



# MISSION COUNCIL

2 - 4 October 2001

# F

## Mission Council Task Group on Personal and Conciliar Leadership and Authority – Interim Report

### Task Group Membership

Dr Graham Campling, Rev Elizabeth Caswell, Rev Fleur Houston, Rev John Humphreys (until April 2001), Rev Elizabeth Nash, Rev Rachel Poolman (convenor), Rev Peter Poulter (from September 2001) Mr John Rhys.

*Mission Council agrees to set up a task group, which will:*

- 1) *examine from the perspective of our Reformed theology and ecclesiology, and with a concern for mission, the proper relationship between personal and conciliar leadership and authority, with special reference to the work of synod moderators;*
- 2) *draw on previous URC reports, the experience of partner churches and existing ecumenical reports that relate to the subject; and*
- 3) *report to Mission Council in March 2002 the result of the examination and any proposals that come from it.*

*Mission Council asks the Mission Council Advisory Group to propose names for this task group at the March meeting. Those appointed should feel free to make earlier interim reports, and/or to seek an extension of time for the final report.*

*(Mission Council, January 2000)*

1. The Task Group first met in December 2000 and has had 4 subsequent meetings. We have made use of a wide range of ecumenical documents and become aware of the work of other URC working groups and committees that have engaged with issues contained in our brief.
2. An initial 'brainstorm' of matters we should consider threw up 36 possibilities under 6 different headings. This web of matters pertinent to our remit grows ever more complex. We would like guidance from Mission Council about what our priorities should be, and the timescale we should work to. We are at a stage where we have gathered a lot of evidence and prepared several background discussion documents. Some choices now need to be made about how our work proceeds.
3. We have isolated 3 broad areas that we think should be the focus of our work. They are: 1) the role of Synod Moderators, 2) our understanding of episkopé, and 3) the structures of the URC. In considering each of these areas we would expect to regard theological and practical matters as being of equal importance.



4. Some of the areas that need addressing concerning **Synod Moderators** are:
  - Moderators' workload
  - What authority has the Moderator ?
  - The role of the Moderators' Meeting
  - The role of Moderators with regard to the movement of ministers and their pastoral care
  
- 5 Some of the issues that need addressing concerning **episkopé** are:
  - What is our URC understanding of oversight ?
  - Is there any difference between where episkopé is exercised in theory, and where it is exercised in practice ?
  - Would a renewed URC understanding of episkopé help us in ecumenical conversations ?
  
- 6 Some of the areas that need addressing concerning the **structures of the URC** are:
  - How effectively do our Councils work and relate to each other ?
  - Do we have too many layers of church government ?
  - What is the role of meetings that are not formal councils but which are perceived as exercising power and influence (ie Mission Council, District and Synod Executives and Pastoral Committees) ?
  
- 7 Most of these areas are interrelated; some have been raised previously in the life of the URC, whilst others may be the subject of examination by other working groups. All need addressing and we offer 3 different approaches for Mission Council to consider.
  
- 8 **Plan A:** We recognise that at the heart of all these issues is the question of how we can be better equipped for mission in today's world. The Task Group were interested to hear of the example of the French Reformed Church who have marked the Millennium with a country-wide review of how the Church should be working. This approach is involving every church in discussions about mission and was initiated at a National Synod. Packs of study material have been provided for each church. The process is a lengthy one and feedback is still being processed, but it will be on the basis of that feedback that a radical review of structures will be conducted. If the URC decided to go down a similar route the Task Group would prepare a paper on areas to be covered and offer suggestions about how to embark on this consultative process.
  
- 9 **Plan B:** The current Task Group highlights issues, and offers theological and historical background material based on its work thus far. The working out of specific issues is devolved to further working groups, who will be able to focus in greater detail on particular areas and see their thinking through to very specific recommendations. (E.g. a working group on the role of meetings that are not formal councils and a working group on the role of Moderators with regard to the movement of ministers and the pastoral care of ministers.)
  
- 10 **Plan C:** The current Task Group continues in the same way of working, preparing a broad report that has substantial theological content and that makes practical recommendations. This will be a long-term task and the Task Group will need guidance from Mission Council about the sort of boundaries it should be set, with regard to time and to subject matter.

*Rachel Poolman (Task Group Convenor)*  
*September 2001*





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## ASSEMBLY MISSION COUNCIL - GRANTS AND LOANS GROUP (GLG)

### Report of Revised Policy - for October, 2001

1. **The Grants and Loans Group of the Mission Council** was brought into being in April 2000 in order to bring together the allocation of grants to churches from Central Church funds, formerly administered by AGOGAL (for developing local outreach and mission), and to allocate grants and loans from the Church Buildings Fund. It was also to be the clearing house for grant applications to the CWM Self-Support Fund.

In the light of its experience GLG is expected to stimulate reflection on the theology and practice of mission.

Arising from a large allocation of grants in 1999 and 2000 from the Church Buildings Fund for assistance in the provision of disabled facilities, and subsequent significant reduction in available funds, GLG brought to Mission Council in March 2001 a revised policy in the allocation of these funds. Mission Council asked for further work to be done and for a report back. (*para. 3*)

GLG also consulted with interested parties about the potential increased demand to meet the expenses of CRCWs and this has clarified the situation. (*para. 4*)

2. Mission Council in March 2001 asked the Grants and Loans Group to revise its policy report as outlined in its Annual Report. A working group from the GLG has consulted with RPAG (Resource Planning Advisory Group), RSTG (Resource Sharing Task Group) and CRCW (Church Related Community Worker) representatives and met for further discussion. The outcome has been reported to GLG at its September meeting and support has been given to the following proposals:

3. **Church Buildings Fund -**

It was first thought that to follow the pattern of Synod Resources Sharing in the apportionment of grants would be a fairer way of working. However, with closer scrutiny it became clear that such a method would soon become complicated and would probably be unfair to some Synods. Investment income between Synods varies from year to year with the consequence that any "sharing formula" would need to change each year. This could cause confusion and possible resentment. Some Synods might not be able to make up the difference from their funds for a reduced grant for a church, although the theory might suggest they should be able to. Synods also vary in the way they apportion funds for spending on people and/or buildings. For these reasons GLG does not propose to follow the pattern of resource sharing.

For the foreseeable future GLG anticipates that from the expected income available from the Church Buildings Fund the applications from churches for assistance can be met at a reduced level of grant.

### **PROPOSED POLICY**

1. **That for the foreseeable future only the interest of the Capital available to the Church Buildings Fund (CBF) will be used for Grants.**



**2. GLG will offer a revised maximum grant of £5,000 for Disabled Facilities and £1,000 for Feasibility Studies until new legislation comes into force in 2004.**

**3. The moratorium on Loans will be extended until a review of the financial situation takes place in 2002.**

**4. Synods will forward applications to GLG only for Churches where the financial need has been clearly identified and which cannot be met entirely from local church and Synod funds.**

**5. Applications for funds from the Church Buildings Fund will be considered at the May and December meetings in order to ensure a proper sharing of the resources available each year.**

**6. Churches should be encouraged to apply to Local Authorities and Charities for financial help with Disabled Facilities.**

**4. APPLICATIONS FOR "MISSION" PROJECTS -**

GLG had expressed concern about the potential increase in the funding of the expenses for CRCWs. RPAG were of the opinion that any applications should be met from the GLG budget. After receiving further information from the CRCW representative it emerged that the pattern of how local CRCW expenses were met varied from place to place. It was normal for the funding to come from: a) a local church b) a group of churches in an ecumenical partnership c) Synod d) a local authority e) a charity f) EEC funding, or a combination of any of the former a) to f). Where there was a shortfall, a Synod, if unable to provide additional funding, could then forward an application to GLG to make up the difference. Out of the potential thirty CRCW posts GLG may be expected to meet the expenses of about a third. This should be manageable within the present budget provision.

**PROPOSED POLICY**

**1. GLG continues to consider applications for Mission Projects where the financial need has been clearly identified and which cannot be met entirely from local funding and Synod funds.**

**2. GLG will request a report on the progress of a Mission Project twelve months after its launch so that stories of encouragement can be shared with the wider Church.**

**5. CWM SELF-SUPPORT FUND**

The three applications from URC projects to the Self-support fund received final approval in June 2001.

However the most recent information indicates that no further Self-support funds will be available for application until 2005.

Angus W. Duncan  
18th. September, 2001.





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# H

**Mission Council: 23 - 25 March 2001**

## **Theological Reflections**

### **1. The Visitor**

Having attended the last four General Assemblies, as a representative of the Roman Catholic Church, I thought I had familiarised myself with the ways of the United Reformed Church in its life at national level, and I imagined that Mission Council would hold few surprises. I was wrong.

Over the week-end there were to be many unexpected moments - for me, and perhaps, even for the seasoned Mission Council member - moments of recognition, moments of bafflement, frustrating moments and touching moments. These were moments I was privileged to live through as part of your Mission Council, in a way that is only made possible by wholehearted invitation and welcome.

Mission Council's regular practice of inviting a Theological Reflector reminded me of the wisdom of *The Rule of St Benedict*:

If a pilgrim monk come from a distant region and desire to dwell in the monastery as a guest, let him be received for as long a time as he wishes, provided that he is content with the customs of the place as they are, and does not disturb the monastery by exorbitant wants, but its simply content with what he finds. Should he reasonably, modestly and charitably censure or remark upon any defect, let the abbot consider the matter prudently, lest perchance the Lord have sent him for this very end. (Chapter 61).

So I feel emboldened to reflect on "the customs of the place as they are" and on what they reveal of the Church's life and mission, and leave them to the discretion of the URC equivalent of "abbot"!

### **2. Mission Council**

#### **• Membership**

The Moderator set the tone for the three days of prayer, work and fellowship by his opening words and deeds. In studying Acts 2:42 he caused us to focus on the "common life" of the apostolic church, and reminded us that we were all *koinonoi* - partners or sharers holding "all things in common". Being in Christ is the foundation of our *koinonia*. In this sense Mission Council itself manifested God's creative intervention, taking us from membership to fellowship / *koinonia*.

This was a moment of recognition for me: the deep-seated conviction that God will use even the impoverished, provisional and imperfect structures of the Church to be an instrument of God's mission in the world, and that our communion / *koinonia* is brought about and deepened for the sake of that mission.



- **Bonds of Belonging**

The deed which struck and impressed me was the individual, personal and warm welcome extended to the new-comers to Mission Council. New members are symbolic of the Church's growth; visitors from other Churches, of the wider Christian family with which the United Reformed Church is always extremely careful to develop and enhance its links.

That care was demonstrated by the Moderator's search for those to be welcomed, in a gesture which seemed to capture Mission Council's wish to embrace those attending for the first time. It seemed to me once again that the structures of the meeting, including the role of Moderator, were made to serve Mission Council's sense of being Church in that place, at that time. The gesture of welcome was catholic /embracing, and reflected the Church's self-understanding.

- **Collegial *episkope***

In introducing our second day the Moderator focused on *diakonia*. Mission Council can be said to carry out a *diakonia* of *episkope*, serving the Church in a way that only becomes possible when an overview is taken. Once again it is the constitution as well as the task of Mission Council that is concerned with *episkope*.

Mission Council brings together those with detailed knowledge of the Church's life at national, Synod and local levels and those charged with responsibility for monitoring and developing the Church's involvement in a wide range of issues, and partnership with a wide variety of agencies, ecclesial and otherwise. Bringing together this college of those who exercise *episkope* in a personal sense, and share their insights, enables Mission Council to exercise the ministry of *episkope* for the whole Church.

[Given the Roman Catholic view of the sacramental nature of the Church, it is perhaps not surprising that I should emphasise the significance of these ecclesial elements in the make-up of Mission Council. I am also persuaded by the United Reformed Church's emphasis on the provisionality of offices and structures, to stress their symbolic as well as functional relevance in the Church's life. It is not only that the way we are perceived by others is important for the spread of the Gospel and faith, but that our ministries and collaborative ways of working can also be signs and instruments of Christ's presence and activity in the world.]

### 3. The Task

Sunday's Eucharist was the high-point of the weekend and reminded us, through the preaching of the Moderator, that the entire work of Mission Council was set within our offering of worship to God. A constant recollection of this was provided by the moments of prayer and prayerfulness which punctuated our work. Above all on Sunday we recalled St Paul's *diakonia* of *leiturgia*, seeing Mission Council's service as itself an act of worship - a costly worship incorporating the struggle to bring vision and potential together.

One member of Mission Council, reflecting on the task, spoke of the tension between the carefully prepared and presented Reports from Groups and Committees and "all that we have heard about real life" from the local Churches. This tension was frequently illustrated as people praised the inspiring evidence of imaginative strategic planning in the Synods and wrestled with the conclusions and recommendations of the Reports, often to check or stay them.



Exhilaration and frustration seem to be intrinsic to the corporate exercise of *episkope*, as Mission Council sought to hold together different and sometimes divergent elements of its task. The deliberation and prudent researching of the Reports seemed to disappoint Mission Council for their want of inspirational tone. The exciting development of a variety of Mission initiatives in the Synods seemed to uncover concerns about the need for co-ordination and strategy.

Alongside this creative tension, the General Secretary recalled the need to maintain another significant balance in the exercise of *episkope*: while there is an **urgency** about most of the Agenda's issues, yet Mission Council could **not afford to rush** this task. Not only was this testimony to the General Secretary's measured and effective methodology: it also recalled St Paul's listing of *gubernateis* among the charisms for the building-up of the Body of Christ. It is a desirable charism for every General Secretary, if not also for every Moderator.

If Mission Council exhibited a strong sense of God's initiative throughout its work, it also showed considerable respect for the *sensus fidelium*, which it took care to discern in the heart of the debate, as the inspiring activity of God. The processes of Mission Council recognise the personal *sensus fidei* in the contributions of individuals and those whom they represent, the corporate *sensus fidelium* in all councils of the Church and Mission Council's own responsibility to move towards a *consensus fidelium*, so as to offer guidance to and through the General Assembly. This whole process must be pervaded by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

#### 4. The Issues

There was considerable overlap between the four major issues brought before Mission Council: **Mission Resources, Ministry of Evangelists, Small Churches, and Grouping of Churches**. Each issue provided focused insights for the fundamental debate about the demand to resource Mission and the resources available to meet that need. Tied up with this was the recurrent tension between the will for decisions to be taken at the most appropriate level (the call for *subsidiarity*) and the will for decisions to be held together and not taken in isolation (the need for *episkope*).

This tension was identified when looking at the basic gathering and distribution of resources in the Budget, and in considering the possibility of developing new strategies to determine where such resources might be most effectively held and how most effectively deployed. In this connection it was good to be reminded that "talking about money is also a spiritual matter: in the Gospel, giving is a liberating act of solidarity".

[Is Mission Council minded to explore ways of developing its procedures or the Church's procedures for coming to a common mind and strengthening the interdependence between the exercise of *episkope* and discernment of the *sensus fidelium*?]

- **The Strength of Small Churches**

Of all the issues, I felt the discussion of the Report on Small Churches opened up the greatest possibilities for Mission. At one important moment somebody voiced what was immediately recognised to be true: that most local Churches are small and that the Small Church is the most precious Mission resource.



This is consistent with what I know from experience of the United Reformed Church in its ecumenical engagement at local, regional and national levels: the contribution in partnership is always, and across the board, disproportionately high in quantity when seen in the context of the resources available, but also of consistently high quality.

Small Churches may more readily avoid the hubris to which their larger counterparts can be prone - the hubris of self-sufficiency and isolated independence. For a variety of good reasons Small Churches are more inclined to seek out partnerships with other Churches or organisations in the local community, and there was impressive evidence of this in the Mission Resource reports from the Synods. At times when motives may appear to be unclear, we can often see the Holy Spirit using even mixed motives to achieve God's will in our Churches.

[In this respect I believe imperfect motives should not be a source of discouragement: the less impressive our motives turn out to be, the clearer God's initiative, power and effective guiding hand may be seen.]

So Small Churches have peculiar strengths, often develop creative partnerships, and thus have the potential to make Mission-inroads where the bigger Churches cannot reach. At the same time they clearly need and seek the support of the sensitive leadership and the co-ordinated insights of the Church's Ministry of *episkope*.

## 5. Reflecting Thanks

In offering these Theological Reflections I wish also to express my thanks for all that I have received from experiencing Mission Council. To see a little more clearly into the life and mission of a partner Church is to sharpen the focus in understanding one's own Church, and in recognising its strengths and its weaknesses.

As the chiming clock at London Colney amused or interrupted us, it marked not only passing hours but the deepening of *koinonia* between us and the sense of being, as a community, the *imago dei*.

"As we progress in our life and faith, our hearts shall be enlarged and we shall run with unspeakable sweetness of love in the way of God's commandments." (*Rule of St Benedict*: Prologue).

Bernard Longley

7 April 2001





# MISSION COUNCIL

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# I

## Stipend level for 2002

### RESOLUTION

#### **Mission Council sets the basic stipend for 2002 at £17,508**

The Report on Ministerial Remuneration, which was endorsed by the 1999 General Assembly, included a recommendation that "future increases in stipend should be calculated by reference to increases in the index of National Average Earnings".

The current (2001) stipend is £16,944 and the annual increase in the NAE announced in September 2001, was 4.4%. Applying this increase to the current stipend would produce a figure of £17,688.

#### **Unreliability of the National Average Earning index**

When the Review Group, whose report formed the basis for the report to the 1999 Assembly, was carrying out its research it looked at movements in the NAE and RPI over recent years. In the five years ended June 1998 the monthly increase in NAE was, on average, about 0.9% higher than the RPI increase. However, in the following three years ending June 2001, the difference increased sharply to an average of 2.5%, with considerable volatility throughout. When the Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee considered the 2002 stipend increase, the latest published annual increase in the NAE was 2.3% higher than the RPI increase.

The Sub-Committee has concluded that, for the present, the NAE index is not a suitable index to use for the purpose of considering stipend changes.

#### **An alternative yardstick?**

The Sub-Committee has therefore had to consider what alternative yardsticks might be used.

A review of stipends in 1996 showed that, since the formation of the URC in 1972, stipends had increased on average by 1.5% per annum more than the RPI. (For most years the increases were much smaller with infrequent larger catch-up adjustments.) In the light of this review, for the following two years we increased stipends by RPI plus 1.5%.

The Sub-Committee has concluded that, in normal circumstances, RPI plus 1.5% represents a more satisfactory yardstick than the NAE.



### **Consideration of the 2002 stipend increase**

In considering the matter of what stipend increase to recommend for 2002, the Sub-Committee also had regard to the URC's current financial situation. Over the past three years, Ministry and Mission contributions have fallen short of the target set in the budgets adopted by General Assembly. The reasons for this are complex but there is evidence that members and churches are concerned at the rate of increase in expenditure and, consequently, M&M targets. As stipends are by far the largest single cost, any change in stipend has to be reflected by a very similar change in the M&M target.

One view is that we should determine stipends without regard to the current apparent inability to raise the funds to meet them, and challenge the membership to meet any shortfall. This view argues that it is not right to expect ministers to bear the brunt of the URC's financial problems.

Others, while recognising this argument, are concerned that the appeal to members for increased giving could be damaged if there is a perception that costs are not being controlled.

The Sub-Committee did not find it easy to reach a conclusion on this difficult issue. After much debate it concluded that an increase somewhat lower than RPI plus 1.5% would be right. There is no precision in its final conclusion which is to increase the stipend by 3.3% to £17,503 (which would then be rounded up to £17,508 to give a monthly payment in round pounds).

3.3% represents an increase of 1.2% more than the latest RPI increase announced in September.





# MISSION COUNCIL

*2 - 4 October 2001*

# J

## **Mission Council Advisory Group**

1. The Group has met on two occasions since the last meeting of Mission Council.
2. The names of two people to act as Mission Council tellers in the current Assembly year will be proposed at the meeting.
3. Following the agreement of the Assembly that the members of the Mission Council Advisory Group for the time being are considered to be the Charity Trustees of the United Reformed Church, the legal adviser is being asked to draw up an appropriate Deed of Indemnity.
4. The Data Protection Act becomes operative in October 2001 and it was agreed that the General Secretary should act as Data Controller for the United Reformed Church.
5. The Moderators' Meeting suggested to MCAG that it should give further thought to the idea, first mooted by Peter McIntosh, of a URC ministers' consultation. It was clear that such a meeting could be valuable in terms of encouragement and collegiality but there was serious questioning of a "ministers only" consultation. MCAG concluded that it would recommend to Mission Council that a small group be asked to look more closely into the idea and to come back with a reasoned recommendation.
6. At both meetings MCAG considered papers on an Occupational Health Service for ministers, prepared by Tony Burnham. The present thinking is outlined in Paper A.
7. Following a resolution passed by the Uniting Assembly in April 2000 regarding the Women's Union of the Congregational Union of Scotland and women's work generally, MCAG has arranged for enquiries to be made and views to be sought. Paper D is the conclusion of this work and it is recommended that this should be the response of Mission Council to the General Assembly.



**Training for Church-Related Community Workers  
in the United Reformed Church**

**1. Extract from the Manual**

" For those without professional qualifications:

" 1. A four-year full-time foundation course will be provided at Northern College, Manchester (Manchester Christian Institute). This will include an integrated programme of theological and professional studies. This will lead to a professional qualification which will be accredited by Accreditation Unit of the Greater Manchester Community Work Training Group, and will also include a theology qualification with the University of Manchester.

" 2. In some cases, it may be possible to consider part-time training with practical placement work near the student's home, and at least six weekends a year on the Partnership for Theological Education, Manchester.

" 3. For those who have already qualified as either social workers or youth workers, a one- to two year theological qualification may be provided at the Manchester Christian Institute. "

Some explanation of names:

a. Northern College is a theological college in Manchester.

b. Manchester Christian Institute was effectively absorbed by Northern College about three years ago. References to the Institute in paras 1 and 3 above should now say 'Northern College'.

c. The Partnership for Theological Education Manchester is an ecumenical consortium, to which Northern College belongs: several colleges combine to run a common teaching programme. The wording in 2 above, 'on the Partnership for Theological Education', might more simply say for our purposes 'at Northern College'.

d. The Accreditation Unit of the Greater Manchester Community Work Training Group is a separate agency, which has been licensed by the government to examine and accredit practical community work training for public JNC qualification. The URC, acting through Northern College, has used this Accreditation Unit on a contract basis. Indeed the Unit's connection with our CRCW programme long predates that programme's link to Northern College.

**2. The Recent Pattern of Training**

2.1 The pattern of training recently used has been a cross between paras 1 and 2 of the Manual. Blending the two paragraphs would give a description of what we have been doing, as follows.

2.2 " A three- or four-year foundation course is provided by Northern College, and includes an integrated programme of theological and professional studies. This will lead to a professional qualification which will be accredited by Accreditation Unit of the Greater Manchester Community Work Training Group, and also to a theology qualification with the University of Manchester. For most students training involves extensive practical placement work near the student's home, and six teaching weekends a year at Northern College, plus home study in pursuance of the issues introduced at weekends. Northern College is responsible for arranging, monitoring and supporting the placement work, and for overseeing progress n every part of the study programme. "



### **3. Review and Report**

3.1 The Training Committee, with the Church's CRCW Development Workers, has recently conducted a careful review of the training of CRCWs. This review was prompted by several factors:

- a. the prominence given in 'Growing Up' to community involvement, and the resulting wish to increase the number of serving CRCWs.
- b. a concern arising from several points, not least from the Church's CRCW Review (1998), that CRCW training should be available to candidates, wherever they happen to live.
- c. serious difficulties emerging in the Manchester Accreditation Unit, which cause us to doubt whether we can go on working through this agency.

3.2 While the review has dealt principally with training concerns, it has also touched on many issues that belong with Ministries Committee, and has made strings of recommendations to both committees. This report deals primarily with training aspects, although some issues span the boundary between the committees' remits, and discussion continues between officers of the two committees.

3.3 This report to Mission Council is chiefly for information: to let you know how we intend to tackle the immediate problems; to give you an indication of our longer-term thoughts; and to allow your comment. Some of this material may need to come to Assembly, in which case it will be cast in the form of resolutions.

### **4. Immediate concerns**

4.1 The Manchester Accreditation Unit has enabled students to accredit their practical training to JNC standards. It is not necessary for CRCWs to gain this qualification in order to be commissioned to a church post, but we have encouraged students to gain it, for two reasons: the Church should be visibly committed to professional credibility, so that practising CRCWs will be recognised as competent by colleagues in other agencies; and if a CRCW cannot at any stage continue in a church post, they can make a proper application to work professionally with another employer.

4.2 Our withdrawal from using the unit has been necessarily abrupt, and a few students are adversely affected: one 2001 leaver, one 2002 leaver, one 2003 leaver, one 2004 leaver and one 2005 leaver. We can still offer church posts to leavers who do not have the JNC qualification; they can be called, commissioned and employed, on the basis of a leaving certificate from Northern College. But it is better if they can get a public qualification too.

4.3 We have therefore asked Northern College to work immediately towards securing an accreditation path with another agency, and to report to the Training Committee on progress, not later than February 2002. Northern College is determined, and cautiously optimistic of success, but should that optimism appear unfounded before February, there are other avenues we shall need to explore. We believe that this is the best and most hopeful way to resolve our current difficulties.

### **5. Training Criteria**

5.1 We believe that the following learning criteria should precede commissioning as a CRCW:

- a. a Diploma in Theology;
- b. a Diploma in Community Work (or equivalent), with JNC validation;
- c. ability to link theological understanding to context and community, and to enable others to do the same;
- d. understanding of the ethos, structures and practices of the United Reformed Church;
- e. understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a CRCW.



5.2 A full course of training normally takes three or four years; acceptance into training depends upon some prior experience of community work.

5.3 It is Assembly policy (1994) that where a candidate has some of the required qualifications but not others, then a shortened form of training should be devised. We implement this policy at the moment, and will continue to do so.

## **6. Training Pattern and Venue**

6.1 Much of the present training pattern for a CRCW involves placement work, and this can normally be arranged - if desired - within striking distance of the student's home. Thus the training is usually full-time, but need not take the student away from home for long periods.

6.2 As well as placement, the training includes teaching weekends in Manchester. But there is no major residential component in Manchester. Northern College is now able to compress the teaching into six weekends per year, over four years. (As a comparison, none of the other English institutions where we train ministers has such a small residential component.) The College arranges placements (in consultation with appropriate officers of the Church), and monitors and supports students' work in them, but does not draw students to Manchester for long periods. I stress this point because the wording of the Manual, "four-year full-time ... at ... Manchester", now misleads. We ought to have changed it a year or two ago.

6.3 After careful consideration, we have decided not to recommend the Church to use any other training institution, but to stick to a single track. The reasons are:

- a. this is a broad track. Northern College can take students from anywhere in England and Wales, because so much of the training can be home-based.
- b. there is great value in training in a setting that is both ecumenical and Reformed; we are not big enough as a church to have a wide choice.
- c. numbers are not great. Only five students are in training at the moment.
- d. if we use several institutions for such small numbers, we may have great problems in communication, and in preventing feelings of isolation and detachment from URC structures, and we may have to put enormous effort into liaison, contact and support. At the moment that responsibility lies with Northern College.
- e. Northern College has just recruited a tutor to concentrate on Church and Community issues (Lesley Husselbee); our relationship with them deserves further trust from our side.

## **7. The Scottish Situation**

There are not at present any CRCWs serving in our Synod of Scotland. Further, the practice of community work in Scotland, and the training that leads to it, have developed in ways distinct from those in England and Wales, and so this report may not be helpful to our Scottish churches. We have begun to explore the Scottish situation and have now asked that colleagues in Scotland conduct further research on what might constitute appropriate CRCW training for Scotland. We may then need to consider whether and how our CRCWs will be able to move during their career from one nation to another.

## **8. Work that Continues**

The Training Committee continues to work at several aspects of this whole issue.



8.1 The possibility of developing models of training where the community work element of training will fuse the responsibilities of a post of service and the formative aspects of training placement.

8.2 The best ways of preparing and inducting candidates who apply for accreditation after service in other churches.

8.3 The drafting of a list of core competences, so that applicants' prior learning can be more accurately gauged in the candidacy process.

8.4 Appropriate continuing education opportunities for serving CRCWs.

John Proctor, for the Training Committee, September 2001



**Mission Council : 2-4 October 2001**  
**from the Resource Planning Advisory Group**

*[As RPAG only met on 24<sup>th</sup> September we apologise that it was not possible to circulate papers in advance or present this report in the usual format]*

*Please don't shoot the messenger.*

It gives me no pleasure that in my first report to Mission Council I bring bad news. Last week's meeting of RPAG concluded that, in common with other denominations, the financial outlook for the United Reformed Church is critical, but like the former insurance company advertisement "We do not need to make a drama out of a crisis." If we face up to the situation there is no need for drama let alone panic, but if we adopt a Micawber like position and "wait for something to turn up" then all the indications are that we should be forced to take panic measures which would do great harm to our Church.

Put simply the gap between our Church's national income and expenditure is growing at an unsustainable rate. In recent years we have been prepared to adopt deficit budgets in the expectation that the out-turn would be better than budget, but such projected deficits must themselves be kept in check. Using "broad brush" figures our best projections are that if we do not make major changes to our national income and expenditure patterns there would be a deficit of **£650,000** in 2003. That is an unsustainable figure, not least because the deficit would increase significantly every year without major changes to the budget.

While detailed budgets have not yet been prepared for 2003, the proposed stipend increase for 2002 (noted in the papers for this meeting) has enabled RPAG to take a "broad brush" view of the likely appearance of the 2003 budget showing, as I have stated, that unless we make major changes to our national income and expenditure patterns there would be a deficit of some **£650,000** in 2003, which would grow in future years.

The main reasons for this situation can be stated fairly simply:

- \* For three years up to 1999 we enjoyed a standstill in Ministry and Mission contribution targets. This was made possible by reductions in the size of the special payments to the Ministers' Pension Fund and in the size of our contribution to CWM. But in 2000 we needed to resume regular annual increases in the M&M targets to match the increasing level of expenditure. So for three years we have set targets 3% higher than the previous year. However contributions from synods have not matched this increase. In 2000 they were **£200,000** short and in the current year are running at an annual rate that will lead to a shortfall of **£300,000**.
- \* In addition we are suffering a drop in dividend and interest income of about **£100,000** p a. This is due both to lower interest and dividend rates and to the fact that funds available for investment are down.
- \* Further, the number of ministers on the payroll is currently 7 above budget - although a small number this represents some **£150,000** p a.

We must also recognise that:

- \* The clear indication is that synod M&M contributions in 2002 will not catch up with the shortfall this year *and* provide for normal increases in expenditure - hence the developing gap between income and expenditure leading RPAG to the conclusion



that at least £400,000 must be taken out of the 2003 budget (and not re-instated in later years) - this would still leave a projected deficit of £250,000 in 2003 - the most that we could responsibly allow.

- \* The second problem is more fundamental. We need to return to the position we enjoyed for many years until the late 1990s of matching increases in expenditure with increases in M&M contributions. Unless M&M contributions are increased by at least 3% every year, and such an increase sustained indefinitely, we have to make real, continuing cuts in the budget.
- \* The policies that stipendiary minister numbers should only change (in practice, decline) at half the rate of change in membership numbers and that the number of CRCWs in post should be increased (which falls outside the policy on minister numbers) must increase the overall cost of ministry per member even without any increase in stipends.

Some 80% of our expenditure is on stipends: this means that unless we project for a greater than expected decline in the number of stipendiary ministers and CRCWs or hold down stipends, all reductions have to be made from the remaining 20% of our budget. Such savings would become almost impossible to achieve as the 20% itself grew smaller as a result of the accumulating effect of previous cuts.

As all work done by the URC is worthwhile and supported by Assembly decisions it will not be easy to agree where such cuts must fall, but RPAG submit that hard decisions must be taken.

Of course an alternative to cuts in expenditure is an increase in income. Is it responsible or realistic to expect contributions to M&M to be raised substantially? On a positive note an application through the Ecumenical Committee for a further grant from CWM to finance some work currently funded through our URC national budget might be successful: if so this would release some funds to sustain other work. While such a possibility should be pursued it would be irresponsible to assume success or that in itself it would solve the problem.

RPAG hopes that members and churches will be able to respond to the challenge of meeting increasing M&M targets: all know that this will call for major effort. We know that there is disquiet about the allocation of M&M targets to synods, and we are working on this - but no synod has approached us to suggest that it should meet a larger share of the national budget. At this stage it is essential that we all do our best to maintain and increase contributions.

RPAG therefore advises Mission Council that in the light of this serious situation all Assembly Committees and staff be asked to consider where major savings can be made and that RPAG should present to March 2002 Mission Council detailed proposals to save at least £400,000 from the 2003 Budget. It is recognised that it may be impossible to achieve all the savings in the first year (2003) but it might be appropriate to accept a larger projected deficit in 2003 if it could be seen that full savings would be made thereafter.

The further, longer term, issue of stimulating M&M contribution increases should be tackled through a concerted effort in advocacy. This should include steps to establish confidence in the allocation of M&M targets to synods.

Julian Macro

#### *Resolution*

RPAG invites Mission Council to instruct it to make specific recommendations to Mission Council in March 2002 for reductions in expenditure of the order of £400,000 in the 2003 Budget, such recommendations to be in the light of consultations with Assembly Committees



## **Responding to the Current International Situation**

### **1 Introduction**

A large part of the September Ecumenical Committee meeting was given over to reflecting on our international involvement and our response to international situations. This was prompted by two papers:

- Emerging Patterns in International Relations, and
- The Middle East (responding to the report of the CTBI<sup>1</sup> delegation).

All this happened before the horrendous events in the USA on the 11<sup>th</sup> September, which we received news of just after the meeting closed.

The first part of this paper reports on the actions the Ecumenical Committee is proposing in these two areas, which in the light of events seem more significant than we realised at the time. The second part speaks particularly to the events on the 11<sup>th</sup> September and their aftermath.

Mission Council is asked to:

- Adopt the statement to the church leaders in Jerusalem
- Note the points which will provide the framework for further responses from the United Reformed Church to the current international situation as it continues to unfold
- Communicate this framework and the suggested practical actions in a letter to local congregations

### **2 Ecumenical Committee actions and proposals**

In reviewing our international relationships, the committee recognised that with two Urdu-speaking congregations now we needed to follow-up contacts made with us by the Church of Pakistan and the Presbyterian Church of Pakistan (both WARC<sup>2</sup> member churches) and explore the possibility of developing partnerships with these two churches.

**Responding to the CTBI report on the ecumenical visit to the Middle East in March the committee undertook**

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<sup>1</sup> CTBI – Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

<sup>2</sup> WARC – World Alliance of Reformed Churches



- to explore the possibility of a partnership with the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (a WARC member church);
- to convene a meeting of the Committee for Inter-Faith Relations Jewish and Muslim advisers, the Secretaries for Church & Society, International Relations and Racial Justice, our representative on the CTBI Middle East Forum and John Waller to consider in more depth the issues and connections raised in the Middle East report and how the URC might respond to them;
- to maintain better contact with the Middle East Council of Churches; and
- to invite Mission Council to make the following statement on the present situation in Israel/Palestine –

Last year a hundred pilgrims from the United Reformed Church (representing every synod of the church and including the Moderator of the General Assembly) were profoundly affected as they shared in the hopes and fears of Christians, Jews and Muslims in Israel/Palestine. They came home to tell the story conveying to many more people the experience they had gained. In the light of this and watching with increasing horror at the deteriorating situation today we wish to state to the Church leaders in Jerusalem<sup>3</sup>

- our continuing solidarity with you and your people in these troubled times, assuring you of our prayers and concern
- our commitment to work with partner churches in the UK to press our government for an effective internationally supported solution to the present crisis based on the Mitchell Report
- our endorsement of your call for the Israeli government to negotiate steps which will 'End the Occupation' in the interests of security for Israel, peace for the Palestinians, and the transformation of relationships in the region.

Whilst most of the above is for information, Mission Council is requested to act on this point and adopt this statement, with the perhaps the following minor amendment:

In the last line of the preamble, to replace 'deteriorating situation today' with 'way in which the situation has deteriorated over recent months'.

This would be to avoid any confusion with the global situation today.

### 3 11<sup>th</sup> September and its aftermath

The events of the 11<sup>th</sup> September were utterly shocking and we responded to them very quickly as follows:

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<sup>3</sup> This is a commonly used term to cover all the church communities in Israel/Palestine (and beyond) most of whose leaders are based in and around Jerusalem.



- messages of support were emailed to our three partner churches in the USA on the 11<sup>th</sup> September
- on the following day a pastoral letter was sent to all known ministers from the USA serving with the URC
- on the same day a letter was also sent to Tony Blair urging 'very careful reflection on the responses which are rightly called for, but which need to be measured and just, in order to ensure that more suffering is not inflicted on the innocent.'
- this and other material was placed on the URC website
- as events continued to unfold a pastoral letter was sent to our Urdu-speaking congregations
- participating in a meeting of Reformed Church leaders in Hungary we contributed to a statement from that meeting
- the Committee for Inter-Faith Relations has issued a statement *The shared grief of Christians and Muslims.*

#### 4 Continuing to respond

Events continue to unfold making it very difficult (at least as this is prepared) to suggest any meaningful statement which Mission Council might make at this time. However, Mission Council might like to note the following points as the basis for informing our position and responses over the coming weeks and months. It might also be felt appropriate that they form the basis for a pastoral letter to URC congregations to assist them as they also respond to events.

1. Our condemnation of terrorism.
2. Our belief in the equal value of human life and our concern and support for all people who become innocent victims through bereavement, becoming refugees, being denied emergency relief aid, etc.
3. Our belief that there is no peace without justice.
4. That there is no inherent enmity between people of different faith and that as Christians we are called to love our neighbour regardless of faith, creed, race, nationality and so on.
5. We are committed to resisting racism and xenophobia and more positively to building harmonious community relations.
6. That fundamentalism is found in all faith communities and as such represents a broader challenge to us as a faith community ourselves.
7. That the issues are complex and interrelated and that we cannot only address the issues on the surface (acts of terrorism) without also considering the injustices which have created the conditions which have nurtured such enmity and hatred.



8. A new paradigm in global conflict requires a new paradigm for the response. How we have settled conflicts or gone to war in recent times will not help us respond to this situation.

## 5 Practical actions

In addition there are the following practical actions which we can all be involved in:

- Learn about the situation and listen to the stories coming from all sides and then pray for the people involved
  - that they may find healing from their pain and suffering
  - that they may be inspired by a vision broad enough to contain the rich differences of all God's people
  - that they may find ways and the energy to work for peace with justice in their situation
- Support Christian Aid's programmes of emergency relief and reconstruction
- Encourage the government and world leaders to address the causes of injustice as well as the consequences
- Get to know our neighbours from other faith communities, especially Muslims at this time, and work with them to build supportive and harmonious community relations.

## 6 And finally

Additionally, as circumstances allow, the Ecumenical Committee will work at building partnerships with churches in Syria, Lebanon and Pakistan as originally proposed, but additionally now as an act of solidarity with them and to further our understanding of these regions.

Philip Woods  
2001-10-01



# The United Reformed Church

## Mission Council's Resource Planning Advisory Group

### A challenge for 2002

#### Ministry & Mission contributions - £18,750,000 required for 2002

The draft budget for 2002 which will be presented to General Assembly in July 2001 is set out on the back of this sheet. It shows a target for Ministry and Mission contributions for 2002 of £18,750,000. **This is 4½% higher than the total contributions promised for 2001.** What is all that money spent on and why is it increasing by so much?

#### Where does all the money go?

Circulated with this paper is a "Commentary on the 2002 budget" which explains how the main figures are built up or the reasons for changes from the 2001 budget. This commentary is aimed at helping more people to understand the URC's budget. But this is still quite complicated.

For those who want a simpler picture the detail can be compressed into a very few figures.

The average number of **stipendiary ministers serving in local pastorates or special category ministries**, is estimated at

662

The **basic cost per minister** comprises:

Stipend (provisionally assumed at 4% up on 2001)  
Pension & National Insurance  
Total per minister

17,600  
3,600  
£21,200

This produces a total cost of

**£14,030,000**

The cost of **synod moderators, CRCWs, children's allowances and resettlement and retirement removal grants** for all ministers comes to

1,190,000

Which makes a total of

15,220,000

**Training costs** (excluding YCWTs and administration) are

1,530,000

This makes a **total for ministry and training** of

**£16,750,000**

**All other costs, less income from investments, grants and legacies, are budgeted to amount to**

£2,250,000

**So total budgeted expenditure, less income from sources other than M&M contributions, comes to**

£19,000,000

The **target for Ministry & Mission contributions** is slightly below budgeted expenditure, to allow for unanticipated income such as legacies and possible budget savings. **It amounts to**

£18,750,000

continued on back page



## DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2002

	Actual 1999 £'000	Actual 2000 £'000	Budget 2000 £'000	Budget 2001 £'000	Budget 2002 £'000
<b>INCOME</b>					
<b>MINISTRY AND MISSION FUND CONTRIBUTIONS</b>	16,629	17,363	17,201	18,207	18,750
<b>INVESTMENT INCOME</b>					
Dividends	204	241	459	269	280
Interest	286	225	350	306	260
	490	466	809	575	540
<b>GRANTS RECEIVED</b>					
Memorial Hall Trust	420	350	0	320	350
New College London Trust	262	262	266	273	280
URC Insurance Company Limited	33	48	78	50	0
	715	660	344	643	630
<b>LEGACIES</b>	118	308	0	0	0
<b>OTHER INCOME</b>					
CWM Mission Support programme	71	117	0	126	0
Other donations	0	51	50	50	50
Other	182	11	4	4	8
	253	179	54	180	58
<b>PROFIT ON SALE OF PROPERTIES</b>	193	177			
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<u>18,398</u>	<u>19,153</u>	<u>18,408</u>	<u>19,605</u>	<u>19,978</u>
<b>NET INCOMING/(OUTGOING) RESOURCE</b>	<u>202</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>(660)</u>	<u>97</u>	<u>(237)</u>



October 2001

Authority working party.

Recommendations

5.1.

5.1. Groups.

look again at

- a) legal independence of training institutions.
- b) the relationship between decisions about 'suitability for ministry' and the colleges right to refuse candidates on educational grounds
- c) re-draft of para 3.1.2.

5.7.1. Groups.

a) How can we live with difference?

~~to what ways might of a theology of unity~~

b) What shape might a theology of unity have which embraces radical diversity?

5.4. Groups.

Please continue to sharpen up your thoughts.



① Legal independence of training institutions:

Either Institutions are independent, and free to reject a student  
 Recognise position of Westminster is different  
 GA must say: "we will <sup>exercise</sup> ~~exercise~~ our authority over Westminster  
 (in the interests of transparency)

Or Common sense manages well now, + allows flexibility  
 So any special reference to Westminster (in 3.1.3) should be omitted

② Yesterday unhappy about divide between 5.1 (i) + (ii), so

5.1 Decisions about candidate's suitability for ministry should remain with the councils of the church, whilst decisions on matters of an educational nature should continue to fall within the remit of colleges + courses.

③ 3.1.2 (i) A college or approved course ~~may~~ <sup>may</sup> consider that a candidate's beliefs or conduct might cause serious disruption to the life of the learning community  
 (ii) In such circumstances, decisions on matters of an educational nature (which are broader than solely academic suitability) rightly fall within the remit of colleges and courses. It is important that colleges + courses maintain a close liaison with the Training and Ministries Committees and synods at all stages of training.



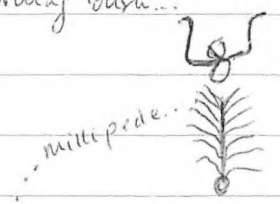
Minister Conference

- Bill Mahood (convener)
- Graham King
- Peter Poulton Elizabeth Caswell
- ~~Richard Fairman~~ / Kristina O'Shea?
- Peter Marc.



leader and  
Fashioner of change.

Burning Bush...



Elizabeth Caswell noted, has anyone thought about David Butler for Treasurer?