

**MINUTES OF THE MISSION COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT THE
HAYES CONFERENCE CENTRE, SWANWICK
2ND – 4TH DECEMBER 2008**

Session 1

The Revd Mary Buchanan led the opening worship. Bible study was led by The Revd Janet Lees. **Mission Council was constituted** by the Moderator, The Revd John Marsh

Attendance

Present with the Moderator were 67 members and 20 staff. The Moderator welcomed newly-attending Members and Staff.

Attending Mission Council for the first time:

Mrs Val Morrison and The Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe – (Moderators designate of General Assembly)

The Revd Mary Buchanan – Moderator's Chaplain

The Revd Janet Lees – facilitating our Bible study

Mr Ron Buford – from UCC – consultant on 'God is still speaking', which is part of the Mission Committee report

Members:

Dr David Robinson (Convener of Assembly Arrangements Committee), Mr Alan Small - Chair of the United Reformed Church Trust, Mr George Grime (North Western Synod), The Revd Gordon Smith (Mersey Synod), The Revd Roy Lowes – new role as Moderator of West Midlands Synod, The Revd Paul Whittle (Moderator of Eastern Synod), The Revd Catherine Ball (Eastern Synod), The Revd Dr Andrew Prasad (Moderator of Thames North Synod), The Revd Maggie Hindley (Thames North Synod), The Revd David Lawrence (Thames North Synod), Ms Iris Williams (National Synod of Wales)

Those deputising this time:

Mrs Chris Eddowes (Northern Synod), Mrs Barbara Shapland (National Synod of Wales)

Assembly Staff:

The Revd Craig Bowman (Secretary for Ministries), The Revd Dr Michael Jagessar (Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministries), The Revd Fiona Thomas (Secretary for Education and Learning), Ms Kay Parris (Editor of Reform), Mrs Irene Wren (former synod clerk of East Midlands synod) present in her new role as Minutes Secretary)

The Moderator ruled that staff in attendance might freely participate in discussion without seeking permission each time – pending any decision made as a result of the report of the Task Group on Mission Council

Apologies for absence

Mrs Elaine Colechin, (Northern Synod), The Revd Pauline Calderwood, (Yorkshire Synod), The Revd Neil Thorogood (Convener Youth and Children's Work Committee), Mr James Wickens (FURY Moderator) and Staff Members Ms Michelle Marcano and Mr Lawrence Moore.

08/45 Minutes

The Minutes of the 7th – 9th March 2008 Mission Council were signed as a correct record by the Moderator.

08/46 Matters arising were explained by the Deputy General Secretary to be on Paper A. Tabled papers included: **A2 (i)** - Section O supplementary, **C2** - URC Ministers' Pension Fund, **J** - Review of General Assembly, **L** - Liaison Group Report (Tuesday evening), **L1**- MCAG's response (Tuesday evening) **Q** - Questions re RSTG (Wednesday)

08/47 Nominations Committee Report 1

The Revd Malcolm Hanson invited the Moderator as Convenor of the Nominating Group to move the appointment of Deputy General Secretary. He proposed: **Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, appoints The Revd Richard Mortimer as Deputy General Secretary from 1st January 2009 until 31st December 2015.** The resolution passed with acclamation.

08/48 The General Secretary reflected on her early days in post. She was aware that Vision4Life was enabling people to talk to each other but commented that people were asking where it would take us. The God is Still Speaking programme could be the answer. She had attended many meetings from which she had observed the ongoing need for joined-up thinking. It had been decided to ask assembly appointed staff members from the URC & the Methodist Church to meet each other and explain their roles. Following discussion with her counterpart in the Methodist Church she hoped that in the Autumn of 2010 a joint meeting of URC Mission Council and Methodist Church Council might be held. She proposed: **Mission Council agrees to welcome a Methodist observer to future meetings and to appoint a URC observer to attend the Methodist Church Council, subject to review in 2010.** This was resolved by consensus. She further proposed: **Mission Council welcomes the proposal of a joint meeting with the Methodist Church Council in the Autumn of 2010 and encourages the General Secretary to make preparations.** This was resolved by consensus.

08/49 Consensus Procedure

Elizabeth Nash introduced further comments regarding the consensus procedure. Two observations had been received since Assembly: Institutional bullying by asking dissenters alone to show their cards and too much emphasis given to those who disagreed. She suggested two changes: In future the facilitator would report changes reached and all would show cards, not just those who showed blue cards in the first round.

08/50 Report of the Task Group reviewing Mission Council (Paper D)

The report was brought by the Revd Elizabeth Nash. She highlighted and clarified recommendations: 4.1; 4.3; 4.4; 4.5; 4.6; and 4.9. This paper would be discussed in groups later during the meeting.

08/51 Vision 4 Life

Paper A6 was introduced by the General Secretary. 468 churches and 2 Synods had already signed up. The booklet had been sent to all churches and extra copies sent to synod offices.

08/52 Energy for Life

An apology was received from The Revd Terry Oakley for any confusion caused by the title chosen for the inter-assembly event.

08/53 Staffing Advisory Group (Paper A7)

The report was presented by The Revd Rowena Francis. The Clerk suggested the need for an enabling resolution and it was agreed to return to the matter later in the meeting.

08/54 Windrush at 60

Paper H was introduced by The Revd Dr. Michael Jagessar. The Moderator thanked Michael for his report and its reminder of how our society had been enriched, and told of a lively Windrush Group in Redditch. Mission Council adjourned for tea.

Session 2

08/55 Sexual Ethics Advisory Group

The Revd Carla Grosch-Miller presented Paper A1. She hoped that the policy and procedure would be up and running by March 2009, and responded to questions from the floor. The Moderator thanked Carla for her work.

08/56 MCAG Report (Papers A & E3)

The Deputy General Secretary presented the report. He referred to **Safe Church**. The declaration is to be found on page 183 of the Book of Reports (2008) as Appendix 5.

08/57 All God's People Enabled

The Revd Dale Rominger was invited to comment. He apologised that the visit of the CWM visitors was not planned as well as it might have been, and apologised to The Revd Carla Grosch-Miller for any inference that there were shortcomings on her behalf.

08/58 Resolution 12 (2008)

This would return to Mission Council for further consideration in due course. The Revd Terry Oakley wished to record his disappointment that a vote had not been taken at the General Assembly to allow a majority decision.

08/59 Resolution 49 (2008)

The General Secretary explained that an accidental reference to District Councils had remained in the wording of the resolution. She and the Clerk had made the decision to remove the reference. Mission Council concurred by consensus.

08/60 Mission Council Minutes on the Website

The Revd David Lawrence reminded Mission Council that General Assembly had agreed to this taking place four years ago.

08/61 Future meetings of Mission Council

Dates for 2009 and 2010 were included in the report. It might be necessary to find a different venue for November 2010 if a joint meeting with the Methodist Council should emerge.

08/62 MCAG Resolution

The Deputy General Secretary proposed that **Mission Council appoints The Revd Elizabeth Nash as Consensus Adviser to Mission Council until General Assembly 2010 in the first instance**. This was resolved by consensus.

08/63 Staffing Advisory Group

A re-worded resolution was presented by The Revd Rowena Francis, on behalf of the Staffing Advisory Group. **Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, agrees to the continuation of the posts of Youth Work Development Officer and Children's Work Development Officer and confirms Mr John Brown in the former post and Ms Jo Williams in the latter, both on open contracts**. This was resolved by consensus.

08/64 Review of General Assembly

Paper J was presented by the General Secretary. She commented upon the large amount of business to be dealt with, the value of the Children's Assembly and the budgetary implications of the changes. Three possible scenarios for assembly were presented. These scenarios provided a stimulus for the group discussions on Paper J.

08/65 Notices

The Deputy General Secretary gave notices and directions for the small groups. Mission Council moved to a group discussion session to consider the report on Mission Council and General Assembly.

Session 3

08/66 Following the dinner break, the group discussion continued. Mission Council members returned to share the outcomes of the group discussions.

1. Rethinking the General Assembly. Many views were expressed but generally the desire was for a mixed Assembly with business kept to a minimum with worship, study, inspirational speakers and discussion upon the direction and priorities of the Church.
2. Paper D Report of the Mission Council Review Group. There was thought that the purpose of Mission Council needed clarifying in the light of whatever shape the new General Assembly might take. Then a possible new name could be considered. There was general support for the report with requests for some clarifications and some further reflection by the group. The Moderator thanked everyone for their contributions and asked that any further comments be handed to the Deputy General Secretary.

08/67 The Revd David Fox

The Revd Peter Noble informed members of Mission Council that all had concluded that the missing minister and Synod Clerk, The Revd David Fox, had now been presumed dead. He thanked those who had sent messages of encouragement to the church in Penarth and the Moderator for taking time to visit the church. The Synod is dealing with the range of legal issues connected with the disappearance of someone without next of kin. He hoped this might eventually be a learning experience for the whole Church.

Evening Prayers were led by the chaplain. Mission Council adjourned.

Wednesday 3rd December

Session 4

08/68 Inductions

Morning Worship included the induction of The Revd Fiona Thomas as Secretary for Education and Learning and of The Revd Richard Mortimer as Deputy General Secretary.

The Deputy General Secretary explained changes to the order of business for the day.

08/69 Legal Adviser

The Deputy General Secretary invited Andrew Middleton of Towns Needham to give up-to-date news of Mrs Janet Knott (our legal adviser) who is ill in hospital. Mission Council sent good wishes and prayers for Janet at this difficult time.

08/70 Mission Committee Report (Paper E)

The Revd Ed Cox introduced the report. He thanked the members of the committee and staff team for their energy and willingness to work together in new ways. Theological reflections have been an important element of the committee working. He invited questions or comments on the report. There were none. He then invited Ron Buford to speak to Mission Council about the God is Still Speaking programme.

08/71 God is Still Speaking (Paper E1)

Mr Ron Buford spoke of a renewal movement to strengthen Reformed identity of those in the Church, and also to close the distance between those inside and outside the church. In a video presentation a number of URC leaders shared their hopes and vision for the URC, all of them convinced that in today's world "God is Still Speaking!" A wide range of questions and comments were shared. Mr Cox thanked all who had contributed, responded to questions and comments from the floor, and proposed the following resolutions:

- 1. Mission Council welcomes the proposal of a God is Still Speaking initiative in the United Reformed Church as a vehicle for renewal and evangelism.**

Resolved by agreement

- 2. Mission Council approves the submission of a grant application to the CWM Mission Support Programme for a God is Still Speaking campaign in the United Reformed Church.**

Resolved by agreement

- 3. Mission Council asks the Mission Committee to proceed with preparations for the God is Still Speaking campaign.**

Resolved by agreement

Session 5

08/72 Mission Committee

The Revd Ed Cox thanked those who had contributed during the previous session. He added that work on advice about Charity Registration for LEPs was also underway. Mission Committee had a significant role in watching the budget for God is Still Speaking.

08/73 Mission Strategy (Paper E2)

The Revd Cox presented the paper on Mission Strategy. He gave the rationale for a denominational Mission Strategy - clarity of purpose, more effective opportunities for teamwork and a strategy to enable the making of difficult decisions were all needed. He discussed what the committee meant by "strategy" - a process rather than a document arrived at as a result of much talking and conversations, which started with the local congregations and showed how Church House staff and synods might help the local situations, which was permissive to the local congregation, values driven and not targets driven and effective in demonstrating said values, and an aid to pilgrimage, but not precluding the unexpected. He explained the relationship between the local regional and General Assembly - Mission pledges made by local churches would be reflected in Synod mission strategies and these reflected in an Assembly strategy, and the Assembly Mission Framework, hopefully ready for General Assembly 2010, would include a clear statement of values, a set of 10 year outcomes, measurable indicators giving a sense of moving in the right direction and a biennial mission survey. It was very necessary that there was time for adequate discussion/consultation for churches, synods, committees, moderators, clerks all to engage with the subject before 2010. Further discussion was continued in groups, followed by plenary feedback.

Mr Cox proposed the following resolutions:

1. **Mission Council affirms the general direction and three layered approach to developing a URC Mission Strategy and requests the Mission Committee to continue this work subject to the feedback received at the Mission Council meeting.** Following discussion the resolution was resolved by agreement.
2. **Mission Council affirms the plans being developed for an extensive consultation process about the URC Mission Strategy throughout 2009 and encourages all councils and committees of the Church to participate in the consultation.** Following discussion and some clarification the resolution was resolved by agreement.
3. **Mission Council requests the Mission Committee to bring forward an Assembly Mission Framework at General Assembly 2010 having considered feedback from the 2009 consultation process.** The resolution was resolved by agreement.
4. **Mission Council encourages all councils and committees of the Church to have regard for the emerging URC Mission strategy in all aspects of policy-making and planning between now and General Assembly 2010.** The resolution was resolved by agreement.

Session 6

08/74 Windermere Centre Building Project (Paper G)

The Treasurer presented the report. The plans for the development having been available for members to look at, he explained that a more costly plan would provide much improved facilities. He showed slides of the building and spoke of the possibilities. Mission Council was invited to look at the options 1 – 5 as given in the paper G. Extra money would be from the Church Buildings Fund which currently has assets in the order of £2m. The Moderator sought the immediate views of the meeting. A range of views was expressed but Option 4 was clearly favoured. It was felt that Carver Church should be encouraged to contribute to the project, as it would benefit greatly from the building project. Option 4 was preferred by majority voting, 0 votes against, 2 abstentions. (The Revd Richard Church registered that as a Director of the North Western Synod Trust he had a formal interest in the matter.)

08/75 Education and Learning Committee (Paper G1)

Recommendations from the review of the Windermere Centre were presented by Professor Malcolm Johnson. He thanked the review group for their diligent work and proposed the resolutions. The Moderator ruled the matter to be urgent.

Recommendations:

That the Centre be recognised by General Assembly as a resource Centre for Learning for the United Reformed Church, and one of the coalition of learning providers seeking to equip the whole people of God. The recommendation resolved by consensus.

That a new Windermere Management Committee should replace both the present Windermere Advisory Group and the Windermere Local Management Committee as a sub-committee of the Education and Learning Committee. The recommendation resolved by consensus.

08/76 Treasurer's Report – (1 Papers F, F1, F2, F3.)

Mr John Ellis presented the report on behalf of the Finance Committee.

- 1) Letter from the Pensions Regulator (Paper F). The letter marked an agreement for the present time. There would be more discussion in the future.
- 2) The Stewardship Sub-Committee would be re-instated from January with Mrs Faith Paulding as Convenor.
- 3) There was ongoing work from General Assembly to tie up the loose ends concerning the funding of the Children and Youth Development Officers.
- 4) Work was ongoing on the proposals regarding Retired Ministers' housing provision, taking into account the views expressed that periods of training should also be taken into consideration. Mr Ellis reported the Ministers' stipend for 2009 would be set at £21,900. In order to facilitate the decision about stipend in future years he proposed the resolution:

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, agrees that the level of the basic ministerial stipend should be set annually by agreement between the Finance Committee and the URC Trust and reported to Mission Council. In the event that the URC Trust is unable to endorse the Finance Committee's recommendation, the decision will revert to Mission Council. This was resolved by consensus.

Mr Ellis explained that although there had been two investment committees, (serving the URC Trust and the Ministers' Pension Trust respectively) until now, it was believed by those bodies that one committee could do the work of both. A number of members were due to retire shortly and so this seemed a sensible time to create a single group with those who had continuity of knowledge forming the first committee members. He proposed the resolution:

Mission Council thanks those who have served the Church diligently on the URC Trust Investment Sub-Committee and the members of the URC Ministers' Pension Trust Investment Sub-Committee; agrees that those two committees should be dissolved; agrees to the establishment from 1st January 2009 of a United Reformed Church Investment Committee to operate in accordance with its agreed terms of reference and composition. This was resolved by consensus.

Mr Ellis drew attention to changes in Section 3 of the draft proposal on paper F2. At 3 the wording should read: *The composition of URCIC shall be as follows: 1) The Chair of the URC Trust or other board member, 2) The Chair of the URC Ministers' Pension Trust Board or other board member, 3) The Treasurer of the United Reformed Church, 4) The Convenor of the Pensions Executive, 5) The Treasurer of Westminster College.*

Session 7

08/77 Treasurer's Report: Budget 2009

Mr Ellis was optimistic for the 2009 Budget. Signs were that the 2008 accounts would be close to balance due to higher than expected giving and lower than expected stipend expenditure. However he was concerned that the Assembly costs were so much over budget. The 2009 budget had been drawn up on the assumption of a 4% stipend increase and an increase for lay staff pensions but currently with no extra provision for ministers' pensions. There were a number of comments from the floor, to which Mr Ellis responded. He proposed the resolution:

Mission Council accepts the budget for 2009 set out in the attachment of this report. (Paper F3) This was resolved by agreement.

Amendment to the rules of the Pension Fund (Paper C2)

Mr Ellis proposed amendments to the rules of the Pension Fund:

Disapplication of the HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) Transitional Regulations

Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly resolves that the following notice be included in the Scheme document of the Rules of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund. This was resolved by majority.

(The Trustees resolve, and the United Reformed Church acting in General Assembly agrees, that the rules of the Fund shall be deemed to be, and they are hereby, modified with effect from 6th April 2006: in a manner which has the same effect as all of the modifications in regulations 3 to 8 of the HMRC Transitional Regulations but without limitation to the transitional period mentioned in those Regulations and subject to the "General Finance Act 2004 amendments" already made to the fund with effect from 6 April 2006 by Resolution 3` passed at General Assembly at their meeting of 1st July 2006: and so that the HMRC Transitional Regulations no longer apply in relation to the Scheme with effect from 6th April 2006 "Transitional period" has the meaning given to it in the HMRC Transitional Regulations.)

Resolution: Pension Fund Rule on Additional Voluntary Contributions

Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly resolves to amend the Rules of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund, with effect from 3rd December 2008, by the following additions, deletions and amendments. This was resolved by majority. Deletions shown in bold [brackets] additions/amendments shown in italic (*brackets*)

Amend Rule 17 as follows

[17.1.1 the voluntary contributions shall be limited to a sum which, when added to all other contributions in respect of his/her membership of the Fund, would provide benefits not exceeding Inland Revenue limits and when added to the contributions (if any) of the member to this and all other retirement benefits schemes that have received or are capable of receiving approval under the 1988 Act does not exceed 15% of the member's total remuneration for that year.]

Re-number paragraphs [17.1.2 & 17.1.3] (17.1.1 & 17.1.2.) respectively.

Amend Rule 43 & 43.1 as follows

(Overriding Tax Rules and) Maximum Benefits

[The Inland Revenue limits on benefits apply to the Fund and are set out in the Schedule hereto] *(The Schedule hereto sets out the Tax Rules and the Inland Revenue Limits on benefits that apply to the Fund)*

Add the following at the end of the Schedule: "Inland Revenue Limits: Part 1-Tax Rules"

Members' contributions: The annual rate of Members' contributions may, with the consent of the Pension Trustees, exceed 15% of remuneration or any other limit imposed by the provisions of Part 11 of the schedule.

1. These amendments to the Pension Fund Rules allow members to pay Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs) to the AVC Scheme attaching to the Fund without the current contribution restriction (maximum contribution 15% of stipend.)

Resolution: Pension Fund Rule on Death in Service & Death after Retirement

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, resolves to amend the Rules of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund, with effect from 3rd December 2008, by the following additions, deletion and amendments. This was resolved by majority.

Deletions shown in bold [brackets] Additions/amendments shown in italic (*brackets*) 22.2 as follows:

22.2 “To the surviving spouse a pension for life of an annual amount equal to one half of the pension to which the member would have been entitled to if the member had attained normal pension age (*or, in the case of the death of a contributing member in service after normal pension age, one half of the pension to which the member would have been entitled had he or she retired the day before his/her death*) plus in the case of the spouse of a member of the Congregational Fund.....”

Amend Rule 23.1 as follows

23.1 “ In the event of the death of a member who has retired on pension and who leaves a spouse whom he/she married before [**attainment of normal pension age**] (the later of the date on which his/her service of a contributing member of the fund ceases and the date of his/her retirement), a pension will be payable for life to the spouse”

2. On 1st December 2006 when the Pension Fund Rules were brought into line with the requirements of the Employment Equality (Age) Discrimination Regulations 2006, these required amendments were overlooked. The amendment would ensure that benefits are provided from the Fund where a member has continued in contributory service after normal pension age 65); and that spouse benefits are available in all cases where the marriage took place before the member’s retirement date.

08/78 Nominations Committee – Papers B – B4

The Convenor presented the report.

He proposed the resolutions:

1. **Mission Council agrees to reappoint the Revd David Grosch–Miller as Moderator of the South Western Synod from 1st September 2009 to 31st August 2013.** This was resolved by consensus
2. **Mission Council agrees that the impending appointment of the Secretary for World Church Relations may be made by MCAG on the recommendation of the appointing group.** It was pointed out that this would result in double delegation, which is not permitted. The Clerk assisted in rewording the resolution to read:
3. **Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, agrees that the impending appointment of a Secretary for World Church Relations may be authorised, in this instance, by MCAG on the recommendation of the appointing group.** This was resolved by consensus.

Since the report was printed, The Revd. Robert Weston had agreed to convene the work of the Youth and Children’s Committee.

Mr Hanson also indicated that there should be an alteration of wording in paragraph 5 and that it should read: 5. There have been recent changes to the composition of the Churches Legislation Advisory Service (previously known as the Churches Main Committee). Our representative should now be Mrs Sheila Duncan with the General Secretary or Deputy General Secretary as alternate.

Mr Hanson proposed the resolution

3. **Mission Council agrees to appoint the committee officers and representatives as set out in the Nominations Committee report.** This was resolved by consensus.

Mr Hanson presented papers B1, B1i, and B1ii. These gave the background to the work recently undertaken to monitor committee membership in accordance with the Equal Opportunity Policy of the church. He explained that every effort was made to achieve balanced representation on our committees but that due to refusals to invitations balance was not always achievable.

Mr Hanson presented Paper B2 Orientation and Induction of Committee and Panel Members, with the resolution:

Mission Council commends the paper on “Orientation and Induction of Committee and Panel Members” to the committees concerned for their consideration and possible use in their own induction processes. This was resolved by consensus.

Papers B3 and B4 provided information about the make up and accountability of various group and task groups. They were provided for Mission Council to reflect the ongoing work and thinking of the nominations committee.

Considerable discussion was generated and Mr Hanson responded. The Moderator thanked the Nominations Committee for its work.

The Moderator then invited the Revds Terry Oakley and Rachel Poolman to speak on Resolution 12 (2008) and offer a new resolution to Mission Council.

Resolution:

Mission Council, in receiving Resolution 12 from the General Assembly in 2008 agrees to consider the issues relating to it at its meeting in May 2009. This was resolved by consensus and Mr Oakley and Ms Poolman undertook to do the necessary background work before the next meeting.

08/79 Communications Committee Report – 1 (Paper K)

The report was presented by the Convenor. She noted that the work of the church depended upon much hard work from the Graphics team and Communications office. There were high expectations for good quality paperwork and presentations, but these came at high cost. She invited the groups to discuss the questions on paper Ka and bring back written comments plus one verbal piece of feedback to share in the plenary session. The Clerk informed Mission Council that the document relating to churches application for charity status was largely redrawn by the Graphics team and thanked Sara in particular for her excellent piece of work, which was available for churches from the website.

The discussion of the questions posed on paper Ka continued in smaller groups. Groups responded briefly. Dr Thorpe thanked everyone for the comments received and said they would be reflected upon and shared later during the Mission Council meeting.

08/80 Year of the Child

Mrs Karen Bulley and Ms Jo Williams both supported this work about which Karen spoke briefly. A DVD with audio-visual resources was to be sent to every URC church hoping that it would be found useful along with further resources posted on the web-site. Mission Council watched a short piece of film as a taster.

The Chaplain outlined the arrangements for the celebration of Holy Communion on Thursday morning. Mission Council adjourned for dinner.

Session 8

08/81 Closed Session

Mission Council continued in closed session. Mission Council resolved

Mission Council recognises reluctantly that the process instigated in January 2006 has reached an end, and discharges the Liaison Group with thanks for the work it has done on its behalf.

(A full record of this session is held *in retentis*.)

Evening worship was led by the Chaplain and members of the Synod of Scotland and the session closed at 10.57p.m.

Thursday 4th December

Session 9

Holy Communion was celebrated by the Moderator and his Chaplain.

The General Secretary invited anyone who felt the need to talk after the previous night's closed session to meet with the chaplain.

08/82 Cool Heads and Warm Hearts (Paper F4)

Mr John Ellis presented Paper F4. He endeavoured to explain the state of the URC assets in understandable terms. He read from the story of Paddington Bear visiting the bank and commented on the financial lessons from the story! 1) Understand the deal done with the bank (our investments have been cautious so are saved from the worst disasters). 2) Panic causes dramatic consequences (our confidence is not at panic level). 3) World looks different if you are looking at the long term (we are long term investors). Further, in terms of our income we did not rely on investment for paying for our programmes, we relied on our people's giving to M&M. This was not a good time to add to our expenditure but it was a good time to review how M&M was raised in Synods, our expenditure would stay much as it had been, in a time of recession the number of candidates for ministry typically increased and we could continue with some confidence. In terms of our wealth, falling prices might help us with retired ministers' housing, the reserves of the church were held in shares, bonds and cash (15% loss rather than 20%) and in the long term shares did perform better. The Ministers' Pension Fund assets were in similar types of investments. The Pension Fund evaluation in the pipeline would reveal deficits, and lower estimate of income from assets – value would look inadequate. Another factor was the longevity of retired ministers. However, there were no threats for the immediate future, although in the longer term there might be shortage of funds to pay pensions but there would equally be time to redress the deficit. Our investors would continue to keep cool heads and warm hearts!

08/83 Ethical Investment Group (Paper A5)

Mr Ellis presented the report. Work continued to be done to pursue our ethical stance. He drew attention to a CTBI conference to be held on 20th January 2009. The Joint Public Issues Team had planned with CTBI to reflect theologically on the financial crisis and responsible investment.

08/84 Ministries Committee (Papers C & C1)

The Convenor presented the report.

08/85 Ministerial Development Review

The pastorate profile would become much more important in the ongoing life of local churches, with clearer expectations on Minister or CRCW and the people of the pastorate but with a flexibility of models to be followed to suit local situations. It was not a threat to MASA but a relationship between minister and people. The two processes should interlink for the benefit for both. The process had been trialled in one Synod and feedback received.

He proposed the resolution:

Mission Council authorises the scheme of Local Ministry and Mission Review as proposed by the Ministries Committee. This was resolved by agreement.

08/86 Section O Advisory Group (Paper A2, A2i A3)

The Clerk presented the report and invited comments. The Revd David Lawrence asked if the records of Section O processes were stored in a fire-proof cabinet. The Clerk would ensure that they were. Revd Adrian Bulley was grateful for the recommendations and said that Moderators were uneasy as they found themselves overseeing the recommendations from the Assembly Commissions. The Legal Advisor responded saying that more recently the Commission Panels had included the recommendations as part of the decision of the panel. This relieved the Moderators from having to monitor the outcomes. The Convenor of the Nominations Committee noted that the joint panel was not nominated by that Committee nor was its membership published. The Clerk responded that there were a number of people who only served because of the anonymity. The Clerk moved to the resolutions which he proposed.

The Section O Advisory Group has requested the following changes to the Section O and Section P processes and asks Mission Council to agree, acting on behalf of General Assembly.

Resolution:

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, agrees the following changes to Part II of Section O (The Process for dealing with cases of discipline involving Ministers and Church Related Community Workers) and Part II of Section P (Incapacity Procedure) of the Manual: This was resolved by consensus.

Changes to Part II of Section O

E.5.3.15 Replace the existing wording with the following:

‘That Notice shall state that the proceedings under the Section O Process shall stand adjourned to await written notification from the recipient as to whether the recommendation contained in the Notice has been accepted or rejected. The Notice to the recipient shall include a request for him/her to respond with all due expedition, consistent with the consultation process laid down by the Incapacity Procedure.’

E.7.4 Delete the bracketed words at the end.

E.7.7 Delete this paragraph

J.2 Replace the words: '(but excluding any costs of representation)' with the words: '(but excluding any costs and expenses incurred by the parties in the preparation of their respective cases and the cost of any representation at the Hearing)'

J.3 Replace the words: 'all papers... [to end of sentence]' with the words: 'all papers relating to concluded cases, which shall include the papers which the Mandated Group and the Minister have lodged with the Secretary of the Assembly Commission and, in the event of an appeal, with the General Secretary during the course of the proceedings. The complete bundle of all these papers shall be kept in a locked cabinet at Church House.'

Changes to Part II of the Incapacity Procedure (Section P)

N.1.2 Add the following words at the end of the paragraph: 'The name of the Minister shall not be read out at General Assembly, but shall be recorded in the list of all those no longer on the Roll of Ministers.'

Add a new Paragraph N.1.4 as follows:

'N.1.4 If the Review Commission decides to retain the name of the Minister on the Roll, the report to General Assembly shall simply state that a case under the Incapacity Procedure has been concluded and the name of the Minister has been retained on the Roll, but shall not supply the Minister's name or any further information.'

N.2 Replace the words: '**(but excluding any costs of representation)**' with the words: '**(but excluding any costs and expenses incurred by the Minister in the preparation of his/her case and the cost of any representation at the Hearing)**'.

Further, the Section O Advisory Group met on 26th November 2008 and requested Mission Council to give consideration to the following two issues.

Joint Panel

The establishment of the Joint Panel, the list of membership of which was held by the Synod Moderators, and from which well-trained and equipped people were drawn to join Mandated Groups had been most successful. The Advisory Group had received a number of requests to consider increasing the number of those on the Joint Panel, thus providing a greater pool of such skilled people. The Group having considered this had concluded that it would indeed be beneficial to allow Synods to nominate two people to the Joint Panel, and accordingly asks Mission Council to approve changes to the relevant paragraph. Because it would inevitably take time for Synods to identify suitable people and then train them, it would be helpful if this change could be made soon in order that the process could begin and the enhanced panel would be in place as soon as possible. Note that this new provision was permissive, not obligatory, that is, each synod must nominate one person and may nominate two.

Resolution:

Mission Council agrees to change Part II of the Disciplinary Process found in Section O of The Manual as follows:

In Paragraph B.2.2 replace "thirteen" with "twenty six" and add "or two" after "of whom one". This was resolved by consensus.

The paragraph will then read: "There shall also be a standing panel (the "Joint Panel") consisting of a maximum of twenty six persons, of whom one or two shall be nominated by each Synod and selected preferably"

Name of disciplinary process

From its beginning the Disciplinary Process had been referred to as "Section O". The Group believed that there was some evidence that this rather anonymous, neutral title had the effect of dulling the significance of what was a very serious disciplinary process and so could lead people to fail to appreciate its significance and the seriousness with which it and its findings should be taken. Furthermore, it has been agreed that the Incapacity Procedure was so known and not referred to as "Section P".

Section O Advisory Group therefore proposed the following resolution:

Mission Council resolves that henceforth the disciplinary process for Ministers and Church Related Community Workers shall be known as "The Disciplinary Process". Where appropriate the words "found in Section O of The Manual" may be added. This was resolved by consensus.

08/87 Assembly Committees and the Assembly (Paper A3)

On a point of order the General Secretary asked permission to withdraw Paper A3 and this was granted by consensus.

Session 10

08/88 Communications Committee

The Revd Martin Hazell shared comments from the group work. "Do it well with an eye on the budget". "We get more than we pay for – good value for money". "Bookshop – we now know the costs- runs at a deficit of £50,000 (mostly staffing costs) if we keep it, it will need a manager to run it". "There is work still to be done". "Assembly - Raising the profile is costly". "Could we raise some money – sponsorship, advertising in our reports, publicity stands?" There was an orange card response to keeping the bookshop with 3 blue cards.

08/89 Resource Sharing Task Group (Paper A4) Q

The Convenor presented the report. Resource sharing was supported by all synods. It worked and was vital to their ongoing work. He asked what Mission Council wanted, what should be shared and at what level? He noted work was ongoing on a notional Synod 14 as a template for income and necessary expenses. Was that what the Assembly Resolution in 2002 meant? Was that what Mission Council meant? Did we want to go further? Synods would need to cooperate in what was decided. These questions and those on Paper Q were discussed in buzz groups. A Plenary Session followed.

08/90 Remaining Business

Legal Adviser

Andrew Middleton reported he had passed on Mission Council's good wishes to Janet Knott and she had responded with thanks for the good wishes and cards received.

08/91 Thanks and Farewells

These were made to Mr Alan Wickens (North Western Synod), Mrs Maureen Lawrence and Mr Nigel Macdonald (Southern Synod) whose term of service had been completed, The Revd Neil Thorogood who had resigned as Convenor of Youth & Children's Committee, The Revd Dale Rominger for his work on our behalf in connecting with the World Church, and to The Revd Ray Adams, who was moving into pastoral ministry. Thanks were offered particularly to Ray by the General Secretary noting especially his attention to detail in a behind-the-scenes role. His musical talents had been much enjoyed and could have a higher profile in his next role. Ray responded saying the time was right for him to move on. The Moderator presented Ray with a card of good wishes.

Closing Worship

The Chaplain led Mission Council in closing worship.

**MINUTES OF THE MISSION COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT THE
HAYES CONFERENCE CENTRE, SWANWICK
2ND – 4TH DECEMBER 2008**

Session 1

The Revd Mary Buchanan led the opening worship. Bible study was led by The Revd Janet Lees. **Mission Council was constituted** by the Moderator, The Revd John Marsh

Attendance

Present with the Moderator were 67 members and 20 staff. The Moderator welcomed newly-attending Members and Staff.

Attending Mission Council for the first time:

Mrs Val Morrison and The Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe – (Moderators designate of General Assembly)

The Revd Mary Buchanan – Moderator's Chaplain

The Revd Janet Lees – facilitating our Bible study

Mr Ron Buford – from UCC – consultant on 'God is still speaking', which is part of the Mission Committee report

Members:

Dr David Robinson (Convener of Assembly Arrangements Committee), Mr Alan Small - Chair of the United Reformed Church Trust, Mr George Grime (North Western Synod), The Revd Gordon Smith (Mersey Synod), The Revd Roy Lowes – new role as Moderator of West Midlands Synod, The Revd Paul Whittle (Moderator of Eastern Synod), The Revd Catherine Ball (Eastern Synod), The Revd Dr Andrew Prasad (Moderator of Thames North Synod), The Revd Maggie Hindley (Thames North Synod), The Revd David Lawrence (Thames North Synod), Ms Iris Williams (National Synod of Wales)

Those deputising this time:

Mrs Chris Eddowes (Northern Synod), Mrs Barbara Shapland (National Synod of Wales)

Assembly Staff:

The Revd Craig Bowman (Secretary for Ministries), The Revd Dr Michael Jagessar (Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministries), The Revd Fiona Thomas (Secretary for Education and Learning), Ms Kay Parris (Editor of Reform), Mrs Irene Wren (former synod clerk of East Midlands synod) present in her new role as Minutes Secretary)

The Moderator ruled that staff in attendance might freely participate in discussion without seeking permission each time – pending any decision made as a result of the report of the Task Group on Mission Council

Apologies for absence

Mrs Elaine Colechin, (Northern Synod), The Revd Pauline Calderwood, (Yorkshire Synod), The Revd Neil Thorogood (Convener Youth and Children's Work Committee), Mr James Wickens (FURY Moderator) and Staff Members Ms Michelle Marcano and Mr Lawrence Moore.

08/45 Minutes

The Minutes of the 7th – 9th March 2008 Mission Council were signed as a correct record by the Moderator.

08/46 Matters arising were explained by the Deputy General Secretary to be on Paper A. Tabled papers included: **A2 (i)** - Section O supplementary, **C2** - URC Ministers' Pension Fund, **J** - Review of General Assembly, **L** - Liaison Group Report (Tuesday evening), **L1**- MCAG's response (Tuesday evening) **Q** - Questions re RSTG (Wednesday)

08/47 Nominations Committee Report 1

The Revd Malcolm Hanson invited the Moderator as Convenor of the Nominating Group to move the appointment of Deputy General Secretary. He proposed: **Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, appoints The Revd Richard Mortimer as Deputy General Secretary from 1st January 2009 until 31st December 2015.** The resolution passed with acclamation.

08/48 The General Secretary reflected on her early days in post. She was aware that Vision4Life was enabling people to talk to each other but commented that people were asking where it would take us. The God is Still Speaking programme could be the answer. She had attended many meetings from which she had observed the ongoing need for joined-up thinking. It had been decided to ask assembly appointed staff members from the URC & the Methodist Church to meet each other and explain their roles. Following discussion with her counterpart in the Methodist Church she hoped that in the Autumn of 2010 a joint meeting of URC Mission Council and Methodist Church Council might be held. She proposed: **Mission Council agrees to welcome a Methodist observer to future meetings and to appoint a URC observer to attend the Methodist Church Council, subject to review in 2010.** This was resolved by consensus. She further proposed: **Mission Council welcomes the proposal of a joint meeting with the Methodist Church Council in the Autumn of 2010 and encourages the General Secretary to make preparations.** This was resolved by consensus.

08/49 Consensus Procedure

Elizabeth Nash introduced further comments regarding the consensus procedure. Two observations had been received since Assembly: Institutional bullying by asking dissenters alone to show their cards and too much emphasis given to those who disagreed. She suggested two changes: In future the facilitator would report changes reached and all would show cards, not just those who showed blue cards in the first round.

08/50 Report of the Task Group reviewing Mission Council (Paper D)

The report was brought by the Revd Elizabeth Nash. She highlighted and clarified recommendations: 4.1; 4.3; 4.4; 4.5; 4.6; and 4.9. This paper would be discussed in groups later during the meeting.

08/51 Vision 4 Life

Paper A6 was introduced by the General Secretary. 468 churches and 2 Synods had already signed up. The booklet had been sent to all churches and extra copies sent to synod offices.

08/52 Energy for Life

An apology was received from The Revd Terry Oakley for any confusion caused by the title chosen for the inter-assembly event.

08/53 Staffing Advisory Group (Paper A7)

The report was presented by The Revd Rowena Francis. The Clerk suggested the need for an enabling resolution and it was agreed to return to the matter later in the meeting.

08/54 Windrush at 60

Paper H was introduced by The Revd Dr. Michael Jagessar. The Moderator thanked Michael for his report and its reminder of how our society had been enriched, and told of a lively Windrush Group in Redditch. Mission Council adjourned for tea.

Session 2

08/55 Sexual Ethics Advisory Group

The Revd Carla Grosch-Miller presented Paper A1. She hoped that the policy and procedure would be up and running by March 2009, and responded to questions from the floor. The Moderator thanked Carla for her work.

08/56 MCAG Report (Papers A & E3)

The Deputy General Secretary presented the report. He referred to **Safe Church**. The declaration is to be found on page 183 of the Book of Reports (2008) as Appendix 5.

08/57 All God's People Enabled

The Revd Dale Rominger was invited to comment. He apologised that the visit of the CWM visitors was not planned as well as it might have been, and apologised to The Revd Carla Grosch-Miller for any inference that there were shortcomings on her behalf.

08/58 Resolution 12 (2008)

This would return to Mission Council for further consideration in due course. The Revd Terry Oakley wished to record his disappointment that a vote had not been taken at the General Assembly to allow a majority decision.

08/59 Resolution 49 (2008)

The General Secretary explained that an accidental reference to District Councils had remained in the wording of the resolution. She and the Clerk had made the decision to remove the reference. Mission Council concurred by consensus.

08/60 Mission Council Minutes on the Website

The Revd David Lawrence reminded Mission Council that General Assembly had agreed to this taking place four years ago.

08/61 Future meetings of Mission Council

Dates for 2009 and 2010 were included in the report. It might be necessary to find a different venue for November 2010 if a joint meeting with the Methodist Council should emerge.

08/62 MCAG Resolution

The Deputy General Secretary proposed that **Mission Council appoints The Revd Elizabeth Nash as Consensus Adviser to Mission Council until General Assembly 2010 in the first instance**. This was resolved by consensus.

08/63 Staffing Advisory Group

A re-worded resolution was presented by The Revd Rowena Francis, on behalf of the Staffing Advisory Group. **Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, agrees to the continuation of the posts of Youth Work Development Officer and Children's Work Development Officer and confirms Mr John Brown in the former post and Ms Jo Williams in the latter, both on open contracts**. This was resolved by consensus.

08/64 Review of General Assembly

Paper J was presented by the General Secretary. She commented upon the large amount of business to be dealt with, the value of the Children's Assembly and the budgetary implications of the changes. Three possible scenarios for assembly were presented. These scenarios provided a stimulus for the group discussions on Paper J.

08/65 Notices

The Deputy General Secretary gave notices and directions for the small groups. Mission Council moved to a group discussion session to consider the report on Mission Council and General Assembly.

Session 3

08/66 Following the dinner break, the group discussion continued. Mission Council members returned to share the outcomes of the group discussions.

1. Rethinking the General Assembly. Many views were expressed but generally the desire was for a mixed Assembly with business kept to a minimum with worship, study, inspirational speakers and discussion upon the direction and priorities of the Church.
2. Paper D Report of the Mission Council Review Group. There was thought that the purpose of Mission Council needed clarifying in the light of whatever shape the new General Assembly might take. Then a possible new name could be considered. There was general support for the report with requests for some clarifications and some further reflection by the group. The Moderator thanked everyone for their contributions and asked that any further comments be handed to the Deputy General Secretary.

08/67 The Revd David Fox

The Revd Peter Noble informed members of Mission Council that all had concluded that the missing minister and Synod Clerk, The Revd David Fox, had now been presumed dead. He thanked those who had sent messages of encouragement to the church in Penarth and the Moderator for taking time to visit the church. The Synod is dealing with the range of legal issues connected with the disappearance of someone without next of kin. He hoped this might eventually be a learning experience for the whole Church.

Evening Prayers were led by the chaplain. Mission Council adjourned.

Wednesday 3rd December

Session 4

08/68 Inductions

Morning Worship included the induction of The Revd Fiona Thomas as Secretary for Education and Learning and of The Revd Richard Mortimer as Deputy General Secretary.

The Deputy General Secretary explained changes to the order of business for the day.

08/69 Legal Adviser

The Deputy General Secretary invited Andrew Middleton of Towns Needham to give up-to-date news of Mrs Janet Knott (our legal adviser) who is ill in hospital. Mission Council sent good wishes and prayers for Janet at this difficult time.

08/70 Mission Committee Report (Paper E)

The Revd Ed Cox introduced the report. He thanked the members of the committee and staff team for their energy and willingness to work together in new ways. Theological reflections have been an important element of the committee working. He invited questions or comments on the report. There were none. He then invited Ron Buford to speak to Mission Council about the God is Still Speaking programme.

08/71 God is Still Speaking (Paper E1)

Mr Ron Buford spoke of a renewal movement to strengthen Reformed identity of those in the Church, and also to close the distance between those inside and outside the church. In a video presentation a number of URC leaders shared their hopes and vision for the URC, all of them convinced that in today's world "God is Still Speaking!" A wide range of questions and comments were shared. Mr Cox thanked all who had contributed, responded to questions and comments from the floor, and proposed the following resolutions:

- 1. Mission Council welcomes the proposal of a God is Still Speaking initiative in the United Reformed Church as a vehicle for renewal and evangelism.**

Resolved by agreement

- 2. Mission Council approves the submission of a grant application to the CWM Mission Support Programme for a God is Still Speaking campaign in the United Reformed Church.**

Resolved by agreement

- 3. Mission Council asks the Mission Committee to proceed with preparations for the God is Still Speaking campaign.**

Resolved by agreement

Session 5

08/72 Mission Committee

The Revd Ed Cox thanked those who had contributed during the previous session. He added that work on advice about Charity Registration for LEPs was also underway. Mission Committee had a significant role in watching the budget for God is Still Speaking.

08/73 Mission Strategy (Paper E2)

The Revd Cox presented the paper on Mission Strategy. He gave the rationale for a denominational Mission Strategy - clarity of purpose, more effective opportunities for teamwork and a strategy to enable the making of difficult decisions were all needed. He discussed what the committee meant by "strategy" - a process rather than a document arrived at as a result of much talking and conversations, which started with the local congregations and showed how Church House staff and synods might help the local situations, which was permissive to the local congregation, values driven and not targets driven and effective in demonstrating said values, and an aid to pilgrimage, but not precluding the unexpected. He explained the relationship between the local regional and General Assembly - Mission pledges made by local churches would be reflected in Synod mission strategies and these reflected in an Assembly strategy, and the Assembly Mission Framework, hopefully ready for General Assembly 2010, would include a clear statement of values, a set of 10 year outcomes, measurable indicators giving a sense of moving in the right direction and a biennial mission survey. It was very necessary that there was time for adequate discussion/consultation for churches, synods, committees, moderators, clerks all to engage with the subject before 2010. Further discussion was continued in groups, followed by plenary feedback.

Mr Cox proposed the following resolutions:

1. **Mission Council affirms the general direction and three layered approach to developing a URC Mission Strategy and requests the Mission Committee to continue this work subject to the feedback received at the Mission Council meeting.** Following discussion the resolution was resolved by agreement.
2. **Mission Council affirms the plans being developed for an extensive consultation process about the URC Mission Strategy throughout 2009 and encourages all councils and committees of the Church to participate in the consultation.** Following discussion and some clarification the resolution was resolved by agreement.
3. **Mission Council requests the Mission Committee to bring forward an Assembly Mission Framework at General Assembly 2010 having considered feedback from the 2009 consultation process.** The resolution was resolved by agreement.
4. **Mission Council encourages all councils and committees of the Church to have regard for the emerging URC Mission strategy in all aspects of policy-making and planning between now and General Assembly 2010.** The resolution was resolved by agreement.

Session 6

08/74 Windermere Centre Building Project (Paper G)

The Treasurer presented the report. The plans for the development having been available for members to look at, he explained that a more costly plan would provide much improved facilities. He showed slides of the building and spoke of the possibilities. Mission Council was invited to look at the options 1 – 5 as given in the paper G. Extra money would be from the Church Buildings Fund which currently has assets in the order of £2m. The Moderator sought the immediate views of the meeting. A range of views was expressed but Option 4 was clearly favoured. It was felt that Carver Church should be encouraged to contribute to the project, as it would benefit greatly from the building project. Option 4 was preferred by majority voting, 0 votes against, 2 abstentions. (The Revd Richard Church registered that as a Director of the North Western Synod Trust he had a formal interest in the matter.)

08/75 Education and Learning Committee (Paper G1)

Recommendations from the review of the Windermere Centre were presented by Professor Malcolm Johnson. He thanked the review group for their diligent work and proposed the resolutions. The Moderator ruled the matter to be urgent.

Recommendations:

That the Centre be recognised by General Assembly as a resource Centre for Learning for the United Reformed Church, and one of the coalition of learning providers seeking to equip the whole people of God. The recommendation resolved by consensus.

That a new Windermere Management Committee should replace both the present Windermere Advisory Group and the Windermere Local Management Committee as a sub-committee of the Education and Learning Committee. The recommendation resolved by consensus.

08/76 Treasurer's Report – (1 Papers F, F1, F2, F3.)

Mr John Ellis presented the report on behalf of the Finance Committee.

- 1) Letter from the Pensions Regulator (Paper F). The letter marked an agreement for the present time. There would be more discussion in the future.
- 2) The Stewardship Sub-Committee would be re-instated from January with Mrs Faith Paulding as Convenor.
- 3) There was ongoing work from General Assembly to tie up the loose ends concerning the funding of the Children and Youth Development Officers.
- 4) Work was ongoing on the proposals regarding Retired Ministers' housing provision, taking into account the views expressed that periods of training should also be taken into consideration. Mr Ellis reported the Ministers' stipend for 2009 would be set at £21,900. In order to facilitate the decision about stipend in future years he proposed the resolution:

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, agrees that the level of the basic ministerial stipend should be set annually by agreement between the Finance Committee and the URC Trust and reported to Mission Council. In the event that the URC Trust is unable to endorse the Finance Committee's recommendation, the decision will revert to Mission Council. This was resolved by consensus.

Mr Ellis explained that although there had been two investment committees, (serving the URC Trust and the Ministers' Pension Trust respectively) until now, it was believed by those bodies that one committee could do the work of both. A number of members were due to retire shortly and so this seemed a sensible time to create a single group with those who had continuity of knowledge forming the first committee members. He proposed the resolution:

Mission Council thanks those who have served the Church diligently on the URC Trust Investment Sub-Committee and the members of the URC Ministers' Pension Trust Investment Sub-Committee; agrees that those two committees should be dissolved; agrees to the establishment from 1st January 2009 of a United Reformed Church Investment Committee to operate in accordance with its agreed terms of reference and composition. This was resolved by consensus.

Mr Ellis drew attention to changes in Section 3 of the draft proposal on paper F2. At 3 the wording should read: *The composition of URCIC shall be as follows: 1) The Chair of the URC Trust or other board member, 2) The Chair of the URC Ministers' Pension Trust Board or other board member, 3) The Treasurer of the United Reformed Church, 4) The Convenor of the Pensions Executive, 5) The Treasurer of Westminster College.*

Session 7

08/77 Treasurer's Report: Budget 2009

Mr Ellis was optimistic for the 2009 Budget. Signs were that the 2008 accounts would be close to balance due to higher than expected giving and lower than expected stipend expenditure. However he was concerned that the Assembly costs were so much over budget. The 2009 budget had been drawn up on the assumption of a 4% stipend increase and an increase for lay staff pensions but currently with no extra provision for ministers' pensions. There were a number of comments from the floor, to which Mr Ellis responded. He proposed the resolution:

Mission Council accepts the budget for 2009 set out in the attachment of this report. (Paper F3) This was resolved by agreement.

Amendment to the rules of the Pension Fund (Paper C2)

Mr Ellis proposed amendments to the rules of the Pension Fund:

Disapplication of the HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) Transitional Regulations

Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly resolves that the following notice be included in the Scheme document of the Rules of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund. This was resolved by majority.

(The Trustees resolve, and the United Reformed Church acting in General Assembly agrees, that the rules of the Fund shall be deemed to be, and they are hereby, modified with effect from 6th April 2006: in a manner which has the same effect as all of the modifications in regulations 3 to 8 of the HMRC Transitional Regulations but without limitation to the transitional period mentioned in those Regulations and subject to the "General Finance Act 2004 amendments" already made to the fund with effect from 6 April 2006 by Resolution 3' passed at General Assembly at their meeting of 1st July 2006: and so that the HMRC Transitional Regulations no longer apply in relation to the Scheme with effect from 6th April 2006 "Transitional period" has the meaning given to it in the HMRC Transitional Regulations.)

Resolution: Pension Fund Rule on Additional Voluntary Contributions

Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly resolves to amend the Rules of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund, with effect from 3rd December 2008, by the following additions, deletions and amendments. This was resolved by majority. Deletions shown in bold [brackets] additions/amendments shown in italic (brackets)

Amend Rule 17 as follows

[17.1.1 the voluntary contributions shall be limited to a sum which, when added to all other contributions in respect of his/her membership of the Fund, would provide benefits not exceeding Inland Revenue limits and when added to the contributions (if any) of the member to this and all other retirement benefits schemes that have received or are capable of receiving approval under the 1988 Act does not exceed 15% of the member's total remuneration for that year.]

Re-number paragraphs [17.1.2 & 17.1.3] (17.1.1 & 17.1.2.) respectively.

Amend Rule 43 & 43.1 as follows

(*Overriding Tax Rules and*) Maximum Benefits

[The Inland Revenue limits on benefits apply to the Fund and are set out in the Schedule hereto] **(*The Schedule hereto sets out the Tax Rules and the Inland Revenue Limits on benefits that apply to the Fund*)**

Add the following at the end of the Schedule: "Inland Revenue Limits: Part 1-Tax Rules"

Members' contributions: The annual rate of Members' contributions may, with the consent of the Pension Trustees, exceed 15% of remuneration or any other limit imposed by the provisions of Part 11 of the schedule.

1. These amendments to the Pension Fund Rules allow members to pay Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs) to the AVC Scheme attaching to the Fund without the current contribution restriction (maximum contribution 15% of stipend.)

Resolution: Pension Fund Rule on Death in Service & Death after Retirement

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, resolves to amend the Rules of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund, with effect from 3rd December 2008, by the following additions, deletion and amendments. This was resolved by majority.

Deletions shown in bold [brackets] Additions/amendments shown in italic (brackets) 22.2 as follows:

22.2 “To the surviving spouse a pension for life of an annual amount equal to one half of the pension to which the member would have been entitled to if the member had attained normal pension age (*or, in the case of the death of a contributing member in service after normal pension age, one half of the pension to which the member would have been entitled had he or she retired the day before his/her death*) plus in the case of the spouse of a member of the Congregational Fund.....”

Amend Rule 23.1 as follows

- 23.1 “ In the event of the death of a member who has retired on pension and who leaves a spouse whom he/she married before **[attainment of normal pension age]** (the later of the date on which his/her service of a contributing member of the fund ceases and the date of his/her retirement), a pension will be payable for life to the spouse”
2. On 1st December 2006 when the Pension Fund Rules were brought into line with the requirements of the Employment Equality (Age) Discrimination Regulations 2006, these required amendments were overlooked. The amendment would ensure that benefits are provided from the Fund where a member has continued in contributory service after normal pension age 65); and that spouse benefits are available in all cases where the marriage took place before the member’s retirement date.

08/78 Nominations Committee – Papers B – B4

The Convenor presented the report.

He proposed the resolutions:

1. **Mission Council agrees to reappoint the Revd David Grosch–Miller as Moderator of the South Western Synod from 1st September 2009 to 31st August 2013.** This was resolved by consensus
2. **Mission Council agrees that the impending appointment of the Secretary for World Church Relations may be made by MCAG on the recommendation of the appointing group.** It was pointed out that this would result in double delegation, which is not permitted. The Clerk assisted in rewording the resolution to read:
3. **Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, agrees that the impending appointment of a Secretary for World Church Relations may be authorised, in this instance, by MCAG on the recommendation of the appointing group.** This was resolved by consensus.

Since the report was printed, The Revd. Robert Weston had agreed to convene the work of the Youth and Children’s Committee.

Mr Hanson also indicated that there should be an alteration of wording in paragraph 5 and that it should read: 5. There have been recent changes to the composition of the Churches Legislation Advisory Service (previously known as the Churches Main Committee). Our representative should now be Mrs Sheila Duncan with the General Secretary or Deputy General Secretary as alternate.

Mr Hanson proposed the resolution

3. **Mission Council agrees to appoint the committee officers and representatives as set out in the Nominations Committee report.** This was resolved by consensus.

Mr Hanson presented papers B1, B1i, and B1ii. These gave the background to the work recently undertaken to monitor committee membership in accordance with the Equal Opportunity Policy of the church. He explained that every effort was made to achieve balanced representation on our committees but that due to refusals to invitations balance was not always achievable.

Mr Hanson presented Paper B2 Orientation and Induction of Committee and Panel Members, with the resolution:

Mission Council commends the paper on “Orientation and Induction of Committee and Panel Members” to the committees concerned for their consideration and possible use in their own induction processes. This was resolved by consensus.

Papers B3 and B4 provided information about the make up and accountability of various group and task groups. They were provided for Mission Council to reflect the ongoing work and thinking of the nominations committee.

Considerable discussion was generated and Mr Hanson responded. The Moderator thanked the Nominations Committee for its work.

The Moderator then invited the Revds Terry Oakley and Rachel Poolman to speak on Resolution 12 (2008) and offer a new resolution to Mission Council.

Resolution:

Mission Council, in receiving Resolution 12 from the General Assembly in 2008 agrees to consider the issues relating to it at its meeting in May 2009. This was resolved by consensus and Mr Oakley and Ms Poolman undertook to do the necessary background work before the next meeting.

08/79 Communications Committee Report – 1 (Paper K)

The report was presented by the Convenor. She noted that the work of the church depended upon much hard work from the Graphics team and Communications office. There were high expectations for good quality paperwork and presentations, but these came at high cost. She invited the groups to discuss the questions on paper Ka and bring back written comments plus one verbal piece of feedback to share in the plenary session. The Clerk informed Mission Council that the document relating to churches application for charity status was largely redrawn by the Graphics team and thanked Sara in particular for her excellent piece of work, which was available for churches from the website.

The discussion of the questions posed on paper Ka continued in smaller groups. Groups responded briefly. Dr Thorpe thanked everyone for the comments received and said they would be reflected upon and shared later during the Mission Council meeting.

08/80 Year of the Child

Mrs Karen Bulley and Ms Jo Williams both supported this work about which Karen spoke briefly. A DVD with audio-visual resources was to be sent to every URC church hoping that it would be found useful along with further resources posted on the web-site. Mission Council watched a short piece of film as a taster.

The Chaplain outlined the arrangements for the celebration of Holy Communion on Thursday morning. Mission Council adjourned for dinner.

Session 8

08/81 Closed Session

Mission Council continued in closed session. Mission Council resolved

Mission Council recognises reluctantly that the process instigated in January 2006 has reached an end, and discharges the Liaison Group with thanks for the work it has done on its behalf.

(A full record of this session is held *in retentis*.)

Evening worship was led by the Chaplain and members of the Synod of Scotland and the session closed at 10.57p.m.

Thursday 4th December

Session 9

Holy Communion was celebrated by the Moderator and his Chaplain.

The General Secretary invited anyone who felt the need to talk after the previous night's closed session to meet with the chaplain.

08/82 Cool Heads and Warm Hearts (Paper F4)

Mr John Ellis presented Paper F4. He endeavoured to explain the state of the URC assets in understandable terms. He read from the story of Paddington Bear visiting the bank and commented on the financial lessons from the story! 1) Understand the deal done with the bank (our investments have been cautious so are saved from the worst disasters). 2) Panic causes dramatic consequences (our confidence is not at panic level). 3) World looks different if you are looking at the long term (we are long term investors). Further, in terms of our income we did not rely on investment for paying for our programmes, we relied on our people's giving to M&M. This was not a good time to add to our expenditure but it was a good time to review how M&M was raised in Synods, our expenditure would stay much as it had been, in a time of recession the number of candidates for ministry typically increased and we could continue with some confidence. In terms of our wealth, falling prices might help us with retired ministers' housing, the reserves of the church were held in shares, bonds and cash (15% loss rather than 20%) and in the long term shares did perform better. The Ministers' Pension Fund assets were in similar types of investments. The Pension Fund evaluation in the pipeline would reveal deficits, and lower estimate of income from assets – value would look inadequate. Another factor was the longevity of retired ministers. However, there were no threats for the immediate future, although in the longer term there might be shortage of funds to pay pensions but there would equally be time to redress the deficit. Our investors would continue to keep cool heads and warm hearts!

08/83 Ethical Investment Group (Paper A5)

Mr Ellis presented the report. Work continued to be done to pursue our ethical stance. He drew attention to a CTBI conference to be held on 20th January 2009. The Joint Public Issues Team had planned with CTBI to reflect theologically on the financial crisis and responsible investment.

08/84 Ministries Committee (Papers C & C1)

The Convenor presented the report.

08/85 Ministerial Development Review

The pastorate profile would become much more important in the ongoing life of local churches, with clearer expectations on Minister or CRCW and the people of the pastorate but with a flexibility of models to be followed to suit local situations. It was not a threat to MASA but a relationship between minister and people. The two processes should interlink for the benefit for both. The process had been trialled in one Synod and feedback received.

He proposed the resolution:

Mission Council authorises the scheme of Local Ministry and Mission Review as proposed by the Ministries Committee. This was resolved by agreement.

08/86 Section O Advisory Group (Paper A2, A2i A3)

The Clerk presented the report and invited comments. The Revd David Lawrence asked if the records of Section O processes were stored in a fire-proof cabinet. The Clerk would ensure that they were. Revd Adrian Bulley was grateful for the recommendations and said that Moderators were uneasy as they found themselves overseeing the recommendations from the Assembly Commissions. The Legal Advisor responded saying that more recently the Commission Panels had included the recommendations as part of the decision of the panel. This relieved the Moderators from having to monitor the outcomes. The Convenor of the Nominations Committee noted that the joint panel was not nominated by that Committee nor was its membership published. The Clerk responded that there were a number of people who only served because of the anonymity. The Clerk moved to the resolutions which he proposed.

The Section O Advisory Group has requested the following changes to the Section O and Section P processes and asks Mission Council to agree, acting on behalf of General Assembly.

Resolution:

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, agrees the following changes to Part II of Section O (The Process for dealing with cases of discipline involving Ministers and Church Related Community Workers) and Part II of Section P (Incapacity Procedure) of the Manual: This was resolved by consensus.

Changes to Part II of Section O

E.5.3.15 Replace the existing wording with the following:

'That Notice shall state that the proceedings under the Section O Process shall stand adjourned to await written notification from the recipient as to whether the recommendation contained in the Notice has been accepted or rejected. The Notice to the recipient shall include a request for him/her to respond with all due expedition, consistent with the consultation process laid down by the Incapacity Procedure.'

E.7.4 Delete the bracketed words at the end.

E.7.7 Delete this paragraph

J.2 Replace the words: '(but excluding any costs of representation)' with the words: '(but excluding any costs and expenses incurred by the parties in the preparation of their respective cases and the cost of any representation at the Hearing)'.

J.3 Replace the words: 'all papers...[to end of sentence]' with the words: 'all papers relating to concluded cases, which shall include the papers which the Mandated Group and the Minister have lodged with the Secretary of the Assembly Commission and, in the event of an appeal, with the General Secretary during the course of the proceedings. The complete bundle of all these papers shall be kept in a locked cabinet at Church House.'

Changes to Part II of the Incapacity Procedure (Section P)

N.1.2 Add the following words at the end of the paragraph: 'The name of the Minister shall not be read out at General Assembly, but shall be recorded in the list of all those no longer on the Roll of Ministers.'

Add a new Paragraph N.1.4 as follows:

'N.1.4 If the Review Commission decides to retain the name of the Minister on the Roll, the report to General Assembly shall simply state that a case under the Incapacity Procedure has been concluded and the name of the Minister has been retained on the Roll, but shall not supply the Minister's name or any further information.'

N.2 Replace the words: '**(but excluding any costs of representation)**' with the words: '**(but excluding any costs and expenses incurred by the Minister in the preparation of his/her case and the cost of any representation at the Hearing)**'.

Further, the Section O Advisory Group met on 26th November 2008 and requested Mission Council to give consideration to the following two issues.

Joint Panel

The establishment of the Joint Panel, the list of membership of which was held by the Synod Moderators, and from which well-trained and equipped people were drawn to join Mandated Groups had been most successful. The Advisory Group had received a number of requests to consider increasing the number of those on the Joint Panel, thus providing a greater pool of such skilled people. The Group having considered this had concluded that it would indeed be beneficial to allow Synods to nominate two people to the Joint Panel, and accordingly asks Mission Council to approve changes to the relevant paragraph. Because it would inevitably take time for Synods to identify suitable people and then train them, it would be helpful if this change could be made soon in order that the process could begin and the enhanced panel would be in place as soon as possible. Note that this new provision was permissive, not obligatory, that is, each synod must nominate one person and may nominate two.

Resolution:

**Mission Council agrees to change Part II of the Disciplinary Process found in Section O of The Manual as follows:
In Paragraph B.2.2 replace "thirteen" with "twenty six" and add "or two" after "of whom one". This was resolved by consensus.**

The paragraph will then read: "There shall also be a standing panel (the "Joint Panel") consisting of a maximum of twenty six persons, of whom one or two shall be nominated by each Synod and selected preferably"

Name of disciplinary process

From its beginning the Disciplinary Process had been referred to as "Section O". The Group believed that there was some evidence that this rather anonymous, neutral title had the effect of dulling the significance of what was a very serious disciplinary process and so could lead people to fail to appreciate its significance and the seriousness with which it and its findings should be taken. Furthermore, it has been agreed that the Incapacity Procedure was so known and not referred to as "Section P".

Section O Advisory Group therefore proposed the following resolution:

Mission Council resolves that henceforth the disciplinary process for Ministers and Church Related Community Workers shall be known as "The Disciplinary Process". Where appropriate the words "found in Section O of The Manual" may be added. This was resolved by consensus.

08/87 Assembly Committees and the Assembly (Paper A3)

On a point of order the General Secretary asked permission to withdraw Paper A3 and this was granted by consensus.

Session 10

08/88 Communications Committee

The Revd Martin Hazell shared comments from the group work. “Do it well with an eye on the budget”. “We get more than we pay for – good value for money”. “Bookshop – we now know the costs- runs at a deficit of £50,000 (mostly staffing costs) if we keep it, it will need a manager to run it”. “There is work still to be done”. “Assembly - Raising the profile is costly”. “Could we raise some money – sponsorship, advertising in our reports, publicity stands?” There was an orange card response to keeping the bookshop with 3 blue cards.

08/89 Resource Sharing Task Group (Paper A4) Q

The Convenor presented the report. Resource sharing was supported by all synods. It worked and was vital to their ongoing work. He asked what Mission Council wanted, what should be shared and at what level? He noted work was ongoing on a notional Synod 14 as a template for income and necessary expenses. Was that what the Assembly Resolution in 2002 meant? Was that what Mission Council meant? Did we want to go further? Synods would need to cooperate in what was decided. These questions and those on Paper Q were discussed in buzz groups. A Plenary Session followed.

08/90 Remaining Business

Legal Adviser

Andrew Middleton reported he had passed on Mission Council’s good wishes to Janet Knott and she had responded with thanks for the good wishes and cards received.

08/91 Thanks and Farewells

These were made to Mr Alan Wickens (North Western Synod), Mrs Maureen Lawrence and Mr Nigel Macdonald (Southern Synod) whose term of service had been completed, The Revd Neil Thorogood who had resigned as Convenor of Youth & Children’s Committee, The Revd Dale Rominger for his work on our behalf in connecting with the World Church, and to The Revd Ray Adams, who was moving into pastoral ministry. Thanks were offered particularly to Ray by the General Secretary noting especially his attention to detail in a behind-the-scenes role. His musical talents had been much enjoyed and could have a higher profile in his next role. Ray responded saying the time was right for him to move on. The Moderator presented Ray with a card of good wishes.

Closing Worship

The Chaplain led Mission Council in closing worship.



The
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The United Reformed Church

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

To: Members of Mission Council
and staff in attendance

21st October 2008

Mission Council: Tuesday 2nd – Thursday 4th December 2008
The Hayes Conference Centre, Alferton, Swanwick, Derbyshire DE55 1AU
Telephone: 01773 526000; Fax: 01773 540841; Email: office@cct.org.uk

Dear Colleague,

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

It would be very helpful if you could reply immediately (and by Friday 31st October at the latest) either by e-mail (krystyna.pullen@urc.org.uk); by telephone (020 7916 8646); by fax (020 7916 2021); or by completing the enclosed form and sending it to Krystyna Pullen.

Some preliminary papers are enclosed:

- directions to The Hayes Conference Centre
- a list of members (to help people plan to share transport, where possible)
- an expenses slip (to be completed and handed in at the meeting)
- a reply form about your accommodation and meal requests, and certain other necessary information.

Registration will take place on Tuesday 2nd December from 12.00 noon – 12.45 p.m. Keys may be issued but access to rooms will only be possible at 2.00 p.m.

Lunch: 12.45 p.m. – 1.45 p.m.
1st session: 2.30 p.m. – 3.45 p.m.
Tea: 3.45 p.m. – 4.15 p.m.
2nd session: 4.15 p.m. – 6.30 p.m.
Evening meal: 6.45 p.m. – 7.45 p.m.
3rd session: 8.00 p.m. – 9.00 p.m.
Evening Prayers: 9.00 p.m. – 9.15 p.m.

Mission Council will close with lunch on Thursday 4th December.

Further details will be sent with the second mailing during week commencing Monday 24th November 2008.

The next meeting dates are:

Friday 15th – Sunday 17th May 2009 at Ushaw College, Durham

Monday 16th – Wednesday 18th November 2009 at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick

Tuesday 9th – Thursday 11th March 2010 at All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney

Friday 19th – Sunday 21st November 2010 at Ushaw College, Durham

With good wishes

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ray Adams." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R'.

The Revd Ray Adams
Deputy General Secretary



MISSION COUNCIL

2 - 4 DECEMBER 2008

Tuesday - Thursday

MEMBERS & REPRESENTATIVES

The Moderator
General Secretary
Deputy General Secretary
Clerk
Legal Adviser

Rev John Marsh
Rev Roberta Rominger
Rev Ray Adams
Rev James Breslin
Towns Needham Solicitors

Past Moderator Rev Dr Stephen Orchard
Moderators Elect Rev Dr Kirsty Thorpe
Mrs G Val Morrison
Treasurer Mr John Ellis

Assembly Standing Committees

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

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

FURY Advisory Board Representatives

Mr James Wickens - Moderator
Ms Jane Hoddinott

13 synod Moderators, plus 3 representatives from each synod

1 N	Rev Rowena Francis	Miss Elaine Colechin	Rev John Durell	Mr Justice Semuli
2 N.W	Rev Richard Church	Mr George Grime	Rev Rachel Poolman	Ms Marie Trubic
3 Mer	Rev Howard Sharp	Miss Emma Pugh	Rev A. Gordon Smith	Mr Donald Swift
4 York	Rev Kevin Watson	Mr Roderick Garthwaite	Rev Pauline Calderwood	Mrs G. Val Morrison
5 E.M	Rev Terry Oakley	Rev Jane Campbell	Mrs Margaret Gateley	Mr Duncan Smith
6 W.M	Rev Roy Lowes	Mrs Adella Pritchard	Rev Anthony Howells	Mr William Robson
7 E	Rev Paul Whittle	Revd Catherine Ball	Mr Mick Barnes	Mrs Joan Turner
8 S.W	Rev David Grosch-Miller	Mrs Janet Gray	Rev Roz Harrison	Rev Stephen Newell
9 Wex	Rev Adrian Bulley	Rev G Cliff Bembridge	Mrs Margaret Telfer	Mr Peter Pay
10 Th.N	Rev Dr Andrew Prasad	Mr Simon Fairnington	Rev Maggie Hindley	Rev David Lawrence
11 S	Rev Nigel Uden	Dr Graham Campling	Mrs Maureen Lawrence	Mr Nigel Macdonald
12 Wal	Rev Peter Noble	Rev Dr Peter Cruchley-Jones	Rev David Fox	Mrs Iris Williams
13 Scot	Rev John Humphreys	Ms Irene Hudson	Rev John Sanderson	Mr Patrick Smyth

In attendance

Minute Secretary
Moderator's Chaplain

Children's Work Dev't Officer
Church & Society
Church Related Community Work

Communications
Ecumenical Relations
Education & Learning
Finance
Human Resources

Mrs Irene Wren
Rev Mary Buchanan

Miss Jo Williams
Mr Frank Kantor
Mrs Suzanne Adofo/
Mr Stephen Summers
Rev Martin Hazell
Rev Richard Mortimer
Rev Fiona Thomas
Mr Andrew Grimwade
Ms Michelle Marciano

Ministries
Mission
Pilots Development
Press Officer
Racial Justice & Multicult
Rural Consultancy
URC Trust
Windermere Centre
World Church Relations
Youth Work

Rev Craig Bowman
Ms Francis Brienen
Mrs Karen Bulley
Mr Stuart Dew
Rev Dr Michael Jagessar
Rev Graham Jones
Mr Alan Small
Mr Lawrence Moore
Rev Dale Rominger
Mr John Brown



The
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The United Reformed Church

86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT, United Kingdom
Deputy General Secretary: *The Revd Raymond Adams*

To: Members of Mission Council
and staff in attendance

20th November 2008

Mission Council: 2-4 December 2008

The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire DE55 1AU

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

Dear Colleague,

This is the second mailing of papers for Mission Council which meets in Swanwick on 2nd December. My previous letter, dated 21st October, contained information about accommodation, meals and transport, included directions to The Hayes Conference Centre and a list of members. If you did not receive these, please contact Krystyna Pullen immediately - krystyna.pullen@urc.org.uk - or tel: 020 7916 8646).

Registration will take place from 12.00 noon with lunch at 12.45 p.m. Keys may be issued but access to rooms will only be possible about 2.00 p.m. The eagle-eyed among us will notice a discrepancy between the timings given in my previous letter for the first session and the timetable printed on the enclosed Agenda.

Because of the anticipated large quantity of business, the first session will begin at 2 p.m., thus making it unlikely that you will have time to gain access to your room until the tea break at 3.45 p.m. It may be possible for some people to get earlier access, but that depends on the Hayes Centre's staffing arrangements as we find them on the day.

Please note that registration will take place in the foyer of the Lakeside building, not in the main house. Accommodation will be in that building on the first (U.K.), second and third floors.

Please find enclosed the following papers:

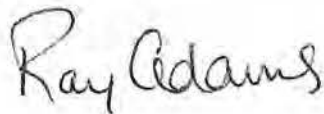
- o The Agenda
- o A list of Discussion Groups
- o Papers A - K (with some family groupings among the As, Bs, Cs, Es, Fs and Gs). Other papers referred to on the Agenda (J and L) will be tabled at the meeting.

It is obviously important that you remember to bring all the agenda papers and Minutes of the March 2008 meeting with you.

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

With good wishes,

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ray Adams". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R'.

The Revd Ray Adams
Deputy General Secretary

Encs



The
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Church

MISSION COUNCIL
2nd - 4th December 2008

**AGENDA AND
TIMETABLE**

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

Tuesday 2nd

12.00 noon onwards

Check in

12.45 p.m. - 1.45 p.m.

Lunch

2.00 p.m.

Session 1

Opening Worship and bible study

Welcome to new members

Apologies for absence

Minutes of 7th-9th March 2008 Mission Council

Matters Arising

Nominations Committee Report - 1

The General Secretary

Report of Task Group reviewing Mission Council PAPER D

3.45 p.m.

Tea 3.45 p.m. - 4.15 p.m.

4.15 p.m.

Session 2

Sexual Ethics Advisory Group

PAPER A1

Report of Vision4Life Steering Group

PAPER A6

MCAG Report

PAPERS A
and E3

Staffing Advisory Group

PAPER A7

Review of General Assembly

PAPER J

Notices

6.00

Groups - 1 (to discuss report on Mission Council and General Assembly)

6.45 p.m.

Dinner

7.45 p.m.

Session 3

Groups - 2

8.30 p.m.

Groups feedback

9.15 p.m.

Evening Prayers

Wednesday 3rd

8.30 a.m.

Breakfast

9.15 a.m.

Session 4

Morning Worship will include the induction of the Revd Fiona Thomas as Secretary for Education and Learning, and of the Deputy General Secretary- designate.

Mission Committee Report
Still Speaking

PAPER E
PAPER E1

10.45 a.m.

Morning coffee

11.15 a.m.

Session 5

Mission Strategy

PAPER E2

11.35 a.m.

Groups

12.20 p.m.

Plenary feedback and discussion of resolutions

12.45 p.m.

Lunch

2.15 p.m.

Session 6

Windermere Centre: Building Project
'Windrush' at 60
Treasurer's Report - 1

PAPER G
PAPER H
PAPERS
F, F1, F2, F3

3.00 p.m.

Closed Session restricted to voting members of Mission Council:
MCAG Report -2

PAPERS L & L1
(to be tabled)

3.45 p.m.

Afternoon tea

4.15 p.m.

Session 7

Treasurer's Report - 2
Nominations Committee - 2

(continued from Session 6)

PAPERS
B, B1, B1(i),
B1(ii), B2, B3, B4
PAPER K

5.50 p.m.

Communications Committee Report -1

6.45 p.m.

Groups

Evening meal

8.00 p.m.

Session 8

Communications Committee Report-2 (feedback and decisions)
Windermere Centre: Education and Learning Committee Review

PAPER G1

'Will you make a difference?' - the Year of the Child

9.00 p.m.

Evening Prayers

Thursday 4th

7.30 a.m.

Holy Communion

8.30 a.m.

Breakfast

9.15 a.m.

Session 9

Cool Heads and Warm Hearts

PAPER F4

Ministries Committee

PAPERS C and C1

Section O Advisory Group

PAPER A2

Assembly Committees and the Assembly

PAPER A3

10.45 a.m.

Morning coffee

11.15 a.m.

Session 10

Ethical Investment Advisory Group

PAPER A5

Resource Sharing Task Group

PAPER A4

and discussion

Any remaining business

Thanks and farewells

Closing Worship

12.45 p.m.

Lunch

Depart



The
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MISSION COUNCIL
2nd-4th December 2008

**AGENDA AND
TIMETABLE**

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

ANNOTATED AGENDA FOR THE MODERATOR

Copies: Gen Sec; Dep Gen Sec x 2; Clerk; Minutes Sec; Mod's Chaplain: Gen Sec's P.A.

Tuesday 2nd

12.00 noon onwards

Check in

12.45 p.m. - 1.45 p.m.

Lunch

2.00 p.m.

Session 1

2.30 p.m.

Opening Worship and bible study

Welcome to new members

The Moderator may care to welcome the following members and Staff who are attending Mission Council for the first time:

- Mrs Val Morrison and the Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe - (Moderators designate of General Assembly)
- The Revd Mary Buchanan - Moderator's chaplain
- The Revd Janet Lees - will facilitate our bible study
- Mr Alan Small - Chair of the United Reformed Church Trust
- Mr Ron Buford - from UCC - consultant on 'God is still speaking', which is part of the Mission Committee report

Members:

Dr David Robinson (Convener of Assembly Arrangements Committee)

Mr George Grime (North Western synod)

The Revd Gordon Smith (Mersey synod)

The Revd Roy Lowes - new role as Moderator of West Midlands Synod

The Revd Paul Whittle (Moderator of Eastern Synod)

The Revd Catherine Ball (Eastern synod)

The Revd Dr Andrew Prasad (Moderator of Thames North Synod)

The Revd Maggie Hindley (Thames North Synod)

The Revd David Lawrence (Thames North Synod)

Ms Iris Williams (National Synod of Wales)

Those deputising this time:

Mr Chris Eddowes (Northern synod)

Mrs Barbara Shapland (National Synod of Wales)

Staff:

Revd Craig Bowman (Secretary for Ministries)

Revd Dr Michael Jagessar (Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministries)
Revd Fiona Thomas (Secretary for Education and Learning)
Ms Kay Parris (Editor of Reform)

Welcome Mrs Irene Wren (former synod clerk of East Midlands synod, is present in her new role as Minutes Secretary)

(The Moderator may wish to rule that staff in attendance may freely participate in discussion without seeking permission each time - pending any decision made as a result of the Report of the Task Group on Mission Council)

Apologies for absence Deputy General Secretary leads
Miss Elaine Colechin (Northern synod)
The Revd Pauline Calderwood (Yorkshire synod)
The Revd Neil Thorogood (Convener Youth and Children's Work Committee)
Mr James Wickens (FURY Moderator)
Staff: Ms Michelle Marcano; Mr Lawrence Moore;

Minutes of 7th-9th March 2008 Mission Council

Matters Arising Deputy General Secretary
i) These are detailed in the Report of MCAG - Paper A (para ii) and will be dealt with under that report in Session 2.
ii) Tabled Papers include
A2 (i) - Sec O supplementary
C2 - URC Ministers' Pension Fund
J - Review of General Assembly
L - Liaison Group Report (Tuesday evening)
L1 - MCAG's response (Tuesday evening)
Q - Questions re RSTG (Wednesday)

Nominations Committee Report - 1

Revd Malcolm Hanson (convener) will bring a nomination for Deputy General Secretary. Mission Council is asked to approve the Resolution:

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, appoints the Revd Richard Mortimer as Deputy General Secretary from 1st January 2009 until 31st December 2015.

2.45 p.m.

3.15 p.m.

3.45 p.m.

4.15 p.m.

The General Secretary

Report of Task Group reviewing Mission Council PAPER D

Elizabeth Nash (Convener)

Tea 3.45 p.m. -4.15 p.m.

Session 2

Sexual Ethics Advisory Group

PAPER A1

✓ 4.40 p.m.	Report of Vision4Life Steering Group	Carla Grosch Miller (Convener) PAPER A6 General Secretary
✓ 4.50 p.m.	MCAG Report	Deputy General Secretary PAPERS A and E3
→ 5.10 p.m.	Staffing Advisory Group	PAPER A7 Rowena Francis (Convener)
5.30 p.m.	Review of General Assembly	PAPER J General Secretary
5.50	Notices	Deputy General Secretary
1. Make sure attendance register has been signed, and expenses given in.		
2. Groups' location: A (Hall stage); B (Hall) C (Orchard Hall) D E F G H (Rooms around hall)		
3. Groups' task: Groups A-D begin with Paper J - General Assembly		
Group A give particular attention to questions 1 - 4		
Group B do questions 1, 3, 5 and 6		
Group C do questions 1 and 7-9		
Group D do questions 1 and 10-12		
Groups E-H begin with Paper D - Mission Council		
6.00	Groups - 1 (to discuss report on Mission Council and General Assembly)	
6.45 p.m.	Dinner	
7.45 p.m.	Session 3 Groups - 2	
8.30 p.m.	Groups feedback	
	Notices - (Deputy General Secretary) - Kayshya's list	
	① Collect tabled papers: L - Liaison Group Report (Tuesday evening) L1 - MCAG's response (Tuesday evening)	
9.15 p.m.	② Plans for Windermere Devel. on table - look before Evening Prayers	
	③ Peter Noble - report re David Fox.	
Wednesday 3rd		
8.30 a.m.	Breakfast	
9.15 a.m.	Session 4 Morning Worship will include the induction of the Revd Fiona Thomas as Secretary for Education and Learning, and of the Revd Richard Mortimer as Deputy General Secretary- designate.	
9.45 a.m.	Mission Committee Report	PAPER E Ed Cox (Convener)
10.00 a.m.	Still Speaking Moderator invites Ron Buford (UCCUS) to speak	PAPER E1
10.45 a.m.	Morning coffee	
11.15 a.m.	Session 5 Mission Strategy	PAPER E2 Ed Cox (Convener)

1. DVD on 'Will you make a difference' - (before lunch - Wed? - if time)
2. Collect Paper Ka - Q's for group discussion on communications.



MISSION COUNCIL
2nd - 4th December 2008

**AGENDA AND
TIMETABLE**

ANNOTATED AGENDA WEDNESDAY 3RD DECEMBER REVISION

Copies: Gen Sec; Dep Gen Sec x 2; Clerk; Minutes Sec; Mod's Chaplain: Gen Sec's P.A.

Wednesday 3rd

2.40	2.15 p.m.	Session 6 Windermere Centre: Building Project	PAPER G The Treasurer
3.05	2.40 p.m.	Windermere Centre: Education and Learning Committee Review	Malcolm Johnson (Convener)
3.25	3.00 p.m.	Treasurer's Report - 1	PAPER G1 PAPERS F, F1, F2, F3 John Ellis (Treasurer)
	(if time begin ...	Nominations Committee	Malcolm Hanson (Convener)
	3.45 p.m.	Afternoon tea	PAPERS B, B1, B1(i), B1(ii), B2, B3, B4
	4.15 p.m.	Session 7 Nominations (continue and complete)	
	4.45	Communications Committee Report Kirsty Thorpe (Convener)	PAPER K
	5.00 ish	Groups	
	(if we are ahead at this point suggest Moderator gives groups 45 minutes and report back 45 minutes)		
	5.45 p.m.	- James - Group Communications Committee Report (feedback and decisions)	
	(note for Moderator, Gen Sec, Communications, Treasurer - whether to return to this matter tomorrow during the final session to clarify where we have got to in the overarching discussion re Assembly- Communications - Budget. Is Mission Council's advice clear enough to steer those who have to act and plan?) - Mary		
Not later than 6.30 p.m.		'Will you make a difference?' - the Year of the Child (a DVD presentation - about 3 minutes)	
			YCW staff
	6.45 p.m.	Evening meal	
	8.00 p.m.	Closed Session restricted to voting members of Mission Council: MCAG Report -2	PAPERS L & L1 - TO BE TABLED Peter Poulter (Convener of Liaison Group) Stephen Orchard (on behalf of MCAG)
	9.10 p.m. - flexible	Evening Prayers	

11.35 a.m.	Groups	
12.20 p.m.	Plenary feedback and discussion of resolutions	
12.45 p.m.	Lunch	
2.15 p.m.	Session 6	
2.30 p.m.	Windermere Centre: Building Project	PAPER G The Treasurer
	Windrush' at 60	PAPER H
	Secretary for RJ&MM - Michael Jagessar	
2.40 p.m.	Treasurer's Report - 1	PAPERS F, F1, F2, F3 John Ellis (Treasurer)
3.00 p.m.	Closed Session restricted to voting members of Mission Council: MCAG Report -2	PAPERS L & L1 - TO BE TABLED Peter Poulter (Convener of Liaison Group) Stephen Orchard (on behalf of MCAG)
3.45 p.m.	Afternoon tea	
4.15 p.m.	Session 7	
	Treasurer's Report - 2	(continued from Session 6)
4.45 p.m.	Nominations Committee - 2	Malcolm Hanson (Convener) PAPERS B, B1, B1(i), B1(ii), B2, B3, B4
5.30 p.m.	Communications Committee Report -1	Kirsty Thorpe (Convener) PAPER K
5.50 p.m.	Groups	
6.45 p.m.	Evening meal	
8.00 p.m.	Session 8	
	Communications Committee Report-2 (feedback and decisions)	
	<i>(note for Moderator, Gen Sec, Communications, Treasurer - whether to return to this matter tomorrow during the final session to clarify where we have got to in the overarching discussion re Assembly- Communications - Budget. Is Mission Council's advice clear enough to steer those who have to act and plan?)</i>	
8.45 p.m.	Windermere Centre: Education and Learning Committee Review	Malcolm Johnson (Convener) PAPER G1
9.00 p.m.	'Will you make a difference?' - the Year of the Child (a DVD presentation - about 3 minutes)	YCW staff
9.10 p.m. - flexible	Evening Prayers	
Thursday 4th		
7.30 a.m.	Holy Communion	

8.30 a.m.

Breakfast

9.15 a.m.

Session 9

Cool Heads and Warm Hearts

John Ellis

PAPER F4

9.45 a.m.

Ministries Committee

Peter Poulter (Convener)

PAPERS C and C1; C2

TABLED

10.15 a.m.

Section O Advisory Group

The Clerk

PAPER A2 and

PAPER A2(i) - TABLED

Assembly Committees and the Assembly

The Clerk

PAPER A3

(Possibly insert Ethical Investment Advisory Group here from Session 10)

10.45 a.m.

Morning coffee

11.15 a.m.

Session 10

Ethical Investment Advisory Group

Frank Kantor

John Ellis

(Secretary)

PAPER A5

(take

Resource Sharing Task Group

David Grosch-Miller

(Convener)

PAPER A4

PAPER Q - TABLED

1. Communications
2. Mission Council
3. G. Assembly

and discussion

Any remaining business

Possible return to the Assembly/ Communications/Finance reports to recap where the discussions have got to by the end of MC and whether the outcomes are clear enough. (see Wed evening above)

12 noon

Thanks and farewells

- North Western Synod rep: Revd Malcolm Wickens (completed term of service in Sep 2008)
- Southern Synod: Mrs Maureen Lawrence and Mr Nigel Macdonald complete their term of service (December 2008) (any others?)
- Neil Thorogood has resigned as Convener of Youth and Children's Work Committee to take effect from March 2009
- Dale Rominger – retiring end of January 2009
- Ray Adams – moving on

12.15 p.m.

Closing Worship

12.45 p.m.

Lunch

Depart

MISSION COUNCIL 2 – 4 DECEMBER 2008

GROUPS

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

<p style="text-align: center;">A</p> <p>John Durell Margaret Gateley Martin Hazell Maureen Lawrence Roy Lowes John Marsh Peter Pay Rachel Poolman Marie Trubic Kevin Watson</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">B</p> <p>John Brown Roz Harrison James Breslin Andrew Grimwade Jane Hoddinott Irene Hudson Malcolm Johnson Richard Mortimer Gordon Smith Fiona Thomas Paul Whittle</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">C</p> <p>Rowena Francis Graham Campling Cliff Bembridge Craig Bowman Karen Bulley David Grosch-Miller Peter Poulter Emma Pugh Bill Robson Roberta Rominger Alan Small</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">D</p> <p>Val Morrison Stephen Orchard Mary Buchanan Adrian Bulley Ed Cox Simon Fairnington George Grime Stephen Newell Kay Parris Adella Pritchard Jo Williams</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">E</p> <p>John Ellis Kirsty Thorpe Ray Adams Malcolm Hanson Graham Jones Andrew Prasad Patrick Smyth Steve Summers Margaret Telfer Joan Turner Irene Wren</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">F</p> <p>Richard Church Donald Swift Mick Barnes Pauline Calderwood Jane Campbell Janet Gray David Lawrence Morag McLintock David Robinson Dale Rominger Nigel Uden</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">G</p> <p>Roderick Garthwaite Terry Oakley Catherine Ball Ann Barton Francis Brienen Anthony Howells Frank Kantor Andrew Middleton Peter Noble John Sanderson Barbara Shapland Iris Williams</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">H</p> <p>Howard Sharp Peter Cruchley-Jones Suzanne Adofo Stuart Dew Chris Eddowes Maggie Hindley John Humphreys Michael Jagessar Nigel Macdonald Elizabeth Nash Duncan Smith</p>



The
United
Reformed
Church

MISSION COUNCIL 2-4th December 2008

A

Mission Council Advisory Group

MCAG is made up of the following members of Mission Council:

Moderator of General Assembly: The Revd John Marsh.

Immediate past Moderator: The Revd Dr Stephen Orchard.

Moderators-elect: Mrs Val Morrison and the Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe.

Two conveners of Assembly committees: Ms Morag McLintock (2010); VACANCY.

The Hon Treasurer: Mr John Ellis (ex officio).

Four members of Mission Council: The Revd David Grosch Miller (2011); The Revd Rachel Poolman (2011); 2 VACANCIES;

The General Secretary: The Revd Roberta Rominger.

The Deputy General Secretary, The Revd Ray Adams, acts as secretary to the Group.

(i) Declaration Towards a Safe Church : Members of Mission Council were sent an email prior to General Assembly seeking approval of the action taken by the Secretary. Replies produced 48 in favour, 1 reluctant agreement, 1 against and 1 abstention.

(ii) Matters arising from March 2008 Mission Council

a) 08/20 Paper A - Mission Council resolved that up to 50% of the ministry of the Revd James Breslin which related to his work as Assembly Clerk should be funded from the General Assembly budget for the remaining period of his appointment until the close of General Assembly 2012. After further consideration, Mr Breslin decided not to proceed with this arrangement, and continues as Clerk on a voluntary basis as before.

b) Mission Council Task Groups (for information). The list of participants in newly-established task groups was incomplete at the time of the March Mission Council. The groups are now made up as follows:

on *Human Sexuality*: The Revd John Waller (Convener); The Revd Lucy Brierley (Secretary); The Revd Dr John Bradbury, the Revd Richard Church, Ms Doreen Daley, Sr M. Cecily Boulding O.P., Ms Claire Gouldthorpe and Mrs Val Morrison.

on *Housing Provision for Ministers and CRCWs*: Miss Elizabeth Lawson (Convener); The Revd Ray Adams (Secretary), the Revd Nigel Appleton, the Revd Craig Bowman (Secretary for Ministries), the Revd David Coote, Ms Rachel Greening, Mr Brian Hosier (Finance Committee), Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith, the Revd Michael Spencer (Retire Ministers Housing Society) and Mr Graham Stacy (Ministries Committee). The Hon Treasurer is also a member (ex officio).

c) Advisory Groups (for information)

i) *MCAG*: Mission Council sought to fill three vacancies: one convener of an Assembly Committee and two Mission Council members. It was decided by MCAG not

to fill these vacancies until the report of the task group on Mission Council had been considered.

ii) *Church House Management Group*: The Revd Meryl Court has replaced Val Morrison, and Mr Mike Gould has agreed to serve following the resignation of Mr Graham Morris.

iii) *Resource Sharing Task Group*: David Grosch-Miller (Convener) Mr John Rea (Secretary), the Revd Dick Gray (Treasurer), Miss Margaret Atkinson, Ms Rachel Greening, Mr Richard Turnbull, and the Hon Treasurer (ex-officio).

iii) Matters arising from General Assembly requiring Mission Council action

a. Resolution 12 - Equality of opportunity for women (Record of Assembly page 65): *'Following debate, neither consensus nor agreement could be achieved. The Moderator ruled that the matter be remitted to Mission Council to decide whether or not further work on the issue be undertaken.'*

b. Resolution 32 - Representation to General Assembly (Record of Assembly page 25): *'b) General Assembly instructs Mission Council to monitor and review the representation of black minority ethnic members in General Assembly in relation to the growth trends of the United Reformed Church and report back to the 2012 Assembly.'* (no immediate action required)

c. Resolution 40 - Task Group on Youth and Children's Work - line management of CYDOs, etc (Mission Council to receive a report by May 2009) (no immediate action required)

d. Resolution 49 - Amendments to the Structure: Membership of Assembly (mistaken reference to "district council" in 1(1), second sentence)

This being a constitutional amendment, the error should be noted by synods prior to ratification (response to General Secretary by 31st March 2009).

e. Resolution 51 - Support of Rural Community: although there is no direct reference to Mission Council, the resolution asks the Ethical Investment Advisory Group and Joint Public Issues Team to take action. Representation has already been made and discussion is ongoing with ecumenical partners about the way forward.

iv) The Report of the visit of the CWM Community of Women and Men in Mission Team (Paper E3) was considered by the Mission Committee in September, and they agreed that it should be forwarded to Mission Council with some comments and suggestions about the way it should be considered within the United Reformed Church.

The Committee felt that there was evidence of a lack of preparation both on the part of the United Reformed Church as host and CWM in preparing the group, but there is much to be learned from the experience. Obviously, the report submitted only reflects what the Team saw and heard with very limited exposure to the Church and its range of contexts. There seemed also to have been little or no CWM training for the group before they arrived in the UK. Nonetheless, the Mission Committee welcomed the report and agreed the following immediate actions:

- A letter should be sent to CWM outlining steps the United Reformed Church would take in light of the report.

- The report should be sent to Mission Council asking Council to consider it alongside the General Assembly 2008 Resolution 12 (see iii (a) above).
 - A Mission Team programme/project on gender would be explored as part of the Mission Committee's prioritisation exercise.
 - The Vision4Life steering group should be asked to include gender in the Bible Year and the Evangelism Year.
 - The Mission Committee Outcomes Group would consider the report and underlying issues.
- v) MCAG agreed to bring to Mission Council the suggestion that, for the sake of greater transparency, the Minutes of Mission Council should be put on the website, subject to certain safeguards being in place. It was noted that the Methodist Church follows this practice.
- vi) In 2006 a Liaison Group was established by Mission Council to be the sole point of contact between the Assembly and a minister who was in dispute with the Church. MCAG reviewed the role of this group and met representatives at its November meeting. A report will be made to a closed session of Mission Council.
- vii) Consensus Decision making:
Mission Council Advisory Group agreed to bring the following proposal to Mission Council:
- RESOLUTION: Mission Council appoints the Revd Elizabeth Nash as Consensus Adviser to Mission Council until General Assembly 2010 in the first instance.**
- viii) Minister A Liaison Group:
The Liaison Group was appointed in January 2006 initially for a two year period. The Group's report to be tabled and presented to this meeting of Mission Council will include proposals which shall be discussed during a closed session. MCAG will bring an alternative proposal at that time.
- ix) Mission Council dates and venues 2009-2011 (already circulated, for information)

Friday 15 - Sunday 17 May 2009	Ushaw College, Durham
Monday 16 - Wednesday 18 November 2009	The Hayes, Swanwick
Tuesday 9 - Thursday 11 March 2010	All Saints, London Colney
Friday 19- Sunday 21 November 2010	Ushaw College, Durham
Tuesday 17-Thursday 19 May 2011	High Leigh, Hoddesdon
Friday 25- Sunday 27 November 2011	The Hayes, Swanwick



MISSION COUNCIL
2-4th December 2008

A1

Sexual Ethics Advisory Group

Members: Carla Grosch-Miller (convener); David A. L. Jenkins (Thames North Synod); Rowena Francis (Synod Moderator); Elizabeth Gray-King (Education and Learning); Alan Evans (Ministries Committee)

SEAG was established in October 2007 to bring together two strands of sexual ethics work.

Remit:

- to oversee implementation of Mission Council-approved recommendations published in *Preserving the Integrity of the Body* (URC: 2006) concerning ministerial sexual misconduct.
- continue the work begun in response to *Time for Action* (CTBI: 2002) by implementing the URC Policy and Procedure in response to alleged incidents of sexual harassment and abuse against adults and facilitating local implementation of the *Declaration towards a Safe(r) Church*
- assure long-term oversight of sexual ethics

Progress report on work:

Responding to allegations of sexual harassment or abuse

- URC Policy/Procedure in consultation with Andrew Middleton (the Legal Adviser)
- Advisor training arranged for January and February 2009
- A briefing paper on implementation of the policy has been prepared for the Synod Moderators, to be presented at the December meeting.
- It is hoped that the Synods will be ready to launch the URC Policy and Procedure system by 1 March 2009.

Ministerial sexual misconduct.

Andrew Gibb was appointed Coordinator for Pastoral Response Team. His duties include implementing the system - arranging training for the PRT pool members and setting up system. [Note: the PRT system will be available for Moderators at their discretion in incidents of ministerial sexual misconduct.

Local church work

- Sexual abuse survivor prayer cards *Do not fear...were* distributed to Synods in summer 2008 for distribution to every local church
- *Declaration towards a Safer Church* NRSV was published in the Assembly Reports 2008, Appendix 5.
- The briefing paper for the Synod Moderators referred to above includes guidance on assisting local churches to implement the *Declaration*.

Prevention

- o Encouragement to Ministries to approve the Ministerial Code of Conduct, which is to be included in ministerial education (EM1-3)
- o Encouragement to Education & Learning to provide continuing ministerial education and training on boundaries, power and sexual ethics.

Communication strategies

- o Working with the Communications Office to develop a web page with resources and relevant information

**Carla Grosch Miller
Convener**



MISSION COUNCIL
2-4th December 2008

A2

Section O Advisory Group

The Section O Advisory Group brings the following changes to the Section O and Section P processes and asks Mission Council to agree, acting on behalf for General Assembly.

Resolution: Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly agrees the following changes to Part II of Section O (The Process for dealing with cases of discipline involving ministers and church related community workers) and Part II of Section P (Incapacity Procedure) of the Manual:

Changes to Part II of Section O

E.5.3.15 Replace the existing wording with the following:

'That Notice shall state that the proceedings under the Section O Process shall stand adjourned to await written notification from the recipient as to whether the recommendation contained in the Notice has been accepted or rejected. The Notice to the recipient shall include a request for him/her to respond with all due expedition, consistent with the consultation process laid down by the Incapacity Procedure.'

E.7.4 Delete the bracketed words at the end.

E.7.7 Delete this paragraph

J.2 Replace the words: **'(but excluding any costs of representation)'** with the words: **'(but excluding any costs and expenses incurred by the parties in the preparation of their respective cases and the cost of any representation at the Hearing)'**.

J.3 Replace the words: **'all papers...[to end of sentence]'** with the words: **'all papers relating to concluded cases, which shall include the papers which the Mandated Group and the Minister have lodged with the Secretary of the Assembly Commission and, in the event of an appeal, with the General Secretary during the course of the proceedings. The complete bundle of all these papers shall be kept in a locked cabinet at Church House.'**

Changes to Part II of the Incapacity Procedure (Section P)

N.1.2 Add the following words at the end of the paragraph: **'The name of the Minister shall not be read out at General Assembly, but shall be recorded in the list of all those no longer on the Roll of Ministers.'**

Add a new Paragraph N.1.4 as follows:

'N.1.4 If the Review Commission decides to retain the name of the Minister on the Roll, the report to General Assembly shall simply state that a case under the Incapacity Procedure has been concluded and the name of the Minister has been retained on the Roll, but shall not supply the Minister's name or any further information.'

N.2 Replace the words: '(but excluding any costs of representation)' with the words: '(but excluding any costs and expenses incurred by the Minister in the preparation of his/her case and the cost of any representation at the Hearing)'.



MISSION COUNCIL
2-4th December 2008

A2(i)

Section O Advisory Group - SUPPLEMENTARY PAPER

The Group met on November 26th 2008 and requests Mission Council to give consideration to the following two issues:

JOINT PANEL

The establishment of the Joint Panel which is held by the Synod Moderators and from which well trained and equipped people are drawn to join Mandated Groups has been most successful. The Advisory Group has received a number of requests to consider increasing the number of those on the Joint Panel, thus providing a greater pool of such skilled people. The Group having considered this has concluded that it would indeed be beneficial to allow synods to nominate two people to the Joint Panel, and accordingly asks Mission Council to approve changes to the relevant paragraph. Because it will inevitably take time for synods to identify suitable people and then they will need to be trained it would be helpful if this change could be made soon in order that the process can begin and the enhanced panel will be in place as soon as possible. Note that this new provision is permissive, not obligatory. That is, each synod must nominate one person and may nominate two.

RESOLUTION

Mission Council agrees to change Part II of the Disciplinary Process found in Section O of The Manual as follows:

In Paragraph B.2.2 replace "thirteen" with "twenty six" and add "or two" after "of whom one".

The paragraph will then read: "There shall also be a standing panel (the "Joint Panel") consisting of a maximum of twenty six persons, of whom one or two shall be nominated by each Synod and selected preferably"

NAME OF DISCIPLINARY PROCESS

From its beginning the Disciplinary Process has been referred to as "Section O". The Group believes that there is some evidence that this rather anonymous, neutral title has the effect of dulling the significance of what is a very serious disciplinary process and so can lead people to fail to appreciate its significance and the seriousness with which it and its findings should be taken. Furthermore, it has been agreed that the Incapacity Procedure is so known and not referred to as "Section P".

We therefore propose the following resolution:

RESOLUTION

Mission Council resolves that henceforth the disciplinary process for Ministers and Church Related Community Workers shall be known as "The Disciplinary Process". Where appropriate the words "found in Section O of The Manual" may be added.

The Group also hopes that Mission Council will change the name of the Group - perhaps to the Mission Council Disciplinary Process Advisory Group.

November 27th 2008



MISSION COUNCIL
2-4th December 2008

A3

Assembly Committees and the Assembly

In 2010 the General Assembly will be much smaller. Were its membership to be calculated using the information in the 2008 year book it would have a total membership of just under 300, 273 of whom would represent Synods. Of this much reduced membership, seven are Officers of Assembly and nine are committee conveners. (Two Committee Conveners, the Treasurer and the Convener of Assembly Arrangements are ex officio Officers of Assembly.)

It has always been the case that a Committee Convener could inform the Moderator that the Committee Secretary would present a report or answer a question., but this necessitated the relevant secretary being present in the Assembly. In this regard practice varies widely across Committees. Some Secretaries always attend the Assembly, some attend only when members. Some are funded from their committee budget and some are funded from the Assembly Budget.

The changes to the Assembly brought about by the restructuring of Committees, the reduction in size and the move to Consensus have led at least one Committee Convener to suggest that in future Committee Conveners and Secretaries should be members of Assembly. This would increase the membership of Assembly by a maximum of ten but probably only increase its attendance by two or three. It would help Committees with complex briefs to report on their work more fully and would undoubtedly facilitate the Information and Discussion stages of the Consensus Process.

However, not all Committee Secretaries are Members of the United Reformed Church so Mission Council may conclude that the appropriate way forward is to agree to invite Secretaries to attend and fund their attendance of Secretaries from the Assembly Budget. This would allow participation in the first two stages of the Consensus Process, but not in the final decision making stage.

Two draft resolutions are therefore appended.

- 1. Mission Council agrees to invite all Assembly Committee Secretaries to Attend future General Assemblies and to fund this attendance from the Assembly Budget.**
- 2. Mission Council acting with the authority of General Assembly resolves, under the powers conveyed to it by Paragraph 2.(6)(n) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church, that all Secretaries of Assembly Committees shall be members of General Assembly from the Assembly of 2010 until such time as General Assembly, or Mission Council acting on its behalf, shall resolve to the contrary.**



MISSION COUNCIL
2-4th December 2008

A4

Report of the Resource Sharing Task Group

Preamble:

It is clearly recognised that the adoption of the resolution supporting the aim of resource sharing among the synods, and aiming to reach a complete sharing of synod income by 2013, has been an enormous benefit to the mission of the United Reformed Church. Without the funds so released some Synods would not have been able to fulfil even the most basic of responsibilities given to them by the Basis of Union. The generosity of the few has enhanced the work of the whole and there is much to give thanks to God for in this sharing of resources. It also needs to be recognised that the Ministry and Mission Fund, 'M&M', is itself a hugely successful element of resource sharing across the Synods.

The Present Situation

Representatives of the synods meet in groups of four or five to monitor and discuss the level of sharing of resources. These regular meetings have included discussion of how to account for both income and expenditure and recognition of differences, both historic and contemporary, of how the work of the Synods is financed. These differences have at times made it difficult to compare the financial commitments and resources of each synod. The robustness of the quartet and quintet meetings can sometimes come into question. Partially from our innate desire to be polite to one another, partially from restrictions on our generosity because of increased financial pressure in our own synod and partially from lack of clarity about a common understanding of the essential and desirable functions of a synod. This latter consideration is being addressed through discussion of Synod 14, an attempt to reach agreement on what the core activities of a Synod should be. The conviction is that if we can reach agreement about those core activities, and cost them, we are provided with a template by which to measure the income which we need to guarantee each synod. This in turn will provide a figure which needs to be generated by Inter Synod Resource Sharing

Looking to the future

The present chaos in financial markets yoked to the institutional decline of the church has had a profound effect upon all the synods. Everyone has had to review spending plans and the commitment to inter synod resource sharing is not exempt from those considerations. What is agreed by all the synods represented at the annual consultation is:

- resource sharing works,

- it is vital to the ongoing work of the synods,
- it is a principle to which we are all committed.

There is however lively discussion about how we proceed to the next level of inter synod resource sharing and even what we mean by that. Those synods which are net contributors understandably want to ensure that recipient synods spend money in ways for which the money was given while recipient synods may equally want to challenge the donor synods on how they spend the resources which they have. This exercise in mutual accountability is dependent upon a high level of trust between the synods.

Some hard questions

The template of synod expenditure that we believe will be provided by the discussions around Synod 14 will provide a minimum amount that each synod receives in income. How that income will be spent will be informed by the needs of each synod as it responds to their own sense of what God is asking of them. Mission Council will need to be clear in its expectations of the Synods as future plans are made. This guarantee of minimum income falls short of full sharing but Mission Council has not quantified what that means.

What does Mission Council understand by the resolution of General Assembly in 2002 that sought a *'more complete sharing of the financial resources of the synods'*? And by the subsequent resolution synods passed with the stated aim *'to reach a complete sharing of synod income by 2013'*?

Without clarity of the aim it is not possible to make significant progress.

David Grosch-Miller
All Saints 2008



MISSION COUNCIL
2-4th December 2008

A5

Report of the Ethical Investment Advisory Group

1. Ethical Investment Policy Proposal

The current Ethical Investment Policy of the URC was revised at General Assembly in 2005 and reads as follows:

General Assembly recommends that trustees and all those with investment responsibilities connected with the United Reformed Church should avoid any investment in:

- a. Companies directly engaged in the manufacture and supply of weapons of destruction;
- b. Companies a significant part of whose business is in the supply of alcoholic drinks or tobacco products or military equipment (other than weapons of destruction); or the provision of gambling facilities; or the publication or distribution of pornography.

General Assembly notes that the definition of these activities, or of what constitutes a significant part of a company's business, requires judgement and the Ethical Investment Advisory Group (EIAG) of Mission Council is available to offer advice. In general, EIAG will deem "significant" to mean where the share of turnover derived from the activity concerned is more than around 10-20% of the company's turnover.

General Assembly recognises that this policy can only be advisory as the responsibility of specific investment decisions remains with each body of trustees.

The EIAG, in consultation with the Synod Moderators (at their November meeting) and the EIRIS Foundation (a charity that supports and encourages responsible investment), are proposing that this policy be revised to incorporate issues related to the environmental, social and governance impact of companies and to include positive as well as exclusionary criteria. A good example of such a policy is that of the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust.

Specifically, the EIAG would like a revised ethical policy to achieve the following outcomes:

Outcomes

- To align our investment practices with our mission outcomes and strategy;
- To review the investment universe and current practice in light of the global financial crisis;
- To develop a more informed and integrated ethical policy for the URC.

Principles

Such a policy needs to be based on principles of good stewardship, sustainability, accountability, fiduciary duty, legality, and transparency.

Process

The proposed process for the development of this policy is as follows:

- To undertake theological reflection on the issue of 'mission responsibility through investment.'
- To commission the EIAG to undertake research on specific areas of concern and offer advice to synods and churches as required.
- To produce a revised Ethical Investment Policy based on the above information for discussion and review by the EIAG.
- To circulate this to key stakeholders within the URC for comment and discussion.
- To capture the comments from this consultation process into a revised Ethical Policy for submission to Mission Council for discussion and debate in November 2009.
- To review this policy based on trends and research from agencies such as EIRIS.

2. Human Rights and Corporate Responsibility

The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) is producing a report for the EIAG on this issue to guide investment decisions of our churches in companies operating in contested areas such as Israel/Palestine, China and other areas where the human rights of communities and groups are being infringed by such operations. A summary of this report will be brought to Mission Council in November 2009.

3. Financial Crisis and Responsible Investment

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) in conjunction with JPIT are planning a one day conference on 20th January 2009 to reflect theologically and practically on the underlying causes of the current financial crisis and its implications for our churches. This is an open conference and further information will be posted on the JPIT website in the near future. One of the issues that will be discussed is the role of responsible investment in addressing the underlying causes of this crisis and how this should be reflected in our mission as churches.

4. Nestle' update

The review of the URC boycott of Nestle' products is to be informed by the revised ethical investment policy and the EIAG have therefore advised the working group set up to review this decision, to wait for the outcome of the process outlined in point 1 above. This decision has been accepted and the boycott of Nestle' products continues to stand in the interim.

5. Churches and Socially Responsible Investment Conference

A report outlining the main themes and discussions at this conference which took place in Brussels in May this year has been posted on the URC website under Ethical Investment section of the Index page. The report highlights some of the important trends and good practice on ethical investment by European churches.

Frank Kantor
EIAG Secretary
17 November 2008



MISSION COUNCIL
2-4th December 2008

A6

Vision4Life

1. Vision4Life is happening! The Bible Year is underway with the beginning of Advent. This will be followed by a Prayer Year and an Evangelism Year.
2. As of the first week of November, 330 churches had signed up to participate. Several synods wanted to register in their own right, so this facility has been created. Other synods are encouraged to join them.
3. Although Vision4Life has now begun, churches may continue to register over the next three years and use the materials according to their own timetables.
4. The booklet for the Bible Year will be posted directly to all churches, with copies to Synod Offices for distribution to their staff as they wish. Additional copies will be available through the URC Bookshop.
5. A DVD to accompany one of the "main course" Bible studies has been produced and will be distributed to churches that have registered. Further film clips will be available for download.
6. The website (www.vision4life.org.uk or simply hit the button on the URC website) has been up and running since Assembly. Further Bible Year materials can be downloaded from the site and a steady supply of new materials will be added throughout the year. Submissions are invited from across the church – see the website for details.
7. Plans are already well underway for the Prayer Year which begins in Advent 2009. Again, ideas and suggestions will be very welcome.
8. The Vision4Life steering group recognises the importance of coordinating their work with other programmes and initiatives. They would be interested to know which synods have incorporated V4L into synod strategies or staff priorities. They will be meeting with members of the Mission Committee in February to explore how the Evangelism Year (2010-11) should link with other mission initiatives such as 'God is Still Speaking', 'Back to Church Sunday', Fresh Expressions, etc.

Roberta Rominger - 6 November 2008



MISSION COUNCIL
2-4th December 2008

A7

Staffing Advisory Group

SAG met on 30th October 2008 to review the posts of Youth Work Development Officer and Children's Work Development Officer. The Pilot's Officer Post had been reviewed at an earlier date. The SAG is bringing recommendations to Mission Council for the confirming of the two posts, now on an open contract. However, further work is required on the job descriptions in the light of the YCWTD review task group's work. Hopefully, this will take place in the first part of 2009 allowing confirmation of new job descriptions with immediate effect.

SAG recommend that the two post holders, together with the Pilots Development Officer, should work as an equal team to deliver the Youth and Children's Work Committee's strategy in a coordinated way and that therefore the three job descriptions should parallel one another. It acknowledges that the work of these three posts takes place within the wider circle of the CYDO team and the synods. In the light of the strategy presented to General Assembly 2008 for children's and youth work the job descriptions should encourage innovation and expansion of the work, rather than fulfilment of existing specified tasks. Ecumenical working is still vital although it is recognised that at the present time this is unlikely to lead to a rationalising of posts across denominations.

The Youth and Children's Work Training and Development Officers' (YCWTD) review, in one scenario, proposed a fourth General Assembly post for children's and youth work. Recognising that this is not seen as sustainable by synods and others; SAG is proposing that the United Reformed Church continues with the three current posts it has in this area, in order to best implement the YCWTD review and the strategy of the YCW Committee.

Recognising that the job descriptions need further work and consultation between the YCWTD review task group and SAG, but that the Youth development officers post comes to an end at the end of the year SAG proposes that the two posts be continued and that revised job descriptions are implemented as soon as possible in consultation with relevant personnel.

Resolutions:

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, appoints John Brown as Youth Work Development Officer from January 1st 2009.

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, appoints Jo Williams as Children's Work Development Officer from January 1st 2010.

Rowena Francis
Convenor SAG
November 2008



MISSION COUNCIL 2-4th December 2008

B

Nominations Committee

1. Appointment of Deputy General Secretary

Following the resignation of the Revd Ray Adams as Deputy General Secretary, an Appointing Group was set up according to the new procedures agreed at General Assembly 2008 and under the convenership of the Moderator of General Assembly. A report on its work and a recommendation for appointment will be made verbally at Mission Council.

2. Report of Review Group for the Moderator of South Western Synod

The Review Group for the Moderator of South Western Synod, convened by Dr Jean Silvan Evans, recommends the reappointment of the Revd David Grosch-Miller for a further four years from 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2013.

Resolution: Mission Council agrees to reappoint the Revd David Grosch-Miller as Moderator of the South Western Synod from 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2013.

3. Appointing Group convener

The Revd Elizabeth Welch has agreed to convene the Appointing Group for the Secretary for World Church Relations. This vacancy arises from the resignation of the Revd Dale Rominger with effect from 31 January 2009.

4. Officers of Committees

The following have agreed to serve:

- 2.1.3 Commitment for Life (Convener)
To be confirmed.
From 1st July 2009 until 30th June 2013
- 2.1.4 Methodist/URC Inter Faith Relations Reference Group (Co-Convener)
To be confirmed
From 1st January 2009 until 30th June 2013.
- 3.1 Ministries Committee (Convener-Elect)
To be confirmed.
From 1st July 2009
- 3.1.5 Retired Ministers' Housing Sub-Committee (Convener)
Revd David Bedford
Reappointment until Assembly 2014
- 3.2 Disciplinary Process Commission Panel (Deputy Convener)
Revd Christine Craven
From 1st July 2009 until Assembly 2014
- 3.4 Youth and Children's Work Committee (Convener)
To be confirmed
From 1st January 2009 until 30th June 2013
- 4.3 Equal Opportunities Committee (Convener-Elect)
To be confirmed
From 1st July 2009
- 4.4.1 Stewardship Sub-Committee (Convener)
Mrs Faith Paulding
From 1st January 2009 until 30th June 2013
- 4.5 Nominations Committee (Convener-Elect)
Revd John Durell
From 1st July 2009

4.6.1 Standing Panel for the Incapacity Procedure (Secretary)

To be confirmed

From 1st January 2009 until Assembly 2014.

4.8.1 Pensions Executive (Convener)

Mr Maurice Dyson

Reappointment to Assembly 2012

5. There have been recent changes to the composition of the Churches Legislation Advisory Service (previously known as the Churches Main Committee). Our representatives should now be the General Secretary and Mrs Sheila Duncan with the Deputy General Secretary as alternate for both.

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



MISSION COUNCIL 2-4th December 2008

B1

Nominations Committee

Introduction to MONITORING of nominations and appointments

1. Assembly instruction

General Assembly 2005 passed the following resolutions:

"16. General Assembly instructs the Nominations Committee to monitor appointments to the Assessment Board, the Commission Panel for the Disciplinary Process and the Panel for the appointment and review of Synod Moderators in order to further its Equal Opportunities objectives and sets the following targets for the lists of nominations to each of these bodies presented in the annual report to Assembly:

- a) an equal number of men and women.
- b) at least 10% representation from minority ethnic groups.

"36. General Assembly instructs the Nominations Committee to monitor the appointment of Synod Moderators, Assembly Appointed Staff, Westminster College Staff and the Conveners of Assembly Committees for equal opportunities purposes. It further instructs Nominations, Equal Opportunities and Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry Committees to work together to devise a strategy for all appointment procedures which ensure a balance in those groups which matches the balance in other nominations of:

- a) an equal number of men and women;
- b) at least 10% representation from minority ethnic groups."

2. Policy

Nominations Committee is now in a position to report on discussions and work carried out since then as well as on some of the wider issues involved in monitoring and seeking to achieve balance. Discussions with representatives of Equal Opportunities and Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry Committees led to the formation of a policy which included the following elements:

- earlier and wider advertising of committee vacancies;
- a more detailed response form for monitoring replies from those invited to serve;
- some standardization of information received from synod representatives;
- more detailed reporting to General Assembly of results of monitoring;
- production and circulation of a new "skills audit form" initially to congregations with a significant ethnic mix, so that people could identify their own skills and ethnic identity, and so that these names could be passed on to synod representatives; this form might come to be used more widely e.g. to all church secretaries, FURY, etc in due course.

Most of these provisions are now in place.

3. Principles

Nominations Committee seeks to work with the following principles -

- the United Reformed Church has committed itself to being an equal opportunities organization (1994); it has also declared itself a Multicultural Church (2005);
- the aim is to create a culture in which all our church members and ministers of whatever background are considered for appointments on an equal basis and without prejudice;

- this aim includes the intention to avoid discrimination, not to consider people on a "quota" basis (1999), and to make full use of the rich diversity of the membership of the church;
- in every appointment, the objective is that the "most suitable people [should be nominated] to all positions of responsibility within the church disregarding irrelevant considerations" (1994 and 1999);
- in some circumstances it may be necessary to give added weight to the potential of some candidates if they are perceived to be in danger of being marginalized for any reason;
- in practice it will never be possible to achieve or maintain a total balance of all factors in all committees, or overall; but the ideal is the goal.

4. Responsibility

Nominations Committee is responsible for nominating to General Assembly conveners and members of Assembly committees, boards, panels and some appointing groups. It is not responsible for the appointment of support staff in Church House, synod moderators or other Assembly appointed staff, though it is the channel for reporting the nomination of Assembly appointed staff. In these latter cases, equal opportunity issues are monitored by the Secretary for Human Resources in consultation with the Equal Opportunities Committee and the Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry. These individual appointments adhere to rigorous equal opportunities procedures.

5. Balances

In considering the composition of committees, boards and representatives, the balancing factors to be taken into account are -

- male and female [in equal number in all nominations and notably on Assessment Board, the Commission Panel for the Disciplinary Process and the Panel for the appointment and review of Synod Moderators, the General Secretary and the Deputy General Secretary (2005)]
- lay and ordained
- minority ethnic representation [at least 10% in all nominations and notably on Assessment Board, the Commission Panel for the Disciplinary Process and the Panel for the appointment and review of Synod Moderators, the General Secretary and the Deputy General Secretary (2005)]
- geographical spread
- youth representation and spread of ages
- theological diversity
- disability should not in itself be a bar to nomination
- (specifically not included in this list are marital status and sexual orientation, as being irrelevant for purposes of balance; nor are issues of availability, e.g. whether someone might be free to attend a weekday or a Saturday meeting in London – this should clearly be a matter for the candidate to determine.)

6. Responses

The response form mentioned above is now being used for all appointments. The results from forms returned since 2007 are set out elsewhere. These do not give a comprehensive survey since the response rate is only 76% and only covers those newly serving in the past year. The skills audit form has already produced the names of some 40 BME people who might be invited to serve. Their names are now with the synod representatives on Nominations Committee where they will be considered alongside others in the normal way. The skills audit form enables people to identify their own ethnicity, so that no assumptions are made on their behalf, and so that this category can be monitored more accurately. Some greater effort may now be needed to involve younger people.

7. Monitoring

From earlier discussions on monitoring it seems there are two kinds of monitoring:

- a) what might be called *proactive* monitoring, where every effort is made to ensure appropriate balances on committees and panels;
- b) what might be called *reactive* monitoring, where advertising, applications, shortlists and final appointments of staff members, for example, are monitored to ensure there had been no undue bias or weakness that could be corrected. If there are weaknesses at any point these can then be highlighted and addressed in the next appointment. For this kind of monitoring to be effective, there needs to be some sharing of information between appointing groups and the monitoring body, which would normally be the Equal Opportunities Committee. It is important to recognize this distinction and to use the relevant style of monitoring for each different situation.

8. Outcomes

Detailed monitoring figures and analysis are given on other papers. However, in terms of response to the Assembly resolutions the following comments can be made –

- (a) Male/female balance has been achieved on the boards and panels listed in resolution 16. BME representation is probably still below 10% however. New policies already implemented should begin to correct this imbalance.
- (b) The appointment of Assembly Appointed Staff, including Synod Moderators, is not directly the responsibility of Nominations Committee. However, monitoring of those appointed indicates that the desired balances are not being met at the moment, though progress is being made in the long term. It should be noted, however, that the length of terms of service in these posts means that the potential for rapid change is limited.
- (c) The appointment of conveners of Assembly committees does not fully meet the criteria either. However, all appointments are considered in the light of this policy and decisions made on the basis of the best person for the post.
- (d) The consultations requested have resulted in the implementation of policies as set out in paragraph 2 above. Regarding BME representation, it is seen as highly desirable that people should be given the opportunity to identify their own ethnicity.
- (e) It has not so far proved possible to devise a strategy for achieving the desired balance in individual staff appointments, although there is general awareness of the ideal and equal opportunities criteria are followed in all appointments.

9. A broader view

The figures set out here and in the associated documents largely reflect a "snapshot" of recent figures. However these are not always based on statistically significant numbers and do not adequately reflect long term trends. The Revd Dr Stephen Orchard has recently done some research based on a review of the current Yearbook, in which he has examined numbers of ministers currently serving and the posts they have held - not just those currently held. This reveals some interesting results in relation to ordained women. He offers the following percentages of ordained women:

Ministers in stipendiary service, including chaplaincies	31%
Synod Moderators, including those now in other service	27%
Central staff, including those now in other service	30%
Centres for Learning staff	27%
Synod staff, including those now in other service	27%

This could suggest that from the very low numbers of ordained women who were serving in some of these posts in 1972, the trend is almost keeping pace with the proportion of women actually serving in ministry.



MISSION COUNCIL
2-4th December 2008

B1(i)

Nominations Committee

Monitoring of Committee Membership

COMPARISON OF FIGURES 2005 - 2008

These figures do not include those committees where the members are there to represent their synods (e.g. Mission Council, Mission Committee, Nominations Committee, URC Trust), nor those who serve as representatives to other bodies.

MO = Male Ordained, FO = Female Ordained, ML = Male Lay, FL = Female Lay

<u>2005</u>	MO 78	FO 47	ML 61	FL 69
	Male 139 (54%)	Female 116 (46%)	Lay 130	Ordained 125
	Total 255			
<u>2006</u>	MO 75	FO 52	ML 67	FL 67
	Male 142 (54%)	Female 119 (46%)	Lay 134	Ordained 127
	Total 261			
<u>2007</u>	MO 45	FO 38	ML 49	FL 48
	Male 94 (52%)	Female 86 (48%)	Lay 97	Ordained 83
	Total 180			
<u>2008</u>	MO 55	FO 47	ML 47	FL 50
	Male 102 (51%)	Female 97 (49%)	Lay 97	Ordained 102
	Total 199			

COMPARISON OF RESPONSES TO INVITATIONS 2007 – 2008

These figures relate to the past year and exclude the same categories of committee and people as listed above. They take into account the committee changes made at the 2007 Assembly.

Number of invitations sent out

MO 28 ML 16 FO 22 FL 23 Total 89

Replies received on monitoring forms

(NB Four of these respondents did not answer any of the monitoring questions. Some others did not answer all of the questions.)

<u>Responded</u>	MO 22	ML 11	FO 19	FL 19	Total 71
<u>Accepted</u>	MO 16	ML 9	FO 18	FL 11	Total 54
<u>Declined</u>	MO 6	ML 2	FO 1	FL 8	Total 17

Replies received NOT on monitoring forms

<u>Responded</u>	MO 5	ML 5	FO 3	FL 4	Total 17
<u>Accepted</u>	MO 4	ML 1	FO 1	FL 1	Total 7
<u>Declined</u>	MO 1	ML 4	FO 2	FL 3	Total 10

Thus, for detailed monitoring purposes, we have a response rate of about 76%.

Invitations declined

MO 25% ML 37% FO 14% FL 48%

ANALYSIS OF MONITORING RESPONSES 2007 – 2008

These comments are based on the responses returned on the reply forms sent out with invitations to serve on Assembly committees. The detailed summary of the data is not being widely distributed (even though no names are attached) to avoid any possible breach of confidentiality. The detailed summary has been given to the Convener, Secretary and Secretary-Elect of the Nominations Committee and the Convener of the Equal Opportunities Committee.

1. Male/Female and Lay/Ordained

A good balance has been achieved. The target in each of these categories is 50%, though we recognise that the proportion of lay women to lay men in the church is significantly higher, while the proportion of ordained men to ordained women is roughly 2:1. (Of the total pool of active URC ministers under the age of 65, about 32% are female.)

2. Age

The age profile of those who accepted invitations is as follows:

Under 26: 1, 26-35: 3, 36-45: 8, 46-55: 11, 56-65: 19, Over 65: 6

For those who declined it is:

Under 26: 1, 26-35: 1, 36-45: 1, 46-55: 2, 56-65: 6, Over 65: 3

There is a clear lack of people under 36, especially those under 26. The URC has very few ministers under 35, so we need to look for young lay people. One immediate difficulty here is that a high proportion of those whose names are sent to us as being active in FURY are not members of the URC. Experience also shows that students who have been invited to serve often decline because they see their future and their future commitments as being very uncertain. We need to take more active steps to increase the participation of younger people on committees.

3. Occupation, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, native language

No significant points stood out in the answers to these questions. The only refusal on the grounds of disability during the last two years was from someone who could not manage the journey to London.

As no useful data has been collected from the answers to these questions it has been decided that they will be omitted in future.

4. Ethnicity

It is clear that we have failed to achieve the aim of 10% BME membership, although definite numbers remain uncertain as 24% of forms were not returned this year and 41% last year. We have no data at all for appointments made prior to Assembly 2007.

We know of only 2 new BME additions this year and it looks as if we have ended up with about 5% BME membership of the committees being considered (counting those people identified by the secretary, who may well have missed some as she does not know all of the committee members).

Why has this happened? The short answer is that not enough BME names have come to the Nominations Committee. The Committee always seeks to find the best person for the job. In no instance has a BME name been rejected in preference for a "white" one. The Nominations Committee has taken the following steps to widen the pool of talent available to it:

- ⑩ Vacancies for summer 2009 were published widely in May 2008 to give synods and others plenty of time to find suitable people. (Most invitations to prospective committee members will go out in November/December 2008).
- ⑩ In 2006 extensive work was done with the Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministries Committee and the Equal Opportunities Committee to produce a "BME Skills Audit" form, which the Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministries Committee subsequently distributed.
- ⑩ In May 2008 Nominations received a list of 40+ names of BME church members who had filled in this "BME Skills Audit" form and were willing to serve on Synod or Assembly committees. These names were referred back to their synods so the synods could choose how best to use them. (This always happens when people refer themselves to the Nominations Committee). We hope that some of these people will be able to fill committee vacancies in 2009.

So changes for the better are taking place, but they are slow. They must take place at local and synod levels as well as at Assembly level so that BME church members can share their gifts with the whole church and Assembly committees can draw on a richer pool of talent.



MISSION COUNCIL
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B1(ii)

Nominations Committee

MONITORING FIGURES

Panels and Boards

Members of these three Panels/Boards undergo training. The periods of service of the Assessment Board and the Disciplinary Process Panel have always been five years. Terms on the Disciplinary Process Panel have normally been renewable because of the special skills required. No terms of service were given for the Panel for the Appointment of Synod Moderators until 2008 when a term of five years was agreed and "retirement" dates were allocated to Panel members.

ASSESSMENT BOARD (3.1.6)
(The Board has 22 members)

2005	MO 8 Male 12	ML 4	FO 4 Female 10	FL 6	BME 2
2006	MO 6 Male 10	ML 4	FO 5 Female 12	FL 7	BME 2
2007	MO 4 Male 10	ML 6	FO 5 Female 10	FL 5	BME 2
2008	MO 5 Male 11	ML 6	FO 7 Female 11	FL 4	BME 2

DISCIPLINARY PROCESS COMMISSION PANEL (3.2)
(The Panel has 50 members)

2005	MO 12 Male 24	ML 12	FO 11 Female 25	FL 14
2006	MO 12 Male 25	ML 13	FO 11 Female 24	FL 13
2007	MO 12 Male 24	ML 13	FO 11 Female 24	FL 13
2008	MO 13 Male 25	ML 12	FO 12 Female 25	FL 13

Owing to the relatively recent introduction of the monitoring form, only 11 out of the 50 members of this Panel have received it. It is not clear, therefore, exactly how many BME members there are on the Panel.

PANEL FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF SYNOD MODERATORS, ETC (4.5.1)

(The panel was formed in 2004 with 10 members. The membership was increased to 18 in 2005 and 24 in 2008 when the remit was also increased.)

2005	MO 3 Male 9	ML 6	FO 4 Female 9	FL 5	BME 2
2006	Unchanged				
2007	Unchanged				
2008	MO 6 Male 11	ML 5	FO 6 Female 13	FL 7	BME 2

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE CONVENERS

(There were 31 convenerships in 2005; there are now 25)

2005	MO 16 Totals Male: 24 (78%)	ML 8	FO 5 Female: 7 (22%)	FL 2	BME: 1 (3%)
2006	<i>Six committees had new conveners</i>				
	MO 16 Totals Male: 24 (78%)	ML 8	FO 4 Female: 7 (22%)	FL 3	BME: 1 (3%)
2007	<i>Situation before restructuring took effect. Eight committees had new conveners.</i>				
	MO 11 Totals Male: 20 (67%)	ML 9	FO 6 Female: 10 (33%)	FL 4	BME 0 (0%)
2008	<i>Six committees disappeared and two new ones were added. Two "old" committees had new conveners.</i>				
	MO 11 Totals Male: 18 (72%)	ML 7	FO 3 Female: 7 (28%)	FL 4	BME: 0 (0%)

WESTMINSTER COLLEGE STAFF

(There are 5 staff members)

The appointment of Westminster College staff is the responsibility of the College Governors, though General Assembly appoints the Principal. Years refer to the start of the academic year.

2005	MO 4	FO 1	BME 0
2006	MO 4	FO 1	BME 0
2007	<i>One staff member left</i>		
	MO 3	FO 1	BME 0
2008	<i>One staff member left and two new ones were appointed</i>		
	MO 3	FO 2	BME 0

SYNOD MODERATORS
(There are 13 synod moderators)

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008
Number of Changes	0	0	2	4
MALE	10 (77%)	10 (77%)	9 (69%)	12 (93%)
FEMALE	3 (23%)	3 (23%)	4 (31%)	1 (7%)
BME	0	0	0	1 [7%]

OTHER ASSEMBLY APPOINTED STAFF
(There are 17 staff members)

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008
Personnel Changes	0	1	3	4
Changes in Posts	0	-1	0	+1
MALE	10 (59%)	9 (56%)	10 (63%)	10 (59%)
FEMALE	7 (41%)	7 (44%)	6 (37%)	7 (41%)
BME	3 [18%]	3 [19%]	3 [19%]	3 [18%]



MISSION COUNCIL
2-4th December 2008

B2

Nominations Committee

ORIENTATION AND INDUCTION OF COMMITTEE AND PANEL MEMBERS

How can we best help new committee members to find their feet? An enquiry was sent to all Committees and Panels for information about how they deal with the induction and orientation of new committee members. What follows is a summary of their responses. Clearly this is not a case of "one size fits all", but this may provide an opportunity to learn from each other. Committees might be encouraged to develop their own strategies.

Stage 1

INFORMATION SENT BY THE SECRETARY OF THE NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE WHEN INVITING SOMEONE TO SERVE:

- An invitation letter giving the committee remit, term of service, the frequency and places of meetings, contact details for the convener and staff secretary and references to the Reports to Assembly.
- Plus, if available, material provided by the relevant committee, for example -
 - an up to date leaflet outlining what happens at meetings, how decisions are made and what is expected of committee members.
 - detailed material on how the work of the committee is carried out and the responsibilities of members.

Stage 2

PRELIMINARY COMMITTEE CONTACTS WITH NEW MEMBERS

(This is a sample list of things done by different committees)

- Welcoming letter from committee secretary answering the Most Frequently Asked Questions and outlining training, procedures and work patterns
- Convener talks to the new member some weeks before the first meeting highlighting agenda and policy issues
- New members are given a thorough briefing paper identifying important issues
- Letter of welcome sent out with key policy documents to be assimilated and opportunity given to discuss these with staff secretary or convener
- Invitation to visit projects and workers with the staff secretary
- Letter with meeting dates and opportunity for online discussion.
- Convener talks to new members and ascertains what else might be useful, e.g. visit to office, sets of recent minutes, further conversations with convener or staff secretary.

Stage 3

WORKING IN THE COMMITTEE/PANEL:

- One committee does much of its work in sub-groups. This means that there is more frequent and somewhat more informal contact between members than in a large meeting.
- After the formal training, matters are arranged so that new members work closely together with experienced members.

Stage 4

FOLLOW UP

- The convener asks an "old" committee member to elicit feedback from the new member after the meeting or does this him/herself after a couple of meetings to see what more needs to be done to help.

Resolution: Mission Council commends the paper on "Orientation and Induction of Committee and Panel Members" to the committees concerned for their consideration and possible use in their own induction processes.



MISSION COUNCIL
2-4th December 2008

B3

Nominations Committee

Length of Terms of Service on Committees

The current length of service on committees is as follows:

4 Years

All committees except Retired Ministers' Housing

5 Years

Assessment Board*

Disciplinary Process Commission Panel*

Panel for Appointment and Review of Synod Moderators, etc.*

Retired Ministers' Housing Sub-Committee

* These require training

6 Years

Faith and Order Reference Group

Methodist/URC Interfaith Reference Group (in line with Methodist committee terms)

URC Ministers Pensions Trust

7 Years

URC Trust

Uncertain

International Exchange Group

Commitment for Life Group

Absenteeism is looked into every year and steps taken to deal with any problems. Every letter of invitation alerts the nominee to the fact that if their circumstances change so that they are not able to play a full part in the work of the committee they should discuss this with the convener with a view to giving up their place to someone else.

Nominations Committee is open to the possibility of changing these terms, but after consideration recommends that these periods of service remain unchanged, i.e. that for most committees we stay with the four year pattern, because –

- (a) that is a reasonable length of service to ask;
- (b) conveners already serve 5 years - one as elect and 4 as convener;
- (c) a four year rotation provides good opportunity for involving more people and for keeping membership fresh as well as gaining some experience;
- (d) exceptional cases can still be treated on an individual basis.



MISSION COUNCIL

2-4th December 2008

B4

Nominations Committee

COMMITTEE STRUCTURES

(including details of advisory groups, task groups, sub-committees, etc)

The outline of Assembly committees as presented to General Assembly (see pp 44-53 of Record) does not give a completely full picture of the current structures. Nominations Committee therefore proposes to supplement and refine its annual report in future so that a more comprehensive view is given of how committees relate to one another, and who is responsible for appointing the members of sub-committees and overseeing their work, particularly where that is not directly the responsibility of General Assembly or Mission Council. It is hoped in due course also to show details of all networks including the contact person.

This paper needs to be read in conjunction with the Assembly Record. Where names of committee conveners are shown there they are not generally given here. Where committee details are unchanged they are not shown here.

This outline may still be inaccurate at certain points, but it is offered as a first draft for correction and comment.

NOTES

- (a) Dates shown after task groups indicate the year they were set up.
- (b) Apart from those made by Mission Council, all other committees and appointments shown in ordinary type are made by General Assembly on the recommendation of Nominations Committee.
- (c) Where committees appoint sub groups for particular tasks, these are shown in italics together with the name of the convener.
- (d) Where committees have associated networks these are shown in italics and within square brackets together with the name of the link person.
- (e) An asterisk * indicates bodies where Assembly appoints only the convener.

1. MISSION COUNCIL

Mission Council Advisory and Task Groups are appointed by Mission Council (sometimes following decisions made by General Assembly).

Mission Council Advisory Group (Moderator of Assembly)
Staffing Advisory Group (Mrs Val Morrison)
Section O Advisory Group (Revd Julian Macro)
Ethical Investment Advisory Group (Revd Raymond Singh)
Sexual Ethics Advisory Group (Revd Carla Grosch-Miller)
Law and Polity Advisory Group (Revd Professor David Thompson)
Listed Buildings Advisory Group (Mr Hartley Oldham)

London Synod Task Group (2005) (Revd Bill Mahood)
Consensus Voting Task Group (2007) (Revd Elizabeth Nash)
Resource Sharing Task Group (2000?) (Revd Elizabeth Caswell)
Human Sexuality Task Group (2008) (Revd John Waller)

Church House Management Group (Mr Donald Swift)

(might be moved to be sub group of URC Trust)
Criminal Records Bureau Reference Group (Revd Adrian Bulley)
Vision4Life Steering Group (Revd Dr John Hall)

2. MISSION DEPARTMENT

2.1 MISSION COMMITTEE

- 2.1.1 Faith and Order Reference Group
- 2.1.2 International Exchange Group
- 2.1.3 [*Commitment for Life Reference Group**]
(This is misnamed and is, in fact, a network.)
- 2.1.4 Methodist/URC Interfaith Reference Group

(The new structures under the Mission Committee are not yet fully resolved, but include such groups as the Joint Public Issues Team, the JPIT Management Group and the Mission Team.)

3. MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH DEPARTMENT

3.1 MINISTRIES COMMITTEE

- 3.1.1 Accreditation Sub-Committee
- 3.1.2 CRCW Programme Sub-Committee
- 3.1.3 Leadership in Worship Sub-Committee
- 3.1.4 Maintenance of Ministry Sub-Committee
- 3.1.5 Retired Ministers' Housing Sub-Committee
- 3.1.6 Assessment Board

3.3 EDUCATION AND LEARNING COMMITTEE

Training Finance Sub-Committee (Mr Michael Downing)

- 3.3.1 Windermere Advisory Group
Local Management Group (Dr Peter Clark)

(However, 3.3.1 is presently under review and recommendations will be presented to the December Mission Council.)

4. ADMINISTRATION AND RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

4.4 FINANCE COMMITTEE

Stewardship Sub-Committee (Mrs Faith Paulding)
Remuneration Sub-Committee (General Secretary or DGS)

4.7 UNITED REFORMED CHURCH TRUST

URC Trust Investment Sub-Committee (Dr Brian Woodhall)
(There are plans to set up an Audit Committee, probably jointly with the URC Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd.)

4.8 THE URC MINISTERS' PENSION TRUST LTD.

Pensions Executive (reports to ...)
Pensions Investment Committee (Mr Richard Nunn)

The remaining sections of the Nominations Committee report (paras 5 - 10) will remain unchanged, but need to be kept in mind in terms of understanding the church's links and ways of working.)



MISSION COUNCIL
2-4th December 2008

C

Ministerial Development Review

(The background to this paper is provided in Paper C1)

1 In 2006, General Assembly

- a) agreed in principle to replace the existing scheme for Ministerial Accompanied Self-Appraisal with a more comprehensive review scheme which would:
 - (i) eventually include all Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers;
 - (ii) operate biennially;
 - (iii) be based around an agreed role description for the Minister;
 - (iv) retain the confidential accompanied self-appraisal discussion for the Minister;
 - (v) include open discussions involving both the Minister and the pastorate or post;
 - (vi) would become, from a date to be agreed, a standard part of the Terms of Settlement when a Minister starts in a new pastorate or post
- b) asked the Ministries Committee to prepare a detailed scheme, to consult the Synods and to report back to Mission Council; and
- c) authorised Mission Council to implement a scheme.

2.1 Ministries Committee asked two synods to pilot the process and report. Northern Synod has done so and raised some important questions, largely about the preparation of visitors, the connection with wider pastoral oversight within the synod, and how the process relates to ecumenical partnerships.

2.2 Consultation with other synods indicates that the principles are not in question. There is an eagerness to engage with some form of process whereby the Pastorate Profile is a living document that enshrines and develops the mutual accountability of ministers/CRCWs and the pastorate/post, and which is reviewed and updated regularly. It is because we sense an impatience with the timetable and feel that it is important that there are some elements of consistency across the Church that the committee now asks Mission Council to implement the scheme.

2.3 We believe that there will be a need to listen and learn how best to do the task that will only come through as synods set about trying to work it through and adapting the scheme to meet their needs. We hope that synods will share their experience of good practice and of addressing difficulties discovered. The committee will look to modifying the process in the light of experience in the future.

- 2.4 Some synods have concerns about their ability to recruit and train those who are expected to work in support of pastorates/posts. We are not sure to what extent this is a greater commitment than that which was formerly borne by District Councils as part of the process of quinquennial visits.
- 2.5 We need to restate that the process sits alongside and relates dynamically with MASA - ministerial assisted self-appraisal. MASA remains personal and confidential to the minister because ministerial development is more than just the development of the pastorate and the working relationship within it.

Resolution:

Mission Council authorises the scheme of Ministerial Development Review as proposed by the Ministries Committee.

Core provisions address the following questions

- 1 What does the pastorate/team seek to do by way of mission and service in the next identifiable period ?
- 2 What tasks and activity are necessary to ensure that happens ?
- 3 Which of these tasks and activity do we expect the minister to do ?
- 4 Who will do the others or ensure that they are carried out ?

Review process reflects on the core provisions

- 5 Reflection in the second year of a settlement may conclude that the recently prepared Pastorate Profile has specified all these provisions and that all is going according to expectations.
- 6 Such reflection might suggest that some of the original provisions need to be adjusted in the light of experience with added responsibilities, or a change in the pattern of sharing responsibilities.
- 7 It might indicate that the mutual accountability in the pastorate partnership is not working. This might be because the minister is trying to deliver but others are not fulfilling their share. It might be that the minister is unable or unwilling to deliver.

The process has a built-in flexibility

- 8 It offers a range of models from one which is entirely locally based with a minimum of input from or involvement by the Synod, to one which involves a close partnership in reflection between the minister and elders and people called and trained by the Synod to act as Pastoral Partners or Outside Facilitators.
- 9 It recognises that MASA is and should remain personal and confidential. It may be conducted quite separately from MASA. Or there might be a bridge of reflection between MASA and the suggestions for ongoing personal development and training arising from changes in the perceptions of partnership tasks and activity within the pastorate.



MISSION COUNCIL
2-4th December 2008

C1

Ministerial Development Review Background Paper

1. Introduction

1.1 In 2006, General Assembly (GA)

- a) agreed in principle to replace the existing scheme for Ministerial Accompanied Self-Appraisal with a more comprehensive review scheme which would:
 - i) eventually include all Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers;
 - ii) operate biennially;
 - iii) be based around an agreed role description for the Minister;
 - iv) retain the confidential accompanied self-appraisal discussion for the Minister;
 - v) include open discussions involving both the Minister and the pastorate or post;
 - vi) would become, from a date to be agreed, a standard part of the Terms of Settlement when a Minister starts in a new pastorate or post;
- b) asked the Ministries Committee to prepare a detailed scheme, to consult the Synods and to report back to Mission Council; and
- c) authorised Mission Council to implement a scheme.

The scheme proposed here fulfils GA's requirements and takes account of comments received from a number of Synods on an earlier draft.

1.2 One comment received related to the purpose of the scheme. We define this as

'to explore a Minister's sense of vocation, the pastorate's understanding(s) of mission in context, and the relationship between the two'. As outcomes we anticipate that the Minister's professional development will benefit and that there will be improved cooperative working between Ministers and pastorates or a recognition that it is time for the Minister to move on.'

It is not a 'Ministerial Performance Review'. Rather, the process is that of church and Minister jointly reviewing their mission, the Minister then reflecting on his or her role in this context, and finally, agreement on the way forward and an endorsement of the Minister's role within the framework of the church's plan for mission.

1.3 A review of church life (overseen by an Interim Moderator) is a normal part of the creation of a Pastorate Profile for a church or churches seeking a Minister. We are used to them. They describe our context, our aspirations and what we seek in a new Minister - what we hope their role will be; what our

priorities are for him or her. However, once a Minister has accepted a call, the Profile usually sits gathering dust until we are next in vacancy.

This process changes that. The Pastoral profile becomes a living document which we periodically review and up-date as a statement of where we are and where we believe God is leading us.

In doing so we necessarily review our Minister's role. As a result there should be clarity about the church's objectives and about what is expected of the Minister, and in particular what should be given priority by both congregation and Minister.

1.4 A church life review necessarily involves detailed work by the Eldership (including the Minister) and endorsement by the Church Meeting. For a CRCW, the same concept can be applied. The Project Management group simply takes over the role of the Eldership, and a gathering of representatives of both the church and community replaces the Church Meeting.

1.5 It is considered neither practical nor necessary to require churches to undertake a major review of their life at 2 yearly intervals. The process therefore envisages a 4 yearly cycle for major reviews (which are equivalent to, and would supersede our current 'Synod pastoral consultations'), with a relatively low key review every second year. For CRCW's the major review at 'year 8' is seen as helpful in defining the CRCW's priorities for the final two years in the post.

1.6 For Ministers not in pastoral charge, some details of the review process will be different but the principles should be the same. These are outlined in Appendices C and D. Commonly the process for Special Category Ministers will be similar to that for CRCW's.

1.7 Where a Minister, stipendiary or not, is acting in a Ministerial capacity in another context, e.g. as a chaplain, then we expect that they would be subject to the review procedures of their employer, e.g. the NHS. However, by virtue of that person being on our Roll of Ministers, we implicitly endorse what they are doing. There is therefore a need for the role of Ministers in such situations to be periodically reviewed and endorsed by the URC. This is not covered by this document and further work is necessary.

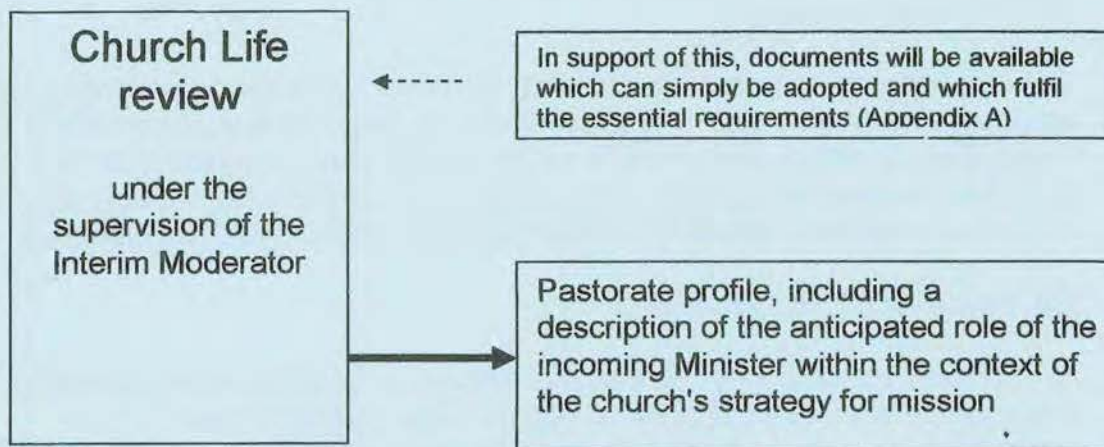
1.8 The process described is distinct and separate from our quinquennial surveys of property. Where the condition of a building has a major impact on the church's perception of its future, reviews may be brought forward.

1.9 Both appendices A and B are interim documents. Further work is being undertaken on both. The use of alternative approaches is not precluded.

2. Process

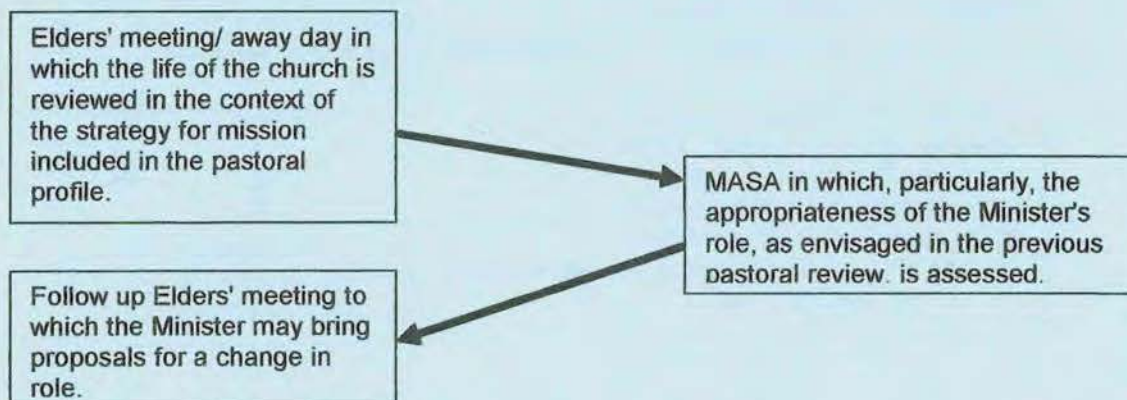
This section has been written for the case of a Minister in Pastoral Charge of a single church. Other situations are dealt with in later sections of the report.

2.1 The church seeking a Minister (year 0)



This might be described simply as current good practice, but it emphasises the importance of a clear statement by the church of its expectations of the incoming Minister.

2.2 Year 2 (6, 10, etc.) Review¹



The core process is shown above. Synods may wish to consider the following options.

The MASA partner could be invited as an observer during the initial discussions within the Elders' council. The benefit of this is that, when it comes to MASA, the Minister's appraisal partner (AP) will have some independent insight into the Minister's situation. However the presence of a 'fly on the wall', however discreet, will affect the dynamics of the Elders' meeting and this may be unhelpful. It may also change the AP's role in the context of the Minister's self appraisal. Currently this is unequivocally seen as one of support for the Minister: it could become more one of challenge.

¹ Nothing precludes a review being undertaken at an earlier stage if it is clear that there is a mismatch between what has been said of the church's situation and purpose, and the emerging reality.

An alternative is to ensure that the AP has copies of the current pastoral profile (incorporating the Minister's role description) and a report from the first Elders' review meeting.

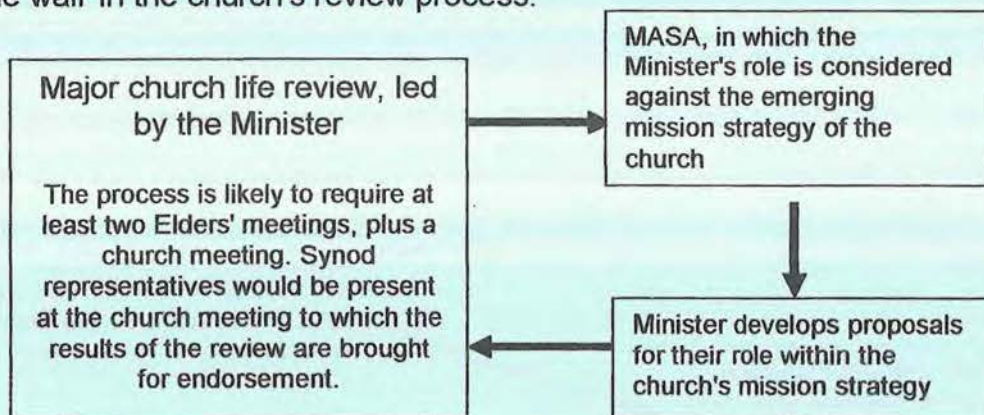
General Assembly has not required that Ministers currently in post undertake an Assisted Self-Appraisal. If a Minister in post does not wish to undertake a formal Self Appraisal, then there is still a need for them to reflect on their role, and respond to changes in the church's perception of its mission. There is no doubt that the input of an independent third party would facilitate this.

2.3 Year 4 (8, 12, etc.) Review

A number of possible ways forward are shown, all of which have a different emphasis. It is for Synods to decide which is best suited to their circumstances, and the circumstances of a particular church or pastorate

Option 1

This is the minimum change, minimum intervention, minimum staffing option. It is assumed that the AP is only involved in MASA, and not even as a 'fly on the wall' in the church's review process.

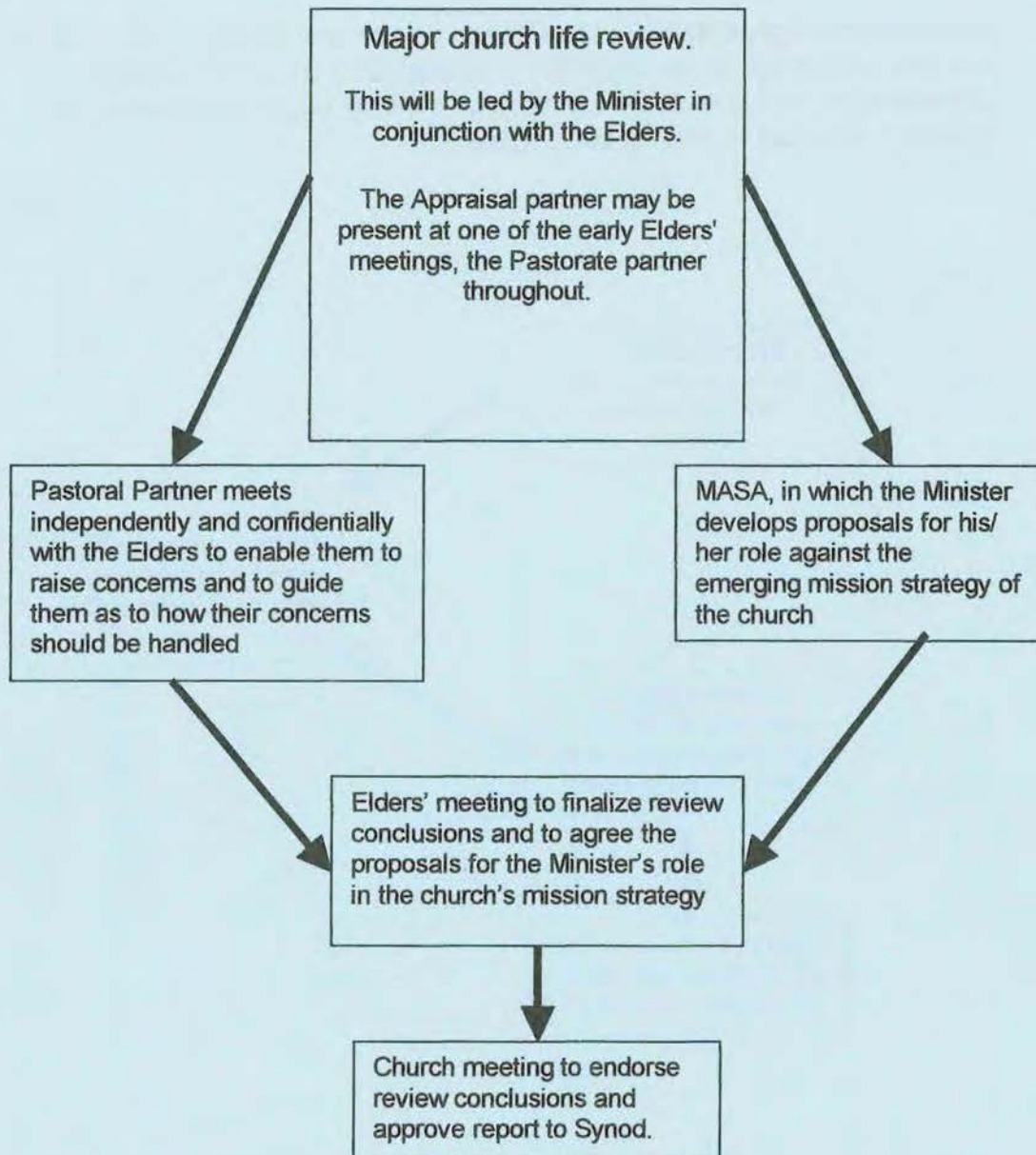


This option emphasizes the role of the Minister as the leader of the review process and seeks to interfere as little as possible with the dynamics of the Elders' and church meetings whilst fulfilling the requirement for Synods to 'visit by deputies' and consult on the church's life and work. It encourages the view that Minister, Elders and congregation work as a team with common objectives. It is within the context of these joint objectives that the Minister's personal role is to be defined through MASA.

Option 1A

This is very similar to option 1, but the AP is involved as an observer in an early Elders' meeting (see discussion on 'Year 2').

Option 2

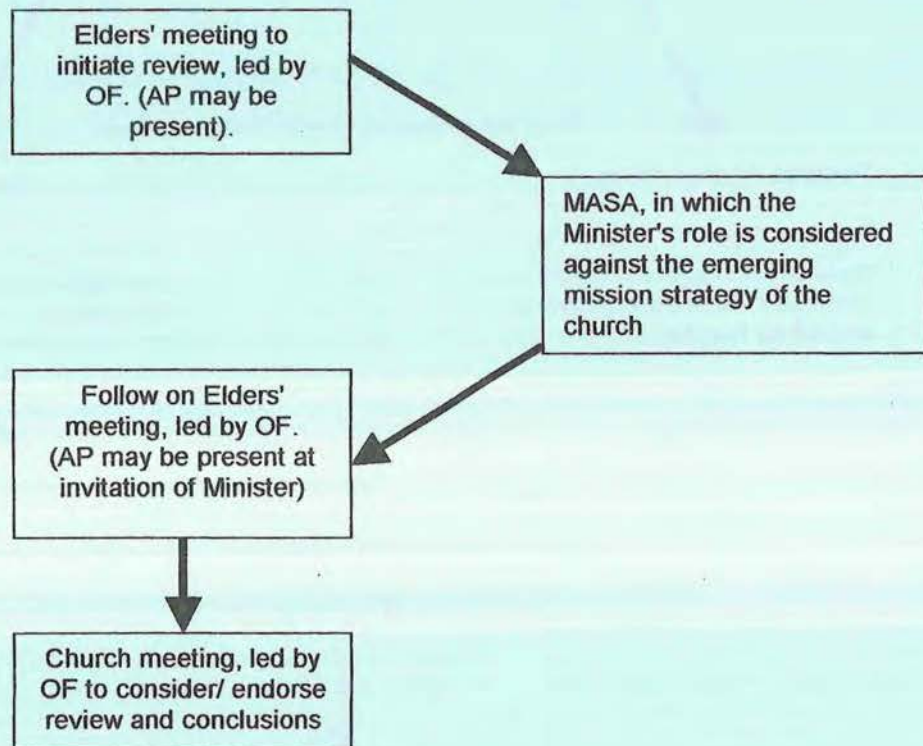


As with option 1, this encompasses two very similar options depending on whether the AP is involved in the Church Life Review process. The major difference from option 1 is the introduction of a 'Pastorate (or church) Partner (PP) who is present throughout the church life review process. The role can be seen as parallel to that of the Minister's AP, providing an opportunity for the Elders to raise concerns with the PP in confidence and independently of the Minister.

The process of review remains Minister led, but with prominent Synod representation throughout (in the person of the PP). Whilst the opportunity for the Elders to raise concerns with the PP in confidence and independently of the Minister may be helpful, it could also be divisive.

Option 3

The major change is again in the Church Life review element, the process now led throughout by an Outside Facilitator (OF). There could be a considerable involvement by the Minister's AP as suggested below, but equally it could be restricted as in option 1.



The church life review is now, very clearly, a Synod led, rather than Minister led process, placing emphasis on the importance of independence in the review process. The skills required of the OF would however be very different from those required of a PP or AP.

3. Taking stock

'Taking stock' (Appendix B), as a template for MASA, fits into the above framework with singularly little need for modification. We have made some slight changes to the wording, but none of major significance. As indicated earlier, further review is anticipated.

The document has been radically condensed. In part this was motivated by a desire to reduce the physical size of the document which, at 21 pages, could be daunting. If the document is provided electronically, 'answers' can be simply interposed into the text so there is no continuing need for big spaces for input.

MASA remains confidential. It is for the Minister alone to bring his or her conclusions to the church or the Synod Training Officer.

4. Multi-church pastorates

Many pastorates involve two or more churches, the groupings commonly being driven by finance rather than synergy. In this situation, the Appraisal Partner needs to keep a particular eye on the usage of the Minister's time in relation to the scoping of the churches.

Because the churches involved may have little in common other than their Minister, it is probably better to think in terms of a church partner, rather than a pastorate partner, if one is considered necessary. This has the advantage as well that an individual 'assignment' for the partner will be less onerous.

In a multi-church pastorate, some Ministers prefer to run their Church reviews sequentially, rather than concurrently, simply to spread the work load. This seems reasonable. It also seems sensible for the same Partner to accompany the Minister through each of these church reviews. However a sequential review of the Minister's churches will increase the time frame for the self-appraisal process and will also mean more meetings with the Minister. There is no ideal solution to this and it is best left for negotiation between the Minister and the Synod's administrator.

5. Group Ministries

By a 'Group Ministry' is meant the situation where a number of churches (but possibly only one) is served by a number of Ministers. In most instances the churches will be independent and at 'year 0' it will be appropriate for each to produce its own pastoral profile. However within this framework, the role of individual Ministers will need to be defined and probably the fraction of each Minister's time that should be spent in a particular sphere of activity.

If one considers the 2 or 4 yearly review, then for options 1 and 2, the members of the Ministry team will need to agree between them who will lead the pastoral review in a particular place, but all team members may need to be involved. It would not be appropriate for the Ministers to act as one

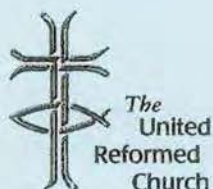
another's AP's, nor would it be appropriate for any of the Ministers involved to have the same AP.

If there are changes in the team, then the church(es) will have needed to discuss in some depth the role of the new team member and the incoming Minister will have discussed and agreed his or her role before accepting a call. In effect this recreates a 'year 0' situation, and it seems most straightforward to allow this to set the timescales for future reviews.

There is a danger in this situation of the process becoming unmanageably complex, and we perceive that a measure of flexibility will be vital.

6. Training and Administration

Synods already have structures in place for both training and administration. There is a view however that it would be helpful if there was guidance from Assembly on training issues. We will be working with Synod training officers on this



MISSION COUNCIL
2-4th December 2008

C2

United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund

Proposed Pension Fund Rule amendments

Resolution **Disapplication of the HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) Transitional Regulations**

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly resolves that the following notice be included in the Scheme document of the Rules of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund.

Deletions shown in bold [brackets] Additions/amendments shown in italic (*brackets*)

(The Trustees resolve, and the United Reformed Church acting in General Assembly agrees, that the rules of the Fund shall be deemed to be, and they are hereby, modified with effect from 6 April 2006:

- (i) *in a manner which has the same effect as all of the modifications in regulations 3 to 8 of the HMRC Transitional Regulations but without limitation to the transitional period mentioned in those Regulations and subject to the "General Finance Act 2004 amendments" already made to the Fund with effect from 6 April 2006 by Resolution 31 passed by the General Assembly at their meeting of 1 July 2006; and*
- (ii) *so that the HMRC Transitional Regulations no longer apply in relation to the Scheme with effect from 6 April 2006.*

"Transitional period" has the meanings given to it in the HMRC Transitional Regulations.)

Resolution **Pension Fund Rule on Additional Voluntary Contributions**

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly resolves to amend the Rules of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund, with effect from (date), by the following additions, deletions and amendments.

Deletions shown in bold [brackets] Additions/amendments shown in italic (*brackets*)

Amend Rule 17 as follows

- [17.1.1 **the voluntary contributions shall be limited to a sum which:**
- 17.1.1.1 **when added to all other contributions in respect of his/her membership of the Fund would provide benefits not exceeding Inland Revenue limits and**
- 17.1.1.2 **when added to the contributions (if any) of the member to this and all other retirement benefits schemes that have received or are capable of receiving approval under the 1988 Act does not exceed 15% of the member's total annual remuneration for that year.]**

Re-number paras. [17.1.2 & 17.1.3] (17.1.1 & 17.1.2) respectively.

Amend Rule 43 & 43.1 as follows

- 43. *(Overriding Tax Rules and) Maximum Benefits*
- 43.1 **[The Inland Revenue limits on benefits apply to the Fund and are set out in the Schedule hereto] *(The Schedule hereto sets out the Tax Rules and the Inland Revenue Limits on benefits that apply to the Fund.***

Add the following at the end of the Schedule: "Inland Revenue Limits: Part I-Tax Rules"

9. *Members' contributions: The annual rate of Members' contributions may with the consent of the Pension Trustees exceed 15% of Remuneration or any other limit imposed by the provisions of Part II of the Schedule).*
1. These amendments to the Pension Fund Rules allow members to pay Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs) to the AVC Scheme attaching to the Fund without the current contribution restriction (maximum contribution 15% of stipend)

Resolution Pension Fund Rule on Death in service & Death aft retirement

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly resolves to amend the Rules of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund, with effect from (date), by the following additions, deletions and amendments.

Deletions shown in bold [brackets] Additions/amendments shown in italic (brackets)

Amend Rule 22.2 as follows

- 22.2 "To the surviving spouse a pension for life of an annual amount equal to one half of the pension to which the member would have been entitled to if the member had attained normal pension age (or, in the case of the death of a contributing member in service after normal pension age, one half of the pension to which the member would have been entitled had he or she retired the day before his/her death) plus in the case of the spouse of a member of the Congregational Fund"

Amend Rule 23.1 as follows

- 23.1 "In the event of the death of a member who has retired on pension and who leaves a spouse whom he/she married before [attainment of normal pension age] (the later of the date on which his/her service as a contributing member of the Fund ceases and the date of his/her retirement), a pension will become payable for life to the spouse."
2. On 1st December 2006 when the Pension Fund Rules were brought into line with the requirements of the Employment Equality (Age) Discrimination Regulations 2006, these required amendments were overlooked. The amendments ensure that benefits are provided from the Fund where a member has continued in contributory service after normal pension age (65); and that spouse benefits are available in all cases where the marriage took place before the member's retirement date



MISSION COUNCIL 2-4th December 2008

D

Report of the Mission Council Review Group

1. Elizabeth Nash (convenor), Morag M McIntock (minute taker) Ray Adams, Roz Harrison, Rachel Poolman, Patrick Smyth. John Macaulay was not able to attend either meeting.
2. The General Assembly 2008 Book of Reports defines the task of Mission Council as taking a comprehensive view of the work of General Assembly; deciding on priorities; and encouraging the United Reformed Church at all levels in its engagement with the world. The scope of this engagement ranges from the local to the international arena, and includes relationships with ecumenical partners in the UK and overseas. While Mission Council services and maintains the work of General Assembly from one year to the next, it is principally concerned about the Church's future direction and the support of all its members.
The roles of Mission Council include acting on behalf of General Assembly, acting on its own behalf, as well as instigating work.
3. The Mission Council Review Group met on two occasions and considered a wide range of issues connected with Mission Council. Although our remit was concerned with Mission Council, with the change to biennial Assemblies and the amount of business at the last two Assemblies we found that we had to include both General Assembly and Assembly committees in our discussions and recommendations. We have tried to concentrate on Mission Council and recommend that there be a review of the way General Assembly works. We considered both the name and membership of Mission Council. We have clarified the responsibilities of Mission Council relative to General Assembly. We have some ideas of ways to help the work of Mission Council. We have reviewed the remit and membership of the Mission Council Advisory Group as well as the Advisory Groups and Task Groups of Mission Council. We propose help for the consensus procedures. We suggest a change in the length of service on assembly committees and a review of the Synod Moderators' meeting.
Some of these recommendations may require a change in our Standing Orders.
4. **Recommendations:**
 - 4.1. Mission Council be renamed. And its name be either Assembly Council or Assembly Executive.
 - 4.2. Each Synod to appoint three members to Mission Council for up to two terms of three years. These members and their Moderator to be as balanced as possible in terms of lay and ordained and the full range of our equal opportunities policy.
 - 4.3. Two representatives from our ecumenical partners with full speaking and voting rights be appointed to Mission Council on the advice of the Mission Committee.
 - 4.4. URC Representatives to wider ecumenical meetings to report to Mission Committee.
 - 4.5. Assembly staff to have full speaking rights on any subject on Mission Council and General Assembly.
OR
Assembly staff to be full members of Mission Council and General Assembly.
 - 4.6. When a Committee Convenor is unable to attend Mission Council another member of the committee may attend in their place.

- 4.7. Mission Council agrees to the changes in responsibility of Mission Council and General Assembly.
 - 4.8. Mission Council agrees to the changes to the remit and membership of Mission Council Advisory Group
 - 4.9. Mission Council agrees to the changes to its Advisory and Task Groups.
 - 4.10. A Consensus Adviser be appointed by Nominations to both General Assembly and Mission Council, and four consensus facilitators be appointed by Nominations to General Assembly
 - 4.11. There be a review of the purpose, format, style and ways of working of General Assembly, including its relationship with Assembly Committees and Mission Council.
 - 4.12. Assembly Committee members be appointed for up to two terms of three years and be considered to have resigned after non-attendance at three consecutive meetings.
 - 4.13. Synod Moderators meeting be reviewed to see how it has changed and what might its appropriate place be in the structure of the URC.
5. **Name** It was clear to us that the name Mission Council needed to be changed. Mission is not the primary work of this meeting and with a Mission Committee there is scope for confusion.
In as much as the URC has executives, Mission Council is the executive committee of the URC between General Assemblies and Mission Council Advisory Group is the executive committee between Mission Council meetings. As a small group MCAG is more able to be an executive. On the other hand the decisions Mission Council makes between Assemblies won't have to wait to be ratified in the way that executives have to report and seek approval of their actions. Although Mission Council has been called 'Council' it was not absolutely clear to us whether or not it is a council of the URC. It is not identified in the Manual as one of the councils of our conciliar church. With Assembly only meeting biennially, Mission Council functions as both executive and council. We were not able to agree whether it should be called **Assembly Council** or **Assembly Executive** or if there was a better name which we could not think of!
6. **Membership** Synods appoint three members to Mission Council according to their own criteria. This has meant that turnover has been very variable since the length of service of each individual has depended on the Synod. Also it has made it difficult for Mission Council to have a balanced membership according to the URC's equal opportunities policy. In order to ensure maximum efficiency and consistency we felt that it would be appropriate for every Synod to have the same turnover period of its membership.
7. We therefore propose:
Each Synod to have 3 members appointed for up to two terms of 3 years. Given that some people can attend only weekend meetings and others only mid week meetings, Synods may appoint alternatives who will communicate with each other between meetings. Each Synod would agree a date for implementation of the new membership system
8. Mission Council needs a **balanced membership** of:
- 8.1. ministers, elders and lay people
 - 8.2. the full range of people according to our equal opportunities policy
 - 8.3. theological position
 - 8.4. context and experience
9. Membership of Mission Council consists of four groups of people
- 9.1. Synod Representatives, including Moderators

- 9.2. Assembly Committee Convenors
 - 9.3. Other people such as Assembly Moderators, ecumenical representatives etc.
 - 9.4. Assembly Staff, depending on the decision of recommendation 4.5
10. At this point we do not make any recommendations regarding the balance of groups 9.2-4, but we felt that it would be possible to improve the balance of Synod Representatives. We considered two alternative ways forward: either each Synod should be asked to nominate 6 names at regular periods to Nominations Committee who would utilise that pool to determine the membership of Mission Council thus hopefully achieving and managing the balance requirements or Synods be asked to send a balance in their four representatives, including their Moderator, on a rolling programme choosing representatives using their own selection processes. There are difficulties with both suggestions but balance in the councils and committees of the church, is vital. It would be a major job for Nominations to do this work and Synods may find it difficult to offer a pool of names to them. Equally, if the Synods have to achieve the balance then they will find it difficult with only four representatives. We recommend asking Synods to provide as balanced a group as possible and suggest that the balance of Mission Council as a whole be reported annually.
 11. There should be two representatives from our **ecumenical partners** appointed on a rolling programme for 4 years each. This should include representatives of a wide range of churches across the three nations. Recommendations for these appointments should come from the Mission Committee. They would have full speaking and voting rights.
 12. **URC Representatives to wider ecumenical meetings** should report to Mission committee.
 13. It has long been a discomfort that **Assembly staff** are not members of any council and do not have the right to speak. They have the knowledge but can only answer through the convenor of their committee, which has been both clumsy and on occasions difficult. It is not only in their particular work that they have things to offer to Mission Council. They have wide ranging knowledge across the URC. We felt that at the least they should have full speaking rights on any subject at both Mission Council and General Assembly. We would be please to recommend that they be made full members of both Mission Council and General Assembly but this would mean that they would be expected to attend Mission Council, which would be a change in their job description. We have started a process of consultation with the staff and at the moment two of them would like to be full members and three would prefer to have full speaking rights. As at this point we offer an alternative. Where there is a clash of interests the staff member will be expected to declare it and staff members and their committee convenors will need to discuss their joint contributions to discussions.
 14. Where a **committee convenor** is unable to attend Mission Council an appropriate substitute from the committee should be invited to attend with full speaking and voting rights.
 15. **The work of Mission Council and General Assembly.** Now that General Assembly is held only every two years, changes are needed in responsibilities held by the two bodies. With help from James Breslin, Clerk of General Assembly, we propose the following:
 - 15.1. Mission Council be authorised to act on behalf of and with the authority of General Assembly when necessary. Mission Council will have discretion as to when to use this authority bearing in mind that General Assembly can still overturn a Mission Council decision.

- 15.2. Where a constitutional change has to be referred back to Synods, if all the Synods agree then Mission Council may agree the change. If there is any disagreement then the change must wait until the next General Assembly.
- 15.3. Every Assembly Committee and Synod be asked to produce a brief written report for accountability and essential information sharing purposes to each General Assembly. Discussion on these written reports to be timetabled into General Assembly. Mission Council will decide which of these reports will be presented verbally to General Assembly.
- 15.4. There is no change to the judicial functions of General Assembly
- 15.5. All deaths and jubilees of ministers and CRCWs should be remembered at General Assembly
- 15.6. All newly ordained ministers should be presented at General Assembly
- 15.7. Nominations Committee report should come to Mission Council for agreement in the years when there is no General Assembly and that agreement should thereafter be reported in writing to the next General Assembly.
- 15.8. All Assembly Staff appointments should be agreed at Mission Council or if urgent at Mission Council Advisory Group. This would reported to General Assembly.
- 15.9. The closure of Churches and the admission of New Churches becomes the responsibility of Mission Council. These changes should be reported in writing to General Assembly. New churches should be welcomed at either Mission Council or General Assembly as appropriate.

16. Ways of working on Mission Council

There is likely to be more work for Mission Council and therefore we would like to suggest some possible ways of working which may help Mission Council to do all its work:

- 16.1. Some time spent working separately in each of the three Departments, Mission, Ministries and Administration. with synod representatives taking an interest in one department for the whole of their time on Mission Council
- 16.2. Some time in two groups consisting of Convenors and Secretaries in one group and Synod Representatives in the other.
- 16.3. Decisions from such groups to be reported to the whole Council not to be discussed again.
- 16.4. A focus on the work of each Assembly Committee in turn (up to 2 committees per meeting.)
- 16.5. Between meetings e-mail forums on specific subjects and responding to specific questions. This might also include emergency issues.
- 16.6. Mission Council Agenda should not include discussion of every Assembly resolution. Such items should only come to Mission Council if a committee wishes to test a particular proposal with a wider group of people.

17. Mission Council Advisory Group

We propose that the current remit of Mission Council Advisory Group be altered from:

- 17.1. To plan the meetings of Mission Council
 - 17.2. To ensure that appropriate follow up actions are taken following meetings of Mission Council and General Assembly and
 - 17.3. To provide support and advice to the Assembly Moderators, the General Secretary.
- to:
- 17.4. To plan the meetings of Mission Council and keep under review the way in which business is done.
 - 17.5. To ensure that appropriate follow up actions are taken following meetings of Mission Council and General Assembly

- 17.6. To advise the Assembly Moderators, the General Secretary and the Deputy General Secretary where necessary.
 - 17.7. To agree Assembly Staff appointments where necessary between Mission Council meetings.
18. In carrying out the above remit, Mission Council Advisory Group should have regard to the Functions of General Assembly, as set out in the Structure, and should seek to ensure that Mission Council and General Assembly are provided with appropriate reports to enable them to see that those Functions are properly carried out.
19. Membership should consist of:
- 19.1. one past Assembly Moderator
 - 19.2. both current Assembly Moderators
 - 19.3. one Assembly Moderator elect
 - 19.4. Treasurer
 - 19.5. General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary
 - 19.6. four members of Mission Council at least one of whom is a committee convenor and one a Synod representative. They should be appointed by Mission Council through nomination and election, for four years from those members of Mission Council who have at least three years of their term left to serve. If their term of office on Mission Council expires before the end of their four years on Mission Council Advisory Group then they should be appointed as a member of Mission Council until their term on Mission Council Advisory Group is completed.
 - 19.7. Consensus Advisor in attendance
20. **Mission Council Advisory Groups and Task Groups**
- Over the years Mission Council has set up a number of Advisory Groups, which are standing committees and Task Groups which are to do a specific job and then cease. Appointing people to these groups has become very ad hoc and frequently it has been left to Ray Adams as Deputy General Secretary to find people to do the work. We considered that Mission Council should have a minimum of advisory and task groups which report to it directly. Where possible all such groups should be appointed by Nominations and report to the relevant Assembly Committee. In order to provide transparency, it would be helpful if Advisory and Task Group convenors and members are included in the Nominations Report.
- 20.1. Staffing Advisory Group (SAG) should remain as a Mission Council Group with its membership appointed by Mission Council
 - 20.2. Resource Sharing Task Group, which has become an advisory group, should be renamed Resource Sharing Co-ordinating Group (RSCG) and remain as a Mission Council Group with its convenor nominated by Mission Council. The other members are appointed by the synods.
 - 20.3. Law and Polity Group to remain an Advisory Group of Mission Council with its membership recommended by Nominations.
 - 20.4. Section O Advisory Group to remain an Advisory Group of Mission Council, but to become the Sections O and P Advisory Group, with its membership recommended by Nominations. Changes to Section 1 of both O and P will still have to come to General Assembly, but changes to Section 2 should be reported to Mission Council only.
 - 20.5. Church House Management Group should become an Advisory Group to the Trustees with its membership recommended by Nominations.
 - 20.6. Ethical Investment Advisory Group should become an Advisory Group of the Mission Committee, which also reports to Finance, with its membership recommended by Nominations.

- 20.7. Criminal Records Bureau Reference Group should become an Advisory Group of the Ministries Committee with its membership recommended by Nominations.
- 20.8. Sexual Ethics Advisory Group should become an Advisory Group of the Ministries Committee (but recognising its connection with Education and Learning) with its membership recommended by Nominations.
21. **Consensus Decision Making** had its first Assembly run in 2008. It is clear that it can be done better but it did bring some valuable insights. We recommend that a Consensus Adviser be appointed by Nominations to both General Assembly and Mission Council and to attend Mission Council Advisory Group and Assembly Arrangements. At General Assembly there should be a further four Consensus Facilitators appointed by Nominations to assist the Advisor. None of them should be a member of the body they are advising. Where the facilitators have worked with groups of people off the floor of Assembly it should be the facilitators who report back to the General Assembly explaining the reasons for the proposal they bring. There are a number of people in the URC with experience of Consensus both in synods and in FURY.
22. **General Assembly** Given the new ways of working using consensus and the importance of using it for several years to help us get used to it and improve our ways of using it, as well as a meeting only every two years we felt that it would be good to have a review of the way in which Assembly business is done. This should include the purpose, format and style of General Assembly. It is clear that in recent years there have been too many resolutions to Assembly. We would wish to encourage committees to take their own decisions and then report what they have done to General Assembly rather than always ask for decisions of the Assembly. It could be helpful for Assembly Arrangements to meet with the convenors of Assembly committees to clarify how their business is best presented and discussed. Assembly needs time for discussion, not only decision making and the value of group work has become evident. It is also important that Mission Council does not take up what legitimately belongs to General Assembly, so clarity about the relationship between the two Councils is important. We therefore recommend a review of the purpose, format, style and ways of working of General Assembly, including its relationship with Assembly Committees and Mission Council.
23. **Assembly Committees**
We noted that the recommendation of up to two terms of three years for Mission Council was at odds with the present four years for Assembly Committees. We agreed that four years is not very long when a committee only meets twice a year. Some people find it difficult to contribute until they feel more comfortable with the group and more certain of their knowledge of the subject. We therefore propose that **Assembly Committee members be appointed for up to two terms of three years.**
24. We were concerned that some Mission Council and Assembly Committee members **fail to attend meetings regularly.** Although Nominations have suggested to us that this is not a major problem and we recognise that there are good reasons why someone may not be able to attend a meeting nevertheless we thought that it would be good to be clear that anyone who does not attend three consecutive meetings should be considered as having resigned from the committee or council. We therefore propose that any member of an Assembly Committee or Mission Council who does not attend three consecutive meetings should normally be considered as having resigned from the committee or council. This proposal should be made clear to each person when they are appointed. Each Committee and Mission Council would be asked to report attendance at meetings to Nominations annually.

25. Synod Moderators

As we reflected on this wide area of the church's work there were two things which we felt were relevant.

- 25.1. Synod Moderators have often been asked to serve on committees and advisory and task groups. Where they have something specific to contribute that is helpful but we felt that we should not burden them with this whenever possible.
- 25.2. The Synod Moderators Meeting. We noted the valuable contribution made by Moderators monthly meeting but recognised that it has no place in the formal structure in the URC. We do not propose that it be given such a formal place but since it is a group of people who meet more often than anyone else in the URC we recommend that this meeting be reviewed to see how it has changed and what might its appropriate place be in the structure of the URC.



The
United
Reformed
Church

MISSION COUNCIL 2-4th December 2008

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Report from the Mission Committee

Committee and Team Development

The Mission Committee has met five times during 2008 and there is a growing sense of co-operation and enthusiasm amongst core members and Mission Team staff about the way ahead.

Finding a common language has been central to this task. Each meeting has made space for times of theological reflection and dialogue which has been of great value in discerning our collective purpose in the very different – and rapidly changing – context in which we find ourselves working. One ‘product’ of this reflection is our ‘mission creed’ which we offer to Mission Council as a resource for its own reflection.

The Mission Creed

We believe in God’s mission:

Beginning at creation
with a word of possibility
and a promise of abundance.

Breathing us into existence
to delight in creation
and to tread carefully.

We are creatures of the earth,
reflecting God’s diversity,
interconnected and interdependent.

We believe in God’s mission:

Bringing good news in person,
starting where others need to begin
and finding holiness in every encounter.

Bursting through the walls of our churches,
to reach out to the marginalised
with unconditional love.

We are called to be a people of resurrection,
sojourners in this generation,
dependent on the generosity of God.

We believe in God's mission:

Challenging complacency,
and calling for action,
through contemplative love.

So that we might be at one
with each other
and at peace with the world.

We are commissioned by God,
Creator, Saviour, Holy Spirit,
Source of the mission we seek to fulfil.

Mission Team – Autumn 2008

The Committee has considered papers clarifying the respective roles of Mission Committee 'core members' and Mission Team staff secretaries. 'Link members' of the committee have been identified to offer close interest and support to different mission programmes and activities and further work is being carried out to clarify the role of core members in relation to Synods.

The Mission Team is forming well. Staff secretaries have committed significant time and energy to working more collaboratively through team meetings and other joint activities. It was with some sadness that we received the resignation of Dale Rominger as Secretary for World Church Relations but a recruitment process is under way to identify a successor in order to minimise the length of any vacancy in the team. Dale has given a huge amount both to his particular sphere of work but also to the team effort for which we give very special thanks.

The Mission Team have now produced two editions of a Mission Team Newsletter which have been distributed through a variety of networks, including Mission Council. It is intended to continue this initiative and to give further consideration to more widespread circulation.

Mission Committee priorities

A significant amount of Committee time has been devoted to discussions about the URC Mission Strategy and its 'outcomes' and 'indicators'. We have also spent some time considering the potential of the 'God Is Still Speaking' initiative. Both of these are the subject of separate papers and discussions at Mission Council.

Time has also been spent identifying a series of priorities for action in 2009. These are included in the attached 'Mission Team Work Plan 2009'. This Work Plan is something of a transitional document as we await a more clear direction in relation to the URC Mission Strategy. However, it does demonstrate a step-change in programme planning within the team. It has enabled the Committee to gather and guide a more strategic overview of the multiple strands of work carried out by the team and it has also demonstrated the many ways in which the team is now working in a more collaborative way.

The Work Plan is not offered to Mission Council for detailed scrutiny (indeed it is not expected that Mission Council members will read its every line!) but we thought it important to include to demonstrate both the breadth of work currently being carried out and also the strategic approach that is now being adopted.

Much of the work included will be familiar to members of Mission Council but the rest of this section sets out some of the more notable new priorities in the year ahead:

Mission Strategy consultation – subject to approval by Mission Council, all members of the Mission Team and Committee will be involved in an extensive consultation with the various councils and committees of the church on the URC Mission Strategy.

Fresh Expressions 2 – Mission Committee has agreed that the URC will join the second phase of development of the Fresh Expressions programme which explores and supports new ways of being and doing church.

God is Still Speaking – subject to approval by Mission Council, time will need to be devoted to the development phase of this new initiative (see separate paper).

Review of Ecumenical Relations – with the ecumenical context changing so rapidly Mission Committee has undertaken to carry out a review of ecumenical relations. The review will explore the practical implications of the Statement on the Nature of Ecumenical Relations adopted at General Assembly 2007. It will have a particular focus on local ecumenical developments, resources and support; and on prioritising the myriad ecumenical dialogues and relationships that currently exist. Plans are being developed for this to be carried out through an externally-led review panel.

Economic and Environmental Justice – 2009 is likely to be dominated by the implications of the global economic downturn; for this reason the Joint Public Issues Team are preparing a range of materials and activities to enable churches to respond fulfilling pastoral, prophetic and partnership roles.

Climate Change – following the General Assembly resolution in 2007, this theme is being explored by each member of the Mission Team making it the first truly integrated programme of the whole Mission Team. For example, material gained through a Commitment for Life visit to Bangladesh will feed through into JPIT campaigns and the ecumenical Theology & Climate Change group.

Review of Grant-giving Arrangements – Mission Team staff are responsible for more than 50 different grants, memberships and subscriptions of different kinds which are administered through at least four different processes each with its associated bureaucracy, and some administered individually. Whilst there is no intention to reduce or change the nature or amount of grant-giving, this review will consider whether there are steps that can be taken to streamline these processes and to increase the learning, sharing and accountability of grant-recipients.

New Racial Justice & Multicultural Ministries resources – the new RJMM secretary is developing plans for a number of new RJMM resources including the publication of a 'congregational stories project' and work with Synods concerning minority ethnic congregations.

Rural Mission – plans are being developed to strengthen the network of Synod Rural Officers and better equip churches for rural mission through links with Education & Learning. We will also lead on the Arthur Ranks Centre’s programme of rural church entrepreneurs and its international focus.

Networks – Mission Committee has recognised the importance of the many different networks that have grown up to support and promote the work of different mission strands. During 2009 we will explore how these are working with a view to learning from the best and developing new approaches and networks where this seems appropriate.

Revd Ed Cox

Mission Committee Convener

Annex 1 - Mission Team Work Plan 2009

Mission Team Workplan 2009

CHURCH AND SOCIETY						
Link Persons: Simon Loveitt/Tracey Lewis (for Climate Change)						
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Programmes/Activities/Processes</i>	<i>Outputs / tangibles</i>	<i>Time table</i>	<i>Team work</i>	<i>Lead person</i>
Responsible investment and mission	To develop an integrated ethical investment policy for the URC	Ethical Investment: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Produce a policy proposal for Mission Council. 2. Develop a theological resource on 'Mission responsibility through investment'. 3. Produce a draft Ethical Investment Policy for the EIAG's review and comment. 4. Distribute this to all key stakeholders in the URC for comment. 5. Capture comments in final version of Ethical Investment Policy for submission to Mission Council for discussion and endorsement. 	Ethical Investment Policy	Dec 2008 Jan-July 2009 April 2009 June 2009 Nov 2009	EIAG and Mission Team	Frank Kantor
Economic and environmental justice	To develop an integrated programme and approach for local churches to respond to the triple impact of the economic downturn, climate change and rising food and energy prices.	Sustainable living: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assist with the planning and running of CTBI conference on economic and ecological crises. 2. Develop a suitable response based on our prophetic, pastoral and partnership roles as the URC, Methodist and Baptist churches. 3. Develop a framework for churches to respond to these crises using the pastoral cycle. 4. Develop an advocacy strategy to give voice to the prophetic role of the Church in these crises. 5. Develop an effective network to popularise programme and to share good practice and information across the URC. 	Toolkit for churches to assess their environment. Advocacy strategy. Pastoral response workshops. Active network.	Jan 2009 May 2009 June 2009 July 2009 July 2009	JPIT and Mission Team	Frank Kantor Paul Morrison Steve Hucklesby

Theme	Objectives	Programmes/Activities/Processes	Outputs/Tangibles	Timetable	Teamwork	Lead person
Social justice	To develop an effective strategy to respond to social exclusion and identity issues in the UK.	Social Inclusion: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Produce a discussion document on migration, asylum and social exclusion for the URC. 2. Engage in government consultations on issues related to the Welfare Reform Bill, Equality Bill, Rights and Responsibility Bill, and Citizenship, Immigration and Borders Bill. 3. Develop a URC position paper on the issues raised in these Bills. 4. Develop and implement a strategy to respond to social identity and exclusion. 5. Continue to support and extend existing networks related to the above issues. 	Joint URC/Methodist/Baptist responses to consultations. Position paper for the URC. Effective network.	June 2009 As required Oct 2009 Nov 2009 Ongoing	JPIT and Mission Team	Frank Kantor David Bradwell Rosemary Kidd
Communication and networking	To develop an effective communication strategy and network to integrate public issues into the mission of the URC.	Mission Communication strategy: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consult with Synod and C&S representatives to establish existing projects, programmes and networks. 2. Establish an integrated database for issues based network. 3. Develop a clear message and communication strategy on integrating public issues into the mission outcomes and strategy of the URC. 4. Integrate C&S issues into the new mission webpage of the URC website with links to other sites such as JPIT, Creation Challenge etc. 5. Monitor and maintain website and networks on public issues in an accurate and relevant manner. 	Comprehensive database of C&S practitioners. C&S section of webpage accurate and up-to-date. Communication strategy developed.	March 2009 May 2009 June 2009 Dec 2008 Ongoing	Mission Team and Communication Department	Wendy Cooper
Theological reflection and training	To reflect theologically on key public issues and offer training on specific	Public theology, spirituality and engagement: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Undertake theological reflection on a public theology for the URC and produce a report for Mission Council. 	Public theology report. Workshops x2. Position on URC ethical	Nov 2009	Mission Team and Faith and Order Ref Group	Frank Kantor Neil

	programmes.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Offer training on the pastoral cycle 2x during 2009. 3. Develop a theological basis for engaging in ethical debate and issues. 4. Develop spiritual resources for those involved in social justice and community transformation activities. 	discourse. Spirituality as mission report.	<p>May and Oct 2009</p> <p>June 2009</p> <p>Oct 2009</p>		Messer
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ECUMENICAL RELATIONS						Link Person: Clare Downing
Theme	Objectives	Programmes/Activities/Processes	Outputs/tangibles	Time table	Team work	Lead person
Methodist-URC Relations	To help take forward 2008 Assembly and Conference Resolution and Review of Methodist-URC Liaison Committee.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Facilitate process with others. 2. Establish who leads and draw up team. 3. Establish terms of reference. 4. Carry out review. 5. Help implement the outcome. 6. Review implementation of review 	Probable papers and/or reports	Ongoing	Review Team	For Resolution: General Secretariat For Review: Richard Mortimer
Meeting with Synod Ecumenical Officers	To touch base in time of change and restructuring.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fix meeting by doodle poll. 2. Hold meeting: listen, reflect, discern next steps. 3. Follow up next steps. 	Effective networking Possible reports	Spring or Summer 2009		Richard Mortimer
5 Way Ecumenical Officers Gathering (CofE, RC, Methodist, Baptist, URC)	To help organise this gathering following a 3-way meeting in November 2007	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fix date. 2. Hold meeting: listen, reflect, discern next steps. 3. Follow up next steps. 	Effective networking Possible reports	Autumn 2010	Team of National Ecumenical Officers	Secretary, Church of England Council for Christian Unity.
Bilateral Dialogues	To grow in understanding and trust. To produce a report.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organise and attend regular meetings for sharing and reflecting together. 2. Review of CofE-URC dialogue with a view to extending it to a 4th year. 	Deeper understanding of a partner church: giftings to affirm and celebrate, commitments held in common, and what still divides us.	CofE-URC dialogue from 2007 to 2009, with 4 th year possible depending on progress. RC-URC dialogue ongoing.		Co-chairs and co-secretaries

RURAL MISSION						
						Link Person: Elizabeth Caswell
Theme	Objectives	Programmes/Activities/Processes	Outputs/tangibles	Time table	Team work	Lead person
Rural Officers' network	To recruit more Synod Rural Officers and strengthen the network. To encourage better resourcing of Rural Officers by their Synods.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Share recent research with Moderators. 2. Encourage Synods to respond to its findings. 3. Visit Synods and Rural Officers. 	More Synod Rural Officers. Increased time allocation and resources for Rural Officers from their Synods.	Attend Moderators' meeting April 2009. Two new Rural Officers by December 2009. Increased resourcing by December 2009.	Secretary for Mission	Graham Jones
Rural input into all aspects of Education and Learning	To better equip the church for rural mission. To increase awareness of opportunities for rural input. To provide rural input.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attend the proposed Education and Learning workshop. 2. Develop learning modules for rural mission. 	Rural Officer better integrated into the Education and Learning networks. Production of learning modules initiated.	Date for workshop tba. ARC project to produce learning modules (Spring 2009)		Graham Jones
Rural social justice agenda	To enable the church to respond effectively to rural social justice issues.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To do ongoing work on Food, Migrant Workers, Poverty, Housing, Environment, Service Provision, Farming Help. 		Ongoing	Secretary for Church & Society, JPIT, Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry.	Graham Jones
Arthur Rank Centre work programme (2009-2013)	To take the lead on three areas of work within the ARC work programme for 2009-2013: Rural Church Entrepreneurs (RCE); Shared/Collaborative Ministry (LSM/LCM); International Focus – developing links.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collaborate with churches' regional commission for Yorkshire and the Humber on RCE. 2. Set up a group to explore LSM/LCM. 	Strategy for developing work on RCE. Strategy for developing LSM/LCM – and possible pilot project.	Meeting in Feb 2009 Group to meet summer 2009	Secretary for World Church Relations	Graham Jones

MISSION						
Link Persons: Ed Cox, Peter Ball (for Fresh Expressions), Mike Walsh (for V4L)						
Theme	Objectives	Programmes/Activities/Processes	Outputs/tangibles	Timetable	Team work	Lead person
Mission strategy development	To facilitate the process of developing a denominational mission strategy framework.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organise mission committee meetings and sub-group meetings. 2. Survey synod mission strategies and resources. 3. Facilitate consultation process within the URC. 	Completed mission strategy framework and identified mission team priorities and workplan.	March 2010	Mission Team, Mission Committee, Assembly staff team, Synod staff, Mission Team networks	Ed Cox Francis Brien Mission Team members as needed
Mission Team development	To co-ordinate Mission Team and facilitate team development.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Convene regular team meetings. 2. Organise team away days. 	Increased sense of team identity and team working.	Ongoing	Mission PA Secretary for Church and Society Peter Pay	Francis Brien
Mission development in the URC	To raise the profile of mission in the URC.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide support and co-ordination for the Vision4Life process, by convening meetings, managing the budget and assisting in the production of materials. 2. Help with ongoing development of the God is Still Speaking programme (if agreed). 3. Facilitate URC involvement in Fresh Expressions phase 2 (if agreed). 4. Facilitate a meeting of the Mission Enablers' network. 	<p>V4L materials. Meetings of groups.</p> <p>Proposal for Mission Council; application to CWM. Access to Board, resources and training of FX.</p> <p>Strengthened and integrated network</p>	<p>Ongoing in 2009.</p> <p>Ongoing in 2009.</p> <p>Jan 2009</p> <p>Spring 2009</p>	<p>V4L Steering Group; V4L co-ordinator; V4L prayer group/Mission PA GISS Steering Group</p> <p>FX Steering Group</p> <p>Mission PA</p>	<p>Francis Brien</p> <p>Tba</p> <p>Francis Brien</p> <p>Francis Brien</p>
Mission research and reflection	To engage in research and reflection on mission theology and practice in URC in light of insights from local churches, ecumenical partners and world church.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gather good practice stories from local churches and find ways of sharing. 2. Read, research, reflect, write. 3. Attend relevant ecumenical meetings and conferences. 	Articles for website, Reform and other means of communication. Reports and documentation	Ongoing	Mission Team	Francis Brien Frank Kantor Michael Jagessar

Theme	Objectives	Programmes/Activities/Processes	Outputs/tangibles	Timetable	Team work	Lead person
Theology and Climate Change	To participate in and contribute to the Theology and Climate Change working group (URC/Methodist/Baptist)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Study publications and URC policy documents on climate change. 2. Attend working group meetings and contribute to discussion. 3. Contribute written materials to final report if and where necessary. 4. Contribute to follow up from production of report. 	Theological document to inform policy making in the three denominations on climate change. Possibly, materials for local congregations.	March 2009	Theology and Climate Change Working Group (URC/Meth./Baptist)	Rosalind Selby, Steve Hucklesby

WORLD CHURCH RELATIONS			Link Persons: Pauline Sparks/Mike Walsh (for Still Speaking)			
Theme	Objectives	Programmes/Activities/Processes	Outputs / tangibles	Time table	Team work	Lead person
Belonging to the World Church: Global Partners	To stretch the imagination and vision of people in the URC. To enable us to find new ways of being church here. To equip us to become a more multicultural church. To promote a concern for the world in which we live and for its peoples.	1. Organise small group exchanges. 2. Facilitate issue based sharing. 3. Share/produce worship and Bible Study resources.	Exchange reports. Worship materials. Bible Studies. Forming and nurturing of relationships.	Ongoing	CforL co-ordinator; Mission Team members as needed.	Dale Rominger
Belonging to the World Church: Training	To provide international placements for students (initial training); lay people (lay training); young people (FURY); ministers (EM2/3).	1. Organise international placements and programmes for students, lay people, FURY, EM2/3.	Placement and college reports. Placement and programme reports.	Ongoing		Dale Rominger
Belonging to the World Church: Church Leaders Programme	To expose church leaders to church life in a completely different context. To enable church leaders to gain new insights into how we might pursue God's mission here.	1. Organise church leaders programme in Israel/Palestine in 2009.	Report. Debriefing day.	April 2009 Ongoing programme in BWC.		Dale Rominger
Overseas Partner Assistance Programme: Training grants in Uganda, Angola and	To provide financial support for training programmes.	1. Support partners in providing training programmes for lay and clergy.	Annual visit to receive audited accounts and evaluations of programmes.	Ongoing		Dale Rominger

Mozambique; Health and Education Project in Bangladesh	To build a primary health care centre in Juri, Bangladesh.	2. Facilitate this joint project between Bromley by Bow URC, the Church of Bangladesh and the World Church Relations Office.	Annual visit to assess progress; ongoing evaluation and reports.	Initial three years; then ongoing.		Dale Rominger
International Representation	To maintain representation and participation, mainly in: Council for World Mission (CWM); the World Council of Churches (WCC); the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC); the World Convention of the Churches of Christ (WCCC) and the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council (DECC).	1. Attend meetings and conferences mostly.	Report back to World Church Relations Office and appropriate URC councils, committees, synods and local churches.	Ongoing	Mission Team. Other URC people who represent the denomination on behalf of the World Church Relations Office.	Dale Rominger
God is Still Speaking Initiative (if approved by Mission Committee and Mission Council)	To foster URC identity, market the URC in British society and promote church growth and evangelism.	1. Organise Synod training days, local church visits. 2. Create training materials etc.	Annual review. Feedback from local churches and Synods. Churches opting in.	2009 preparation for launch; start in 2010 to run for three years.	Everyone	Dale Rominger

COMMITMENT FOR LIFE			Link Persons: Chris Eddowes/ Tracey Lewis (for Climate Change)			
Theme	Objectives	Programmes/Activities/Processes	Outputs / tangibles	Timetable	Team work	Lead person
Commitment for Life scheme: education; administration; support and inspiration.	To increase awareness through education and worship of world development issues. To use data to target actions on giving. To provide a personal service, updates on partners countries campaign issues and worship materials.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Design and organise resources for Harvest and Christmas. 2. Produce E letter: 'Stories for Change'. 3. Administer the scheme. 4. Draw statistics from database 5. Respond to individual churches' requests for information, speakers and worship resources. 6. Review updates. 7. Review new leaflets and posters. 8. Compile and design Prayer Partners and CforL Service pack and send out. 	Resources and regular updates for postal and email mailings. Speakers for churches. Letters to churches. Database up-to-date. Money distributed to Christian Aid and World Development Movement. Increase in giving. More links to action against injustice as integral part of faith.	July-Oct 2009 Monthly Ongoing	CforL administrator Christian Aid Contributors to resources With Christian Aid With Christian Aid	Linda Mead Gill Hillman
CforL Reference Group	To service the group who provide strategy, monitor finances and support of staff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Resource group meetings. 2. Get reports from Christian Aid and World Development Movement. 	Effective group meetings	Jan 2009 May 2009 Sept 2009	CforL convenor CforL administrator	Linda Mead CforL convenor
Resourcing Advocates	To inform advocates on issues and theology. To visit all 13 Synods. To hold annual meeting to discuss issues and provide current information.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Send mailings and updates; respond to individual requests. 2. Resource for speaking at local churches or groups. 3. Organise Synod visits. 4. Organise day including speakers and activities. 	Advocates better informed and equipped. Face-to-face contact with Synods. Support mechanism for Advocates.	Sept 2009 Ongoing Sept. 2009	CforL administrator	Linda Mead
Web page	To provide information, inspire action and develop understanding of justice issues.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Update and review all pages on old website. 	Updated information for use by churches in services and meetings, to help understand issues, take action and link faith and action.	March 2009	CforL administrator	Linda Mead

Theme	Objectives	Programmes/Activities/Processes	Outputs/tangibles	Timetable	Team work	Lead person
Ecumenical World Development Conference	To organise conference for like-minded people to meet and be educated about current issues. Theme: 'Partnership'.	1. Organise conference with planning committee.	New learning and inspiration for delegates to carry on job as World Development Advisor or CforL Advocate.	March 2009	Planning Group	Linda Mead with planning group
Southern Synod Youth event 'All around the world'	To revitalise CforL in the Synod, especially through the young people.	1. Advise and participate in planning of children's event and youth event.	Inspiration for CforL in Synod and greater awareness of injustice in the world.	March 2009		Linda Mead and planning group
Israel/Palestine	To bring together those interested in this issue and to provide a forum for discussion.	1. Organise speakers for Israel/Palestine day. 2. Attend meetings linked to WCC. 3. Produce Moving Stories e-letter.	Delegates better informed to take strong message back to local churches.	June 2009 As needed Monthly	CforL administrator	Linda Mead
Climate change	To visit Bangladesh to meet Christian Aid partners, gather information and represent the URC as part of our justice work. To help the URC develop a strategy on climate change. To encourage all church members to take the Countdown to Copenhagen pledge and take action.	1. Cascade information from Bangladesh trip to advocates and link people. 2. Organise meetings. 3. Produce resources and action ideas. 4. Send background, actions and follow up to all churches.	New inspiration for churches supporting Banglades. Well informed materials giving the Christian viewpoint. Denomination seen to be active on climate change. Churches taking action and signing the pledge.	Feb 2009 Ongoing Ongoing Dec 2009	CforL administrator Secretary for Church and Society; Task Group.	Linda Mead Frank Kantor; Task Group

RACIAL JUSTICE AND MULTICULTURAL MINISTRY						
Link Persons: Anne Parker/David Jonathan (Interfaith)						
Theme	Objectives	Programmes/Activities/Processes	Outputs/tangibles	Time table	Team work	Lead person
Multicultural Ministries	To explore new ways/models and using new tools to enable MCM as key to mission and ministry of Church. To develop new resources to enable and nurture this dynamic process. To enable continuing theological and biblical reflections on core activity by (and with) local constituencies.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a conference project. 2. Develop new resources. 3. Communicate the vision (incl. RJMM webpage). 4. Develop congregation stories project. 5. Plan and deliver training programme. 6. Provide resources for Learning Centres. 7. Develop vocations among BME constituencies. 	Two conferences. New resources. A more user friendly and interactive webpage. Published congregation stories (via a MC competition). Publication and webpage Direct input in shaping curricula. More BME members for ministry.	Ongoing (as programme is young). New initiatives will be ongoing with yearly reviews.	Secretary for Mission. Cross-Depts partnerships. RJMM link person on Mission Cttee.	Michael Jagessar
Justice	To continue to develop the connection between justice and mission and ministry. To give specific focus to racial justice, diversity, inclusion and the connections among all justice issues. To advance concrete ways to enable churches to walk justly in mission and ministry.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grow, support and train RJ advocates. 2. Support and nurture EMLOMA. 3. Focus training programme for the whole church. 4. Monitor inclusion mandate. 5. Develop new tools for analysis of data and issues. 	More advocates (esp. youths). Updated analysis of audit and inclusion (paper). Paper and documentation on new tools (pamphlet). Joined up justice issues gatherings.	Ongoing (as programme is young). New initiatives will be ongoing with yearly reviews.	Secretary for Church and Society. Co-ordinator of CforL programme. Rural Officer. Mission Committee members.	Michael Jagessar
Minority Ethnic Ministries	To work with Synods and congregations on a common strategy in enabling, nurturing and supporting with regard to minority ethnic congregations in mission and ministry alongside and as an integral part of the church.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Guide and support ethnic ministries and mission. 2. Advise Synods and congregations strategies. 3. Link to integration and cohesion project. 4. Arrange EM conferences. 5. Explore/develop partnerships with a difference. 	Annual gatherings and events. A co-ordinated Synod strategy. Resource materials (including new ones). Joined up conversation on mission and evangelism (conference).	Ongoing	Mission Sec. Sec. for World Church Relations. Sec. For Church & Society. Link person on Mission Cttee.	Michael Jagessar

Interfaith engagement	To enable Synods and local congregations to articulate hospitable, open and committed theology and practice that is relevant to engagement in mission and ministry in interfaith contexts.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Serve as staff person on Methodist and URC Interfaith Reference Group. 2. Develop 'Living faithfully in Multi-faith Contexts Project'. 	Resources and mapping of URC inter-faith work among congregations. Two conferences on mission and ministry in a multi-faith context: more practice-based.	Ongoing. Mapping: Two years.	Secretary for Mission. Mission Cttee member.	Richard Mortimer Michael Jagessar
Transforming and celebrating	To discern and work towards concrete ways to bring transformation and renewal in the whole church. To identify these key moments to celebrate the achievement of RJMM in the life of the URC.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organise and support celebration. 2. Co-ordinate and develop MCM Congregational Stories Project. 3. Organise Multicultural Event 	Two-yearly gatherings. Testimonies. Documented stories. Inspiring - motivating congregations	Ongoing Biennial	Mission Team. Mission Committee Members.	Michael Jagessar

TEAM WORK						
Link Persons: Ed Cox/Peter Pay (for Team Development)						
Theme	Objectives	Programmes/Activities/Processes	Outputs/tangibles	Timetable	Team work	Lead person
Mission Strategy consultation	To consult the denomination at all levels about the draft mission strategy.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Produce a consultation document for local churches. 2. Produce a road show (resource) for use at Synod meetings, FURY Assembly and other meetings and committees. 3. Write articles for Reform and newsletters. 4. Create a web-based discussion forum. 5. Organise special activity for key national events (Inter-Synod Assembly/Multicultural event etc.) 	<p>Information on strategy proposal's content. Information on how the strategy can be implemented. Information on how strategy links with other Committee and Synod strategies.</p> <p>Finalised strategy for March 2010 Mission Council.</p>	Throughout 2009	Mission Team Mission Committee Communication department	Mission Committee convener, Mission Team members on various aspects.
Communication	To develop an effective communication strategy as the mission team incorporating both internal and external communication.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop an integrated presentation incorporating the different areas of work of the Mission Team in a coherent manner to explain the mission strategy and structure to our constituencies. 2. Develop an integrated mission team website. 3. Develop mission team newsletter. 4. Provide regular updates on mission team work to other departments in-house and to the wider church. 5. Write regular articles for Reform. 	Clarity throughout church about new structure and strategy. Updated website. Regular newsletter. Clear internal and external communication.	Ongoing in 2009	Mission Team Communication Department	TBA
Networks	To develop effective networks across departments within Church House and review current databases of each team member and the URC.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review existing networks and develop effective 'issue based' networks for all mission related themes and programmes. First steps: sharing developments in our various networks and exploring possibility of a joint network gathering. 2. Develop effective networks for mission projects and reference groups, e.g. health and healing, funerals, CCJF etc. 3. Review and develop an integrated 	Theme based networks established and functioning. Integrated database established. Communication strategy implemented and reviewed.	Ongoing	Mission Team Church House staff	Frank Kantor Wendy Cooper

		<p>database for Mission Team mailings and newsletter.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to the development of an effective Church House communication strategy to ensure co-ordination and integration of mission, ministry and administration strategies and programmes. Attend occasional meetings of all Church House support staff. 				
Team development	<p>To further strengthen team identity and team working.</p> <p>To establish the authority levels of team members and the mission team in carrying out assigned tasks in job descriptions.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Organise regular meetings and team away days, including a spiritual retreat during the course of the year. Develop co-ordinated work around common themes: e.g. justice, education/awareness raising, reflection & research. Clarify common elements and authority levels in job descriptions. Review the roles and responsibilities of administrators within the Team. 	<p>Team development plan produced, including who does/leads what, and how others can help. Retreat planned and implemented. Job descriptions reviewed and agreed with incumbents.</p>	Ongoing		<p>Francis Brien</p> <p>All</p> <p>Roberta Rominger</p>
Capacity building	<p>To broaden the knowledge and expertise of Team and Committee members beyond own brief or interest.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Organise a longer Mission Committee meeting with input through speakers and articles. Strengthen Link person relationship. Resource colleagues and committee with relevant information. Provide access to further education and courses. 	<p>Better informed Committee and Team. More integrated approach to mission.</p>	<p>May 2009</p> <p>Ongoing</p>		<p>Francis Brien with convener and team.</p> <p>Mission Team</p>
Climate change	<p>To develop an integrated programme on climate change.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct workshop on climate change and mission. Develop integrated strategy linking climate change to the 5th mark of mission 	<p>Climate change workshop. Integrated strategy developed and</p>	<p>March 2009</p>	<p>Frank Kantor, Linda Mead, Francis Brien, Graham Jones,</p>	<p>Frank Kantor Steve Hucklesby</p>

		<p>based on Mark Dowd's analysis.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Develop effective climate change network and link to Creation Challenge website. 4. Monitor and co-ordinate the many initiatives by local congregations on climate change. 5. Integrate the climate change and theology and other resources on climate change into mission strategy. 	<p>implemented. Climate change network established. Theological and liturgical resources developed.</p>		Michael Jagessar	
Mission Committee	To service the work of the Mission Committee.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To organise Mission Committee and sub-group meetings. 2. To take minutes at MissComm meetings. 3. To draw up and manage the Mission Team budget. 4. To review Mission Committee grants. 	<p>Regular and effective meetings. Minutes Effective budget management. Reviewed list of grants</p>	<p>Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Feb 2009</p>		<p>Francis Brienen Richard Mortimer Tba Dale Rominger</p>



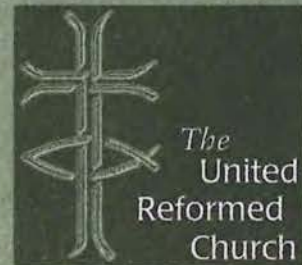
**MISSION COUNCIL
2-4 December 2008**

E1

***The God is still speaking, Initiative*
EVANGELISM, MARKETING AND CHURCH GROWTH
IN THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH**

God is still speaking,

Never place a full stop where God has placed a comma.



A Introduction

God is still speaking is an initiative for church growth built on faith-centred renewal in the local churches, the strengthening of Reformed identity, tools for welcome, and marketing. It is offered within the Mission Committee's strategy to address four of the proposed ten-year outcomes:

- **IDENTITY:** In ten years' time every local church will be able to say who they are, what they do and why they do it.
- **DIVERSITY:** In ten years' time we will be a diverse church that welcomes and includes all people equally.
- **EVANGELISM:** In ten years' time we will be engaging in evangelism, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God with friends, families and strangers, through story and action.
- **CHURCH GROWTH:** In ten years' time we will be a growing church with an increasing membership.

Stillspeaking is proposed as a vehicle to carry on the momentum begun by Vision4Life, equipping church members to witness to a living God. It is practical, offering tools and language for a consistent branding campaign. Church growth training materials are supplemented with an ongoing stream of suggested programme activities. It is infectious, partly because it encourages local creativity, partly because of its lightness of touch, but mostly because the Christian gospel with

its message of love and grace is itself infectious. Stillspeaking sidesteps the guilt and heaviness many URC members have experienced with past calls to evangelism. It makes use of public media (internet and advertising) to attract the attention of non-churchgoers. It draws upon the dynamism of the Reformed tradition for its inspiration, putting the good news of a Stillspeaking God into the public arena through appropriate marketing, and equipping local churches to participate in the "buzz" this creates. It thus has the potential to transform the church as a whole, from a stodgy institution towards the energy of a people's movement.

The 2001 census revealed that 72% of the British population regard themselves as Christian, but only 8% attend church. Further analysis by Tearfund shows that while some people state categorically that they are not interested in church, others would be open to churchgoing if someone invited them. Informal URC market research in 2008 elicited a hopeful response: "I never knew a church like the URC existed. Had I known, I would have come to church a long time ago." Vision4Life aims to refresh us in the gospel and enable church members to claim and tell their faith stories; Stillspeaking offers tools for invitation and welcome.

B Exactly how does it work?

1. Materials are prepared centrally and road-tested during a two-year preparation period (2009-10):
 - a. denominational branding (colour scheme, strap lines, incorporating the URC logo)
 - b. initial Bible studies, worship resources, hymns
 - c. identity-building leaflets and posters
 - d. a set of DVDs to train churches in welcoming newcomers
2. Synod roadshows tell people what is coming and give them an opportunity to sample the materials. Further promotion could take place at Energy4Life (July 2009) and General Assembly (July 2010), plus FURY Assembly (January 2009) and anywhere else where URC people gather.
3. Churches are invited to opt in if they are willing to commit:
 - a. to undertake the training
 - b. to create a website, or improve the one they've got already
 - c. to adopt the branding
4. An advertising campaign is launched to coincide with Vision4Life's evangelism year. The low-budget version of this is via the internet. The budget in this paper allows for signs on buses, local radio adverts and magazine/newspaper adverts. (Billboards and television cost a lot more.) Local imagination supplements central initiatives.
5. A website enables seekers to discover where their nearest Stillspeaking URC church is located.
6. The training materials equip churches to identify outreach opportunities in their communities through data gathering.

7. A Stillspeaking website enables churches to network and share ideas and stories.
8. "Web pastors" (retired ministers and others, recruited and trained) respond to internet enquiries while the local churches welcome visitors.
9. Churches follow up with visitors in a way that expresses interest and welcome without hounding them.
10. Attention is given to engaging newcomers in church life. This includes the encouragement of discipleship-building materials – Alpha, Emmaus and Living the Questions, plus existing and newly written church membership materials.

It is not the goal of the Stillspeaking campaign to judge, condemn, browbeat or lure any disinterested person. The goal is simply to offer a non-intrusive and wide welcome to all to experience the United Reformed Church as a place that feels like a good home for themselves and those they love. In the process, many long-term members will be transformed by engaging with the God who does still speak in our generation. Together, old-timers and newcomers will be energised for the witness of the URC in the world.

Stillspeaking also aims to renew the culture of the United Reformed Church itself. It moves faster than we are used to moving, building momentum and energy, stretching people's comfort zones, and creating opportunities for small successes in quick succession. Rather than waiting until we are entirely "ready", Stillspeaking encourages us to get going. It reckons 30% to be a reasonable success rate for its programme activities. That means that two thirds of activities might fall flat – but each one teaches us something we didn't know before. New ideas are welcome from all quarters. Churches across the multi-ethnic rainbow of the church can tailor programmes for their various cultures. The three "F's" of Stillspeaking are Fun, Focus and Faithfulness to the call to make disciples.

C It started in America – will it translate into a British context?

The inspiration for Stillspeaking is British: Pastor John Robinson's famous words to the departing Mayflower Pilgrims (1620). "Do not cling to where Calvin and Luther have left us... the Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from his holy word." Our partners in the United Church of Christ U.S.A. seized upon this Reformation insight, launching the Stillspeaking initiative in 2002. Therefore there is six years' worth of resource material available from across the pond from a partner not dissimilar to the URC.

There are three points worth noting. First, a group of URC churches has already piloted some of the materials and given feedback that has been overwhelmingly positive. Only one person raised the cultural concern, saying: "Bit sugary – maybe too American?"

**"Do not cling to where
Calvin and Luther left us,
God hath yet more light
and truth to break forth
from God's
Holy Word."**

John Robinson

Second, in 2009 a group of creative people will be gathered together with the task of going through UCC Stillspeaking material to decide what is translatable and what needs to be rejected out of hand. The group will also write new material for our local churches. When the material is sent to our local churches, it will be from us.

Third, Stillspeaking is an opt-in movement. Most of the ideas and creativity are generated on the local level. Once the campaign begins, it will be URC and British, simply because much of it will be created by our local churches and synods.

D What's with the little red comma?



John Robinson's words are inspiring but a bit long for a bumper sticker! A catchier version is from a letter comedian Gracie Allen wrote to her husband, George Burns: "Never place a period [full stop] where God has put a comma." The comma testifies to the God who is still speaking in our lives, in the church and in the world. It has now appeared on banners, posters, T-shirts and hoodies, mugs, pens and pencils, lapel pins, etc. Perhaps surprisingly, the evidence so far is that URC people clamour for these items as enthusiastically as Americans do. The good news is that the sale of merchandise helps to raise funds to further the work.

E What's the story so far in the URC?

In 2004 the Rev. Sheila Maxey, then Moderator of General Assembly, visited the UCC/USA and came home excited about Stillspeaking. In September 2006 the Belonging to the World Church programme enabled four URC members (Chris Baillie, Martin Hazell, Lawrence Moore and Dale Rominger) to visit the UCC head office to learn more. There they met Ron Buford, the programme director. Ron agreed to come to Windermere in January 2007 and a wider group was invited to hear about Stillspeaking.

Ron Buford returned for a follow-up session at Windermere in December 2007, taking the opportunity for a presentation to the synod moderators as well. Given the enthusiasm at both conferences and with the moderators it was decided to introduce the idea of Stillspeaking to the newly formed Mission Committee and to begin negotiating with the UCC to become God is still speaking partners. Ron agreed to take up a one-year contract (February 2008 to January 2009) as a consultant to the URC under the Mission Partners programme. A small working group was appointed by the Mission Committee, relating to the World Church Relations and Communications & Editorial offices.

Dale Rominger and Richard Mortimer returned to Cleveland in March 2008 to begin explorations as to how the UCC initiative might be used in the URC. Discussions were fruitful. They made a presentation to the Mission Committee in May 2008, with a follow-up presentation in September which included Ron Buford's participation.

With the blessing of the Mission Committee, ten URC churches have sampled the Stillspeaking experience in autumn 2008 as an exercise in "research and development". The churches are small and large, theologically diverse, urban/suburban/rural, and include two LEPs. Each was provided with a large pack of worship and small group materials, a PowerPoint presentation and sample merchandise. Each agreed to use Stillspeaking materials in worship on at least one Sunday and hold a discussion session for feedback. They were invited to attend a one-day sample training session with Ron Buford at URC Church House. Ron created a DVD from interviews with URC people who are enthusiastic about Stillspeaking, and this was also used by some of the R&D churches. Feedback from the churches will be shared in the presentation accompanying this paper.

F Doesn't this go against our ecumenical principles? What would our partners say if the URC began promoting itself as a denomination?

In 2004 the Catch the Vision steering group sent a questionnaire around to all the churches. Over 80% agreed that "it is our goal to become a vibrant and sustainable faith community in the next ten years." Let Richard Mortimer say more:

At the St Katharine's Consultation on Eldership in October 2006 representatives of our ecumenical partners urged us not to say what we thought they wanted to hear, but to articulate what we believed and why. Ecumenism, they argued, is best served when partners produced reasoned justifications for their practice with which others can engage under God. We are also at a time in the British Ecumenical Movement where some partners, particularly the Roman Catholics, want to focus on what each Church confesses and needs to hear and receive from others. If we present God is still speaking as a positive restatement of our traditional core self-understanding and values, ecumenical partners will be grateful and cheer.

In 1972 the ecumenical movement was dominated by the historic Free Churches and the strategy was to persuade the Church of England to ally with them. That did not happen but in the 25 years since the number and ecclesiological variety of those who have committed to travelling the ecumenical journey together has grown and grown and been profoundly blessed by God. Today the British ecumenical movement comprises the largest, broadest, widest, most deeply varied group of partner Churches, Associations, Unions, etc. anywhere on this planet. Roger Nunn, first Field Officer South for Churches Together in England said quite a few years ago now, "The Ecumenical movement used to be a

The idea of the God who still speaks is written into the core and fibre of our *Basis of Union*, implicitly and explicitly...

I note the following in David Cornick's *Letting God be God* (page 17): "Reformed theology has long played Martha to Catholicism's Mary, for if classical Thomist theology is about ultimately attaining the vision of God, the goal of Reformed theology is participation in God's divine activity". In other words, at the core of the Reformed way of looking at things are the questions: *where is God?, what is God up to? And how can/should we join in?* And behind those three questions lies a conviction about a God who is still at work, still up to fresh, original and creative things, and still speaking/calling/beckoning/inspiring/re-invigorating/challenging/and bringing outrageous new possibilities from seeming dead ends.

Richard Mortimer

nice cosy dinner party for 5 or 6. Now it's a noisy outdoor barbecue for 25." These days that last figure of 25 needs to be doubled.

Negatively what is possible given such a range and mix is different. But David Cornick, now at Churches together in England, would say that there are so many visions of the nature and goal of ecumenism that a Church like the URC with a clear historical commitment has to be a respected partner at the table.

A further practical answer is that materials would be produced in two formats, one with URC branding and the other adaptable for branding as appropriate by LEPs.

G How does it fit with Vision4Life?

The United Reformed Church has been on a journey from Growing Up through Catch the Vision to Vision4Life. The 1999 *Growing Up Report* said that the Church exists for mission, that God is missionary,

transforming the world into Kingdom. It invited the United Reformed Church to embrace the Five Marks of Mission, which include proclaiming the faith and nurturing new disciples.

Vision4Life
Transforming the church

Catch the Vision emphasised that the United Reformed Church should have a missionary focus: *God's people, transformed by the Gospel, making a difference.*

This vision led to substantial structural changes in the area of mission. Where once Church House staff worked somewhat independently, there is now a Mission Team. Where once several committees existed (in the areas of International Relations, Ecumenical Relations, Doctrine Prayer and Worship, Church and Society, and Racial Justice and Multi-Cultural Ministry), there is now one Mission Committee.

Vision4Life, as a continuation of the Catch the Vision process, hopes to bring vitality to local church life and witness through engagement with the Bible, prayer and evangelism. So far some 25% of churches have signed up for Vision4Life and the numbers are expected to rise.

The third year of Vision4Life encourages people in local churches to learn to tell their faith stories. Plans are at an early stage, but so far there are materials from the new Evangelism module of TLS (Training for Learning and Serving) to give shape to the year. Vision4Life will create story-telling Christians; the question then becomes, how can doors be opened to allow the stories to be told beyond the walls of the church? Where does the courage for evangelism come from?

The Mission Committee is looking at various possibilities, and a joint meeting between the Mission Committee and Vision4Life steering group is planned for February 2009 to explore together. Fresh Expressions is one piece in the jigsaw – the invitation to offer alternative forms of worship designed to be accessible to non-churchgoers, such as café church, cell church, etc.

Stillspeaking is another crucial piece of the jigsaw. It takes the momentum from Vision4Life and carries it forward into the next phase of URC focus and programme life. It is part of the answer to those who are already asking, "What happens AFTER

Vision4Life?" By providing tools for invitation and welcome, it is a vehicle for new, specifically URC-style evangelism. Vision4Life and Stillspeaking dovetail because both are expressions of the same desire: to revitalise the life and mission of the URC. They both include biblical study and prayer. They both aim towards evangelism. While Vision4Life encourages church members in learning to tell their faith stories to one another, Stillspeaking opens doors to new people who are welcomed into the conversation. The experience in the UCC/USA is that people who never thought of themselves as evangelists have become enthusiastic advocates for Christ and his church, and churches have grown.

The heart of the Stillspeaking initiative is proclamation of a God who is indeed still speaking – a startling, prophetic word to our time. The denomination says this loudly and local churches, newly equipped by Vision4Life, demonstrate by word and action that it is true.

One lesson of Vision4Life is that major denominational initiatives take time. If we want Stillspeaking advertising to launch in December 2010, with churches ready to welcome visitors, we need to start now.

H What about other evangelism resources and discipleship-building programmes?

There is no shortage of programme material available in Britain: Alpha, Back to Church Sunday, Reaching the Unchurched Network (RUN), Fresh Expressions, and the Prodigal – Friendly Church initiative. Why another one?

First and foremost, Stillspeaking is unapologetically URC and openly desires that people should get to know our church. That is not to say that we will not benefit from other networks and resources. However, the URC does have something distinctive to offer and we want to tell people about that.

Stillspeaking creates a different kind of culture – light and fast, rich with identity, open to God. It "fits" the United Reformed Church, addressing the factors that have made the URC weak in evangelism over the years. Other programmes and tools are all available to supplement Stillspeaking, but Stillspeaking fills the gap for many churches that have been dissatisfied with existing resources.

I We heard there was a controversy...

It's a long and exciting story, but suffice it to say that the success of the UCC campaign did not depend on the publicity that arose when their television ads were banned by two major networks. The following responses were all from the testing phase carried out in six medium sized, affordable media markets, predating the controversy:

Just found the church by me and went to service yesterday. I found a home! Thank you for the enlightened thinking and thank you for the great commercials that brought me into the church.

For many years, I have been put off by churches which discriminate and promote bigotry and racism and discriminate against anyone who is different from themselves.

This has caused me not to go. When I saw your commercial I was blown away, and my faith was renewed in the whole idea of church. Your commercial "Jesus doesn't discriminate" is the most powerful religious ad I have ever seen. Congratulations on restoring acceptance and harmony among people, at least at your church.

I'm a 39 year-old, happily married Jewish woman. I have never felt so afraid of my heritage as I do now due to the current political climate. I have studied the Bible and have tried to practice a Christ consciousness for most of my adult life, but I have always been baffled by how the "traditional" Christian church seems to be all about exclusion and intolerance...certainly not what Jesus taught or personified. Thank God there are churches like yours out there, not afraid to come on national TV and show the world what Jesus really meant. And thank you -- you made my day!

I recently saw your church's ad on TV and was overcome with joy that there are people out there who believe as I do. I have long been a member of the xxx denomination, but have never felt that what they were teaching me was what Jesus wanted me to know. ... It was so refreshing to finally see a church stand up and say that we accept all people no matter what. That is one thing that I have always believed and stood for; that Jesus accepted the lowly and the mighty equally. I want so much to commend you and your church for standing up and voicing that "ALL" people are equal and loved in Jesus' eyes even in this time when prejudice is rearing its ugly head at every opportunity... I will be attending your church in the very near future and I shall share with others your message of equal love and acceptance of "every" person...I look forward to visiting your church soon and learning more about your message and maybe find the spiritual "home" that I have been looking for.

I just wanted to let you know how much I appreciate your commercial! Although I don't consider myself religious at all, I like to see a church showing a good example of what I believe Christianity is SUPPOSED to be about. I thought it was so beautiful, it brought tears to my eyes. Thank you!

Here are comments from local churches:

*Love the commercial! Last Sunday our church attendance grew by over 25% due to the publicity. One family immediately said "this is the type of church we've been waiting 20 years for," and immediately asked for a pledge card. Keep up the fantastic work.
--Rev. Stephen Coates, Brunswick UCC Ohio.*

I made a giant black comma and put it on a red background on both sides of our outdoor sign with the words "God is still speaking." It is amazing what pride this has generated in our conservative congregation!

--St. Stephens', New Holland, PA

J ALL the people...does that include homosexual people?

Expressing the all-inclusive welcome of Jesus Christ is fundamental to any witness to the gospel. Every URC congregation would endorse the UCC's best known strapline: "No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here." Where congregations differ is in what would happen next. Some would call for repentance from a homosexual lifestyle while others would welcome and affirm gay couples. This initiative is not an attempt to shortcut the work of the new Human Sexuality Task Group in helping the URC to seek the mind of Christ on this issue.

The same diversity exists in the UCC. Not all UCC churches that signed up for Stillspeaking felt able to accept homosexual people as members. There was no pressure for them to do so. The training materials encouraged that whenever a newcomer appeared who would find a better home elsewhere, for whatever reason, members should help them to locate an appropriate church in their area. Churches knew where a gay or lesbian enquirer would be welcome and referred them there.

There has been talk about some churches leaving the denomination because of God is still speaking; however, Ron Buford says that he knows of no churches that left over the initiative. Some churches did leave the United Church of Christ after the 2007 General Synod passed a resolution in support of same-gender marriage, but Stillspeaking should not be confused with that General Synod resolution.

K Proposed timescale

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|---------------------------------|--|
| December 2008 | The Stillspeaking Working Group presents its proposal to Mission Council. Upon approval the application for the CWM Mission Support Programme grant is submitted. |
| December 2008 | URC to begin its initial PR launch to the public about this experiment. |
| January to December 2009 | Preparation: phase 1
Stillspeaking website; formation of a writing group to adapt American material and write new material; Bible studies produced as a contribution to the V4L Bible year with planning for prayer events in 2010; expansion of the group of R&D churches to test-drive new materials; training DVDs; opt-in strategies; brochures; themes, materials and a production plan for advertising campaign and merchandising; consultation with other URC departments; workshops for synods, congregations and other strategic groups; recruitment and training of "web pastors"; fundraising; monitoring of take-up and regular reporting to Mission Committee; the hiring of a UK-based director (to begin Jan 2010). |
| January 2009 | "God is still speaking" is the theme at FURY Assembly. |
| February 2009 | Joint meeting of Mission Committee and Vision4Life steering group for planning of the V4L evangelism year (begins December 2010). |
| July 2009 | CWM grant is approved (prayers, please!) |

September 2009	Working group engages an advertising agency for exploration of initial radio, web, and bus ad possibilities and product development. R&D churches go into “focus group” mode, working with branding proposals to give feedback.
January 2010	New Director begins. Consultant makes wrap up reports and ensures smooth transition to incoming director.
January to November 2010	Preparation phase 2 Active participation in V4L prayer year. Opt-in churches actively recruited. Opt-in churches use the training DVDs and set up their websites. Director oversees preparations for marketing campaign, including website, adverts and merchandising. Active fundraising.
December 2010	Beginning of the Vision4Life evangelism year marked with advertising campaign.
2010 to 2011	Expand Initiative, stimulating interest from as many opt-in congregations as possible resulting in: More churches knowing who they are, what they do, and why they do it; increasing diversity in the URC; increasing member growth in opt-in congregations.

L CWM Mission Support Programme

Mission and marketing campaigns are expensive. Therefore, the Mission Committee has decided to use a grant offered to the URC through the *CWM Mission Support Programme* for the Stillspeaking campaign. The Mission Support Programme assists member churches in developing their priorities for mission within their particular context. Two main criteria which underlie the Mission Support Programme are that the mission priorities need to show a holistic understanding of mission and that mission priorities should reflect how the church seeks to respond to its context.

Elements of a mission plan should include:

- Proclamation and Evangelism;
- Loving Service;
- Mission;
- Support and Programme.

The United Reformed Church grant will be £317,000 over a three to five year period. It is being proposed that the Stillspeaking initiative run for three years beginning in September 2010.

God is Still Speaking Budget ~ 2009 to 2012

Income	2009	2010	2011	2012	
Mission Committee	£15,000	£15,000.00	£15,000.00	£15,000.00	
Mission Partners	15,000	0	0	0	
CWM Grant	35,000	105,000	105,000	70,000	
Fund Raising	10,000	20,000	20,000	10,000	
Merchandise Sales	5,000	60,000	20,000	4,000	
Charge for Training Material	1,500	3,000	3,000	0	
TOTAL	£81,500	203,000	163,000	84,000	£531,500
Expenditure					
Consultant Fee	£20,000	£1,700	£0.00	£0.00	
Consultant Expenses	10,000	1,000	0	0	
Director's Salary	0	35,000	37,000	38,500	
Director's Oncosts	0	9,550	10,100	10,450	
Director's Travel Expenses	0	3,750	3,750	1,500	
Recruitment of Director	2,000	0	0	0	
Admin - Postage	1,000	3,000	3,000	500	
Admin (Director) Phone, Broadband	0	350	360	370	
Computer/Printer/Consumables	0	1,500	200	220	
Volunteer's Expenses	2,400	0	0	0	
Events	4,000	4,000	2,000	2,000	
Working Group	400	500	400	200	
Writers Group	800	800	800	0	
Training Materials	12,000	1,000	1,000	0	
Leaflets, Brochures, Packs	12,000	1,500	1,500	500	
Website and Webmaster	10,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	
Merchandise Productions	30,000	50,000	3,000	3,000	
UCC Permission	0	0	0	0	
Advertising	3,600	£70,000	£80,000.00	£18,000.00	
Contingency/Surplus/(Deficit)	-26,700	£10,000	£13,000.00	£10,000.00	
TOTAL	£81,500	£198,650	£161,110.00	£90,240.00	£531,500

Notes on the budget

1. If the CWM application is successful, a cheque for £105,000 will arrive in September 2009. This has been allocated according to calendar years for the sake of the budget, but the deficit indicated in 2009 would in fact be covered by the first CWM cheque.
2. The personnel costs assume a consultant in 2009 (Ron Buford) with a half-time volunteer URC Programme Worker (Dale Rominger). In 2010 and 2011 there is a full-time salaried director. It is assumed that admin support throughout the programme will be provided from within the URC Mission Team and the Communications Department.
3. The income from fundraising has been estimated very conservatively. If enthusiasm so far is any indication, these amounts should be exceeded several times over. Additional income raised from donations would be added to the advertising budget, enabling greater use of the media.
4. The largest factor in the merchandise budget is for large weather-proof banners for display outside churches. These cost £200 each, so if 250 churches buy them, the total is £50,000. These will only be produced if churches order them.
5. Some preliminary figures on advertising costs:
 - a. bus adverts – 10 London buses for two weeks -- £4890 (still need to investigate what this costs in other parts of the U.K.)
 - b. local radio adverts -- £500 for 25 30-second slots
 - c. Metro newspapers three-nationwide -- £10,000 for a 10 cm high advert across a whole page (more modest sizes start for as little as £750)

Resolutions from the Mission Committee

- 1. Mission Council welcomes the proposal of a God is still speaking initiative in the United Reformed Church as a vehicle for renewal and evangelism.**
- 2. Mission Council approves the submission of a grant application to the CWM Mission Support Programme for a Stillspeaking campaign in the United Reformed Church.**
- 3. Mission Council asks the Mission Committee to proceed with preparations for the Stillspeaking campaign.**



MISSION COUNCIL 2-4th December 2008

E2

A Mission Strategy for the United Reformed Church

1. Background

In 2006 General Assembly resolved to bring together the work of six Assembly Committees through the formation of the Mission Committee with a clear mandate to reappraise both what and how Assembly resources the mission priorities of the denomination. In the 11 months since its first meeting considerable progress has been made particularly in relation to the operation of staff secretaries as a 'Mission Team' and also in identifying a series of work priorities for 2009. These are the subject of a separate report.

At General Assembly 2008 the Mission Committee introduced the notion of a denominational 'mission strategy' founded upon a series of 10-year outcomes. The Mission Committee report received warm approval and small group discussions about the outcomes indicated significant enthusiasm for the broad thrust of the approach. The primary concerns expressed by members of Assembly related to the need for any strategy to avoid being imposed from the centre; and for it to take greater account of issues of spirituality and worship.

Following Assembly, the Mission Committee has considered how best to move forward the development of the URC Mission Strategy. This paper presents our latest thinking. The following sections detail:

- Further rationale for the importance of a URC Mission Strategy
- Some principles for the development of the strategy
- The three 'building blocks' that together constitute the strategy
- Draft 10-year outcomes and indicators
- Plans for further consultation and debate during 2009.

This approach has also gone some way to informing the Mission Team Workplan for 2009 which is being presented to Mission Council as part of a general report from the Mission Committee.

2. Why a strategy?

One could argue that concepts of 'strategic planning' have been a feature of church mission since Jesus sent out the seventy-two. More recently, churches have both borrowed from and contributed to modern business management theory and practice with mixed results but on the whole churches have tended to be slow to embrace developments in this field. There may be good reason for this: strategic planning is no more a precise science than any theological discipline and, like any social science, it has divergent schools of thought, trends and trend-setters, its theories and principles are practised to greater and lesser effect, and it is certainly no panacea. That said, insofar as the church has any institutional form, it would be short-sighted not to consider the benefits of the best practice being developed in this arena.

In the United Reformed Church there are some useful precedents for the use of strategic planning. Processes such as 'Equipping the Saints' and 'Growing Up', Catch the Vision and Vision4Life have offered a form of denominational leadership through a time of change. Different Assembly

Committees have crafted objectives and plans and more recently Synods have begun to set out their aims and programmes in the form of strategic documents and plans.

But for a denomination facing the combined challenges of an increasingly secular society, a decline in church membership and dwindling resource base, and significant changes in the ecumenical context in which it was formed, there are at least three obvious benefits of a fresh approach to strategic planning.

- Firstly, many local congregations are calling for a much greater **clarity of purpose**. Some of the strongest feedback from the discussion groups at General Assembly was from local representatives who made it clear that the kind of statements of ambition presented at Assembly would provide local congregations a much greater sense of what the URC is about in the 21st Century.
- Secondly, it is clear that in many contexts there is a desire for fresh approach to strategic planning can provide new contexts in which a shared vision can galvanise **stronger leadership and teamwork**.
- Thirdly, with a shrinking membership and income and rapidly reducing numbers of ministers, tough decisions need to be taken. In the absence of any strategic direction, such resource planning can lead to slow death-by-multiple-pastorate-fatigue. Strategic planning, at all levels of the church, can provide a much **more transparent and rational basis upon which difficult decisions can be made** and resources can be prioritised.

We are not starting from scratch. The development of a URC Mission Strategy comes out of the restructuring that has taken place through the Catch the Vision process and it is taking place alongside a Vision4Life programme which is in itself very carefully planned and mission-oriented. But for some people restructuring appears to have become an end in itself. And Vision 4 Life offers spiritual resource – a central component of strategic planning - but not strategic direction.

As indicated above, different Assembly committees have already gone some way to adopting a more planned approach to their work. The Ministries Committee's 'Challenge to the Church' encourages Synods to adopt a more strategic approach to ministerial deployment. General Assembly has adopted a series of clear objectives relating to Children's and Youth Work. Within Synods, five Synods have developed their own Mission Strategy and other are working on something similar.

In order to avoid being 'top-down', a URC Mission Strategy must build upon the important work and careful approaches that have already been adopted, but it must seek to bring a greater coherence to the overall picture and provide a framework in which the different activities of the URC can operate to avoid duplication and competition.

With this in mind, some have questioned whether it is appropriate for the Mission Committee to be undertaking such a task on behalf of the whole denomination. There is no intention on the part of the Mission Committee to extend its reach beyond its already overloaded remit, however, given that it has been tasked with developing a mission strategy for the denomination it would seem short-sighted and limiting to develop such a strategy without consideration of issues such as ministerial deployment, education and learning, children and young people, or finance. If these are not somehow related to the church's mission then what are they for? Some have argued that the task of co-ordination and strategy development is better placed with Mission Council. This may be true, but Mission Council needs to consider whether and how it might resource the development of such a strategy should it not seize upon the enthusiasm and momentum with which Mission Committee have set about the task.

Discussion question 1:

Is the Mission Committee the appropriate body to develop a mission strategy for the whole denomination? And how can it best channel its efforts to bring coherence to existing and on-going work in other Assembly Committees and in Synods?

3. Some principles for developing a URC Mission Strategy

Initial discussion about a URC Mission Strategy suggests there are a wide range of views as to what such a strategy might be. In order to help address some of these differences it might be helpful to identify a series of five principles upon which such a strategy must be based:

First, a URC Mission Strategy must be seen as a **process rather than a document**. Whilst the different parts of the church will necessarily need to set out their aims, objectives, priorities and programmes in forms of words, the importance of strategic planning will be as much about the process of discussing, deciding and implementing ideas as it will any finely worded document. The process is also multi-directional allowing sharing and learning between all parts of the 'system'.

Secondly, in-keeping with our denominational tradition, the starting point of any mission strategy must be **the local congregation and its context**. Whilst there is a place for Assembly to suggest broad frameworks and for Synods to encourage and guide, this must be a strategy that serves, inspires and is inspired by the local congregation.

To this end, the third principle is that any strategy must be **permissive rather than prescriptive**. The URC Mission Strategy will be the sum of all of the local plans, developed in an organic and inclusive way, the Synod strategies and Assembly committee priorities – each must have its place as part of a coherent whole. That is not to say that there is no place for an Assembly 'framework' but that part of the strategy must be to inspire and to guide and not to dictate. Local congregations and Synods must have the freedom to choose how to engage.

Fourthly, the URC Mission Strategy must be driven by a **clear set of values** and not a strategy for its own sake. Our Reformed tradition and nearly forty years of history suggest that our strategy must be distinctive and, whilst enabling some clear decisions and plans to be made, it must also tell a story of who we are as a denomination and where we are going.

Finally, the notion of strategic planning should be dissociated with unhelpful categories of success or failure. Rather, a URC Mission Strategy must be an aid to discerning our **journey, path or pilgrimage**, in full knowledge that such a journey of discovery is founded not on worldly measures of utility but upon the more mysterious and surprising way of the cross.

In the following sections, we attempt to embody these principles within a clear process for Mission Strategy development.

Discussion question 2:

Do you agree with these broad principles for the development of a URC Mission Strategy? Are there other principles which you would add?

4. The three 'building blocks'

Any URC Mission Strategy needs to be effective in each spatial level of the church. To this end, we are suggesting that it is based upon three different strands or 'building blocks'. These can be characterised in the drawing overleaf and each is described below.

a. Local Mission Plans

The most important 'unit' of the denominational strategy must be the 'local mission plan'. It is envisaged that this might work alongside the biennial ministerial review scheme already agreed by Assembly but that at the same time as the Taking Stock process is carried out each church would seek to write, re-write or refresh a Pastorate Profile-type document.

It might be a 'Pastorate Profile Plus', not only describing the context and the type of ministry sought, but being more explicit about its aims and objectives over the future period and tying these

more clearly to the availability of human, financial and other resources – more about 'mission' rather than just 'ministry'. Human resources might need to be less preoccupied with the role of the minister but consider the way in which the voluntary effort of church members is channelled and where there is the potential for developing more of a 'team approach' to achieving local objectives.

The local mission plan might be produced by joint pastorates, clusters of churches or Local Ecumenical Projects. It might also be more wider-reaching than is often the case – setting out some of the external partnerships the local church might be involved with and identifying external funding sources that it might draw upon. The local mission plan might also provide a basis upon which local churches can have a more active engagement with other local agencies and funding bodies.

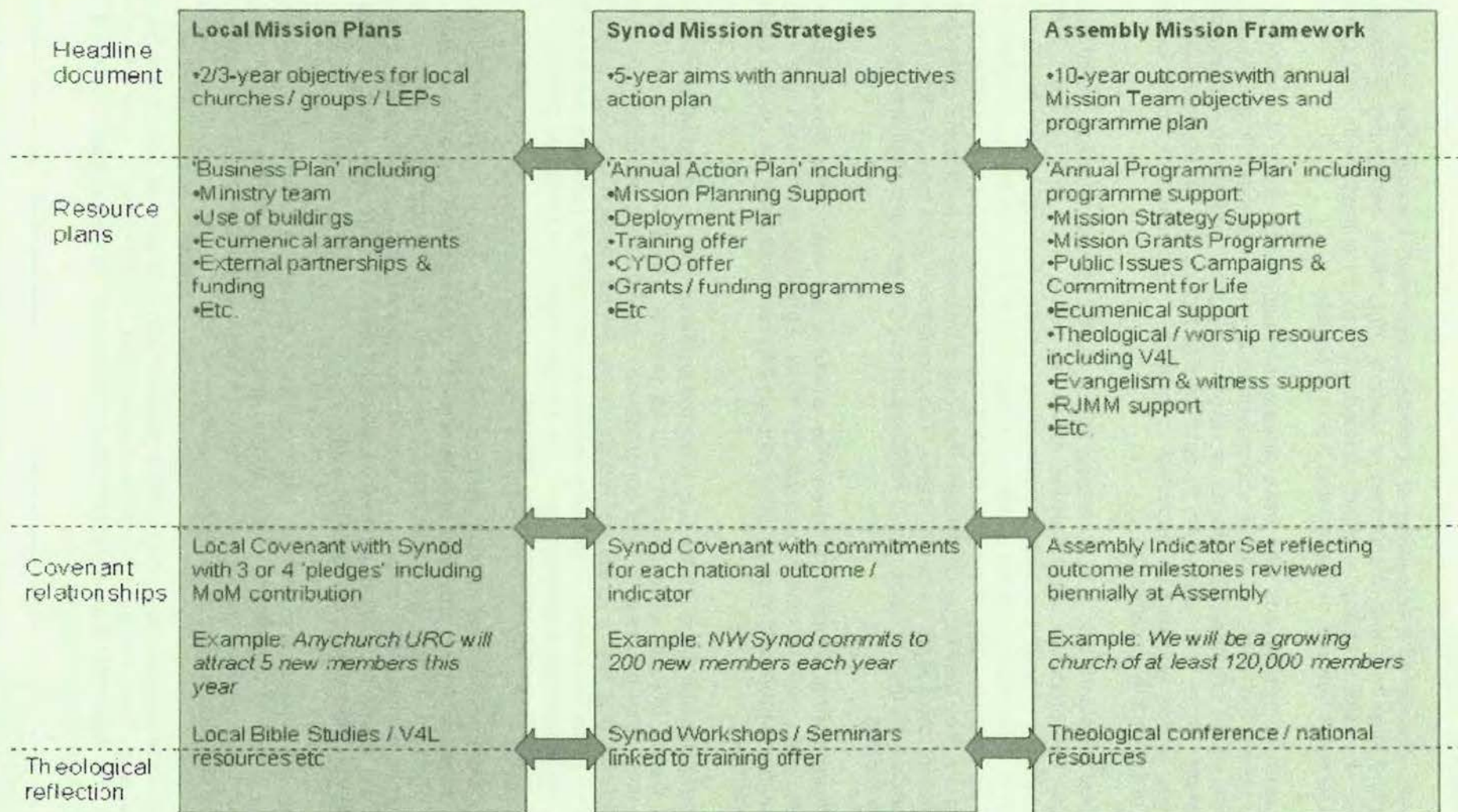
The local mission plan might also give some expression to a church's missiology – its own theological understanding of its purpose. This needs to be supported by opportunities to reflect and pray but processes such as Vision 4 Life and God Is Still Speaking might provide an ideal opportunity through which such reflection can take place.

Finally it is envisaged that each local mission plan contains some form of covenant with all the other churches in the Synod. To some extent this happens already through Ministry & Mission Fund processes, but it is suggested that each local mission plan sets out a number of other non-financial, mission-oriented pledges or commitments, determined by its own local aims and objectives, as a basis upon which it might receive more tailored support from the Synod (as set out in the following section). It might be that when churches receive letters relating to M&M, they might also complete some kind of proforma setting out their 'pledges' or 'covenant' with other churches of the Synod. Whilst encouraging churches to be free to make their own pledges, it is hoped that the Assembly set of 'indicators' might be seen as a helpful source of suggestions and ideas (see Annex 1).

Discussion question 3:

What might be the strengths and weaknesses of the type of local mission plans described above? How far do you think that Pastorate Profiles and the ministerial review team can be extended to meet this purpose?

Building Blocks for a URC Mission Strategy



An alternative version of this diagram representing the centrality of local mission plans is set out in Annex 2.

b. Synod Mission Strategies

Most Synods already take something of a strategic approach towards their work. With limited resources and large numbers of churches to support, their role is necessarily a strategic one but not all make this explicit through a clearly defined and transparent approach. This can often be at the root of tensions between the Synod and the local church.

We are aware of five Synods who have already produced some form of 'strategy'. The most developed set out the plans, structures and resources to ensure that each local church has a clear mission plan. Most are short statements of vision and priority and others relate simply to local mission grants. There is clearly scope to build on this picture and in the near future Synods in England and Wales will also be expected to provide a 'Statement of Public Benefit' for the purposes of the Charity Commission.

As with local mission plans, it is envisaged that a Synod Mission Strategy would need to be a 'living document' produced and refreshed every five years or so and setting out the regional context in which it operates as well as some of the specific challenges faced in different areas or localities. For this reason, Synod Mission Strategies are likely to be quite different from one another – for example, they might take different approaches to grouping churches or stimulating church growth, they may focus on different theological themes, have different global partners and pursue different campaigns on public issues. Their variation will be their strength but only insofar as it connects with their context and is reflective of the pledges and priorities emerging through local mission plans.

It is envisaged that the Synod Deployment Plan will sit at the heart of the Synod Mission Strategy. Deployment plans will represent perhaps the most significant element of the URC's human resource planning process and so must be properly interconnected with the context and challenges described above.

But ministerial deployment is not the only resource challenge that needs to be considered by each Synod. A Synod Mission Strategy can help to provide a clearer rationale and incentive for balancing the further grouping of local congregations against taking the difficult decision to close those buildings that are a drain on resources. A Synod Mission Strategy might provide a geographical focus for mission – focusing resources and effort of particular areas or churches in relation to wider contextual developments – or it might focus on a particular theme or 'community-of-interest' in which special resources are invested.

Careful consideration of local mission priorities will enable the Synod to tailor its training provision more effectively, including providing opportunities for theological and missiological analysis and reflection. It might identify particular situations where children and youth work or ecumenical support can be offered in the most resource-effective manner, and it might provide a clear basis for any grant-giving that the Synod undertakes. It might also stimulate new ideas for church-related community work and special category ministry.

In this way, a Synod Mission Strategy might represent something of a covenant between its local churches – a shared agreement of how shared limited resources will be distributed in order that local mission plan pledges can be fulfilled. Synod Mission Strategies might also have a key role in relation to the Synod Resource Sharing process.

But just as local mission plans might make pledges with one another across the Synod, so it is hoped that each Synod might, through the aggregation of local pledges, enter into some form of covenant with Assembly with a number of commitments to help achieve Assembly's Mission Outcomes (as described below).

Discussion question 4:

Is it feasible to draw together the vision of the diverse local churches to form a Synod Mission Strategy? If so, how would you envisage this could be done in your Synod?

Is it reasonable and practicable for Synod Deployment Plans to be developed in the context of a wider Synod Mission Strategy?

c. Assembly Framework

At Assembly level, the URC Mission Strategy might be formulated as a 'framework of outcomes'. An outcome is a statement of long-term vision or ambition, it seeks to define a future aspiration or hope but - slightly different from an 'aim' - it tends to describe the way in which the wider context will be shaped, rather than have an organisational focus.

At General Assembly 2008 Mission Committee presented a series of statements described as '10-year outcomes' for a URC Mission Strategy. These were broadly welcomed as offering some vision and direction whilst not being overly prescriptive. Further development of these outcomes - amended in the light of General Assembly feedback - are set out in Section 5 below and in Annex 1.

The intention is that such outcomes might stimulate discussion and debate within Synods and local churches, particularly in relation to the kinds of pledge or covenant that each might make in order to contribute to the denominational whole. Alongside each outcome might be a number of 'indicators' – measurable signs of whether the URC is on a path to achieve its outcome. It might be that local congregations and Synods feel able to make pledges which together amount to the achievement of those indicators. For example, if at Assembly level we have an outcome relating to church growth, measured by a numerical indicator, it may be that local churches commit to working towards a small increase in numbers which can be aggregated by Synods which together add up to a 'growth target' for the denomination.

The Assembly Framework might also provide a basis for the way in which Church House resources are used. Small steps have already been taken by staff secretaries in the Mission Team to work more collaboratively towards shared aims and there is a growing appreciation as to how individual roles might contribute to a number of different outcomes. An Assembly Framework might also re-prioritise the manner in which Assembly resources are targeted to resource local church and Synod needs in the same way as Synod Mission Strategies can tailor their 'offer' to assist churches in achieving their local mission plans.

The Assembly Framework might also be supported by a clear statement of URC 'values' – articulated with a coherent, reformed theological and missiological accent. Mission Committee has begun to undertake such a process in conjunction with its development of 10-year outcomes. It is suggested that this work builds upon the series of papers Mission Council approved shortly before Doctrine Prayer and Worship Committee ceased to meet (see section 5a below). There is also the suggestion that this process might be supported by a significant theological conference during 2009 or in early 2010.

Discussion question 5:

Is an Assembly Framework of outcomes, indicators and values suitably open to enable local churches and Synods to develop their own plans but suitably visionary to provide inspiration and direction?

5. Outcomes, Indicators and Values

The previous section provided a rationale for the notion of an Assembly Framework made up of a series of outcomes and associated indicators, based on a number of what might be called 'URC values'. Following a short consideration of 'values', this section begins to articulate what these outcomes and indicators might be. Based on feedback from General Assembly, they remain the subject of far more discussion and consultation (see Section 6), but they are intended to give a little more substance to the shape and nature of a URC Mission Strategy.

a. Values

Many strategic planning processes place considerable importance on setting out the values or principles that provide a foundation for planning and activity. This will be particularly true for a 'values-driven' organisation such as the URC.

In recent years Mission Council has received a number of papers reflecting upon and re-articulating the Basis of Union, our missiological understanding and other significant issues. During its short lifetime Mission Committee has also considered some 'Mission Theses' and drafted a 'Mission Creed'. There is a strong sense in which it would be foolhardy to seek yet another re-statement of what we stand for but work does need to be undertaken to ensure that any URC Mission Strategy is informed by a strong theological and missiological rationale.

To this end it is proposed that a short statement is produced, based upon recent work approved by Mission Council, that can inform the development of 10-year outcomes and ultimately form part of the Assembly Mission Framework. It is suggested that this work is carried out by the Faith and Order Reference Group.

Discussion question 6:

If you were drafting a statement of Mission Values what would you include? In what way might such a re-statement be different from our Basis of Union and other documents agreed by the URC?

b. Outcomes and Indicators

There has been considerable reflection and discussion within Mission Committee about a series of 'outcomes' that might frame the Mission Team's work and provide a basis for the URC Mission Strategy. A number of statements were considered at General Assembly which received general approval and these have been further developed in light of feedback received at Assembly.

One question that has often been asked is: why not stick to the Five Marks of Mission? The Five Marks were used as a basis for developing the outcomes and there are clear links between the suggested ten outcomes and the Five Marks. But Mission Committee felt that whilst the Five Marks provided a useful framework they were perhaps a little general for the purposes of a denominational mission strategy and that the URC needed something a little more focussed.

To this end the Committee has gone further and drafted a series of indicators – measurable signs of whether the URC is on a path to achieve its outcomes – which might provide a basis for local churches to make Mission Pledges. Again, they are not intended to be prescriptive but to provide a helpful prompt or indication as to how it might be possible for local churches and Synods to contribute to the whole church effort.

Most of these indicators are necessarily quantitative – they are there to be counted. But consideration might also be given to more 'qualitative indicators' perhaps measured through some form of biennial mission survey of a significant sample of churches and their members.

The draft outcomes and indicators are set out in an Annex to this paper.

Discussion Question 7:

What specific comments do you have about the outcomes and indicators as drafted? How far do you think they are ready to be used as part of the consultation process on the URC Mission Strategy throughout 2009?

6. Consultation and debate during 2009

As this paper makes clear, the development of a URC Mission Strategy is a complex and challenging process. It cannot be undertaken lightly and must be considered and 'owned' by all the

councils of the denomination. For this reason we are proposing that there is a far-reaching consultation process throughout 2009.

This process is intended to achieve the following:

- To gather further views and reflections on the values, outcomes and indicators that provide a framework for the strategy;
- To consider – in principle and in practice – the nature and scope of each of the three building blocks that might form the strategy and their implications for existing activity;
- To reflect on the way in which covenanting relationships between 'levels' of the church might work and how far 'pledges' might assist closer interaction and resource planning between levels;
- To explore how the various existing strategies and plans of Assembly Committees and Synods might be aligned or integrated within an over-arching mission strategy.
- To call the church to pray and reflect theologically on its mission orientation.

It is intended that every aspect of the URC is consulted and involved as well as ecumenical and international partners. Plans are being developed for a range of 'tools' through which such consultation can take place. These include:

- A formal consultation 'booklet' – in the style of Vision4Life booklets - aimed at local churches with clear questions for deliberation in church meetings and other local gatherings;
- An information/roadshow resource which can be used at Synod meetings, FURY Assembly and in other meetings and committees;
- Articles in Reform and other newsletters;
- A web-based discussion forum;
- A special activity at Energy4Life in July 2009;
- Engagement with ecumenical and international partners.

It is hoped that the URC Mission Strategy will form a substantive agenda item at a number of meetings of each of the Assembly Committees during 2009 and Synods will be supported to develop and implement their own consultation processes, should they wish.

The Mission Committee is seeking the support of the Mission Team, the Communications Department and other Church House Staff in implementing this consultation as well as the co-operation of Synod staff.

Discussion question 8:

What further guidance would Mission Council give for our plans for far-reaching consultation?

7. Resolutions

Mission Council affirms the general direction and three layered approach to developing a URC Mission Strategy and requests the Mission Committee to continue this work subject to the feedback received at the Mission Council meeting.

Mission Council affirms the plans being developed for an extensive consultation process about the URC Mission Strategy throughout 2009 and encourages all councils and committees of the church to participate in the consultation.

Mission Council requests the Mission Committee to bring forward an Assembly Mission Framework at General Assembly 2010 having considered feedback from the 2009 consultation process.

Mission Council encourages all councils and committees of the church to have regard for the emerging URC Mission Strategy in all aspects of policy-making and planning between now and General Assembly 2010.

Annex of Suggested Outcomes and Indicators

Overall statement of purpose:

We seek to be a church that defines itself by mission.

Our dream is of an inclusive church where each congregation will be a vibrant and sustainable faith community centred upon the gospel and proclaiming its message of freedom and justice for all. A church where people are drawn to faith and, as disciples of Christ, all are encouraged to exercise their gifts with passion and purpose so that together they will make a difference in communities and society in the name of Jesus Christ.

We are God's people, inspired by the Gospel, making a difference for Christ's sake.

To this end we envisage the following outcomes by 2020:

Suggested Outcome 1: IDENTITY

In ten years' time every local church will be able to say who they are, what they do and why they do it.

One of our greatest strengths is our diversity and flexibility which allows our churches to serve so creatively and effectively across a wide variety of contexts. However, constant pragmatism can lead to a lack of identity, focus and purpose. We want to encourage local churches to develop mission plans specific to their local contexts, which are owned by the membership of the church, allowing them to articulate clearly to friends, colleagues and neighbours 'who they are, what they do, and why they do it.'

Suggested indicators:

1. The number of local churches with a 'mission plan' or similar strategy document.
2. The number of churches having a welcome pack.
3. The number of churches having an Open Day.

Suggested Outcome 2: CHRISTIAN ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIP

In ten years' time we will be more confident in our identity, valuing the treasures of our tradition, discerning when to seek ecumenical partnerships, and when and how to seek the further unity of the church.

A lot has developed ecumenically since our union in 1972; the focus has changed from seeking further union, to forming a wide variety of partnerships - at local and national levels. Whilst our instincts remain deeply rooted in seeking further unity, we do not believe our dreams are served well by lacking in confidence, purpose and identity. Being confident in ourselves and working with others are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, celebrating and offering our many gifts will make our partnerships stronger and may speed the way to further union.

Suggested indicators:

1. The number of churches in Local Ecumenical Partnerships.
2. The number of churches involved in working with ecumenical partners.

Suggested Outcome 3: COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

In ten years' time we will be a church that is more active in the life of local neighbourhoods.

Many churches already have strong and long-standing links with their local communities – but others have become gathered congregations with little connection to the places where they meet to worship. An incarnational understanding of mission calls us to shape – and to be shaped – by the communities in which we worship and serve. We want to encourage local churches to get involved in their local neighbourhoods in new ways, being creative and taking risks in forming active partnerships with other local agencies, working with people of other faiths in the area to seek the benefit of those that live or work in the area.

Suggested indicators

1. The number of churches running some form of community-project.
2. The number of churches that work in partnership with local agencies, including people of other faiths.
3. The number of church members volunteering in other community-based activities.

Suggested Outcome 4: DIVERSITY

In ten years' time we will be a diverse church that does more to welcome and include all people equally.

There is a rich diversity in the URC of church backgrounds and theologies, of cultures and life experiences. As a multicultural church we are building on our radical commitment to justice as we aim to include and affirm all, welcoming rather than tolerating difference. We will continue to seek greater equality of women and men in all aspects of church life.

Suggested indicators:

1. The number of churches that have regular training to consider inclusiveness in the congregation and act on it.
2. The number of churches that regularly monitor their membership and eldership to ensure inclusiveness.
3. Representation of BME groups on all key councils, committees and task groups, at local, Synod and General Assembly levels.
4. Appropriate numbers of BME ministers, CRCWs, staff and candidates;

Suggested Outcome 5: EVANGELISM

In ten years' time we will be more confident to engage in evangelism, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God with friends, families and strangers, through story and action.

We need to re-claim an understanding and practice of evangelism. Learning to tell the Christian story and our ever evolving stories of faith needs to be a regular part of church life so that disciples of all ages are equipped and encouraged to share the good news of Jesus Christ in their daily lives. Equipped with a robust and reflective knowledge of the Bible and a commitment to openness our churches will be communities where faith is explored and the questions of the present day engaged with. The call to 'go' into the world and 'make' new disciples (Matthew 28 vs 19) being heard and taken up with imagination and creativity.

Suggested indicators:

1. The number of churches taking up the opportunity of the V4L or God is Still Speaking project for congregational development.
2. The number of churches drawing on Synod (staff?) resources for Evangelism for training and networking.

3. Congregations planning and carrying out activities whose primary function is to share the gospel.

Suggested Outcome 6: CHURCH GROWTH

In ten years' time we will be a growing church with an increasing membership.

The numerical decline of the United Reformed Church is unsustainable. And yet a significant number of local congregations are growing in number – and other denominations are experiencing local growth points too. Whilst our growth must be qualitative in terms of our spirituality and fellowship, we should be bold enough to seek quantitative growth too. With resources such as the Vision 4 Life evangelism year, Still Speaking and Fresh Expressions at our disposal we have every reason to be hopeful that our denomination can grow again. We must also embrace explore and embrace new forms of the emerging church.

Suggested indicators:

1. The number of new members in a congregation.
2. The URC will have 120,000 members by 2020.
3. The number of churches exploring Fresh Expressions or new ways of being church.

Suggested Outcome 7: GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP

In ten years' time we will be a church that is an active partner in God's global mission with other churches around the world.

We will continue our active participation in the world church, knowing that together we will more faithfully discern God's action and call, and that by sharing our resources we will be able to respond obediently and effectively in the costly struggle for peace with justice.

Suggested indicators:

1. The number of churches with direct links with another church overseas.
2. The number of Synods linked to a Council for World Mission (CWM) member church or other global partner.
3. The number of churches sharing in Commitment for Life.

Suggested Outcome 8: JUSTICE

In ten years' time we will be a church that keeps faith with the poor and challenges injustice.

The gospel calls us to work against poverty and the structures that keep people oppressed. Together with our Baptist and Methodist partners we need to influence those in power and equip local congregations to take action against everything that undermines or destroys fullness of life. If the church, local, national and international, is to be part of a movement for change in our world, it will need to discern and understand the contexts in which we live and the issues which affect us. Only by developing a sound reputation for intelligent critique and co-ordinated action will we be able to challenge unjust structures and seek economic justice from the local to the global marketplace.

Suggested indicators:

1. The number of churches that actively participate in at least one Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) campaign each year.
2. The number of churches engaged ecumenically in action against poverty and social exclusion in their local communities.

3. The number of practitioners and campaigners involved in a network around these issues.
4. The number of Synods that have endorsed and are monitoring the implementation of the revised ethical investment policy of the URC.

Suggested Outcome 9: THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

In ten years' time we will be a denomination where each congregation has taken significant steps to safeguard the integrity of creation, to sustain and renew the life of the earth.

The changing climate and its consequences for all life on planet earth cannot be over emphasised as the most significant underlying issue of our time. Being an intergenerational community of faith that trust in the God of creation past, present and to come, it is vital that the church recognizes the reality and fear present in environmental debates and lives hopefully in the present climate. Too often the 'prophets' who see the truth and challenge for change are outside the church. Our churches, reflecting faith in God the creator and sustainer of life in all its fullness, must discover the radical voice of care for the earth that is supported by the way we live.

Suggested indicators:

1. The number of local churches who have undertaken an environmental audit and are implementing some form of resulting action plan.
2. The churches that in worship, bible study and prayer give voice to the God whose life and love is expressed in all creation.
3. The number of congregations that are engaged with people in their local communities and globally over issues of environmental care, sharing concerns, contributing the insights of the Christian faith, co-operating with others in finding more sustainable patterns of life together.

Suggested Outcome 10: SPIRITUALITY AND PRAYER

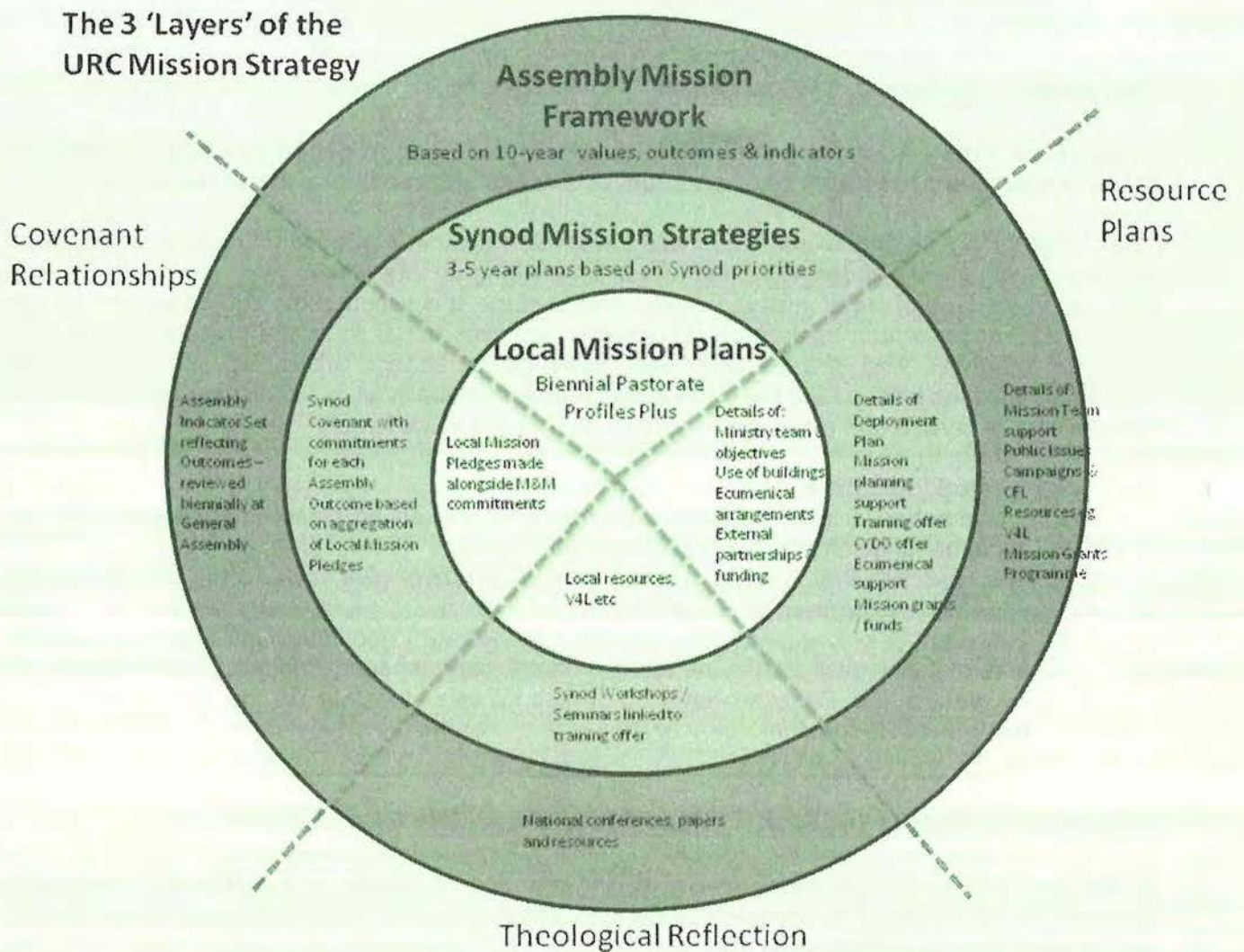
In ten years' time we will have grown in our practice of prayer and spirituality, nurturing strength for our witness in complex times, and developing our discernment of where God is and to what God is calling us to do.

Our faith must lie at the heart of all we do in the name of God's mission. This will be nurtured by our spirituality and theological reflection and will be sustained by our prayer. To this end we must recommit ourselves to this missiological challenge and reaffirm once again that "there is yet more light and truth to break forth from God's word".

Suggested indicators:

1. The number of churches who have committed to taking part in the Vision4Life prayer year or a similar prayer initiative.
2. The number of churches embarking on new ways of exploring mission and spirituality.

Annex 2: An alternative representation of the 3 building blocks placing Local Mission Plans at the heart of the strategy.





MISSION COUNCIL
2-4th December 2008

E3

FOR INFORMATION

All God's people enabled
The report of the Community of Women and Men in Mission Team,
Council for World Mission
Visit to the United Reformed Church
9th - 27th January 2008

Introduction to CWMM

In 1991, the Council for World Mission made a special commitment to building a Community of Women and Men in Mission (CWMM). This programme seeks to promote equal partnership between women and men within all the CWM member churches and to contribute to empowering women and ending discrimination and violence against women. Since 2004, international CWMM teams have made visits to member churches to share with each other our experiences, promote understanding, challenge one another and share working methods, as there is no one way to be a community of women and men in mission. The teams travel around the host country, visiting churches and communities, to discuss the progress made and obstacles faced in achieving gender equality and empowerment. The United Church of Zambia, the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, the Presbyterian Church in Singapore & the Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia, the Congregational Federation of Europe, the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand & Congregational Union of New Zealand, and the Church of North India have been visited in past years. The United Reformed Church invited a CWMM team to visit the UK this year. This document is a report of the CWMM team visit, to be delivered by the Council for World Mission to the United Reformed Church as a resource as it continues on its journey in building a community of women and men in mission. A copy will be kept in the CWM office. A response from the United Reformed Church will be expected in three months' time, with an additional follow-up six months thereafter.

The CWMM team to URC , UK is made up of:

Miss Jyotsna Rani Patro, Church of North India, Team Leader. Miss Patro is a member of the Synod Court of the Church of North India and a Secretary of her Diocese and her local church. As the President of the Synodical Women's Fellowship and the All India Council for Christian Women of the National Council of Churches of India, she has mainstreamed the study of the Bible from women's perspective in the Church. She was Host Enabler of the team visiting the Church of North India in 2004. At present she is the India representative to Asian Church Women's conference .

Revd Cheryl N. Dibeela, United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, Chaplain/Bible Study Enabler. Revd Dibeela, a minister of the UCCSA, currently serves as the Mission Enabler of the Africa Region of the Council for World Mission and is researching how enabling the church is to help women to transform their own situations.

Pastor Utia Manavaikai, Congregational Union of New Zealand. Pastor Manavaikai does joint pastoral work with her husband the Revd Maro Manavaikai in the New Lynn Congregational Church, is Church Secretary and serves as Assistant Chairwoman of the Women Fellowship of the Congregational Union of New Zealand.

Mr. Rudolph G. Brown, United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. Mr. Brown is an Elder, Choir Director, Lay Preacher and Chairman of the Public Education Committee of one of the Area Councils of the Synod. He also is Chairman of the Mission Committee of his local church, and a Justice of the Peace in his region.

Mr. Lee Chong Kai, Presbyterian Church of Singapore. Elder Chong Kai is an Elder of Bethel Presbyterian Church, Singapore. He is currently Chief Executive Officer of All Saints Memorial Chapel, a Christian columbarium, and All Saints Home, a 323-bed nursing home for the elderly sick. He retired as Public Affairs Manager for ExxonMobil Asia Pacific in 2002.

Mrs. Sheila Brain and Revd Carla Grosch-Miller, Rev, Elezabeth Nash United Reformed Church, Host Enablers (assisted by many). Mrs. Brain has had long involvement in gender issues in the URC, having been a member of the Community of Women and Men in the URC and the *Time for Action* (Safe Church) task force. Revd. Grosch-Miller is a theological educator and the convener of the Sexual Ethics Advisory Group in the URC.

Theological framework

Now Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, 'Woman, you are set free from your ailment.' When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the Sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, 'There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the Sabbath day.' But the Lord answered him and said 'You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the Sabbath day?' When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing. Luke 13:10-17.

As we looked carefully at this story, we noticed these things about Jesus: He was observant. The woman did not come to him to ask for healing; he noticed her suffering and *immediately* acted to set her free. His response was quick and it was liberating. He placed her well-being ahead of the rules and traditions of the place and time. And then he stood up to the authorities to defend his action.

We believe that the Church, too, should be observant, quick and liberating for women and men, valuing human well-being over the conventions and rules of our time and place. Thus, as we travelled around England, we explored how the Church valued women and men.

In the midst of structural change within URC, UK and the search for a host enabler to guide the Team the initial blocks to the visit were removed, thanks to both URC and CWM that the visit was not only made possible but also profitable to both the Church and CWM when the members of the Team arrived, met and were well looked after and guided in their assignment at the St.Katherine, Lime House, London.

On the 9th morning the Team Leader Jyotsna Rani Patro (CNI India) arrived and was briefed by the host enabler Rev Sheila Brain about the plan of orientation and visits for the Team.

On 10th January officially in the presence of Mr. Philip Woods (CWM) and Mr. Dale Rominger (Secretary for World Church Relation, URC), the Team members shared their identity, ideology and personal commitment to the Church and the bonding with in the team was ensured. The day's Bible study (attached at the end of the Report) played a vital role in bringing every body into perspective and the creative tension initiated on that day lasted till the end of the visit, in the mind of the members as a serious point to think about, as a joke, as a shared feeling, for each other, as an individual trait (which other members not only accepted but also decided to think about afterwards in the context of that person's background (social, denominational, etc).

That was a great lesson on how different criticism is from a critique.

The Team from CWMM (the names of members of the Team given in the report) drawn from six Regions of CWM had a cursory glance at the United Reformed Church in Britain. Rev Sheila Brain, the host enabler gave an elaborate talk on the history of ecumenism in UK.

The story of the Church is the story of the people who are in Christ. The Team got the chance to listen to the voices of men & women in the Church. They were given the elaborate information (at the Church House), literature, books, guided tours to Churches, worships, theological colleges, choir and precious time and hospitality in individual families.

Looking at URC, UK, we gathered from the Mission House that the basis of "United" and "Reformed" of URC acknowledges the need for constant reform and renewal of the Church according to Biblical basis and guidance of Holy Spirit. Though gender justice is not in the priority list of the Church it certainly is interwoven in the active life of the Church as was envisaged in the following steps taken by the URC Church .

- The Formation of Mission Committee, to discern God's Mission for the United Reformed Church in its local, regional, national and International context.
- The Vision4Life programme.
- Declaring Safe Church --**Charter for Action: This Church accepts that sexual harassment and abuse is a serious problem which occurs in the family of the Church as well as in wider society, and recognizes that sexual harassment and abuse is always unacceptable and must be stopped.**

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

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

Setting the context

British culture

The United Reformed Church is embedded in British culture, which historically has been patriarchal (male-dominated). While there was significant change in the twentieth century and such change is ongoing, there hasn't been a widespread examination of the underlying patriarchal assumptions that shape the structure of the society. For instance, there is still a sense that some jobs and roles are more suited to a particular gender. We noticed that teachers and nurses tended to be women, and that women had only been able to be ordained in the Church of England in the last fifteen years. We also noticed that it is very difficult to get a conviction in rape cases, that there is a high teenage pregnancy rate, and that women and children are trafficked into the country for sexual or other criminal purposes.

A number of other issues cause suffering for girls and boys, women and men, including the allure of gangsterism among young people, alcohol-fuelled violence, racial hostility, a high rate of divorce and a high rate of cohabitation.

We notice that British culture is not comfortable talking about gender issues. Generally speaking, 'strident' feminism is decried, while attention to the issues languishes.

Finally, we note that Britain is a multifaith, multiethnic society that is highly secular.

The United Reformed Church

The URC and its predecessor denominations have long recognised the ministry of women. Constance Coltman was the first woman to be ordained as a minister of word and sacrament in the Congregational Union in 1917. Ella Gordon, ordained in 1956, was the first Presbyterian woman. This makes the URC a leader in the ecumenical community in Britain, as other mainline denominations were much slower to recognise women as able and authorised to exercise such leadership. Moreover, there is a sensitivity to gender balance in the URC. Synods and Assembly Committees are encouraged to attain gender balance in appointments. Churches are advised that women are not to be discriminated against in the filling of ministerial vacancies. An equal opportunities policy proclaims the URC's intent to not discriminate on the basis of gender, and the Church has recently approved a policy to respond to incidents of sexual harassment or abuse.

While women were ordained early in the 20th century, there have been many struggles to have the ministry of women accepted and for it to flourish. In theological education, the first female lecturer at Westminster College was not appointed until 1985 and 2007 saw the first appointment of a female Principal of the College. We note that while the membership of URC is predominantly female, the leadership of the URC is majority male:

There has been no female General Secretary or Deputy General Secretary.

The majority of General Assembly Moderators have been male.

Six of the fifteen General Assembly heads of staff are female, but of the 55 Assembly employees, the junior staff are majority female.

Four of the thirteen Synod Moderators are now female (the highest number so far, with no mechanism for assuring the appointment of female Moderators in the future when their terms are completed).

One-third of ordained ministers are female, a larger proportion are nonstipendiary.

At Mission Council, January 2008, the top leadership table was entirely male; of the members listed, 30 were female, 58 were male.

There is no coordinating body to address gender issues, and there appears to have been no systematic effort to understand how traditional or historic assumptions about ministry (i.e., that ministers were male heads of households) have shaped the structures, practices and customs in the Church (e.g., regarding deployment, the movement of ministers and their families, expectations in congregations). The URC Community of Women and Men has been disbanded for some years, although there remains a voluntary group of Women in Ministries that support one another and advocate for change. As we met with ministers, church members, theological educators and students, we noted a range of levels of awareness of gender issues, with a general consensus that such issues were not 'high on the radar' of the URC. Other issues were considered more important, and there was concern articulated that 'women's issues' be considered 'human issues', which could dilute gender specific issues. An informal poll of a small group of interested women revealed that participants viewed British society to be slightly better on gender issues than the URC, with values clustering around the middle ranges.

Traditional gender roles continue to shape women's experience in the church. Women ministers shared their concerns about the minority of churches that are unwilling to call a female minister. Some churches will say so, and others find ways of rejecting them without naming the real reason. There is also the perception among some women ministers that women getting top positions are 'safe women', who rock the boat a little less than their more 'strident' sisters. We note Christine Fowler's research about the challenges facing women ministers with children (REFORM, Feb. 2008), and we were struck by comments that suggested that women ministers may be less likely to see themselves in 'male-shaped', powerful positions and apply for them. We note the lack of education in the church on gender issues, which perpetuates limiting perceptions about women's capabilities and enables unjust structures to continue to discriminate against women.

The United Reformed Church has experienced serious decline in the last century, and most of the churches we visited were small, with majority female, elderly congregations. It is difficult to provide nurturing and mentoring of girls and boys in such settings.

Finally, we observed that the United Reformed Church is involved in community service and development. Yet they do this good work without necessarily articulating the gospel. We heard a number of excuses for this, from Britain being a secular and pluralistic society to there being competing options on Sundays.

We applaud...

We observed much that we appreciated:

- The increase in the number of women training for ordained ministry, with an equal balance of women and men.
- The Women in Ministries network, which advocates for and supports women, and the existence of women and men who have a vision of gender justice.
- The URC's firm policies, e.g., Equal Opportunities; Sexual Harassment/ Abuse.
- Team ministry based on the sharing of skills based on gifts, an excellent model for women and men working together.
- Research and publication on gender issues, e.g. *Daughters of Dissent* and *Preaching like a Woman*, and articles and dialogue in REFORM.
- The appointment of the first female Principal of Westminster College, Cambridge, and the presence of women and men on the academic staff of both URC learning resource centres.
- The encouragement of gender balance in Synod and Assembly appointments.

- From our limited observation, local churches readily employ the gifts of women and men.
- Again from our limited observation, where local churches are aware of the issues in their communities, they seek to be a constructive presence (e.g. Rainbow Haven, the Street Pastors project in Wythenshawe, and St Paul and St John in Manchester; Emmanuel URC in Cambridge; community relations work in Upper Clapton, London; and the work of multiethnic churches).
- The URC is a living example to promote the ministry of women and addressing issues of sexual ethics in the ecumenical community.
- Vision4Life as a means to inspire deeper engagement with the Bible, prayer and evangelism.

We challenge....

We also noticed that the URC faces particular challenges:

- There is little theological reflection on gender and power, and little articulation of the biblical basis for gender justice.
- There is no coordinating body in the power structure of the Church to address gender issues.
- Where are the men in the local churches? Where are Christian male role models for youth and boys? What space in the churches is there for boys and girls to learn to appreciate each other and work together as a community of women and men?
- There is a predominantly male leadership in a majority female Church.
- Gender issues are hidden and embedded deeply. How may the Church examine structures designed when most ministers were male heads of households to understand their impact of women or families? How may it overcome the British/Church culture's reticence to examine its patriarchal roots and address gender issues head on?
- How may the Church encourage women to think of themselves as able to bring their unique, individual gifts into senior leadership positions? How may it educate women and men to accept those gifts? And how may it mentor diverse people into positions of leadership, providing exposure and experience to issues and structures?
- When people are dismissed as 'strident' and the issues they raise diminished or ignored, gender bias may be at work. It is best to listen beneath anger or hurt, and to respond to the issues.
- Where local churches are inward looking, they miss opportunities to bring the good news to the community in tangible forms.
- There appears to be no awareness or work in the church on issues of HIV and AIDS, which are strong concerns in some of our countries.
- Given that the URC is ahead of other denominations, there is the temptation to complacency – to think that the work is done, when it is not. Has and how has the URC taken a lead in helping other denominations make progress in gender justice?

We reflect....

We also want to share our reflections about the visit. We appreciate the great gifts of time and energy that went into planning and implementing our travels in London, Cumbria, Manchester and Cambridge; everyone we met was gracious and helpful. However, the organization of the trip could have been more useful. We needed to get an overview of the United Reformed Church, more information about the Church, and how it functions. We would have benefited from a better orientation to clarify our own roles and

to build ourselves as a team. We should have had more information earlier and an opportunity to shape the first days' activities and frame our visit. The early splitting up of the team, with two of our number attending the Women in Ministries Retreat, was challenging to us as a group. We regret that a single host enabler did not accompany us throughout the entire trip. That is the expectation in this programme, which has been met in other Church visits. Finally, we acknowledge that this report is a snapshot; our experiences were limited. We did not see many of the parts that represent the whole of the United Reformed Church. We did not visit Scotland or Wales, and we did not see young people or children, people from diverse ethnic groups or men's groups. We wonder what theological reflection is being done on issues related to men.

As we reflect on our own group process, we note (with much laughter and broad grins) that our own diversity was an enrichment. Yes, sometimes it seemed that we had the same arguments, over and over and over again. But our diverse backgrounds meant that our questions were searching and broad – there was no party line. We count our experience as a testimony to the power of diversity to enliven and enrich a community.

We recommend...

We have a vision of a Church that, like Jesus, notices gender inequality and the suffering of women and men, and that acts quickly to remedy and liberate persons. The task begins with observation. What in our culture and in our church culture causes women and men, girls and boys to be 'bent over'? How may the church proclaim and embody the good news that enables us all to stand up and praise God? We recommend that the Church:

1. **Listen to women and men**, seeking to uncover the hidden gender issues that 'bend' people over and prevent their full participation in life and Church life.
2. **Situate gender issues in a coordinating centre, such as the Office for Church and Society**, to enable observation and responsiveness. Such a centre should enable the provision of spaces for women and for men separately to gather for support and advocacy, and a space for women and men together to work in partnership. Such a centre could educate on gender issues for awareness and action.
3. **Examine structures and systems of leadership within the Church** to see if they are female- and family-friendly.
4. **Put significant time and energy into attracting, nurturing and mentoring girls and boys** in a way that will enable them to grow up to work together in a community of women and men.
5. **Finding ways to influence other denominations** to move forward on gender justice issues.
6. **Include within Vision4Life** theological reflection and discussion of gender issues.
7. **Continue to labour for the renewal of the church and the creation of life-giving, joyful and liberating communities of good news for all people.**

Conclusion

It has been a great privilege to receive the hospitality of so many in the United Reformed Church. Everywhere we went, we were greeted warmly and invited into the life of the church or church-related institution. A number of women and men gave generously of their time and their patience. We want to thank all of those, as well as the URC Office of International Relations. In our travels, we witnessed passion and commitment, intelligence and conviction. Nothing we have seen makes us think that the URC does

not care about women and men, girls and boys. On the contrary, we are convinced that the Church has an abiding heart to bring the Good News to all people.

Additional resources

We append to this report the Bible studies prepared by Revd Cheryl Dibeela, as an offering to encourage and assist the United Reformed Church in its work on gender justice.

Our motivation as a team is to pursue issues of Women and Men in Partnership in God's Mission. As part of this process we have over the last three weeks drawn insights from Scripture in an attempt to better understand God's Word on this subject. It is that grounding in faith and search for new insights which we want to share with the URC. We believe that for the URC to come to recognition of the importance of equal partnership of Women in Men in God's mission the Bible should, despite its apparent contradictions, be the primary source for Gender Justice. Our conviction in gender justice is rooted in our understanding of Jesus Christ as liberator of all people.

Discussions were pursued around set questions during each Bible Study session.

Bible Study One:

Numbers chapter 12

Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman. And they said, "Has the Lord indeed spoken only through us Moses?" "Has he not spoken through us also?" And the Lord heard it, (Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.) Suddenly the Lord said to Moses, Aaron and Miriam, "Come out, you three to the tabernacle of meeting! So the three came out. Then the Lord.....

So the anger of the Lord was aroused against them, and He departed. And when the cloud departed from above the tabernacle, suddenly Miriam became leprous, as white as snow. Then Aaron turned toward Miriam, and there she was a leper. So Aaron said to Moses, "Oh my lord! Please do not lay this sin on us, in which we have sinned....

1. What are our perceptions about the three people in leadership during the Exodus?
2. What events or qualities reflect equal/unequal partnership relationships in the leadership portrayed through the passage that we have just read?
3. What lessons can we learn from the leadership qualities of Miriam, Aaron and Moses for our own journey that we are embarking on over the next three weeks?
4. What is the passage alerting us to when we search for equal partnership of men and women in Leadership in the United Reformed Church?

Bible Study Two:

Luke 13:10 -17

Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up. But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her,

Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity. And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, "There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day."

1. Ask the members in the group to walk around in a circle bent down. Ask them how do they feel walking around bent? Is this perhaps how the woman might have felt?
2. What do we think could have made the woman bent?
3. What was Jesus' response to the condition of the woman when he saw her?
4. What was the reaction of the synagogue leader when Jesus healed the woman?
5. List down in two separate columns the things that make women 'bent' and things that make men 'bent' in our societies.
6. How do we as the Church often respond to the 'bentness' of women and men in our societies? Like Jesus or like the synagogue leader?
7. How could we make a difference to women and men that are 'bent' around us?

Bible Study Three

Numbers 27: 1-11

Then came the daughters of Zelophehad the son of Hopher, ...; and these were the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah. And they stood before Moses, before Eleazar the priest, and before the leaders and all the congregation, by the doorway of the tabernacle of meeting, saying: "Our father died in the wilderness; he was not in the company of those who gathered together against the Lord... Why should the name of our father be removed from among his family because he had no son?..."

Luke 10: 38-42

Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me" And Jesus answered and said to her "Martha, Martha you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her"

1. What impact do laws, structures and traditions have on the lives of women and men, respectively in the above passages? Discuss what you see in the passages.
2. What implications do we think these laws, structures and traditions had on the economic standing of women and men in biblical times? Name them. Does this result in an equal or unequal financial standing between men and women?

3. Are there any similarities between the situation of the lives of women and men in biblical times and the situation of women and men today in Church and Society? Give examples if yes or no.

4. What can we do to change these laws, structures and traditions so as to create equal partnership between men and women in Church and Society?

by Rev. Cheryl N. Dibeela

United Congregational Church of Southern Africa



Comments

Miss Jyotsna Rani Patro, team leader: *Secularism in the UK has affected the URC. What about my Church in India? Is the tendency catching up? The members of the team were extremely supportive of each other, notwithstanding the ever present creative tension of looking at gender from a new perspective. Windermere – women in ministry – the thrill of visiting 'Dove Cottage', I am 'bearing in my heart' as a 'joy forever.'*

Mr. Rudolph Brown: *I have been truly blessed and energised by the experiences to which I have been exposed on this trip. I will return to my local church community to do more in helping to build God's kingdom in my part of His vineyard.*

Mr. Lee Chong Kai: *I had not personally been involved in these issues in the past....this exposure is helpful even it is sometimes uncomfortable. The use of inclusive language challenges my understanding of and my personal relationship with my Abba, Father. But I think there needs to be more of an objective discussion on gender issues, and to take care to ensure that the debate is not hijacked by either feminists or misogynists. There*

was little discussion on the role of men in gender issues. I will explore how gender issues can be discussed further in the PCS.

Revd Carla A. Grosch-Miller: There is nothing more stimulating and enlightening than Bible study and discussion of important issues in an international group. I count myself profoundly privileged to have travelled, argued, inquired and laughed with this amazing group of individuals. I shall never forget it.

Revd Cheryl Deebela: My thoughts on our Team Visit are: that the journey was most times very frustrating because of the opposing views held on the position of women and men in Church and Society. It was even more difficult when we discussed scripture as some could not recognise issues of gender within the Bible. I do however have to say that these very differing views often gave rise to very lively discussions and debates. It was different from a previous group in which these different opinions made us feel extremely upset with one another. This time we were able to laugh about and even tease each other, so we did not separate very unhappy with one another.



MISSION COUNCIL
2-4th December

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The Pensions
Regulator

1 July 2008

The URC Mission Council
c/o Revd Raymond Adams
The United Reformed Church
Church House
86 Tavistock Place
London WC1H 9RT

Dear Revd Adams

The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund (the Pension Fund)

You may be aware from the General Assembly's meeting of 7th to 10th September last year that we have been in regular correspondence with the Trustee of the Pension Fund.

The Pensions Regulator has been making on-going enquiries into the Pension Fund and the Trustee has done much to inform us of the unique circumstances in this case; which we have been able to incorporate into our assessment of the valuation documents and Recovery Plan submitted to us.

The Trustee has gone some way to clarify the rationale behind their agreement of the assumptions and Recovery Plan set in respect of the 1 January 2006 valuation and have shown willingness to incorporate some of our comments in the proposed amendments. However, some of our concerns remain.

As those concerns will impact upon the next valuation, we are now contacting the URC Trust and Mission Council directly in the form of this letter, in the hope that they can be addressed in advance. From our meetings and correspondence with the Trustee, we understand the importance of both the URC Trust and the Mission Council to the Church's administrative and executive structure; it is precisely due to the centrality of their position that we are now adopting this approach. It is hoped that both the URC Trust and Mission Council can give thought to the Pensions Regulator's concerns and consider how best they may assist in mitigating these.

For ease of reference of the purpose of general understanding, we have taken the opportunity of outlining under separate headings, the points which are of concern and our proposal for dealing with them.

Napier House	Customer support:	0870 6063636
Trafalgar Place	Textphone:	0870 2433123
Brighton	Fax:	0870 2411144
BN1 4DW	Email:	customersupport@thepensionsregulator.gov.uk
	General office:	01273 811800
	Website:	www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk
	E-learning:	www.trusteetoolkit.com

Technical Provisions

The regulator's continuing involvement with the Pension Fund has been due to our concern that the technical provisions have not been set at a sufficiently high level leading to the deficit disclosed being lower than we would have expected. This is the case despite some changes proposed by the Trustee and even after taking into account the support of a Church with a strong financial covenant.

Whilst the Pensions Regulator agrees with the Trustee that the Church's covenant is strong, we do not share their optimism that the Church will be able to accommodate any losses resulting from assumptions not being borne out by experience (e.g. investment return). The Pensions Regulator is drawing a distinction between the Church's strong balance sheet and enduring nature and its ability to draw upon extra funds from cash-flow.

Recovery Plan length

Following the Trustee's proposed restatement of the technical provisions (from £80m to £81m), the Trustee has suggested an increase in the Recovery Plan from 10 years 7 months to 20 years. For a scheme with two-thirds pensioner liabilities, 20 years represents a very lengthy period.

This will 'trigger' against our published trigger of 10 years. The plan length reflects the ability of the Church to meet its pensions obligations. However, the Pensions Regulator advocates that any scheme funding deficit should be removed as soon as practicable.

Flow of Funds

Whilst we recognise the strong moral code within which the Church operates, we are concerned that there appears to be no legal obligation for the Synods to pass on funds outside of the unlikely event of the dissolution of the Church. The Trustees in their letter of 4th April 2008,

" confirm that there is no legal obligation on the Provincial Synods or the local churches of the United reformed church to fund a deficit on the Pension Fund, if it should arise."

This concern has particular application in the context of a long recovery period under a Recovery Plan.

Our Proposal

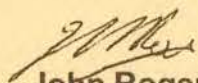
We understand that the General Assembly resolved in 2007 to support the Pension Fund and in particular to make arrangements to meet any deficit. This resolution has given us some comfort in considering the strength of the Church's covenant. In the light of the above concerns, in particular the lack of legally enforceable obligations between the various organs of the Church, we would ask the URC Trust and Mission Council to consider making a further more specific resolution in respect of the Pension Fund. Such further resolution could include the possibility of demonstrating support through legally enforceable means; for example a guarantee or a charge over Church assets.

The implementation of such a resolution would provide comfort in the event that, at the next valuation, a Recovery Plan were agreed in excess of 10 years and would mitigate some concern over the level of the technical provisions.

We hope that the URC Trust and Mission Council will accept this letter in the manner and spirit in which it is written; and that consideration can be given towards our position so that the Church, the Trustee and the Pensions Regulator can discharge their respective duties in agreement with each other for the purpose of the next valuation as at 1 January 2009.

We look forward to our proposal receiving due consideration at your next meeting.

Yours sincerely



John Rogers
Scheme Specific Funding

Cc Mr Alan Small, URC Trust

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General office: 01273 811800
Website: www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk
E-learning: www.trusteetoolkit.com



MISSION COUNCIL 2-4th December 2008

F1

Setting the Stipend

The 2009 Stipend

1 In the absence of an October Mission Council this year, the Finance Committee proposed and the Moderator of General Assembly agreed that the stipend level for 2009 should be set by the Finance Committee and the URC Trust at their September meetings. The Mission Council Advisory Group (MCAG) endorsed this approach.

2 After noting the data available from the wider economy and hearing the considered views of the Ministries and Finance Committees, the URC Trust endorsed a recommendation that the basic ministerial stipend for 2009 should be £21,900. This represents an increase of 4% on the 2008 level of £21,060.

3 The background paper provided to the URC Trust meeting is attached for information as Appendix 1.

Process for Future Years

4 The planned pattern for Mission Council meetings means that there will be not normally be any meeting in the early Autumn. For 2009, 2010 and 2011 Mission Council will meet in the second half of November. If the stipend level for the following year were not known until then it would create acute practical problems, not least because a variety of discussions and decisions about allowances and the uprating of other payments cannot take place until the stipend is settled.

5 Therefore the Finance Committee and the URC Trust recommend that the process used this year should be agreed as the normal process. Only if the Finance Committee and the Trust were unable to agree on a stipend level would the matter be delayed for a Mission Council decision.

6 This procedure would also address another concern expressed periodically at Mission Council. In practice the majority of Mission Council members are ministers with a direct financial interest in the level of the stipend. Moving the decision to the Finance Committee and Trust would give it to bodies where in practice the majority of members do not have this potential conflict of interest.

7 As is currently the case, the Finance Committee would look to the Ministries Committee to give advice on the level of the stipend and if there were any difference of view between the Ministries and the Finance Committee this would be reported clearly to the URC Trust alongside the proposed stipend level.

Resolution

Mission Council agrees that the level of the basic ministerial stipend should be set annually by agreement between the Finance Committee and the URC Trust and reported to Mission Council. In the event that the URC Trust is unable to endorse the Finance Committee's recommendation, the decision will revert to Mission Council.

Appendix 1: Paper submitted to URC Trust September 2008

Background

There is no fixed formula for determining the ministerial stipend. Noting that the URC stipend compares favourably with sister denominations, in recent years we have generally taken most account of movements in the Retail Prices Index excluding mortgage costs (RPIX) as a measure of inflation and the increase in the average earnings index excluding bonuses (AEI). With AEI always rising faster than RPIX, we have in practice agreed stipend increases between the two.

This Year

In several respects this year is different.

- (i) In terms of the general economy we have the exceptional position where the AEI is rising more slowly than inflation. This raises the point of principle whether we are morally obliged to match inflation even when average earnings (not least of URC members giving to M&M) are rising more slowly than inflation.
- (ii) Increasingly official statistics are focused on the Consumer Prices Index (CPI), which in some respects is a more sophisticated measure of inflation as it impacts on households. However the index is constructed in a way that will almost invariably produce a lower figure than RPI or RPIX.
- (iii) With the move to biennial Assemblies and consequent changes in Mission Council meeting date patterns, we have agreed to move the setting of the stipend from Mission Council to the September meetings of the Ministries and Finance Committee, subject to endorsement by the URC Trust. This means the index figures published in October that were previously used for annual comparisons are not available this year.

Latest Data

RPIX	(year to July)	5.3%
RPI	(year to July)	5.0%
CPI	(year to July)	4.4%
AEI	(year to June)	3.7%

Recommendation

The Ministries and Finance Committees recommend that, noting the data and the broken year period, the increase in the ministerial stipend should be 4%. This would raise the basic stipend for 2009 from £21,060 to £21,900. The Trust is invited to endorse this recommendation.

John Ellis
Treasurer

7 September 2008



MISSION COUNCIL
2-4th December 2008

F2

Streamlining Investment Committees

Background

1 The United Reformed Church is served by an investment committee which gives expert advice about the ways the general reserves of the Church should be invested. These are formally the assets of the URC Trust. It is also served by a quite separate investment committee which gives expert advice about the ways the assets of the Ministers' Pension Fund should be invested. The work of the two committees overlaps substantially. It is also demanding and highly specialised; it is difficult to find appropriately qualified volunteers to serve on these two separate committees.

Proposal

2 After full consultation with the two investment committees and the two parent bodies (the URC Trust and the Ministers' Pension Trust) it is clear those most involved agree that the advantages of maintaining and servicing two separate committees are now outweighed by the disadvantages. Therefore it is proposed that a single investment committee be established to cover the work of both the existing committees.

3 Several current members of the two investment committees are due to retire. In order to ensure continuity of knowledge, it is proposed that the new committee should initially comprise the remaining members of the two existing committees.

4 A draft proposal for the terms of reference etc of the new committee is attached as Appendix 1. This draft will be considered by the two parent bodies shortly before Mission Council meets and any amendments will be reported to Mission Council.

Resolution

Mission Council:

- (i) thanks those who have served the Church diligently on the URC Trust Investment Sub-Committee and the URC Ministers' Pension Trust Investment Committee;
- (ii) agrees that those two committees should be dissolved;
- (iii) agrees to establish from 1 January 2009 a United Reformed Church Investment Committee to operate in accordance with its agreed terms of reference and composition.

John Ellis
Treasurer

15 November 2008

Appendix 1: Draft Proposal

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

1 The United Reformed Church Investment Committee (URCIC) should replace the URC Trust Investment Sub-Committee and the URC Ministers' Pension Trust Investment Committee from 1 January 2009.

2 The terms of reference of URCIC shall be as follows.

- (i) The Committee shall provide guidance to the URC Trust and the URC Ministers' Pension Trust in relation to all matters relating to the investment of the assets held by these Trusts.
- (ii) The Committee shall secure advice and support from investment specialists to enable clear recommendations to be made to the Boards of these Trusts.
- (iii) The Committee shall take decisions on behalf of the Boards, subject to the authority of the Boards and within guidelines for delegation agreed with the Boards.
- (iv) The Committee shall organise such training for its members as will enable it to carry out its duties in a professional manner.
- (v) The Committee shall ensure representation on Mission Council's Ethical Investment Advisory Group and work co-operatively with the Group.

3 The composition of URCIC shall be as follows.

(a) Ex officio members:

- (i) the Chair of the URC Trust
- (ii) the Chair of the URC Ministers' Pension Trust Board
- (iii) the Treasurer of the United Reformed Church
- (iv) the Convenor of the Pensions Executive

(b) Appointed in the name of the General Assembly: five members, who shall initially be Michael Goldsmith, Malcolm Littlefair, Richard Nunn, Andrew Perkins and Brian Woodhall

(c) Any additional members co-opted by the Committee

(d) Staff in Attendance:

- (i) The Chief Finance Officer
- (ii) The Clerk to the URC Trust and Secretary to the URC Ministers' Pensions Trust, who shall act as Secretary of URCIC

(e) A Convenor appointed in the name of the General Assembly from amongst those in groups (a) to (c), with the agreement of both Trust Boards; and who, if not already a member, will attend each Board as an adviser.

4 A quorum for Committee decisions shall be a total of five members drawn from groups (a) and (b) above, with a minimum of two from each of these groups.

5 The Committee will suggest dates to the Nominations Committee for the initial Assembly-appointed members to retire, remembering their past service on predecessor committees, and using the general guideline that members should serve for a term of four years, renewable once.

JGE



MISSION COUNCIL 2-4th December 2008

F3

2009 Budget

Key Point

1 Mission Council is invited to agree a balanced budget for 2009 but to discuss the longer term implications of trends in costs relating to (a) General Assembly and (b) Communications.

Briefing for New Readers

2 Each year the Finance Committee takes the lead in preparing a budget for the centralised costs of the Church. This budget covers only a small fraction of the total flow of money through the United Reformed Church as most money is raised and spent locally.

3 The central budget is dominated by the Ministry and Mission Assessments collected from every local church and the spending of this money on the training, stipends and related costs of ministers. Most of the rest of the expenditure in this budget relates to the central programmes of the Church as agreed at Assembly. There is also some housekeeping expenditure, such as maintaining the London office building.

Review of 2008

4 The main variation from budget for 2008 to date is a very substantial overspend on General Assembly. Actual expenditure was £402,000 compared with an authorised budget of only £230,000. The Finance Committee has expressed its concern about aspects of financial control to the Assembly Arrangements Committee and received assurances that the issues are both understood and will be addressed. The Finance Committee also welcomes the plan for Mission Council to review what it wants a General Assembly meeting to achieve and urges that the financial consequences of any proposals should be fully thought through.

5 2009 will be the first year without an Assembly but in order to smooth the budget across years with an Assembly and years without, a notional £150,000 has been put in the 2009 budget towards the costs of the 2010 Assembly.

The Story in the 2009 Budget

6 The attached sheet gives the proposed budget numbers for 2009. The main points are as follows:

- Estimates from Synods suggest the M&M giving will hold up in 2009; but there will be no significant increase and the giving will fail to keep pace with inflation

- A further reduction in the number of stipendiary ministers reduces Ministry costs and avoids any major pressure on the overall budget
- The Communications budget (in Section F) is a substantial rise on 2008. Mission Council will be invited to consider a Communications Strategy, including setting a policy for the longer term cost trends.
- The projected deficit for 2009 is smaller than in recent budgets and effectively represents a balanced budget given the degree of approximation inherent in the budget numbers.

7 The 2009 budget does not include any provision for additional support for the Ministers' Pension Fund. A valuation at the end of December 2008 will almost certainly indicate a deficit needing to be funded by means still to be decided.

Resolution

Mission Council accepts the budget for 2009 set out in the attachment to this report.

John Ellis
Treasurer

12 November 2008

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Department/ Project	2007(Jan-Dec) Actual	2008 Budget	2009 Draft Budget	Budget Comments
	£	£	£	
EXPENDITURE				
General assumptions for 2009: Stipend increase 4% Lay/support salary increase 4.5% Lay pension cost 26% (2008 18.5%)				
A Ministry				
36 Local and special ministries and CRCWs	15,842,873	15,904,000	15,683,000	Fall in minister numbers
11 Synod Moderators - stipends and expenses	633,658	613,000	636,000	
12 Ministries department	255,802	278,400	308,600	
6 Pastoral & welfare	10,560	2,000	2,000	
	16,742,893	16,797,400	16,629,600	
B Education & Learning				
59 Initial training for ministry	873,075	876,250	843,350	
59 Continuing training for ministry	175,398	178,700	185,600	
59 Resource Centres support	284,501	289,000	297,000	
	1,332,974	1,343,950	1,325,950	
04TLS Training for Learning & Serving - net cost	105,706	91,750	122,400	
04LP Lay preachers support	0	0	55,000	New programme - provisional sum
W Windermere Centre - net cost	89,571	91,400	91,900	
04 Education & Learning department	127,266	139,800	153,500	
	1,655,517	1,666,900	1,748,750	
C Youth & Children's Work				
14 Youth and Children's work	233,506	262,500	298,300	
14T Children & Youth development officers	268,064	133,850	154,500	All Synods
16 Pilots development	85,328	108,860	114,550	
	586,898	505,210	567,350	
D Mission				
18 Mission programmes and team	784,210	812,800	843,400	
19 Vision4Life	0	20,000	27,000	
01 Grants (Mission Council Grants & Loans group)	80,316	110,000	70,000	
	864,526	942,800	940,400	
E Governance				
29 General Assembly	228,079	230,000	150,000	Est. 50% of 2010 Assembly
01 Mission Council	50,317	50,000	52,000	
28 Professional fees	105,669	93,000	97,500	
25 Other	24,927	36,000	39,000	
	408,992	409,000	338,500	
F Administration & Resources				
10 Central Secretariat	309,508	308,000	395,500	HR/Facilities additional staff
08 Equal Opportunities	1,381	3,000	3,000	
24 URC House costs	287,255	291,500	294,500	
13 I.T. Services	124,879	121,000	130,100	
21 Finance	399,209	403,000	453,700	Includes Co.Sec./Clerk
22 Communications & Editorial	342,193	353,500	411,550	Report explains
	1,464,425	1,480,000	1,688,350	
Total expenditure	21,723,252	21,801,310	21,912,950	
INCOME				
34 Ministry and Mission contributions	(20,380,025)	(20,452,000)	(20,642,000)	per Synods
Investment and other income				
Dividends	(255,838)	(290,000)	(650,000)	
Donations	(42,773)	0	(14,000)	
Specific legacies	(60,300)	0	0	
Grants - Memorial Hall Trust	(395,000)	(385,000)	(385,000)	
Grants - New College Trust	(309,124)	(300,000)	0	
Net interest income	(208,804)	(70,000)	(100,000)	
Other	(22,410)	(10,000)	(20,000)	
	(1,284,249)	(1,055,000)	(1,169,000)	
Total income	(21,664,274)	(21,507,000)	(21,811,000)	
NET (SURPLUS)/DEFICIT	58,978	294,310	101,950	



MISSION COUNCIL
2-4th December 2008

F4

Cool Heads and Warm Hearts
URC Finances and the Global Economic Crisis

This simplified background factsheet will be used during the Treasurer's presentation to the Council.

INCOME	2009 Budget	
	£m	%
Investment Income	1.1	5
M&M Giving	20.6	95
Other	0.1	-
TOTAL	<u>21.8</u>	<u>100</u>

WEALTH	June 2008 £m	Nov 2008 £m	% Change
URC Trust Capital			
Company Shares etc	18.9	15.3	-19%
Government & other Bonds	1.9	1.8	-5%
Cash on Deposit	5.5	5.5	-
TOTAL	<u>26.3</u>	<u>22.6</u>	-14%

Ministers Pension Fund Assets

Company Shares etc	29.7	22.3	-25%
Government Bonds	48.6	46.0	-5%
TOTAL	<u>78.3</u>	<u>68.3</u>	-13%

15 November 2008



MISSION COUNCIL 2-4 December 2008

G

Windermere Building Project

Background

1 The Windermere Centre occupies the former manse of Carver Memorial United Reformed Church and is on the same piece of land. The Centre's future as a key training resource has recently been reaffirmed by the Education and Learning Committee.

2 In October 2007 Mission Council agreed to open discussions with a view to purchasing the freehold of the Centre from Carver church and the North Western Synod. These negotiations are close to completion. In addition, Mission Council asked the Finance Committee to undertake the necessary negotiations to construct a link building between Carver church and its church halls, which would make these church facilities more useful as extra space for courses run by the Centre.

3 In March 2008 Mission Council agreed that if all the interested parties were in favour, the building project could proceed immediately provided the contribution from central Church funds was not more than £250,000.

Recent Progress

4 Since the last Mission Council a great deal of work has been done by, among others, Carver church, the Windermere Centre staff, the North Western Synod, representatives of the Finance Committee and the URC Trust and our professional advisers. Our architect, Cliff Patten, has produced costed plans for two alternative versions of the link building.

5 The first version reflects the funding ceiling and is estimated to cost a total of £257,000. It meets the basic specification requested by the Finance Committee after discussions with the Centre and Carver church.

6 However the architect recommends that a more elaborate version would be a much preferable project. He has produced plans for a larger version of the link building, which imply a total cost of £336,500. The floor area for the main reception area, which would be used as a break out space by Centre courses, is around 10-15% larger than in the smaller version. The larger version also provides a number of improvements that would be of benefit both to the local church and to the Centre. For example, it would involve replacing the elderly main boiler and heating system for the church building itself. While this would clearly benefit the local congregation on Sundays it would also make the use of the building more attractive for Centre courses in winter.

7 Copies of the plans for the two versions will be available for inspection at Mission Council. The architect's summary of the extra elements in the larger version and their associated costs are set out in Appendix 1.

8 Carver church have generously voted to accept significant changes to one end of their church building to allow easy and attractive access from the church itself to the proposed link building. Mission Council should be aware that this was not decided without much heart searching by church members as longstanding features of their building, including the original organ, would be lost.

9 Carver church have also been clear that they would much prefer the larger version of the link building. It brings several advantages for their work and future vision over the smaller version. However they do not feel able to offer to fund any of the extra costs except the costs of a new basement stair, which is likely to cost £10,000.

10 The North Western Synod officers have been kept apprised of developments. The Synod does not at present feel able to offer any financial support.

11 So far no external funding has been obtained although the architect stresses that this is usually very difficult to secure before a firm commitment is made to proceed with a project.

Issues for Mission Council

12 While there is great deal of further detail that could be shared, the key issues for Mission Council can now be identified.

13 The fact that several key interested parties would prefer a link building 35% more expensive than the original Mission Council budget means that the Finance Committee believes that the situation should be shared with Mission Council for a further steer.

14 Mission Council needs to decide whether it is willing to increase the support from central Church funds and, if so, on what conditions. In particular, Mission Council needs to decide how far, if at all, it is willing for central funds to contribute to enhancements to the link building, which would bring extra benefit to both the Windermere Centre and the local congregation. Mission Council may also wish to set a time limit on its offer of funding. Mission Council will doubtless wish to hear the latest thinking from the North Western Synod and the Education and Learning Committee.

Towards a Decision

15 The Finance Committee suggests this is a topic that lends itself well to the consensus style of decision-making. In the hope that it aids discussion, the Finance Committee offers the following options, trusting that a consensus can be built based around one of them. The Finance Committee's recommendation would be Option 4.

Option 1: Mission Council adheres strictly to its £250,000 funding limit and refuses to authorise either version of the link building scheme unless additional funding is found by Carver church.

Option 2: Mission Council, recognising that its £250,000 funding limit was set a while ago and was somewhat arbitrary, authorises the £257,000 scheme and will pay for it entirely from central funds.

Option 3: Mission Council, noting the architect's view that the larger scheme could be reduced at final design or construction stage if funding did not materialise, authorises the larger version, requiring it to be adapted according to available funding and subject to a ceiling of £265,000 on support from central funds.

Option 4: Mission Council, noting that the extra advantages of the larger scheme benefit the Windermere Centre as well as the local congregation, amends Option 3 to provide £265,000 from central funds; plus up to £35,000 more from central funds to share the costs of any enhancements that other funding make possible.

Option 5: Mission Council authorises the larger scheme and agrees to fund it entirely from central funds at a likely cost of £340,000.

John Ellis - Treasurer
15 November 2008

Appendix 1: Larger Version Additional Costs

LEWIS PATTEN CHARTERED ARCHITECTS

Final issue: 29th October 2008.

In support of the Architect's recommendation to proceed with Scheme 2 (the larger version) the following breakdown of additional costs is offered along with suggested sources.

APPLICATIONS FOR EXTERNAL FUNDING: It should be noted that most funding bodies (and Synods) will not consider applications or make funding offers for schemes without Planning Consent.

RESPONDING TO FUNDING SHORTFALLS: Most additional items can be omitted at detailed design stage or prior to construction if funding is found to be unavailable.

ARCHITECT'S RECOMMENDATION: Proceed with Scheme 2 to Planning and Listed Buildings consent and then review funding and construction costs, prior to finalising the tender stage scheme.

SCHEME 2 PROJECT COST	
Project Cost as set out in report <ul style="list-style-type: none">Subject to implementation timescale and decisions concerning matters noted in the report an addition contingency sum may be required. The value to be agreed.	£337k
SCHEME 2 ADDITIONAL COSTS COMPARED WITH SCHEME 1	
Maximum contribution from central URC funds so far authorised.	£250k
Scheme 1 overspend <ul style="list-style-type: none">Suggest underwritten by central URC funding to fully fund minimum scheme costs.	£7k
Replace boiler <ul style="list-style-type: none">Required by altering platform.Funding source to be agreed.	£7k
Sub-Total	£264k
Proposed Basement Stair <ul style="list-style-type: none">Requested and funded by Carver URC.Stair could be omitted at construction stage if funding not available.	£10k
Additional Building Area <ul style="list-style-type: none">Additional area added at the request of the Windermere Centre. Could be omitted at detailed design stage if funding not available.Application could be made to funding bodies by Carver URC	£37k
Upgrade Carver URC church building heating <ul style="list-style-type: none">At the request of the Windermere Centre. Could be omitted at detailed design stage if funding not available.Application could be made to funding bodies by Carver URC	£8k
Carver URC church building Secondary Glazing <ul style="list-style-type: none">Introduced to improve thermal comfort at the request of the Windermere Centre. Could be omitted at detailed design stage if funding not available.Application could be made to funding bodies by Carver URC	£11k
Additional external works (paving etc) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Can be omitted at detailed design stage if funding not available	£7k
Total	£337k



**MISSION COUNCIL
2-4 December 2008**

G1

Education and Learning Committee

Recommendations from the review of the Windermere Centre 2008

In 2003 General Assembly instructed Mission Council to review the life and work of the Centre in 2007 and thereafter every five years. The remit of the current review was

To review and evaluate the Centre's mission, purpose, strategic thinking and work since 2003 in relation particularly to Assembly decisions

- (1) in 2003 concerning the Centre and**
- (2) in 2006, adopting the education and learning strategy**

It should then:

- (3) make any further recommendations it deems appropriate about the Management arrangements of the Centre so that it is fit for its purposes.**

The remit was to be a less major review than 2003's in that it would not question the continued existence of the Centre.

The Review Group carried out its work diligently and thoroughly, and made eight recommendations which were discussed at the Education and Learning Committee in September 2008. Of these, two need to come to Mission Council for agreement:

1. That the Centre be recognised by General Assembly as a Resource Centre for Learning for the United Reformed Church, and one of the coalition of learning providers seeking to equip the whole people of God for mission;
2. That a new Windermere Management Committee should replace both the present Windermere Advisory Group and the Windermere Local Management Committee as a sub-committee of the Education and Learning Committee.

The other recommendations made by the Review Group relate to the marketing and management of the Windermere Centre and thus fall within the remit of the Education and Learning Committee in conjunction with other relevant committees of the United Reformed Church. Consideration and implementation of those subsidiary recommendations will be greatly aided by acceptance by Mission Council of these two recommendations.

Education and Learning Committee
November 2008



MISSION COUNCIL
2-4th December 2008

H



Windrush at 60 and the United Reformed Church

On Sunday 22 June 2008, "Windrush Sunday" was celebrated across Britain, marking the 60th anniversary of the arrival of the *SS Empire Windrush* at Tilbury (Essex) with 492 passengers from the Caribbean on board. This was a defining moment (now iconic), not only in the lives of our Caribbean brothers and sisters, but also for life across the UK. Race relations which were the dilemma of British sea ports such as Cardiff, Liverpool and London suddenly concerned an entire nation.

Windrush was also a defining moment for Churches: it helped to transform the make-up of Churches in Britain. History shows that the responses of Churches were mixed. While some put Christian love into practice by providing a generous welcome, many others did not. Christian sisters and brothers, because they looked different, were turned away from our Churches. In terms of the former, there were instances of good Christian practice manifested by clergy who went against the tide to provide a warm reception for Black folks.

We recall ministers such as Revd Dr. Clifford Hill: his church at High Cross Tottenham in North London attracted large numbers of people from the Caribbean and from Africa as a warm welcome awaited people who were then made to feel included in the life of the church and find a "safer" space at High Cross. Hill's manse was known as the Jamaican Labour exchange and he advocated tirelessly on behalf of the "foreigners" in his midst. His work in that community was taken to greater inclusivity by Francis and Sandra Ackroyd. And lest we forget: we also recall the many stalwarts among this migrant group (across the historic ecclesial traditions) whom we remember for their wisdom, sacrifice, hard work and faith. Allow me to list some of these names: Harold Moody, Zoe Baugh; Beatrice Lattie; Bernice Ashton, Berris Anderson, Francis Hall, Sybil Phoenix, Wilfred Wood, Hewie Andrew, Ruby Brown, and Haynes Baptiste.

While society was generally unprepared for their arrival and often unwilling to understand or give space to their experiences, these Caribbean migrants have demonstrated the most incredible resilience in the face of initial shocks and ongoing battles.

They have made many more opportunities available for their children than they ever had, and contributed significantly to the common good of our life together as a society.

Allow to quote from a descendant of one of the Windrush generation and a member of one of our URC Churches. Doreen Phillips Clennin writes:

“On reflection I wonder what our parents had to endure for 30 days on the Windrush and similar ships, also knowing that their expectations of the UK were high. We know they expected to meet welcoming people... but the realities were very different with the hardships they endured when they arrived here.... However, because of their faith and fortitude they did not give in. Let us not forget the tremendous contribution that these voluntary migrants have made to the UK and their endurance to the end. We also remember the involuntary migrants brought to the UK and elsewhere as slaves in earlier centuries. I think we have made some progress with racial justice, debt cancellation and fair trade but we still have a very long way to go”.

To recognize the 60th anniversary of Windrush is to celebrate one part of the diverse mosaic that now exists within our churches and our society; it is to locate the story of our work for racial justice and multicultural ministry in the context of a larger story as we renew our commitment to this adventure of faith and faithfulness; it is to remember how as host churches and nation(s) we have, in pain, weakness, strength and joy worked towards embracing, as family, those who came as strangers. And at the same time, we recall in order to reaffirm our commitment to becoming a more welcoming church to all who sojourn in our midst.

So, in our remembering, I invite us to re-commit ourselves to be living signs of God's expansive and inclusive love, and to continue to learn and grow in our embracing of the diversity of human experiences, cultures and perspectives in the Church and beyond. Our wind-rush God in Christ in the power of the Spirit, is waiting expectantly to power up a transforming storm in our lives and communities. Breathe on us, O Wind-Rush Spirit of discernment – we are ready for that *conspiring* (breathing together) adventure!

Secretary - Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry
(Revd Dr. Michael N. Jagessar)



MISSION COUNCIL
2-4th December 2008

J

Rethinking the *General Assembly*

1. The purpose of the General Assembly is:
 - a. business – it is where the whole church meets in council to govern its life
 - b. celebration and fellowship – we want to tell good stories and renew our sense of vision
 - c. broad direction setting – realistically, the detail will need to be left to committees and Mission Council in future
 - d. some/all of the above – please indicate percentage of Assembly time that should be given to each

2. It would be good for Assembly to have a theme with the expectation that any major items presented for consideration will “join up” clearly with the big picture
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Yes, but with recognition that some business that doesn't ‘fit’ will still need to be taken

3. Given that Assembly will always be required to consider a few constitutional resolutions, the rest of the agenda should comprise of:
 - a. maximum 15 resolutions to set broad direction and policy
 - b. 60+ resolutions (or whatever it takes) for careful oversight of all Assembly programmes
 - c. More? Fewer?

4. Assembly should take place:
 - a. over four days (as in recent years)
 - b. over three days
 - c. over five days
 - d. Shorter? Longer?

5. There should be an inspirational, direction-setting keynote address:
 - a. by one of the newly inducted Assembly Moderators
 - b. by each of the newly inducted Assembly Moderators
 - c. by the outgoing Moderator(s) reflecting on his/their year
 - d. a + c
 - e. b + c

6. There should be reports:

6. There should be reports:
 - a. from each Assembly Committee, in written form
 - b. from each Assembly Committee, presented with time for discussion
 - c. from groups of committees (Admin, Ministries of the Church, Mission)
 - d. from each Synod, in written form
 - e. from each Synod, presented with time for discussion
 - f. from the Synod Moderators reflecting on the signs of the times and/or the state of the church, in written form
 - g. from the Synod Moderators, presented with time for discussion

7. The Children's Assembly:
 - a. should be discontinued
 - b. should be a gathering of 20 children (as in 2007)
 - c. should be a gathering of 50 children (as in 2008) (£20K)
 - d. More? Fewer?

8. The Loyal Address to the Throne:
 - a. is a sign of our Reformed identity and inheritance and therefore should be retained
 - b. should be allowed quietly to disappear as a tradition
 - c. should be dropped unless requested by Assembly in those years when there is something to say

9. The staging of Assembly:
 - a. should be professional and visually impressive, because Assembly is a shop window of the URC
 - b. should be simple and practical, because Assembly is a council of the church
 - c. Something in between
 - d. ?

10. There should be an "open forum" session to allow representatives to contribute to the setting of the agenda:
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Maybe, but only if ... (please specify)

11. There should be a "What Do You Think?" preparation event:
 - a. for FURY representatives and observers
 - b. for anyone, young or old, who wishes to be more prepared
 - c. if b, should there be one joint event or separate youth/adult events?

12. Fringe events:

- a. are great – we should have lots of them on a wide range of interests
- b. are the last straw in an exhausting agenda – we should drop them
- c. are an option for non-essential Assembly business and reporting, so that those who are interested can go and the rest don't have to
- d. any other thoughts?

URCCOMnews

Investing in our future



A professional film crew working at the 2008 Assembly: we could also broadcast edited highlights online...

Our Communications department gets constant reminders about our fast changing world and the power of news to change events. The current international economic crisis has shown us how much people's mood and actions can be affected by headlines from the other side of the world. Modern communications technology has the power to bring images and words to millions of people, in their homes, in work or on the move, at any moment of the day. The challenge for us, as a small church with finite resources, is how to invest in the newest means of communication so as to build up our sense of community and increase our effectiveness in sharing God's good news.

The Committee's vision is for all our communications to meet professional standards and to raise the public profile of the URC. We would like the church to walk tall and be noticed. We want people to talk the Church up. We aim to be honest and accurate in all our work; we want to deliver modern and exciting products and services. We want better

communications with the world and with everyone in our churches. We want people to be proud to be in the URC – to be inspired, challenged and encouraged, working in God's world.

At the 2006 General Assembly in Exeter we resolved that Communications should explore and develop the website, *Reform*, the bookshop, our publications, press office and new ways of promoting the URC. Since then, the Committee has been working at delivering on these issues one by one. We have discovered how many of

the things we want to do to make the URC a 21st century communicator require significant investment, both in technology and people. We believe our modernisation is already paying off in a growing church – the Reform story shows that.

We are establishing our identity in public life and extending Christ's kingdom in the world. We've started investing in the future – the investment is on behalf of us all. Are you keen for us to continue and willing to entrust us with the resources that make it possible?

'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?

Romans 10: 13-14

Telling our own story



Our Press Officer, Stuart Dew, has made a huge difference to the way we tell our story to the world in his first year's work.

By building sound working relationships with journalists in the national media he's established the United Reformed Church's identity in a new way. Our higher profile means people use our press releases more.

Stuart has also set up media training for staff who may get asked to speak on our behalf. There's a lot more he hopes to do in partnership with Synods, helping people in local churches to tell their good news stories where they live. He also sends a regular bulletin around the URC to those he knows have an interest in publicising our work.

Much of Stuart's work is about reputation management – guarding our good name when things go wrong. In his first year he worked on 62 such situations around the Synods. This work is low profile but very much appreciated by those he advises.

Stuart is paid to work for 3 days a week though he does more: the Committee now wants to recruit a second 3 day a week person to work with him and build on the foundations he's been laying.

Window on the world

The long-awaited new website and our dreams of a sparkling database are in the competent hands of Michael Bluett, a new staff member who is bringing our communications systems up to date. Already, our existing website works faster and looks better, as those who buy books online will know.

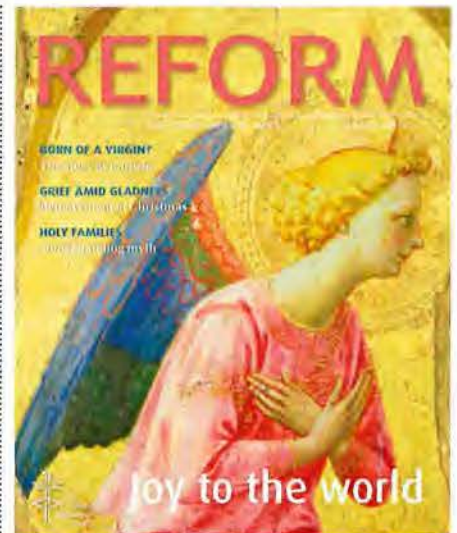
We can now analyse how many people visit our website and see what they are interested in, so we can deliver a better service. The Assembly picture book, currently on the front page, shows what is possible.

We had hoped to be further ahead with the database but we are getting there, and the 2009 Year Book will show that.



Coming soon – a new look website

Our aim is to connect it to our website, making more information available and updating easier. This will speed up internal communications. In future we'll make sure everyone who signs up is kept in the loop.



REFORM SALES UP

Sales of the new look *Reform* are up by over 6% – clear evidence that our communications investments are bearing fruit.

This summer's relaunch, when every URC member was offered a free copy, has raised the journal's profile as a great read and drawn praise from other denominations. A new printer and subscriptions system have also helped cut our overheads. Now, *Reform* boasts top rate writers, better graphics and stimulating content. News, comment, inspiration, debate – yes, *Reform* has them all. Have you ordered your copy yet?

Kay Parris and her team have done the URC proud – raising the bar and boosting our confidence. Our next target is getting copies on the shelves at WHSmiths.

BOOKING IN OR BOOKING OUT?

Selling books is not an easy task today. Plenty of religious bookshops have gone out of business, and the Committee have thought long and hard about the future of the bookshop in Church House. Closing it might free some resources for other things, but the Committee now argue for more investment instead. Here's why:

- the bookshop and website are the only outlets for URC products. Without the bookshop, some staff will still be needed to send out website sales and other central mailings;
- also, publishing our own material – the books we need as part of our

denominational identity – makes less sense without a bookshop to sell them in.

There's a strong argument for seeing if the bookshop can gain sales now we've invested in better support for it through the new website and database. The Committee sees no sense in closing the bookshop now, just as it may start to pay its way.

Our Prayer Handbook sells 10,000 copies each year: clear evidence of a healthy market.





MISSION COUNCIL
2-4th December 2008

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Group discussion on Communications issues

The aim of this discussion is to help Communications to gauge opinion regarding the range of services currently provided, so that we can assess how to move forward as effectively and imaginatively as possible, whilst retaining the support of the Church. If we are to be as professional as we can, most areas of work need investment. But investment means money, as the Treasurer's figures overleaf indicate.

Question 1. Should it be our aim to provide the best that we can, in all that we do? Should we try to match the best professional standards within the commercial world in communicating the Gospel? Or can we accept that a more basic level of service is adequate in some areas? If so, where might we make savings (Reform, Press relations, Publications, Bookshop, Web-site, Database)?

Question 2. The Treasurer's figures show that a more professional General Assembly, with staging, lighting, video projection and reliable technological back-up has added significantly to the Communications budget. We believe this is important because it is the Church that the world can see. Do you agree?

Question 3. The bookshop has been part of our remit for many years and can be seen as a shop window for the Church. Does it have a future? We require a shop if we are to continue selling books and other goods. But is it worth the investment of staff time and money?

Question 4. We need to distribute material on paper whilst moving ahead with developing electronic forms of communicating. But it is expensive. What is a reasonable length of time for us to continue to commit to both forms of communication?

Question 5. How important is internal communication (eg. Mailings to local churches, Liaison with synods, Co-ordinating the work of different Assembly committees)? And can it be improved, without us incurring further expense?

Mission Council December 2008

Wednesday afternoon Group work

Figures to support Communications presentation

1 The following figures relate to the net costs to the central URC budget of Communications & Editorial work. Particularly since 2006, these have included significant costs for the staging and technical back-up of General Assembly

2 In 2005 the total Communications & Editorial costs were around £1/4m but by 2008 were approaching £1/2m. This rate of increase is much higher than for the programmes of other committees. As a proportion of the total Programme and Admin costs in the central URC budget, the Communications & Editorial budget has risen from around 8% in 2005 to around 14% this year.

3 As an average M&M contribution, the Communications and Editorial costs are equivalent to giving of around £7pa for every URC member.

4 Currently the cost breakdown of the aspects of Communications & Editorial work featured in the Committee's Mission Council report (Paper K) is as follows.

	%
General Assembly	20
Press Office	10
Reform	19
Website	6
Bookshop	7
Other	38 (incl Graphics Office 11%; database 6%)
	<hr/> 100

John Ellis
Treasurer
November 2008



MISSION COUNCIL 2-4th December 2008



Report of Minister A Liaison Group

In previous reports relating to the issue now being addressed by the Liaison Group, in the interests of confidentiality councils of the church have not referred to those most involved by name. However, the Reverend Moira Kerr has no wish for her identity to be protected in this way - indeed she has a strong preference that her name ('the name given to her by her parents at birth and by which God welcomed her into His family of faith at baptism, a faith by which she has lived all her life and which she confirmed as a young person') be used wherever she is referred to either in discussion or in written documentation. In addition, the Liaison Group is aware that situations of abuse are often hidden through the dehumanisation of the victim and secrecy surrounding the circumstances. We have therefore used both Moira's name and that of her abuser in this report. We ask/invite Mission Council to do the same.

Background

There are three interweaving narratives which we would like to present to Mission Council as it considers a way forward. These narratives belong to Moira, to the church and to the Liaison Group. As part of our task, we have received and digested background information given to us by the URC and taken time to listen to some of the human story about Moira's experience. Our own narrative has developed over the years of our constitution. We start with Moira's story, as this is where the narratives begin, then summarise the church's involvement and responses, next describe the process in which we have been involved, and conclude with our recommendations of what should be done and why.

Moira's story

...to be tabled

The Church's story

From about June 1987 there has been a developing unresolved situation between Moira and the councils of the United Reformed Church. The illness and pain resulting from the past abuse have surfaced at times in expressions of extreme anger and frustration. There have been instances when this has happened in local church worship and District Council meetings, and personally both orally and written, to individual church members, office holders and representatives of the councils of the Church. These events have been the occasion of great pain and distress for Moira and her family have experienced but also for other people in the Church.

A Commission appointed by Mission Council in March 2002 concluded that Moira was suffering from an untreatable condition and made recommendations for closure in accordance with that judgment. They also recommended that a Review Group be established to discern what lessons could be learned for the Church out of the experience.

The Review Group was set up in March 2004. Among its terms of reference, the group was requested to take appropriate specialist medical advice. The advice received was that Moira was suffering from a treatable condition, Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Therefore the

group concluded that this new situation gave the United Reformed Church an opportunity, and placed upon it a responsibility, to work towards a healing of relationships.

The Review Group proposed a process of restitution indicated as apology, therapy, conflict mediation and financial compensation. They recognised Moira's deep sense of vocation to ministry and expressed the hope that this process might lead at some stage, to her returning to ministerial service within the United Reformed Church. They proposed that a group of five people be asked to act as the sole point of contact between Moira and the Church to negotiate the process, ensure pastoral care and keep Mission Council advised and informed. The Review Group also made a number of specific recommendations to address issues of prevention, ministerial training and pastoral care for the broad range of people affected in instances of clergy sexual misconduct and abuse.

In July 2005 General Assembly accepted the *Declaration of a Safe Church - a Charter for Action* in the response to the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland report *Time for Action*.

In January 2006 Mission Council agreed to appoint a Liaison Group of five people to relate on behalf of the Church with the Revd Moira Kerr. That group was recruited and began work in July 2006.

The January 2006 Mission Council also agreed to establish a Steering Group to encourage and oversee responses to the specific recommendations of the Review Group. That group has given oversight to consideration and response of various committees and working groups, has produced a document - *Preserving the Integrity of the Body - sexual Ethics within the United Reformed Church*. - and encouraged the United Reformed Church to put appropriate procedures in place to implement the Review Group's recommendations.

The Liaison Group's story

We have met on a number of occasions with Moira. We have experienced her anger, pain and frustration about the original abuse and her subsequent experience. She has told us that she was raped; and we have believed her. We invite the Church to believe her, too. In the nature of things, there is no way that she can prove the specifics of the abuse and nor can we. However,- physical intimacy was admitted by the supervising minister. All the research literature on the subject of sexual abuse by clergy, doctors, therapists and teachers is unequivocal that, in a situation where one party is in a position of moral or religious authority or has a mentoring role in relation to another, the normal presumptions about consent do not apply. (See, for example, the Orr Report, Section B pp8-14.) At very best, the implication of the supervising minister's admission is that there was a gross breach of trust on his part. Believing, as we do, Moira's account, we consider that she was the victim of serious sexual, emotional and spiritual abuse, the trauma of which affects her to the present day.

In addition, we have sought to establish relationship with Moira as fellow human beings. This has not been easy and, as a group set up by the URC to act on its behalf, we have, inevitably, experienced to varying degrees the mistrust which Moira feels towards the URC. We have tried to work in a climate of well-bounded listening. It has been our experience that at those points where we (or others) have been able to break through formality or impasse into more human-to-human relating, Moira has been most able to engage with us. It is when she feels powerless in the face of an impersonal system that the dynamics of the earlier trauma kick in and she is disabled by the powerful feelings which accompany them.

We have reported to MCAG that we believe that there are issues of justice towards Moira that have to be addressed by the United Reformed Church. These particularly relate to matters of an apology or expression of regret, and of compensation. Moreover, unless these matters are addressed, it is unlikely that things could proceed to a process of mediation that would re-

establish a respectful relationship between Moira and individual leaders and councils of the United Reformed Church.

MCAG has reiterated the opinion of the United Reformed Church's legal advisers and the advice of the Trustees that there should be no provision with regard either to apology/ expression of regret or to compensation in this matter because to do so would accept and admit liability. However, the Liaison Group believes that there is inconsistency here. The group is aware that other bodies, like the NHS, regularly offer an apology without liability; and the United Reformed Church's acceptance of some degree of liability is already implicit in the decision to pay for Moira's therapy costs.

Theological reflection - by Ruth Layzell

'Abuse...is a violation of covenant, the 'sacred trust' to protect vulnerability. It occurs when those in power exploit the vulnerability of those in their care in order to further their vested interest. And, whatever form it takes (emotional, physical, sexual) abuse always has spiritual consequences.

The abused person sustains a spiritual wound. The trust and hope which they had invested in the abuser turns out to be ill placed and the fragile sense of identity, which looked to the other for validation, is damaged. Their access to the creative power of life is diminished and various forms of psychological self-defence are needed in order to survive. Perhaps the deepest wounds are sustained in the messages: 'You do not matter,' 'You have no intrinsic value,' 'You are not loved.' If all abuse has spiritual consequences, is there anything particular to be said about abuse in religious contexts? I believe so. First, I want to suggest that when a person is in a place of spiritual searching, she makes the deepest parts of herself vulnerable. To be wounded in these places is a very serious matter. Further, if, as I believe, God is the giver and sustainer of life, whose nature (seen supremely in the person and life of Christ) is love, to discover abuse among those who claim to follow him threatens and distorts fundamental truth. For the messages of abuse ('you do not matter,' 'you have no intrinsic value,' 'you are not loved') run directly counter to the message of the Gospel ('you are loved so much that God has given all he has for you'). Abuse in a religious context, then, constitutes a double blow to the spirit - the first as a result of the abuse and the second in that where a person might reasonably have expected to find love and hope and life, what they experience is death-dealing and hope-destroying. It is no accident that Jesus' harshest words (Matt 23) are addressed to religious leaders. Abuse in a religious setting is such a distortion of the creative potential given to humanity by God that it can appropriately be described as evil.

We believe that Moira did sustain such wounding in the original abuse. Our plea is that church not only in the content, but also in the manner, of its response to her embody or give witness to the gospel which we would verbally proclaim.

Action points

The Liaison Group regrets that it was not permitted to facilitate the whole of the proposed process of healing for Moira and the United Reformed Church.

The group believes that:

1. notwithstanding the legal advice currently available to the Trustees and Mission Council, there are serious issues to be addressed relating to the matter of justice to Moira.
2. there is a question of the integrity of the United Reformed Church and the impact action taken here will have on other victims
3. there are lessons to be learned from the period of operation of this process.

Therefore the group invites Mission Council:

1. to authorise a process of mediated settlement in respect of an apology or statement of regret, and of financial compensation
2. to reflect on the following:

- A Mission Council resolution to establish a group to engage in a specific piece of work should always contain reference to appropriate lines of accountability and mechanisms of support for those appointed to serve.
- The Structure of the United Reformed Church describes the General Assembly as the *final authority* in the Church's life. The appointment and constitutional position of the Trustees appears to conflict with this. The fact that their terms of service make them individually and corporately responsible under law for decisions and acts of the United Reformed Church may have a limiting effect on the ability of the Church to exercise a prophetic witness, especially within the tradition of radical dissent.

Lesley Charlton - United Reformed Church minister - Kingston on Thames.

Ruth Layzell - 'Pastoral Counsellor in Independent Practice (BACP Reg Counsellor/Psychotherapist, UKCRG Reg Ind Counsellor/Psychotherapist) Director of Institute of Pastoral Counselling'

Peter Poulter - retired United Reformed Church minister

John Thorndyke - United Reformed Church Member, Exeter.

Jane Weedon - United Reformed Church minister - Welwyn Garden City

Resolution:

Mission Council;

a) authorises a process of mediated settlement with the Revd Moira Kerr in respect of an apology or statement of regret, and of financial compensation.

b) appoints a group to reflect on how to create an apology or statement of regret in the light of United Reformed Church ecclesiology, and to initiate the process of mediated settlement.

c) resolves to establish a group of people to relate to the Revd Moira Kerr on a pastoral level.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

A Briefing Paper for the Trustees meeting on 5th December 2007 prepared by The General Secretary (David Cornick)

For many years the church has been involved in dispute with a minister, minister A. The case is extremely complex.

The history of the case

1. At some stage between October 1974 and June 1975 Minister A alleges that while on placement under the supervision of Minister B she was sexually abused. In 1976 she reported this to her provincial moderator. It was admitted by Minister B that inappropriate sexual intimacy took place but he maintains that what occurred was consensual. There is therefore a dispute of fact between the parties as to what occurred between them. In view of the time that has passed since the alleged events and the lack of contemporaneous documentation it has not been possible to take the matter forward evidentially. Irrespective of this there was abuse of his position as a Mentor. Following the allegations Minister B resigned from his pastorate. No more was heard from Minister A, and Minister B was re-admitted to ministry in 1978 in a different pastorate, judged to be 'sincerely repentent'.

2. From about June 1987 there has been a developing situation of unresolved dispute between Minister A and the councils of the United Reformed Church which has been marked at times by expressions of her extreme anger and frustration involving disruption of local church worship and District Council meetings, and personal attacks, both oral and written, on many individual church members, office holders and representatives of the councils of the Church. This has been the occasion of real pain and distress – both for her and her family – and also for many other people in the Church. It began in 1987 with a dispute about housing expenses, which was eventually settled in 1996. During this period her mental health deteriorated considerably.

3. In 1994 her sister wrote to the General Secretary, informing him that Minister A's ill-health resulted from her sexual abuse in the 1970s, although there is no objective medical evidence available which supports this view. In the October, her husband informed the General Secretary that she had been raped in 1994. This and any sexual intercourse was denied by Minister B, although he admitted physical intimacy. He resigned from the ministry, and from his membership of the URC and has refused to have any contact with the church since. He is now in his 80s. In 1996 the police investigated the rape claim, but closed their enquiry. No charge was brought.

4. The next few years were marked by Minister A's increasingly abusive behaviour towards individuals in the church, pressure for the church to find her a ministerial post, and varying diagnoses by psychiatrists, which have varied from personality disorder to severe PTSD.

5. Since 2000 the church has attempted to deal with this impossible situation through a) its disciplinary process (deemed inappropriate), b) a Commission chaired by Elizabeth Lawson QC, a barrister who specialises in mental health issues, and c) a Review Group working under the leadership of the Revd Dr Lesley Orr of the Church of Scotland which sought to explore the possibilities of bringing the matter to closure so far as the councils of the church are concerned.

6. Mission Council dealt with the Review Group report in October 2005 and January 2006. In the October meeting (minute 05/78) it became clear a) that the Review Group were not of one mind, and b) that they had exceeded their remit and linked the specific case of Minister A to the more general review of sexual abuse which they had been asked to undertake. Mission Council then agreed that the specific material referring to Minister A should be removed from the report, and the report then be discussed in closed session at the January Mission Council. It also appointed a Liaison Group of "five people to act as the sole

point of contact between Minister A and the Church on specified matters (.eg. Assembly matters, synod matters, district council matters, pastoral care, requests for grants etc.).

7. The decision to appoint a Liaison Group was confirmed at the closed session of Mission Council in January 2006. Two members of Mission Council gave notice that they wished to present a resolution to the March 2006 Mission Council expressing an apology to Minister A in terms which they believed did not open the church to liability but which would be helpful in the therapeutic process that the Liaison Group would be undertaking with Minister A. The minute notes, 'It was agreed that the advice of the Legal Advisors should be obtained and submitted along with this draft resolution.'

8. Discussion about the apology ensued at the March 2006 Mission Council. Whilst Mission Council clearly wished to make an apology, it was equally clear that the Legal Advisor was less than happy. The minute notes 'After discussion the Moderator ruled that the wording of the draft should be offered to the Trustees to see if there would be financial or legal implications for them, and that the URC's insurers should be consulted.'

9. MCAG (who were at that point the Trustee Body of the Church) considered the matter at their May meeting (minute 06/21c). The General Secretary reported that after conversation with the church's insurers he had discovered that a) the church's employer's liability policy only covered Church House staff, and b) because ministers are office holders rather than employees, their legal status raises difficult questions for insurers. There is a possibility that some ministers might have been covered under local church policies. However, given these facts Ansvar had been unwilling to make any comments on the wording of an apology. He had also had a conversation with his predecessor who had no recollection of contacting the church's insurers over the Minister A case. MCAG decided that as Trustees they should investigate insurance further, seek independent legal advice on Mission Council's decision and gain a legal view of their own liability as Trustees.

10. Independent legal advice was sought from Cobbetts LLP. Their advice was clear – 'We believe that the Church's legal advisors were correct in advising strongly against making any apology.' They also confirmed that the Trustees would be personally liable in the event of any future claim of negligence should they act on Mission Council's direction and against legal advice. MCAG met in an extraordinary meeting at Assembly in July 2006 and resolved 'that it had no other option, as trustees, than to accept the legal opinion which had been given by two firms of lawyers.' (minute 06/24) Cobbetts had also, extremely reluctantly, offered the wording of an apology without liability. The Trustees agreed that this should be reported to Mission Council.

11. Mission Council met in closed session in October 2006 to consider the Trustees' response. With reluctance it accepted the Trustees' response. It also considered Cobbetts wording of an apology without liability, but felt that it would not meet the requirements of Minister A [from memory; no minute].

12. Since then the Liaison Group have been about their difficult work, and have asked that we re-visit the question of an apology without liability. In the light of this, the Legal Advisor arranged for an informal meeting with a counsel who has considerable experience in church abuse cases. He helpfully placed the issue in a wider social and political context, and for both general policy reasons and reasons relating to this specific case was emphatic that no apology or statement of regret should be given. That advice could be formalised, should the Trustees so desire. It is, however, a matter for the Trustees to consider whether they are willing to endorse the position adopted by their predecessor body, or whether they wish to seek further advice and instruction on their own behalf.

Note: The Trustees, meeting on 5th December 2007, upheld the decision of MCAG.



MISSION COUNCIL
2-4th December 2008

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**Extract from Minutes of
Mission Council Advisory Group
meeting on 24th September 2008**

- i) **Remit of Minister A Liaison Group:** The General Secretary reported that the liaison group was looking for a steer from MCAG on its future activity, and confirmation of its terms of reference. She briefly outlined the history of the case, mentioning the Lawson report (2003) which sought to draw a line under the past; the Orr report (2006) whose brief was to draw out lessons to be learnt by the Church, and whose final report had led to a review of all safeguarding practices throughout the Church. It had also resulted in appointing a liaison group to be the sole point of contact between the United Reformed Church and Minister A.

As part of the Orr report's recommendations included seeking reparation between Minister A and the Church, differing interpretations existed about the Group's precise role. At one end of the scale, the Group was set up to be a buffer between Minister A and the senior officers of the Church. At the other end the group's role was to facilitate a future acceptable relationship between Minister A and the United Reformed Church. The Group had been appointed in January 2006 for a two-year period, but, because it was unable to start its work until the autumn of 2006, had not yet reported to Mission Council.

Stephen Orchard as Assembly Moderator (2007-2008) had not wanted the Group to report to Mission Council unless there was something useful which the Council could do. Senior officers who had consulted during the past year felt that the Church was not serving Minister A's best interests by constantly discussing her case, and that further contact should be made through legal representatives. [XX] maintained that we had been part of the problem for the last ten years. [YY] expressed the view that the Lawson report had got within an inch of closure in 2003, and noted that financial compensation* had already been paid in areas which were not in dispute. It was pointed out that to argue that Mission Council had accepted the Orr report in totality was to ignore the fact there was a substantial minority report submitted by one of the group of three who produced the original (Orr) report. It was also a strange view of ecclesiology to believe that reconciliation could take place between an individual and a council of the church. If reconciliation was sought, it should begin by re-establishing connection with a local church.

The meeting struggled with the inappropriateness of bringing this matter back to Mission Council without a clear proposal, while at the same time recognising the right of the Liaison Group to report to the body which had set it up. It was suggested that the matter be reported to Trustees as the legally responsible body if any of this matter were to result in legal action.

[* Financial compensation was paid in respect of a dispute over a housing allowance]

MCAG concluded

1. that the liaison group (in view of the legal restrictions accepted by Mission Council on the advice of lawyers and the Trustees) was unable to make further substantial progress with Minister A to resolve those issues which are still in dispute, and in those areas which the Liaison Group believed from the Orr report it had authority to pursue, even though there was difference of agreement about the extent to which Mission Council accepted the report, and therefore the Group's freedom to act beyond the defined terms of reference.
2. that any further contact with Minister A which might involve General Assembly or one of its councils should be conducted through the Church's legal adviser.
3. that it should ask Mission Council to discharge the Liaison Group from its task and for them to submit a final report.
4. that the General Secretary should liaise with the liaison group, and consider what appropriate pastoral care might be offered to them.

Alternative Resolution by MCAG to that being brought by the Liaison Group in Paper L:

Resolution:

Mission Council recognises reluctantly that the process instigated in January 2006 has reached an end, and discharges the Liaison Group with thanks for the work it has done on its behalf.



MISSION COUNCIL
2-4th December 2008



QUESTIONS put to Mission Council by the Resource Sharing Task Group

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- 1) Does Mission Council believe that if agreement is reached on the funding of the so called Synod 14 and a formula agreed that provides an adequate level of funding to each synod to fulfil those core tasks that the intention of Resolution 6 to Assembly 2002, and subsequent resolutions to Synods, has been met?

- 2) If Mission Council believes that Inter-Synod resource sharing should go further than this, what benchmark does it wish the Church to reach? Options for the target might include the following, although some of these suggestions would not be attainable by 2013. If a common pool of money were created, it would need to be distributed back to Synods on an agreed basis, perhaps using a formula similar to that used for ministerial deployment.
 - (i) A common pool for all unrestricted investment income earned by Synods
 - (ii) A common pool for the proceeds of sales of church buildings
 - (iii) A common pool for the proceeds of the sales of manses
 - (iv) Some combination of (i), (ii) and (iii)
 - (v) Redistributing on a "fair" basis all the Synod financial resources, both capital and income, accumulated after a given date, eg 1972, 2002 or 2008
 - (vi) Some other formula.

- 3) Does Mission Council envisage a radical sharing in which the expenditure of one synod is subject to agreement by another?

Induction of Secretary for Education & Learning

The Reverend Fiona Thomas

Affirmations and Promises

Fiona, do you confess anew your faith in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

I do.

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?

I do.

Do you believe that Jesus Christ, who was born of Mary, lived our common life on earth, died upon the cross, and who was raised from the dead and reigns for evermore, is the gift of God's very self to the world? Do you believe that through him God's love, justice and mercy are revealed and forgiveness, reconciliation and eternal life are offered to all people? And will you faithfully proclaim this gospel?

By the grace of God this I believe and this I will proclaim.

Do you believe that the Church is the people gathered by God's love to proclaim the reconciliation of the world to God through Jesus Christ?

I do.

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Are zeal for the glory of God, love for the Lord Jesus Christ, obedience to the Holy Spirit and a desire for the salvation of the world, so far as you know your own heart, the chief motives which lead you to enter this ministry?

They are.

Do you promise to live a holy life, and to maintain the truth of the gospel, whatever trouble or persecution may arise?

Relying on the strength of Christ, I do.

Do you promise to fulfil the duties of Secretary for Education and Learning faithfully, leading and serving the United Reformed Church in fulfilment of God's mission in the world, preaching, teaching, administering the Sacraments, and exercising pastoral care and oversight?

By the grace of God, I do.

Do you promise, as a minister and as Secretary for Education and Learning in the United Reformed Church, to seek its well-being, purity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church?

By the grace of God, I do.

Will you undertake to exercise your ministry in accordance with the Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church?

I will, and all these things I profess and promise in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Promises by Mission Council

The Moderator invites all who can do so to stand, and asks the members of Mission Council, acting in the name of General Assembly, to reply to these Questions:

Members of Mission Council, do you confess again your faith in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

We do.

Acting in the name of General Assembly, do you receive Fiona as from God, a minister of Word and Sacraments of the United Reformed Church, to serve as Secretary for Education and Learning, and do you promise to pray for her, and to give her due honour, support and encouragement?

We do.

Induction Prayer

Mission Council remains standing

Let us pray ...

God of all perfect gifts, we praise you that in every age you call people to serve your holy purposes, made known in Christ. We thank you that you called your servant Fiona to serve you as a minister in your Church, in succession to the apostles and in company with all who follow Christ's way. We pray for her now as she enters upon the new sphere of ministry to which you have called her.

Renew the gift of your Holy Spirit in Fiona as, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we induct her to serve as Secretary for Education and Learning.

Gracious God, be with her as she takes up this new work, and enable her with gifts of the Holy Spirit, that the ministry and mission of your people may bear fruit.

Protect Fiona in all the pressures and possibilities of her new ministry, and grant her spiritual refreshment, time and space to grow and rejoice.

Give grace to the whole United Reformed Church that we may accept the service you offer us through Fiona. May we work together for the glory of your name.

And may the good work you have begun today be brought to completion in Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you, Creative God, and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever. **Amen.**

Declaration of Induction

Fiona, I declare you to be inducted as Secretary for Education & Learning

The Right Hand of Fellowship

..... in token of which I offer you, on behalf of Mission Council acting in the name of General Assembly, the Right Hand of Fellowship, and invite Mission Council to greet you with applause.

FT/JMM 10.11.2008