.

It is not envisaged that this will be a paid post. A detailed job description will need to be worked out and presented on the basis of this agreement in principle to the proposals.

97/13 LOCAL LEADERSHIP

The Convener of the Discipleship and Witness Committee, Revd Elizabeth Caswell, reported briefly on the consultation held in Birmingham. Resulting from this consultation, draft proposals will be circulated. Comments will be welcomed and after that a paper will be circulated for debate at the next Mission Council. She also drew members attention to a cartoon series, called 'Story Keepers' to be shown on Sunday mornings at 10.15.

97/14 Thanks were expressed to the Centre for their hospitality.

97/15 The Chaplain led members in the closing worship.



The United Reformed Church

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

Telephone 0171 916 2020
Fax number 0171 916 2021

Deputy General Secretary

The Revd John Waller MA

MC JAN 97

To: All members of Mission Council
and staff in attendance

8 January 1997

Dear Colleagues,

Mission Council - Saturday, 18 January 1997

I enclose the remaining papers for our meeting at the Arthur Rank Centre in Stoneleigh. You will also find printed on the back of this letter a response to the letter written to church leaders in Jerusalem and an interim report from the Resource Sharing Task Group.

In regard to Paper B, the report of the group looking at the future of the NYCTO post, it is very important that those who represent Provinces at Mission Council make contact with those in their Provinces who have been involved in discussing the Provincial management of the YCWT/YLTO team. You need to get a sense of the consultation which has taken place, both nationally and in your Province.

There is a list of groups printed on the back of the agenda. The groups may be used to have a preliminary discussion of one or two of the major topics on the agenda. I will be grateful if the first person named acts as group leader and the second person as reporter, as necessary.

Some have suggested that 1997 will be a single-issue year for the United Reformed Church. Our agenda makes it clear that is far from the case. Please pray that God will bless our preparation and our meeting together.

Yours sincerely,

JP

Revd. John Waller
Deputy General Secretary



The United Reformed Church

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

Telephone 0171 916 2020
Fax number 0171 916 2021

To: Members of Mission Council
and staff in attendance

19 December 1996

Dear Colleague,

Mission Council - Saturday 18 January 1997
Arthur Rank Centre, National Agricultural Centre, Stoneleigh Park,
Warwickshire

The next meeting of the Mission Council will take place on Saturday 18 January 1997 at the Arthur Rank Centre (Telephone 01203-696969).

A map showing directions to the centre is enclosed. If you require either overnight accommodation or transport from Coventry railway station **please let Michael Cruchley (at the Arthur Rank Centre) know by 10 January at the latest.**

I enclose:

- ♦ a list of members (to enable you to arrange to travel together)
- ♦ an expense slip
- ♦ a map

Would you please bring with you a bible and a copy of Rejoice and Sing.

The intended timetable for the day is:

09.30	Arrivals and coffee
10.00	Prayers, followed by Session 1
12.30	Lunch
13.30	Session 2
15.15	Cup of Tea
15.45	Session 3
16.45	Closing Worship
17.00	Finish


If you are **not able to be present please let John Waller know**, or if you have any **special dietary requirements please let Michael Cruchley know no later than 10 January.**

Some papers for this meeting are also enclosed. You should already have the October theological reflector's report, which you will need to bring with you. A second mailing of papers will be sent to you early in January. This will include the report of the group advising on the consequences of discontinuing the NYCTO post.

I hope you will all enjoy the celebration of Christmas and the opportunities of a New Year. I look forward to seeing you at Stoneleigh.

Yours sincerely

John Waller
Deputy General Secretary



MISSION COUNCIL

18 January 1997

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

Assembly Standing Committees

Doctrine, Prayer & Worship	Dr. David Thompson
Discipleship & Witness	Revd. Elizabeth Caswell
Church & Society	Professor Malcolm Johnson
Youth & Children's Work	Revd. Stephen Thornton
Ecumenical	Revd. Murdoch Mackenzie
Ministries	Revd. Keith Forecast
Training	Revd John Sutcliffe
Finance	Mr Graham Stacy
Communications and Editorial	Mr Chris Wright
Nominations	Revd. Jessie Clare
Assembly Arrangements	Mrs Wilma Frew
Equal Opportunities	Revd Simon Walking
Inter-Faith Relations	Revd. Bill Mahood

Task Groups

Advocacy & Stewardship
 - Revd. Julian Macro

Fury Council

Ms Jenny Hale
 Miss Liz Burns

12 Provincial Moderators, plus 3 representatives from each Province:

1	Revd David Jenkins	Revd Peter Poulter, Mr Peter Clarke, Revd. Ann Jackson
2	Revd Keith Forecast	Revd Bob Day, Mrs Ann Sutcliffe, Mr Gordon Ollerenshaw
3	Revd Graham Cook	Mrs Barbara Martin, Mr Wesley Woodside, Revd. Peter Roche
4	Revd Donald Hilton	Mr Brian Evans, Revd Duncan Wilson, Mrs Angela Hughes
5	Revd Malcolm Hanson	Mr Geoff Prentice, Revd. Graham Maskery, Mrs Irene Wren
6	Revd Elizabeth Welch	Mr Simon Rowntree, Mrs Erica Young, Revd Patricia Nimmo
7	Revd Bill Gathercole	Mr William McVey, Mrs Elizabeth Whitten, Revd Margaret McKay
8	Revd Ray Adams	Revd John Rees, Mrs Mary Eden, Mr Geoff Lunt
9	Revd Derek Wales	Revd Bernie Collins, Revd Jeffrey Evans, Mrs Christine Robertson
10	Revd Janet Sowerbutts	Dr Jack Gow, Miss Marian Crack, Revd. John Edwards
11	Revd David Helyar	Mrs Christine Meekison, Revd Lesley Charlton
12	Revd John Humphreys	Dr Jean Sylvan Evans, Mr Denis Earp, Mr Peter Devaney

In attendance:-

Minute Secretary	Mrs Christine Hardwick	Editor, Reform	Revd. David Lawrence
Moderator's Chaplain	Revd Fleur Houston	Training	Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee
Church & Society	Revd Peter Brain	Ecumenical Relations	Revd. Sheila Maxey
International Church Relations	Revd Philip Woods	Director, Windermere Centre	Revd Peter McIntosh
Ministries	Revd Christine Craven	Communications	Mrs Carol Rogers
Chief Accountant	Mr Clem Frank	NYCTO	
Youth Work	Mr Paul Franklin	Advocacy	Revd. Bill Wright
Discipleship & Witness	Mrs Muriel Garrow	Nominations	Revd. Arnold Harrison
Office & Personnel Manager	Mr Hilary Gunn	Children's Advocate	Mrs Rosemary Johnston
Rural Consultant	Revd Michael Cruchley		

GROUPS

A

Peter Brain
Elizabeth Welch
Tony Burnham
Lesley Charlton
Peter Clarke
Peter Devaney
Jenny Hale
Malcolm Hanson
Angela Hughes
Malcolm Johnson
William McVey

C

Margaret Carrick Smith
Stephen Thornton
Marian Crack
Brian Evans
Clem Frank
Paul Franklin
John Humphreys
Rosemary Johnston
Pat Nimmo
Gordon Ollerenshaw
Graham Stacy

E

Christopher Wright
Wesley Woodside
Raymond Adams
Jessie Clare
Graham Cook
Jean Sylvan Evans
Wilma Frew
David Lawrence
Carol Rogers
David Thompson
John Waller

G

Peter McIntosh
Ann Sutcliffe
Jack Gow
Donald Hilton
Fleur Houston
Julian Macro
Bill Mahood
Christine Meekison
Peter Poulter
John Reardon
Bill Wright

B

Lesley Husselbee
Bill Gathercole
Martin Cressey
Bob Day
Mary Eden
John Edwards
Barbara Martin
Geoff Prentice
Simon Rowntree
John Sutcliffe
Irene Wren

D

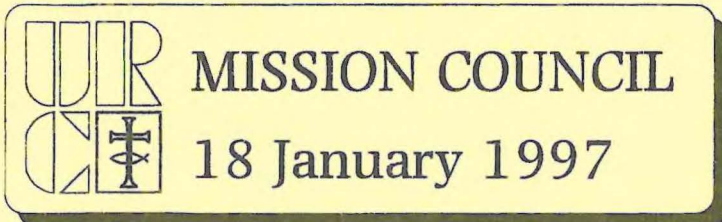
Derek Wales
Muriel Garrow
Elizabeth Caswell
Bernie Collins
Michael Cruchley
Hilary Gunn
Ann Jackson
Hartley Oldham
Peter Roche
Simon Walking

F

Christine Craven
Geoff Lunt
Liz Burns
Denis Earp
Jeffrey Evans
Keith Forecast
Christine Hardwick
Margaret McKay
Graham Maskery
John Rees

H

Philip Woods
Christine Robertson
Arnold Harrison
David Helyar
David Jenkins
Murdoch Mackenzie
Sheila Maxey
Janet Sowerbutts
Elizabeth Whitten
Duncan Wilson
Erica Young



AGENDA AND TIMETABLE

10.00 am **Worship**

SESSION 1

Welcome and apologies

Minutes of the meeting on 1-3 October 1996

Matters arising

Affirmations by lay staff (96/38)

Pensions Act 1995 (96/38)

Secretary for Discipleship and Witness post (96/67, p151)

Partners in Learning (96/70)

Presidency at the Sacraments in Emergency situations (96/73)

Notice of any additional business

Mission Council Advisory Group (Paper C and Paper E)

Youth and Children's Work Committee (Yardley Hastings)

Task Group on Authority (Paper D)

12:20pm Break

12:30 - 1:30 LUNCH

SESSION 2

Group on the future of the NYCTO post (Paper B)

Staffing Advisory Group (Paper A)

Resource Sharing Task Group

3:15pm Break

3:15 - 3:45 TEA

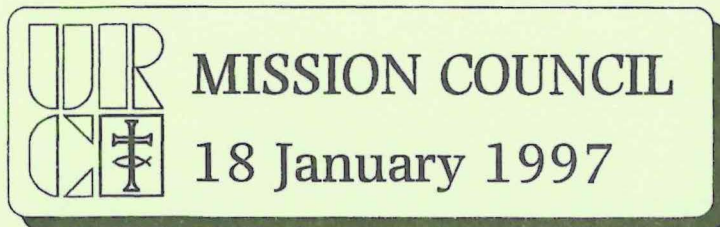
SESSION 3

Nominations Committee

Agency Arrangements
The Support and Development of Lay Preaching (Paper F)

Local leadership: paper to be tabled by the Discipleship and Witness Committee

4:45 Closing Worship



A

MISSION COUNCIL STAFFING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

REPORT TO MISSION COUNCIL 18 JANUARY 1997

INTRODUCTION

1. Staffing Advisory Committee met in November 1996 to consider a proposal relating to the following post:
 - (a) The existing post of Secretary for Youth Work.
2. It also discussed comments made about its method of working at the last meeting of Mission Council. The Committee wishes to assure those who submit papers to it and meet with the Committee to consider proposals that Committee members do not come to meetings with minds made up on issues before them, except insofar that they have been influenced by papers submitted in advance to them. The Committee does however propose to continue to perform its function robustly. It is not a "rubber stamp" and cases put to it will be examined in depth and with due rigour to endeavour to ascertain if the continuance of a post or the creation of a new one can be justified. Robust questioning and probing will not be undertaken in any spirit of hostility but in an attempt to assess the strengths or weaknesses of the case presented. Those who meet with the Committee will need to be well-briefed and must be prepared to be cross-examined on the papers put forward. In endeavouring to do its job, the Committee believes it needs to probe and question rigorously in order that it can present clear recommendations to Mission Council.

SECRETARY FOR YOUTH WORK

3. This post is lified until 31 December 1997 and is currently filled by Mr Paul Franklin.
4. A paper, arguing for the continuance of the post, had been made available to the Committee in advance of its meeting and Revd Stephen Thornton (Convener of the Youth and Children's Work Committee) and Mr James Horton (FURY Chair) met with Committee to discuss it and issues surrounding it. The Youth and Children's Work Committee had proposed that the Job Description (attached) of the Secretary for Youth Work be enhanced by including specific reference to the need for the post-holder to give support, advice and expertise in the development of FURY Council and, similarly, in regard to the National Youth Resource Centre, Yardley Hastings.
5. In discussing these proposed changes, together with the key work of the Secretary for Youth Work in regard to functions related to co-ordination, vision, networking, participation in the Councils of the Church and FURY Council, communication, undertaking new initiatives and relating ecumenically with those engaged in Youth

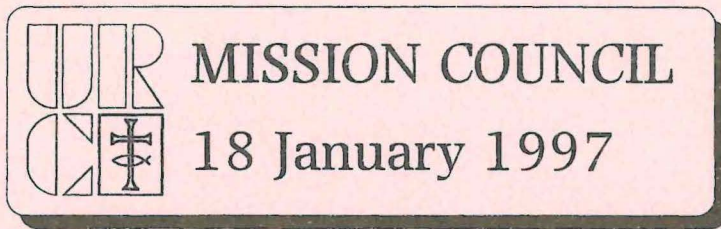
Work in other churches, the Staffing Advisory Committee felt the nature of the post was altering. There are a number of factors which have led to this perception of a changing post, viz:

- (a) The increasingly significant work and role of FURY Council
- (b) The increasing use of the Yardley Hastings Resource Centre
- (c) The work of the Children's Advocate
- (d) The growth of the team of YLTOs/YCWTs
- (e) The current FURY Review process and its outcome
- (f) The effect of the possible discontinuance of the NYCTO post
- (g) The, rightly, higher profile of Youth Work in the life of the URC at all levels.

6. The Staffing Advisory Committee is convinced of the need for a Secretary for Youth Work post. However, it believes that Youth Work requires a lively, innovative and enthusiastic approach for its success. It believes that the Secretary for Youth Work post-holder must provide visible leadership, have a clear vision and be supportive and encouraging and enthusiastically innovative. It believes that the post should be open to both lay people and ordained ministers, but that tenure in the post should be limited. It thus proposes that the post be lified for 4 years, with a possibility that any incumbent could serve for a maximum of an additional 3 years if an extension is deemed mutually desirable. The Staffing Advisory Committee believes that the Job Description presented should be re-written in clearer, more precise terms by the Youth & Children's Work Committee and that sharp, specific Objectives should be formulated and set so that the appointed post-holder may be better able to focus on priorities over the 4-year time-frame.

7. In making its recommendation, the Staffing Advisory Committee brings the following RESOLUTION to Mission Council:

- RESOLUTION:
- 1. Mission Council authorises the continuation of the post of Secretary for Youth Work 1 January 1998 or from when the post becomes vacant if earlier than this, and approves the following conditions:
 - (a) that the post be open to lay people or ordained ministers
 - (b) that the appointment be for four years
 - (c) that the then post-holder may be offered an extension of post for a maximum of a further 3 years on completion of the initial 4 years.
 - 2. Mission Council urges the Youth & Children's Work Committee to re-draft the Job Description in more precise and clear terms and, taking due note of the outcome of the FURY Review (which is currently in progress) and other relevant factors, to establish direct, attainable objectives for the 4-year tenure of the appointed post-holder.



B

The future of the post of
National Youth and Children's Work Training Officer (NYCTO)

1. Introduction

1.1 At its meeting in October 1996 Mission Council appointed David Butler, Lesley Charlton, Elizabeth Nash, John Waller and Wesley Woodside to consider the future of the NYCTO post.

1.2 The terms of reference were:

1. To investigate the legal processes needed in order to effect the discontinuance of the post of NYCTO and the consequences of the discontinuance.
2. To prepare plans for continuing such tasks of the NYCTO as may be necessary if the management of the YCWT/YLTOs were to be carried out by Provinces.
3. To consider whether a new national training post may be appropriate and if so, to put a proposal to the Staffing Advisory Group.

1.3 Mission Council also stated that the group was free to consult as it felt necessary but that it ought to hold a consultation of provincial representatives and should also meet those reviewing the present Discipleship and Witness post.

1.4 The group met on 30 October, 6 November, 4, 11 and 20 December. It held a consultation of Provincial representatives on 25 November, met representatives of the Youth and Children's Work Training Team and of FURY (separately) on 11 December. At various points discussions were held with a number of other people including the Secretary for Training, National Youth Secretary, Children's Advocate and the Office and Personnel Manager.

1.5 The group was also represented at a discussion of the re-shaping of a national post in the area of mission and it reported the possibility of

overlap to those who were revising the job description of the National Youth Secretary.

- 1.6 We have been aware of the particular pressure on the current members of the YCWT/YLTO team, who have faced uncertainty about the pattern of their employment for several months now. We are also aware that the Church owes a considerable debt of gratitude to Duncan Wilson, who has carried out many of the duties of a NYCTO in the interim period since 1st September 1996. In all our discussions and correspondence we have been extremely grateful for the open and sympathetic way in which people have dealt with us. We have also been aware of the deep and divisive emotions which some bring to the issue. We will say something more of this in the spoken introduction to our report.

2. Conclusions

Related to our terms of reference these are:

- 2.1 That no legal processes are necessary in order to discontinue the post of NYCTO but that good employment practice requires that the basic principles of the Staff Development Policy should be maintained. This conclusion is elaborated in sections 3 and 4.
- 2.2 That Provincial management is feasible and we set out what we believe to be a credible scheme in the following sections. Our belief is reinforced by the fact that our proposals have attracted criticism from those on both sides of the present debate. If there is give and take, and if the change-over is managed on a time-frame which allows for the proper consideration of anxieties and concerns, we believe Mission Council could adopt our proposal with confidence. The time-frame we propose is 12 months and we believe the church should use part of the NYCTO budget to employ someone to manage the change-over (Sections 5-7), beginning on a 2 day a week basis and reducing as the Provinces take over responsibility. This person would oversee the implementation of the further actions listed in Section 9.

Although this goes beyond our brief, we suggest that there are now two alternatives before Mission Council:

- 2.2.1 To decide to move to Provincial Management of the YCWT / YLTO team on the basis of this report, amended if appropriate.
- 2.2.2 To continue central management of the YCWT /YLTO team on the present basis and to re-instate the post of NYCTO for a further 5 years.
- 2.3 That it is not possible at this time to make a recommendation in regard to a National Training Officer. We believe the matter should lie on the table

without prejudice one way or the other. Our reasons are set out in Section 8.

3. Legal implications

3.1 The first of the terms of reference of the group is:

"to investigate the legal processes needed to effect the discontinuance of the post of NYCTO, and the consequences of its discontinuance"

3.2 Before making any recommendations in response to this task, the advice of the Office and Personnel Manager was sought. He advised that as there is no longer a NYCTO in post, the only implications for the discontinuance of the post would be in respect of the contracts of the YLTO's and the YCWT's (the staff). After studying the contracts under which the staff are currently employed, the Office and Personnel Manager further advised the group that:

- the contracts do not explicitly require a NYCTO
- the only reference to the NYCTO is that the staff should report to the NYCTO. The substitution of the NYCTO with another 'manager' would certainly not be grounds for grievance by the staff

3.3 This advice has been confirmed in general by the Legal Advisor and he expects to be able to make a definitive response at Mission Council. The present YCWT/YLTO team also accept the advice we have been given.

3.4 In further discussion with the Office and Personnel Manager, it became clear that, although there is no contractual obligation to do so, good employment practice requires the URC to apply the Staff Development Policy (SDP) for the "enhancement and enrichment of each individual member of staff through personal development, job development and organisational development". This obligation is developed in the following section.

4. Staff Development Policy

4.1 In the light of the previous section, the group came to the early view that the NYCTO post could be discontinued only if the basic principles, of the SDP were maintained. This means that, with a keen awareness of the need for consistency where appropriate, provision would need to be made for:

- selection and appointment of staff in accordance with agreed professional standards
- induction of staff

- appraisal of staff
- Strategy Groups
- in-service training of staff
- disciplinary and grievance procedures
- timely review of appointments
- 'exit' procedures and support
- meetings of the 'team' about every eight weeks, mainly for business
- personal and professional support on an informal and confidential basis
- personal meetings between staff member and manager twice a year

4.2 The group's proposals for meeting these requirements are developed in sections 5-7.

4.3 The SDP was developed with the advice of the National Youth Agency, by which body it was accredited in 1993. Work has been done in recent months to update the SDP. It is virtually ready for submission to the National Youth Agency. Whatever is now decided needs to be reflected in the revised edition before it is submitted. Accreditation is a factor in maintaining the professional standing of the programme and Government grant applications.

5. Provincial management with Assembly support

5.1 We looked closely at the present duties of the NYCTO. A few of them could be carried out by other officers and individuals within the Church, provided they have the appropriate gifts and experience. Included in this category is our representation on the oversight of a number of ecumenical courses and agencies. It is particularly important that our contribution to these should not be lost.

5.2 We then looked at the core duties of the NYCTO and came to the conclusion that, if there is to be Provincial management, then the Provinces should be responsible for all the core duties - in most cases solely responsible, in a few cases dependent on the support of Assembly Committees and officers. This seems to us to be necessary if a consistent standard is to be maintained and common practice to be observed.

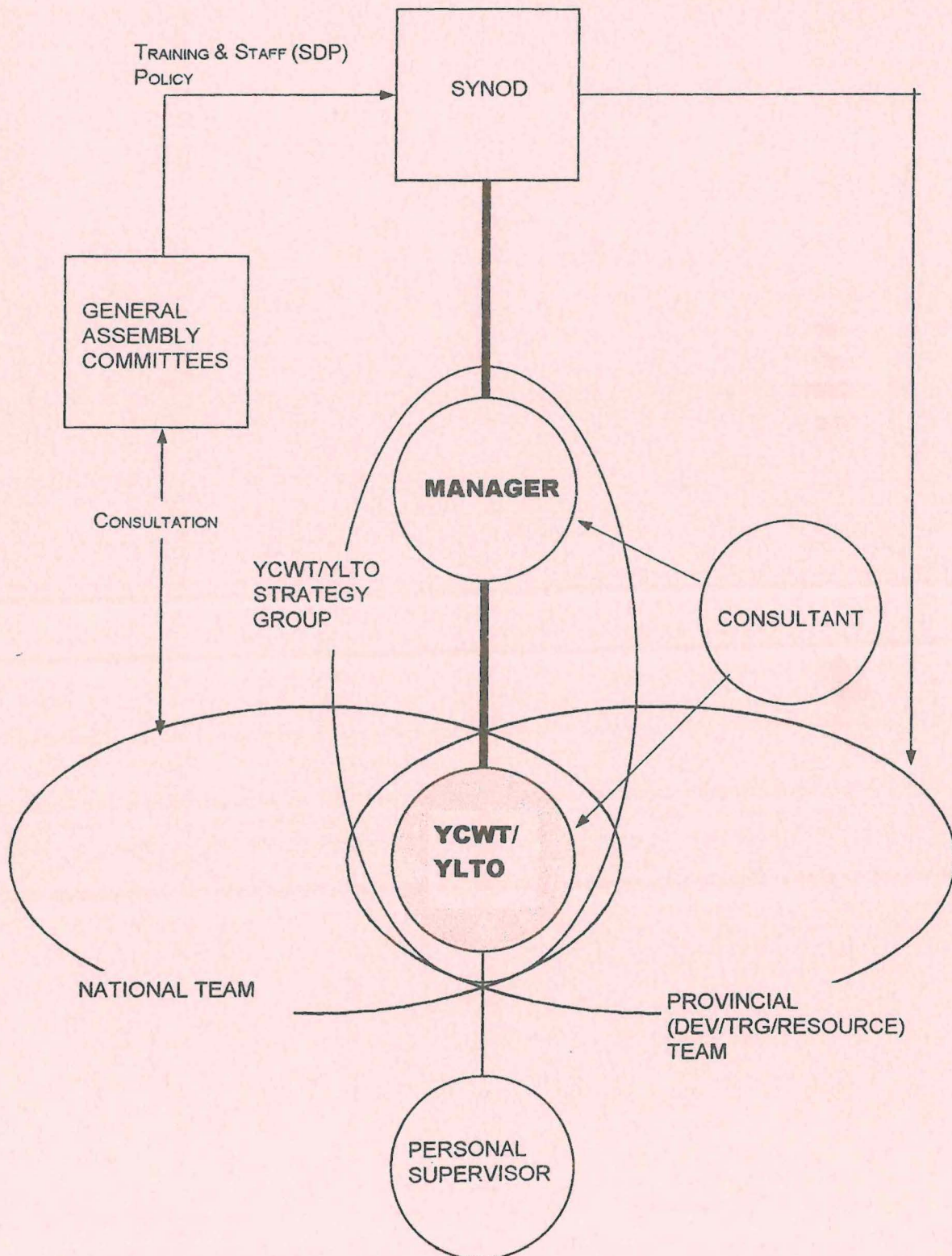
5.3 The present Strategy Groups would continue to operate. Each Province would, in addition, appoint a "manager" who would be responsible for the management of the YCWT/YLTO in the Province. Such a person would need to be competent for the task and have access to Provincial structures. In differing circumstances we can see a Provincial Moderator or a Synod Clerk or a Convener of a Strategy Group or a Convener of a

Synod Committee or any other respected person with the right experience carrying out this task.

- 5.4 The Province, through the manager, would be responsible for ensuring
- An agreed induction process
 - Appraisal procedures
 - Exit procedures and support
 - Ongoing personal support
 - Access to a professional consultant
 - Strategy groups
 - In-service training
 - Meetings between staff member and manager
- 5.5 With Assembly support and involvement, the Provinces would also be responsible for
- Selection and appointment of the officer
 - Disciplinary and grievance procedures
 - Review
- 5.6 Unless the manager has the necessary professional expertise, the Province will need to appoint a consultant who can meet with the officer (and as necessary the manager) to ensure his/her professional development and proper in-service training. The Assembly, through The Youth and Children's Work Committee, will need to advise on and approve the appointment of consultants.
- 5.7 The Assembly would continue to hold the ultimate responsibility for the YCWT / YLTO programme. Whether it belongs in the Training Committee or the Youth and Children's Work Committee is a finely balanced question. We have concluded that it would be better to transfer the programme back to the Youth and Children's Work Committee, which would thus become responsible for supporting the Provinces and providing the Assembly input into the selection and appointment of officers, the review process, and matters of discipline and grievance. It would also be responsible for maintaining the staff development policy. This conclusion is reflected in our proposal in 7.4 that the National Youth Secretary and the Children's Advocate should attend team meetings.
- 5.8 The Training Committee would continue to have a responsibility for developing national training policies. This emphasises the need for there to be continuing close co-operation between the Training Committee and the Youth and Children's Work Committee.
- 5.9 Each Province will need to name a person to whom reference can be made if the staff member is unable to resolve a difference with the Provincial manager. If it is not possible to resolve a dispute within the Province, ultimate reference would be to the Convener of the Youth and Children's Work Committee.

5.10 The Office and Personnel Manager would be available to advise on personnel matters.

5.11 The diagram below sets out our understanding of the way in which Provincial management would work. We recognise that training teams do not exist in all Provinces and that the role of consultant may be included in that of the manager or personal supervisor in some cases.



6. Finance and administration

- 6.1 We believe this should continue much as at present.
- 6.2 The income for the YCWT/YLTO programme would continue to be provided in equal shares by the Assembly and the Provinces (after making allowances for Government grants.)
- 6.3 Administration of the funds, payment of salaries and expenses, would continue through the Finance office. The only change would be that the Provincial Manager would be responsible for authorising expenses claims.
- 6.4 A new expenditure head would arise, in that the professional consultants would need a fee. It may be that an additional sum of, say £5000 would need to be written into the Assembly budget for this purpose.

7. The Team

- 7.1 Meetings of the team have been a significant feature of the YCWT/YLTO programme and we believe they should continue.
- 7.2 The purpose of the meetings would be
 - Consultation on national training policy
 - Planning and allocating responsibility for work on behalf of the church nationally
 - In-service training
 - Mutual support
 - Sharing ideas and experiences
- 7.3 If there is no NYCTO, leadership of the meeting should move around the team with perhaps each member being leader for a year.
- 7.4 The practice already exists that the National Youth Secretary and Children's Advocate attend team meetings. We believe that this should continue and that the NYS in particular should be responsible for introducing agenda items of a national nature and seeing that they are processed.
- 7.5 The Secretary for Training would also need to be able to attend team meetings when matters of national training policy are discussed. It seems to us a good practice that all or part of team meetings can be open to that officer or to others who share a common concern with the team.

8. National Training Post

- 8.1 The group was asked to consider whether the creation of such a post would be appropriate.
- 8.2 The background to the request lies in a proposal put by the Training Committee to the Staffing Advisory Group when it (SAG) was considering the future of the NYCTO post. The proposal argued that the postholder, as well as holding some residual functions of the NYCTO, could support the development of training teams and posts in Provinces and generally assist in the development of adult education skills. This could help the growth of an integrated training policy.
- 8.3 There are other arguments to support the proposal. It can be argued that the central tasks relating to the YCWT team should be in the hands of a designated training officer rather than being shared among existing staff secretaries. It can be argued that at the present time our demand for increased training requires a second staff person if it is to be met effectively.
- 8.4 We recognise the strong financial argument in favour of reducing the number of Assembly-appointed posts and the questioning in some places of the value of such posts, whatever they cost. Some argue that we do not need a National Training Officer when we already have a Secretary for Training.
- 8.5 We are aware of considerable differences of opinion as to the strength of all these arguments.
- 8.6 At the moment a training review is in progress. We believe that until its conclusions are published and accepted (or not) by the General Assembly, it is impossible to judge whether or not they would be significantly helped by the creation of a national training post.
- 8.7 Further discussions are in process or imminent about other posts which have a training element. Our view is that the Church needs a team of national staff to support its mission but that whenever possible (and certainly when reduction is contemplated) decisions about its composition should be made in a holistic rather than piecemeal way.
- 8.8 We therefore suggest that the Mission Council should defer a decision on this matter, leaving open both the possibility of creating the post of National Training Officer and of not doing so.

9 Consequent Actions

If the proposals in this paper are adopted a number of consequent actions will be required. Among the more significant of these are the following.

- 9.1 The Staff Development Policy will need to be amended in line with what is agreed. New sections will be required to provide a job description of the manager, a job description and qualifications of the consultant, and the essential elements in the job description for a YCWT/YLTO. Accreditation by the National Youth Agency will have to be obtained.
- 9.2 Some consultation with the Welsh Office and Department for Education and Employment will be needed.
- 9.3 The Provinces will need to prepare plans for the implementation by an agreed date of the proposals in section 5.
- 9.4 The Training and Youth and Children's Work Committees will also need to prepare plans for their part in the proposals in section 5. In agreement with the present officers, the Office and Personnel Manager will need to amend the wording of the present contracts to reflect the changed situation. The Finance office will need to be consulted about section 6.
- 9.5 The team will need to look at its future method of working with the other national officers identified in section 7.
- 9.6 The person appointed to the post proposed in section 2.2 would have oversight of these changes.

Maximum collaboration and consultation would be essential.

2nd January
John Waller

APPENDIX I

Provincial Responses

A first draft report was presented to the Provincial consultation on 25 November. Those present were asked to consult further with their Provinces and to send a definitive response by 16 December. Nine responses have been received.

Only two of them give a simple answer. Wessex Province feels able to take on a management responsibility and has identified a person it believes could take on this role. West Midlands Province feels able to take on a management responsibility. It seeks assurance that it would not have to contribute to the cost of a professional consultant.

Northern Province has concluded that it does not feel able to supply the level of management coupled with the professional expertise which it feels YCWT's need. This conclusion was reached in the context of a strong conviction that there should be a national officer and that such an appointment could prove a more cost-effective measure than the alternative.

Yorkshire Province also has the starting point that there should be a National Training Officer responsible for all training in the URC. They believe, however, that youth and children's work leadership training should not be seen as separate from other training. They go on to say that if the decision was to dispense with a national officer, they would do what had to be done. They add that their Provincial Director of Training has no line manager. He meets regularly with the Moderator, but his responsibility is to Synod, through the Provincial Executive. "There would seem to be no good reason for treating a YCWT, or similar officer, differently."

East Midlands Province believes that management should be the responsibility of one person, either a NYCTO or a NTO. They have not been able to find a convener for the Management Group of their Training Officer. The letter does not actually say they could not provide management for their YCWT but it would be difficult to come to any other conclusion!

Southern Province give testimony to the help of the NYCTO during their officer's illness. They would like a national officer in one form or another. In answer to the question whether they would be able to take responsibility for the Provincial Trainer, they are prepared to commit themselves in faith that they will find people. They further suggest that the national post is suspended, rather than discontinued, for 12 months to allow Provinces to assess their competence.

South West Province confirms that it will endeavour to find a manager if that is what Mission Council / Assembly decides must happen. If they cannot find

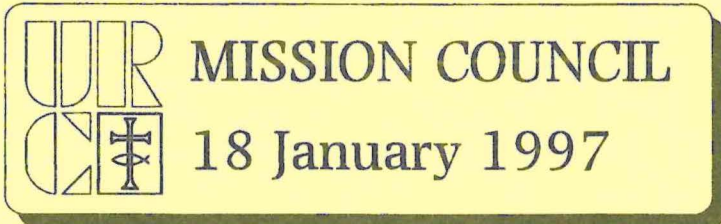
such a person they might turn to another Province (Wessex?) for help. The response from the Province records an intention to consider seeking help from one of the 5 dioceses in that region. Finally it points out that its basic answer makes the assumption that proper national support will be given at the points indicated in our discussion paper.

Mersey Province indicates that the majority of those consulted support Provincial management. The response gives extensive reasons for this conclusion, from which we may deduce that Mersey feels able to provide management! A minority view is recognised.

Wales Province having consulted its Methodist partner, has confirmed that it could manage its own officer and can see positive advantage in doing so. The Province believes that time is needed to consider some of the implications of the proposal and declares that it is not able to accept any increased level of expenditure on the post.

No reply by 2 January from North West, Eastern or Thames North.

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C

Report of the Mission Council Advisory Group

1. **Multi-racial development post.** The Advisory Group learnt that CWM had agreed to make a grant towards the cost of this post in the sum of £8,000 p.a. for three years. It also was told that a number of applications for the post had been received by the closing date. A more up-to-date report will be given to the Mission Council.
2. **Theological reflections.** The Revd. Duncan McClements of the Church of Scotland has agreed to join us for our March Mission Council.
3. **URC 25th anniversary.** It is hoped that the leaflet approved by Mission Council and some guidelines for local church worship will be included in the next Information Service.
4. **Size of committees.** As a result of discussions at the last Mission Council it is proposed that the Communications and Editorial Committee and the Training Committee should each be allowed to have two additional members. This is in view of the breadth of the committees' concerns and their experience since restructuring.
5. **Report from The Revd. Flora Winfield.** The Advisory Group discussed the report, which had been circulated with the minutes of the October meeting. It believes that the issues highlighted by Flora Winfield merit general discussion at the January Council.
6. **Advisory Groups and Committees.** At the last Council meeting questions were asked about the membership and terms of service of the various Groups and Committees. The lack of clarity made the election process difficult. The Advisory Group has looked into this and offers a paper (Paper E) which sets down the present situation and makes suggestions in the areas of uncertainty. The Council is invited to consider these.
7. **Six themes and a question.** A document with that title was prepared during the October Mission Council as a result of the group discussions. As it had not been possible to have a general discussion of the document later in the Council meeting, the Advisory Group looked at it.

It was decided to retain basically the same groups in January as in

October but not necessarily to continue them in March.

It was felt that prioritising the priorities in the Five Year Plan would not be helpful. The eight headings would be better described as mission objectives: which was prior could vary from place to place. The important thing is to check progress on each objective from time to time, and also to be ready to identify new ones.

The area of communication will need continuing attention. There was a suggestion that some may have false expectations and others false fears of Mission Council. These may confuse communication. It was felt that it may be helpful for Mission Council to look at itself about 5 years after its formation (say in October 1997) with a particular view to considering appropriate communication to and from the councils and committees of the Church.

8. **CWM Hong Kong Money.** Although Mission Council decided that this money should be given for mission projects in the 3 Provinces with the least resources, it did not define its terms. The Advisory Group recommends:
 - 8.1 That the criteria used by the Resource Sharing Task Group to assess relative wealth should be used also for the purpose of identifying East Midlands, Mersey and Wales Provinces as the primary recipients of the Hong Kong money.
 - 8.2 That each of the above Provinces be asked to submit proposals for a mission project which will be funded out of its proportion of the Hong Kong money. ^{These} should be ^{work} projects that would not otherwise have been funded out of their own resources.
 - 8.3 That the Mission Council in March or October 1997 will be invited to approve these proposals, or not. Once approved, occasional reports will be submitted to Mission Council for forwarding to CWM.
 - 8.4 In the event that any or all of the 3 Provinces are not able to submit an approved project by October 1997, Mission Council may wish to invite the next poorest, as identified by the Resource Sharing Task Group.
9. **Date of January 1998 meeting.** The date agreed at the last meeting has been found to clash with the FURY Assembly. The Advisory Group recommends that the date of the Mission Council meeting should be changed to 24 January 1998.

John Waller
17 December 1996



MISSION COUNCIL

18 January 1997

D

Note for Mission Council regarding the report of the task group on Authority in the United Reformed Church

Mission Council set up a task group on this topic following the submission of mainly practical questions regarding the exercise of authority by a minister in Mersey Province.

Those appointed to the group were Angus Duncan, Fiona Gow and David Lawrence (appointed by the Mersey Province), together with Tony Cheer, Philip Morgan and Bert Worrall (appointed by the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee).

The group produced a draft report which was sent for comment to both the Province and the Committee. In the light of comments received Philip Morgan and Bert Worrall have produced the present revised version.

The Mission Council Advisory Group has looked at the report and now seeks the advice of Mission Council as to the next stage in this process.

It may help to give a short introductory comment on the report.

Section 1 sets out general thinking on authority and discipleship.

Section 2 considers the place of authority in the Basis of Union and Structures of the United Reformed Church. Texts are set out in full although many members of Mission Council will be familiar with them.

Section 3 identifies problems and difficulties.

Section 4 has reflections and suggestions for Mission Council.

It is suggested that at our meeting in January particular attention is given to Section 4, although that will assume a reading of the previous sections.

Mission Council is asked to consider two questions:

- Do you affirm the Reflections in Section 4 Part A?**
Do you want any or all of the Suggestions in Section 4 Part B to be taken further?

It is hoped that this will enable us to see how this significant discussion of authority in the United Reformed Church should be taken further.

**John Waller
13 December 1996**

Authority in the United Reformed Church

Section 1

The nature of the problem - Authority and Discipleship

1. The source of any authority in the Church is God who calls us to be a people when hitherto we were no people. In the light of this our understanding of authority in the Church is that it is creative and liberating, not, as commonly supposed, necessarily oppressive.

The paradoxical expression of authority is the Gospel of grace which makes men and women new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5, 17). As new creatures God both demands of them a totally new life style which befits those who have died and risen again in baptism and thus become God's chosen people (Col.3, 1-17) and by the Holy Spirit provides the resources for this new life style (Gal. 5, 16-26).

2. As an outcome of this the Church (on earth) consists of those who have heard and by the grace of God responded to the call of God, made known to us in Jesus Christ, to be his people. This call is the Gospel, the good news of God's redeeming love, to which those who hear respond in loving and willing obedience. Individuals who hear and respond become disciples of Jesus, men and women under discipline, called to serve Christ and represent him to the world in service and evangelism. They become part of the Christian fellowship, the Church. In this understanding the Church is a community of love, called to live the life of God's kingdom, seeking to live in obedience to the Gospel to the glory of God and for the sake of the world.

3. In our worship we all acknowledge the authority of God. In confession we acknowledge our disobedience, and in our Sunday worship week by week we commit ourselves anew to a disciplined and obedient life. In this we acknowledge the basic constitution of the Church, the call of Christ, "follow me", and by our commitment to follow both congregation and individuals make an act of obedience to the authority of God in Christ.

4. In the ways just outlined, we all acknowledge the acceptance of authority and commitment to a life of obedience are inherent in Christian experience and Church membership. We profess that such obedience enables us effectively to express the Gospel in life. Our problems arise in the areas of practical exercise of authority by officers and councils of the Church, and the recognition by individuals and congregations of the authority of such officers and councils.

5. Sometimes, the concepts of authority and obedience appear to be critically and negatively affected by the dominant individualism of our time and an interpretation of them in restrictive secular terms. We appear to have adopted a secular model of individualism in conflict with that of a conciliar Church or any concept of the Church as the Body of Christ. There is little

sense of unity, common obedience and service of the Church beyond the local congregation. Ministers can comment that they, "are not willing to submit to the dictates of an ecclesiastical civil service", and some congregations resist or ignore wider councils of the Church. The sense of mutual sharing in obedience to Christ can seem singularly absent.

6. We think that recovery of a sense of common obedience to Christ and the Gospel could be a fruitful starting point from which to consider the understanding and exercise of authority required in a conciliar Church, such as the United Reformed Church claims to be. We wish to assert that the authority of Christ may be joyfully accepted; that properly understood it is the grace of God which is experienced in the exercise of authority, working for the good of the Church and its mission. The purpose of authority may then be seen as the discovery and expression of the mind of Christ in order to build up his body for effective discipleship. Thus, we wish to remove the idea of authority as restrictive and largely external. Instead we wish to show that authority freely accepted, even when it conflicts with the immediate inclinations of individuals or congregations, can be a source of strength and a means of expressing and applying the Gospel in our common life.

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Section Two

Authority and The Basis of Union

As we proceed, we accept that the URC by its openness to change, necessary provisionality and assertion of the rights of personal conviction, makes provision for a broad spectrum of faith and practice. We gladly affirm this breadth.

Nevertheless, we are convinced that, in order for any corporate body to have an identity, an area of common understanding and acceptance in the matter of authority needs to be established. We affirm that the Basis of Union represents our current discernment of the faith and practice of the URC to which we are committed by our act of union. It is the responsibility of those entrusted with leadership or oversight to ensure that the body of members and councils remain faithful to that identity.

We are also aware that in a divided Church any statement about authority or exercise of authority by the URC has to take into account the views and reactions of members of other churches, some of which are in communion with the URC and others share in ecumenical councils with the URC.

In the next three sub-sections we attempt to record what we say we believe about authority, by reference to sections of the Basis of Union, followed by what we appear to mean by what we say, and finally how we seek to implement this authority in the life of the URC.

A. Statements about Authority

The doctrine and practice of the URC are set out in The Manual. The primary texts with reference to 'authority' are:

From The Basis of Union

9. The United Reformed Church testifies to its faith, and orders its life, according to this Basis of Union, believing it to embody the essential notes of the Church catholic and reformed. The United Reformed Church nevertheless reserves its right and declares its readiness at any time to alter, add to, modify or supersede this Basis so that its life may accord more nearly with the mind of Christ

Asserts the standing of the Basis of Union and the URC's right to change it to accord more fully with 'the mind of Christ'.

10. The United Reformed Church, believing that it is through the freedom of the Spirit that Jesus Christ holds his people in the fellowship of the one Body, shall uphold the rights of personal conviction. It shall be for the church, in safeguarding the substance of the faith and maintaining the unity of the fellowship, to determine when these rights are asserted to the injury of its unity and peace.

Asserts 'personal conviction' but not to the injury of the unity and peace of the Church.

12. The United Reformed Church confesses the faith of the church catholic in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It acknowledges that the life of faith to which it is called is a gift of the Holy Spirit continually received in Word and Sacrament and in the common life of God's people. It acknowledges the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people.
13. The United Reformed Church believes that, in the ministry of the Word, through preaching and the study of the Scriptures, God makes known in each age his saving love, his will for his people and his purpose for the world.

Asserts the primacy of the 'Word of God'.

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

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

Acknowledges indebtedness to past declarations of the catholic faith while being open to change should the Spirit so require.

19. The Lord Jesus Christ continues his ministry in and through the Church, the whole people of God called and committed to his service and equipped by him for it. This service is given by worship, prayer, proclamation of the Gospel, and Christian witness; by mutual and outgoing care and responsibility; and by obedient discipleship in the whole of daily life, according to the gifts and opportunities given to each one. The preparation and strengthening of its members for such ministry and discipleship shall always be a major concern of the United Reformed Church.
20. For the equipment of his people for this total ministry the Lord Jesus Christ gives particular gifts for particular ministries and calls some of his servants to exercise them in offices duly recognised within his Church. The United Reformed Church recognises that Christ gives himself to his Church through Word and Sacrament and through the total caring oversight by which his people grow in faith and love, the exercise of which oversight is the special concern of elders and ministers. Those who enter on such ministries commit themselves to them for so long as God wills; the United Reformed Church having solemnly acknowledged their vocation and accepted their commitment shall appoint them to their particular

ministry and give them authority to exercise it within the church, setting them apart with prayer that they shall be given all needful gifts and graces for its fulfillment, which solemn setting part shall in the case of ministers and elders be termed ordination.

The ministry of Jesus Christ is continued through the whole people of God with a gift of particular ministry of elders and ministers of Word and Sacrament, which includes that of oversight, for which the church gives authority.

Elders and ministers make a specific declaration of the source of authority at ordination or induction:

from Schedule B (Elders)

Q. Do you believe that the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people?

A. I do.

Q. Do you accept the office of elder of the United Reformed Church in this congregation and do you promise to perform its duties faithfully?

A. I do

from Schedule C (Ministers)

Q. Do you promise to fulfill the duties of your charge with all fidelity, to lead your people in worship, to preach the Word and administer the sacraments, to exercise pastoral care and oversight, and to give leadership to the Church in its mission to the world?

A. I do.

One of two versions of a 'statement of the nature, faith and order of the URC', or a similar statement, is required to be read at each ordination or induction of elders or ministers. The two versions contain similar assertions to the Basis of Union on the matters of:

- the source of authority;
- the role of tradition;
- the role of the Basis of Union;
- openness to the Spirit and the possibility of revision;
- the place of personal conviction.

The statement also asserts that the government of the Church is appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ

8. The United Reformed Church declares that the Lord Jesus Christ, the only ruler and head of the Church, has herein appointed a government distinct from civil government and in things spiritual not subordinate thereto, and that civil authorities, being always subject to the rule of God, ought to respect the rights of conscience and of religious belief and to serve God's will of justice and peace for all humankind.

and from The Structure of the URC

1. (3) The oversight of the United Reformed Church shall be the concern both of the local church and wider representative councils.

The councils of the United Reformed Church shall be:

- (a) the church meeting and the elders' meeting of each local church;
- (b) the council of each district to be known as a district council and of each area of ecumenical cooperation to be known as an area meeting;
- (c) the synod of each province to be known as a provincial synod; and
- (d) The General Assembly of the United Reformed Church.

These four parts of the structure of the United Reformed Church shall have such consultative, legislative and executive functions as are hereinafter respectively assigned to each of them and each shall be recognised by members of the United Reformed Church as possessing such authority, under the Word of God and the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, as shall enable it to exercise its functions and thereby to minister in that sphere of the life of the United Reformed Church with which it is concerned.

Asserts the responsibility for 'oversight' given to the councils of the Church.

B. Some Comments on the Statements about Authority

1. The URC in recognising itself to be but one part of the divided Church, claims the historic Church as its heritage and lives as fully the life of the Church as present disunity allows. It asserts its right (or the necessity) both to make its own statements of faith and to modify them to accord 'more nearly with the mind of Christ'. All such statements, therefore, are necessarily provisional, in the sense that they represent present convictions to which we are committed until we are convinced of the necessity for change.
2. The URC, possibly uniquely, asserts the right of personal conviction. This appears to mean that a person who is a member in good standing of the

URC may hold an understanding, expression or interpretation of Christian Faith which differs from the faith of the URC as formulated in the Basis, by being either less precise or more detailed in definition than that in the Basis.

However, whilst anyone may do this, the officers and councils and ministers of the URC are committed to teach and practice the faith and practice of the URC according to the Basis of Union. Councils specifically are required to determine and safeguard 'the substance of the faith' and maintain 'the unity and peace' of the URC.

At the date of its formation the URC confessed its faith in the following words:

We believe in the one living and true God, creator, preserver and ruler of all things in heaven and earth, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, whom alone we worship and trust.

We believe that God, in his infinite love for the world, gave his eternal Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who became human, lived on earth in perfect love and obedience, died upon the cross for our sins, rose again from the dead and lives for evermore, sovereign, judge and saviour.

We believe that, by the Holy Spirit, the glorious Gospel is made effective so that through faith we receive the forgiveness of sins, newness of life as children of God and strength of in this present world to do God's will.

We believe in the one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church, in heaven and on earth, wherein by the same Spirit, the whole company of believers is made one Body of Christ, to worship God and serve God and all humankind in God's kingdom of righteousness and love.

We rejoice in the gift of eternal life, and believe that, in the fullness of time, God will renew and gather in one all things in Christ, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.

3. In common with other churches of the Reformation, the URC believes that no belief is required for salvation which is not contained in scripture. In a sentence repeated in Schedules B and C (ordination and induction of elders and ministers), and in one of the versions of a statement on the nature, faith and order of the URC, affirmed by congregations at all ordinations and inductions, it acknowledges the source of 'supreme authority' to be 'the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit'. The phrase 'the authority of scripture' is used without further definition in para 18, which also acknowledges 'corporate responsibility' to Jesus Christ.

Since discernment 'under the guidance of the Holy Spirit' is continuous, our understanding of the Word of God at any one time will be provisional. Individual study, prayer, preaching and group Bible study in the local congregation and in the councils of the Church will contribute to such

discernment and assist the URC to act in 'corporate responsibility' to Jesus Christ. Individual inspiration and discernment needs to be tested by the Church, and any assertion of individual conviction needs to be assessed by the appropriate councils of the Church as to its effect upon the unity and peace of the Church.

4. The URC accepts the witness born to the catholic faith by the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds and recognises the value of historic formulations of the faith of the Church. They constitute an heritage for which the URC is thankful, assisting it in its continuing discernment of the Word of God.

5. The primary ministry is that of Jesus Christ, exercised through the whole people of God, who serve, amongst other things, in the 'proclamation of the Gospel and Christian witness'. Whilst Jesus Christ himself equips his people for these tasks, those called by him and recognised by the Church as elders and ministers have a special responsibility to equip the people of God and, through the exercise of 'oversight' assist them in the growth of faith and love. The Church gives authority for the exercise of this ministry.

Elders and ministers are required specifically to acknowledge the 'supreme' source of authority within the Church, as formulated above (Basis of Union para 12) and in their promise to fulfill their duties faithfully they undertake to act in accordance with that authority.

6. In the statement concerning the nature, faith and order of the United Reformed Church, which is read at ordination and induction services, the Church declares that "... the Lord Jesus Christ, the only ruler and head of the Church, has therein appointed a government distinct from civil government and in things spiritual not subordinate thereto, ...". The form of the ministry is a development from that established at the Reformation when it was believed to be that found in the New Testament (see J Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book 4, Chapter 3). The essential point is that properly constituted Christian ministry is a response to the revelation of God's purpose and is not simply utilitarian or expedient.

C. The Application of Authority

1. The United Reformed Church is a conciliar Church with councils defined in 1(3) of the Structure (see Page 7) From a juridical point of view, supreme authority within the Church is exercised by the General Assembly limited only by common or statute law. In fact, each council has authority within its own sphere unless that authority is challenged by appeal to a wider council of the Church.
2. The responsibilities of each council are defined in the Structure. The General Assembly has power to change those responsibilities by appropriate procedures. It also has power to legislate on matters not within the Structure.
3. In matters of faith and teaching the United Reformed Church, by its statements on the 'Word of God', makes clear that, like other churches of the Reformed tradition, it understands the decision-making power of its councils to be a case of recognising truths revealed in Scripture, or consonant with Scripture. It does not claim the right to lay down new things to be believed by members of the Church. There is, however, always the opportunity to consider matters further and to re-examine beliefs in the light of new insights.
4. In matters of practice the United Reformed Church acts directly by resolution of General Assembly, or another of its councils, and indirectly through the committees of General Assembly or other councils. Questions of the admittance of congregations to the United Reformed Church, or the suspension of congregations from the United Reformed Church are decided by the General Assembly on the recommendation of subordinate councils and committees. In this way too, decisions are made about the selection, training, calling, ordaining, inducting and, when necessary, the disciplining and suspending of ministers.
5. All councils have the responsibility of promoting the work and welfare of the United Reformed Church in harmony with its faith and practice as set out in The Manual. A central feature of this responsibility is the exercise of oversight:

The Church Meeting is responsible for maintaining standards of membership;

The District Council is responsible for the oversight of ministers and churches within the District;

The Provincial Synod is responsible for the oversight of District Councils within the Province;

The General Assembly is responsible for the oversight of the total work of the Church.

Councils which are more local councils are expected to receive and to apply reports and decisions from more central councils.

6. The exercise of authority in the Church will be modelled as closely as possible on that demonstrated by our Lord Jesus Christ, that is generally a

non-coercive authority of love and persuasion. In matters of dispute, decisions will normally be made by reference to the statements and standards of the Church, and such matters will normally be settled in the immediate context in which they arise. It is the responsibility of the appropriate officers and/or councils, through prayer, reference to Scripture, and discussion, to seek to establish the mind of Christ and thus to arrive at a resolution of disputes which is honouring to Christ, and which will be helpful to individuals and congregations in their spiritual growth, witness and ministry. Methods of achieving this end may range from individual conversations and pastoral visits through specially convened meetings of District and Province, to a commission of General Assembly appointed to consider a specific situation.

7. A further consideration with regard to the exercise of authority will be the effect of particular situations on the witness, integrity and ecumenical relationships of the United Reformed Church as a whole.
8. Attempts should always be made to settle matters without appealing to 'higher authority' and such settlements should normally be respected by others without interference. Nevertheless, an appeal procedure exists whereby any matter in dispute which cannot be resolved by a more local council can be brought to General Assembly, whose decision is final and binding.

Section Three

What hinders the United Reformed Church in the exercise of authority

1. Introduction

We have drawn attention to an individualistic temper and to an understanding of authority as external and repressive. We have also sensed an unawareness of the framework of authority provided by the Basis of Union and even when there has been an awareness of this framework a reluctance on the part of councils to exercise authority in accordance with it.

In the following paragraphs we reflect upon some of the practical situations which have been drawn to our attention.

2. We wondered how far District Councils and Provincial Synods recognised that part of their role was the exercise of authority as a matter of pastoral care and leadership. In particular, we wondered whether we had lost an understanding of the nature of relationships within the Church, a relationship of exchange in love, each giving to and receiving from others to enable growth, within which relationship the exercise of authority could be seen as important for the building and protection of the body. This may lie at the root of our problem. The problem may be seen in various ways:

2.1 Sometimes local councils do not promote acceptance of decisions of more central councils. This may be because the atmosphere in which those decisions were taken, and the arguments which led to them, are remote from more local councils. Nevertheless, when particular councils are:

- unwilling to accept the authority of higher councils;
- unwilling to promote acceptance of decisions of higher councils;
- in disagreement with those decisions;
- or lax in the application of this part of their responsibility;

the common life of the United Reformed Church is impaired and the attempt to discern corporately the mind of Christ is thwarted.

2.2 Sometimes councils appear reluctant to exercise authority or take responsibility for oversight, in particular when relationships between congregations and the rest of the Church, or between individuals and congregations, either have broken down or appear to be near to breaking down. Often councils do not act unless forced to do so. There may be various reasons for this reluctance to exercise authority or take responsibility:

- it may be too difficult; too unpleasant; potentially destructive of other relationships, e.g. friendships, which are valued more highly;
- councils may be unclear of their authority and responsibility (in spite of the fact that they are set out in the Structure), or councils may be doubtful of

the loyalty of other congregations and/or church members if difficult pastoral guidance or discipline were to be attempted;

- there appear to be no sanctions which councils could apply, authority would be ignored and so brought into disrepute.

2.3 Difficult situations often come to the attention of District Council or Provincial Synod when it is probably already too late for effective pastoral action, thus the exercise of authority is connected with crisis situations.

For instance, we recognise situations in which individuals and groups had created such difficulties that a congregation had been thwarted in its life and work and some who had made sacrificial efforts in the life of the Church had become disillusioned and had turned away before the District Council had become involved.

On many occasions we discussed the call, assessment and training of ministers. We were aware of instances of failure to exercise authority early enough to be helpful, e.g. by preventing an unsuitable ordinand from receiving a leaving certificate, or by questioning acceptance for ordination, or by questioning the possibility of an established minister accepting a further call when it was known that there were substantial doubts about the person's suitability for ministry.

2.4 A particular problem concerns the authority given to individuals and exercised by them. In particular, Provincial Moderators are "...appointed ... by the General Assembly and responsible to it". They are to "...exercise a pastoral office towards the ministers and churches within the province, ...". Thus, our structure gives functions and responsibilities to an individual with authority to fulfill them. District officers also have responsibilities, but their authority is that of the council they represent.

While recognising the real leadership often given by Moderators, and other officers, we questioned how far they received any training, or even advice, to enable them to cope with pastoral situations in which the authority of the Church needed to be exercised.

2.5 Another potential problem is the minister who is an enthusiast in a particular area. We recognise the need to value, and find a place for, those who have a passion to pursue a particular line and who sometimes appear to have special gifts in a certain direction, and we questioned whether the Church is slightly afraid of enthusiasts. But we also questioned whether some enthusiasts are too impatient of others, and may use their 'oddness' to cover some anxiety over their own status or value. The Church finds it difficult both to acknowledge the enthusiast and at the same time to insist on the accountability of all ministers.

2.6 While the United Reformed Church accepts in theory the accountability of ministers and congregations, it often appears that 'visitations' of congregations are very gentle and unfocused and conditions of ministerial appointments are not always clear and not always insisted upon. It remains unclear what disciplines councils could exercise.

Section Four

Reflections and suggestions for Mission Council

A. Reflections

1. We have identified two kinds of authority. There is one which might be called an official or theoretical authority. Here we speak of the Word of God and to a lesser extent Catholic orthodoxy and tradition represented by creeds and official statements. This authority is stressed on official occasions such as ordinations and inductions by some ministers and others of particular theological traditions in the context of preaching.

Then we have what might be called a practical authority. This is to most people most evident in the business of elders meetings, Church meetings, and to a lesser extent in the agenda of District Councils, Provincial Synods and General Assembly.

There is an air of surprise or unreality when it is suggested that the two should somehow overlap or merge.

2. We were impressed by what we found about the use of authority in secular institutions. Five guidelines stood out

- to see the exercise of authority as a protection both for individuals and for the whole.
- to provide both an adequate job-description and proper training for it.
- to have built early warning systems of potential difficulties.
- to act promptly on the basis of warnings given
- to recognise that any need for crisis management reveals a failure in previous relationships and methods which need to be corrected for the future.

These guidelines confirmed our view that we need to recover both the concept and the experience of authority as positive, healthy and pastorally useful rather than as officious, intrusive and repressive.

This would include the recovery of the idea that Christian discipleship involves discipline as a positive aid to spiritual growth for the individual as well as a means of making the Church as a body more effective. Such positive discipline will normally take place within the fellowship of the Church and would be a normal part of both corporate and individual discipleship.

3. We were led to reflect on the most profound issue of all, which epitomises the tension between the ideal and the reality of the difficulty in application. Given that the 'Word of God' has such a central place in our theory, we need to consider ways in which we can apply it in practice. This will mean avoiding the error of applying it too easily (i.e. simply quoting proof texts with no consideration of background or change of circumstances), and also the error

of supposing it is too difficult to apply it at all (i.e. saying it is alright for theologians but not for anyone else, or that the circumstances are so changed that it cannot apply to us)

4. The practical challenge of such a theological position is obvious.

Our structure gives clear areas of responsibility to various councils, and by implication to officers of those councils. Of church and elders meetings, District Councils or areas of ecumenical co-operation, Provincial Synods, and General Assembly, we say "These four parts of the structure of the United Reformed Church shall have such consultative, legislative and executive functions as are hereinafter respectively assigned to each of them and each shall be recognised by members of the United Reformed Church as possessing such authority, under the Word of God and the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, as shall enable it to exercise its functions and thereby to minister in that sphere of the life of the United Reformed Church with which it is concerned".

5. A number of issues which we have discussed clearly concern the selection, training and accountability of the ordained ministry. We need to examine our understanding of the 'call of God' in the recruitment of ministers and ask in particular how it is tested. There is then the question of who defines the ministry to which an individual is called, perhaps the balance should be moved towards stressing the authority of the Church and away from personal preference.

6. In attempting to be a conciliar church the role of the members of our various councils in the exercise and interpretation of authority places upon these members considerable responsibility. We need to ask how far representatives at Assembly, or at other councils, should see themselves as advocates for the lower councils which sent them, and subsequently as advocates of the decisions made at the higher councils. In any case, we need to find ways in which decisions of any councils are given wide, and fair, circulation.

B. Suggestions

1. A position needs to be reached and affirmed by the URC on our understanding of the 'Word of God' as our 'supreme authority'. We are not unaware of the difficulty of this, and no doubt any position paper would require the establishment of 'limits of tolerance'. This could be the responsibility of the DPW Committee or a special Commission of Assembly serviced by DPW.

2. The role of the Bible and reflection on it within the councils of the church should be reviewed. Models which, in the press of business, have been found to be effective should be shared.

3. Our colleges and courses through which we train our ministers should examine their provision of teaching about authority and its exercise by the ministry and councils of the church. An essential element in this is training to enable ministers to teach others in this matter.

We do not suggest that the whole burden of this can be carried by our colleges and courses. The practical application of authority should be a necessary element of in-service training as ministers increase their experience of ministry in the church.

4. Those who represent the URC in any official capacity, e.g. elders, ministers of Word and Sacraments, officers and members of District Councils, Provincial Synods and General Assembly, and Provincial Moderators, should be provided with appropriate training and support for the exercise of authority.

This might include an induction course for conciliar officials as to the nature and scope of authority as understood by the URC and its exercise by officers and councils in a sensitively pastoral but disciplined manner.

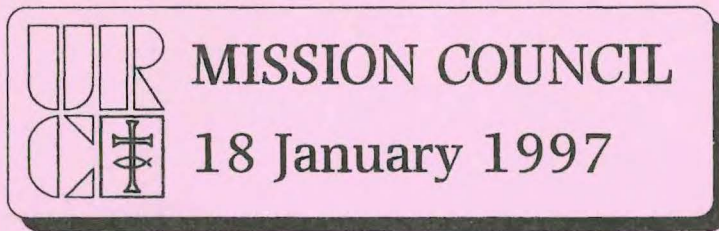
The representative role of conciliar members needs to be clarified.

The work of Provincial Moderators needs to be examined and clarified. In particular the essential but potentially conflicting roles need examination and clarification of a pastorally sensitive 'parent in God' to congregations and ministers and powerful executive, 'powerful' by virtue of possessing wider and more intimate knowledge of the wider and local church and its affairs than anyone else and operating at the critical point of ministerial recommendation. This aspect of the work of Moderators needs to be taken in consideration at the appointment and review of those called to this office.

5. If what is reflected about ministers of Word and Sacraments above in Reflection 5 is accepted, this would strengthen the need for the greater accountability, assessment and oversight of ministers, with implications for the work of District Councils especially in church visitations, the provision of a more focused process of in-service training as part of the discipline of ministry and the work of Provincial Moderators

6. Materials, in a variety of forms, need to be available. Whilst a detailed manual such as the Book of Order of the former Presbyterian Church of England, which would lay down procedures and offer guidance to individuals and councils on the fulfilment of their responsibilities, may not be feasible in the present ethos of the URC some guideline material is most desirable. This might take the form of a revision version of Alan Sell's "Church Discipline", originally published in 1983 (and significantly the first in a series of 'Guidelines' !). Case studies and a video presentation would be particularly helpful, some of which may already exist in the publications of other churches, i.e. Church of Scotland ?

7. There is also a necessarily ongoing task in the interpretation of words and phrases in the Basis of Union, some of which may have been left deliberately ambiguous, others widely drawn or, in the theological climate of the time, others may have had a commonly held meaning no longer generally held. Some examples would be 'oversight', 'pastoral necessity', 'a holy life'. Such interpretation would almost certainly require an agreed 'limit of tolerance'. A similar task probably relates to the interpretation of conciliar responsibilities.



E

Election of Mission Council Advisory Committees and Groups

There was some discussion on this matter at the Mission Council in October 1996 and MCAG was asked to clarify the situation.

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

Mission Council is asked to decide whether or not it wishes to accept the suggestions regarding eligibility and length of service.

1. Mission Council Advisory Group

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

Moderator	David Thompson	
Immediate Past Moderator	John Reardon	
Moderator-elect	David Jenkins	
2 Committee Conveners	Wilma Frew	1998
	John Sutcliffe	1999
Treasurer	Graham Stacy	
4 Members of Mission Council	Angela Hughes	1997
	Julian Macro	2000
	Margaret McKay	1999
	Peter Poulter	1999
General Secretary	Tony Burnham	

(Deputy General Secretary in attendance)

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

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

2. Resource Planning Advisory Committee

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

Convener	Duncan Wilson	2000
Secretary	Dai Hayward	2000
4 members	James Horton	1998
	Peter Poulter	1998
	Pat Nimmo	2000
	Derek Wales	2000
General Secretary	Tony Burnham	
Treasurer	Graham Stacy	
Financial Secretary	Clem Frank	
Secretary for Ministries	Christine Craven	
Advocacy Secretary	Bill Wright	

- 2.1 Convener should be a member of Mission Council, or be invited to attend. S/he should serve for 4 years.
- 2.2 Secretary may or may not be a member of Mission Council and should serve for 4 years.
- 2.3 Members should be members of Mission Council at time of appointment but should then serve for 4 years whether or not they remain members of Council.

3. Staffing Advisory Group

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

Convener	Geoff Lunt	1999
3 members	John Maitland	1997

Denis Earp	1998
Graham Maskery	2000

General Secretary in attendance

3.1 Convener should be a member of Mission Council and should serve for 4 years or until s/he ceases to be a member of the Council, whichever is the shorter.

3.2 Members may or may not be members of Mission Council and should serve for 4 years.

4. Advisory Group on Grants and Loans

The ^{Group} Committee is responsible for considering and co-ordinating central grants. It makes an annual report to Mission Council.

Convener	Simon Rowntree	2000
Secretary	Roger Whitehead	1999

Deputy General Secretary
Church & Society Secretary
CRCW Development Worker
Secretary for Discipleship & Witness
Secretary for Ecumenical Relations
Secretary for International Church Relations
Secretary for Ministries
Youth Secretary or Children's Advocate

4.1 Convener should be a member of Mission Council or be invited to attend. S/he should serve for 4 years.

4.2 Secretary may or may not be a member of Mission Council and should serve for 4 years.



F

MINISTRIES COMMITTEE

THE SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT OF LAY PREACHING

1. Introduction

- 1.1. According to the 1996 Year Book we have 1768 local churches. To lead their acts of worship we have 724 stipendiary ministers, 245 ministers from other denominations serving us in various ways, and 219 non-stipendiary ministers - a total of 1188. It is obvious that, even if it were desirable, there are not enough people here to conduct even one act of worship every Sunday in every church.
- 1.2. To help meet the need of the churches we have 492 nationally accredited lay preachers. They have a distinctive ministry of their own. This was affirmed in the report of the 'Patterns of Ministry' Working Party (1995): "Their work will continue to be vital, and we need distinctive insights from them as they bring together the Word and the world".
- 1.3. Traditionally their role has been itinerant, though many develop particular relationships with certain churches. Sometimes they are invited to take on a definite pastoral task with the agreement of District Council, and "where a District Council believes that pastoral necessity requires a special authorisation that cannot be met from within the congregation, we hope it would look first to lay preachers known to the relevant congregation" ('Patterns of Ministry' report).
- 1.4. In recent years, in addition to the traditional lay preacher, some local churches have developed their own worship leaders, often working in teams, frequently with the help and participation of lay preachers.
- 1.5. This work needs careful support and resourcing from the Church at all levels.

2. What is required

- 2.1. Ministries' Committee has identified the following tasks in relation to the ministry of Lay Preaching:
- a. Recruitment
 - b. Assessment
 - c. Accreditation
 - d. Training
 - e. Support
 - f. Development
 - g. Advocacy
 - h. Ecumenical engagement (that is, contact and working in partnership with those involved in similar ministries in other denominations).
- 2.2 Of these, *Assessment* is currently on the agenda of the Ministries' Committee with a view to recommending some standard form of procedure to assess a candidate's vocation before embarking upon training; *Accreditation* is the responsibility of the Accreditation Sub-Committee; *Training* comes under the aegis of the Training Committee, whose task it is to recommend and validate courses. This leaves *Recruitment, Support, Development, Advocacy* and *Ecumenical engagement*.
- 2.3 While Ministries Committee can, and is willing to, have overall responsibility for these aspects of the work, it cannot undertake the detailed work required. It can validly be argued that these tasks can most effectively be carried out at District or Province level by Lay Preaching Commissioners. There is, however, we believe, a continuing need for national oversight, co-ordination and resourcing, both for the commissioners and for the preachers themselves. We envisage at least the following responsibilities:
- a. Advice and encouragement
 - b. Consultation with District and Province Commissioners (presently taking place annually)
 - c. Organising a network for the dissemination of information
 - d. Publications

3. Proposals

- 3.1. To deal with task 2.1. a, e, f, g, and h and the requirements 2.3. a-d, above, Ministries Committee, following detailed and protracted discussions with Lay Preaching Commissioners, proposes:

a) that a national Lay Preaching Commissioner be appointed to oversee and advocate the work and to liaise with the District and Provincial

Commissioners and with the lay preachers themselves;

b) that a sub-committee of the Ministries Committee be formed to co-ordinate the various interests and concerns, comprising up to four active nationally accredited lay preachers nominated by the annual Lay Preaching Commissioner's Consultation, together with one representative of each of the following Assembly Committees: Ministries, Training, Doctrine Prayer and Worship and Discipleship and Witness; the national Lay Preaching Commissioner to act as Convener and organiser.

- 3.2 We do not envisage the national post as being salaried. It would be done voluntarily on an expenses-only basis. The post-holder would ideally be or have been a lay preacher with experience and vision. A detailed job-description will need to be worked out and presented if agreement in principle is given to our proposals. It may be possible for the administrative work involved to be added to the portfolio of a present member of Church House staff.

CKF
Nov 96

**RESOLUTION ON APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTORS OF
THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MINISTERS PENSION TRUST LIMITED**

1. This matter was considered by the Mission Council on 1 October 1996.
2. As a consequence, a letter was sent to 1,395 of the 1,416 members of the Pension Fund. The difference is accounted for by 21 deferred members who have not kept us advised of their current address.
3. Four members of the Pension Fund objected to the proposal.
4. The following resolution may therefore be moved by the Treasurer:-

“Mission Council, noting that objections were received from four members of the Pension Fund (0.3% of the total) confirms that the statutory consultation procedure laid down in section 19 of the Pensions Act 1995 has been appropriately implemented.”

THE PROBLEM

5. Before considering this resolution, Mission Council will be asked to take into account the following facts.
6. The letter circulated to members contained the words “The period of office of Directors in categories a) and b) above is 3 years with eligibility for a further term of 3 years with a maximum of 6 years service.”
7. Categories a) and a) above are a) members of the Pension Fund and b) members of the Church.
8. It has been drawn to our attention that the sentence should have read “The period of service of Directors in categories a) and b) above is a maximum of 6 years service.”
9. Our Legal Adviser will wish to address Mission Council on the implications of this error.

THE ALTERNATIVES

10. If, having considered the advice given to it, Mission Council is of the opinion that it is unsafe to consider the matter now, a further consultation will take place, pointing out the error in the previous letter, and extending the time for objections.
11. If Mission Council is of the opinion that the error in the letter is of a technical nature, and that the statutory consultation procedure laid down has been appropriately implemented, the resolution may be considered.

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH - RESOURCE SHARING TASK GROUP

Report to Mission Council - January 1997

As a result of its full report to the meeting of Mission Council in the autumn of 1995, the Task Group was asked to focus its future work on the inter-provincial sharing of financial resources. Mission Council expressed the view that:

- consultation between the Provinces was the way forward
- openness and trust were key ingredients
- standardisation of accounting and sharing of financial information between Provinces should be explored
- we need to share a vision of what could be achieved
- the preferred mechanism for sharing was based on the CWM approach of every Province contributing according to its ability and every Province agreeing how the overall contributions should be allocated
- the suggestion of the Task Group, that contributions should be used to ensure that 'essential activities/facilities' in each Province are adequately funded, should be supported

A very constructive consultation between representatives of all the Provinces took place in May 1996, as a result of which, a great deal of information has been shared about the availability and deployment of Provincial resources. A further consultation in October provided the opportunity for comparisons to be made and explored. The Task Group is very satisfied with the progress of the consultative process and is pleased to report that the principle of inter-provincial sharing of financial resources has been established. It has not, so far, been possible to develop a basis for sharing, but as an interim measure, all Synods will be asked, in March 1997, to agree to contribute a minimum of 2% of 1996 investment income for re-distribution inversely in proportion to investment income. Once the outcome of the Synods' decisions is known, a further consultation will take place to consider in depth a number of suggestions which have arisen in the discussions to date.

Dear Revs. Thompson and Burnham,

Greetings from the Holy City of Jerusalem. I thank you for your letter of concern and support of October 2. We are heartened that Christians living overseas are actively observing developments which affect the life of the Christians of the Holy Land.

It is of cardinal importance that we be united on the question of Jerusalem. We are faced with an exclusivist programme for Jerusalem which is quite at odds with our common Christian vision of an open and shared Holy City. Jerusalem belongs to all her sons and daughters, emphatically including the Christians of the whole world. Jerusalem is the capital city of all who hold faith in Jesus Christ.

I wish you a most blessed Christmas and a peaceful new year.

Yours in our Saviour

Archbishop Lufti Laham
Patriarchal Vicar for Jerusalem