



## MISSION COUNCIL

21st JANUARY 1995

# MINUTES

Minutes of the Mission Council, held at Yardley Hastings URC Youth Resource Centre. which was constituted by the Moderator, the Revd Dr Jack McKelvey, who presided. Worship was led by the Chaplain, the Revd Stephen Brown and the Revd Martin Nicholls, Chaplain of Yardley Hastings. Members met in groups for discussion of various items on the Agenda.

### 95/1 WELCOME

The Moderator welcomed members to the meeting, in particular those attending for the first time, including Mr John Dryburgh, FURY Chair and the National Aids Adviser, the Revd Justine Wyatt. He also welcomed as visitors the Revd Michael Szpak of the United Church of Canada, Mr George Coetzee, Youth Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa, and the Revd Dale Rominger (alternate for the Revd David Jenkins).

### 95/2 ATTENDANCE

There were 64 members present, with 15 staff members in attendance, the Revd Stephen Brown, Chaplain, and Mrs Sheila Tull, Minute Secretary.

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Jennifer Shaffery, Mrs Angela Hughes and the Revd David Jenkins.

### 95/3 AGENDA AND TIMETABLE

The General Secretary outlined the Agenda and presented the proposed timetable, which were approved.

### 95/4 GREETINGS FROM THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

Mr George Coetzee, Youth Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa, brought greetings and expressed his thanks for the welcome he had been given by the URC.

### 95/5 MINUTES OF THE MISSION COUNCIL OCTOBER 1994

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Mission Council held on 30 September - 2 October 1994 which had been circulated were, with the following corrections, approved and signed:-

94/45(d) Changes to Committee Structure: The Clerk pointed out that the General Secretary's remarks did not invalidate meetings of the new committees which took place before the beginning of 1995.

94/72 - Information Technology Task Group - should read:

"The following names were put forward and were accepted by the Council: The Revd David Lawrence, the Revd Graham Spicer, the Revd Lloydlangston. It was left to the staff of Church House to appoint a representative to the Group.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

led on a paper (F) entitled "Functions of the  
oly" which was available at the meeting and  
ich required the interpretation of clauses in  
o the functions of the Synod and the General

to comment on this paper (F). He judged  
of the District Council was 2(3)(i) rather  
hat in 2(4)(viii) and 2(5)(xviii) the phrase  
ion" could properly be read as meaning  
e on the Roll of Ministers, i.e. referring  
nuance, resignation and deletion.

the General Assembly confirmed the  
the General Secretary, of the functions of  
nd the General Assembly which requires that  
the roll of ministers be decided by the  
ore further requires Synods to make a  
n case to the General Assembly.

ng rise to paper F the Synod Clerk had  
etary stating that the Synod Committee,  
ince, had concluded that it did not accept  
out before it by the Cambridge District  
interpreted this letter as the relevant  
al Assembly under Synod Function 2(4)(viii).  
is interpretation.

tee was to meet on January 26, 1995, and was  
ure it would follow in considering the  
rder to advise the General Assembly.

with 2 abstentions.

a paper (G) which was available at the  
to initiate a process by which the matter of  
scussed at the 1995 General Assembly and in  
ken by the Assembly at a later date.

by the Mission Council.

ned the reasons which had led to the

g Committee, the Revd John Sutcliffe, said  
t make responsible decisions on a number of  
r likely to come to it, without the outcome  
l the Committee therefore proposed to the  
uld be given the task of conducting the  
be given additional resources for the  
l that it bring resolutions to the January  
t Council.

rrrespondence from Mrs J.F.M.  
ed the background to the  
procedure for the resolution  
n 5). Mrs Maylor had been  
n Council could deal  
ch had engaged in the  
quested the Council's view  
r he had not drawn her  
ict Council. In his view  
l to the relevant District  
the Mission Council.  
Legal Adviser, it was  
Clerk should be followed.  
am should be regarded as

MISSION FROM THE  
SAMOA (CCCAS)

met on 13 October 1994, the  
il a request from the  
Samoa (CCCAS) for admission  
n.

onded, that the URC give  
WM membership, and the

AND

Ecumenical Committee,  
resent this matter. A  
l further material was  
d that Churches Together in  
instrument at every level.  
h belonged to the member

lo by discussion and decision  
the Revd David Helyar,

e to the 1994 Review of  
of the United Reformed

nsion and resignation from  
t to, the United Reformed  
had been circulated and the  
per. The Revd Keith  
e, explained the process by  
ts had been received from  
recast asked for comments

The Revd Martin Cressey, speaking on behalf of the Board of Studies of Westminster College, said that the Board would be unhappy if decisions on Westminster College were deferred for a further year and would wish to present its views to the Mission Council in March 1995.

The General Secretary noted that, in agreeing with the proposal of the Training Committee, it should be clearly understood that there would be no alteration to any process Mission Council had already decided in relation to Westminster College.

With this proviso the proposal of the Training Committee was carried.

95/17 STAFFING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Revd Angus Duncan reported that the National Youth Secretary appointment fitted the criteria of the Staffing Advisory Committee.

Mission Council agreed that the post of National Youth Secretary be continued.

In view of other staff changes and reviews under consideration, the Staffing Advisory Committee proposed that the appointment of Paul Franklin as National Youth Secretary be extended to 31 December 1996.

The proposal was lost.

Mr David Butler proposed, and it was seconded, that Paul Franklin be re-appointed as Youth Secretary from 1st December 1995 at least until 31 December 1997.

This was agreed.

It was noted that this resolution did not preclude a re-appointment and that a policy for lay appointments should be formulated by the appropriate committee.

It was also noted that the appointment of Mrs Eileen Sanderson, National Youth and Children Training Officer, was due for review in 1995.

95/18 MISSION COUNCIL ADVISORY GROUP

The General Secretary reported that:

(a) The Moderator of General Assembly 1995-96 had appointed the Revd Elizabeth Welch as his Chaplain and the Bible Studies at the Assembly would be led by the Revd Roberta Rominger;

(b) the Revd Terry Oakley had been called to an appointment as Development Officer of the Northern Province from 1st December 1995 and that the Advisory Group had in hand the question of appointing a Deputy General Secretary from that date.

95/19 NOMINATIONS

(a) The General Secretary asked that the Mission Council should act for the Assembly in the following matter and this was agreed.



Moderator of Wessex Province

The Revd Jessie Clare, Convener, reported that the Nominating Group for the Wessex Province had nominated the Revd Derek Wales as Moderator from 1 September 1995.

The Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, resolved to appoint the Revd Derek M. Wales, MA, BD, as Moderator of the Wessex Province synod from 1 September 1995 for seven years or to the normal age of retirement whichever is the sooner.

The good wishes of the Mission Council were expressed by the Moderator to Mr Wales as he prepared for this appointment.

(b) Children's Advocate

It was hoped that the new Children's Advocate would be appointed as soon as possible after the March 1995 meeting of the Mission Council.

(c) Editor of REFORM

It was important that the new Editor of REFORM when appointed should be able to start work alongside the present Editor in time for the General Assembly in July and therefore the Mission Council should act for the General Assembly in appointing the new Editor at the March meeting.

(d) Provincial Moderator Appointments

It was proposed by the Mission Council Advisory Group that the General Assembly be asked to delegate these appointments to the Mission Council on the ground that a July Assembly made it impractical to leave such appointments to the Assembly itself.

After discussion, it was agreed, in view of other suggestions for dealing with this difficulty, that the question be not put.

95/21 PROVINCIAL MODERATORS' REVIEW AND NOMINATING GROUPS

Reports were received from each discussion group. The views of the groups were noted and it was agreed that written notes should be sent to the General Secretary.

95/22 FUTURE MEETINGS

1995 17-19 March at St. Joseph's, Upholland  
29 September - 1 October at Damascus House  
1996 20 January to be arranged, possibly at Derby Central, Rugby,  
Walsall or Wolverhampton  
15-17 March at St. Joseph's, Upholland  
1-3 October at High Leigh

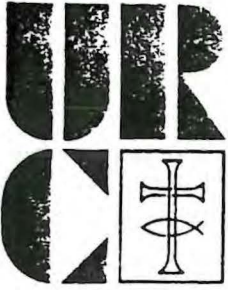
95/23 THANKS

The Moderator expressed the thanks of the Mission Council to the staff of Yardley Hastings for their work during the day and wished them every blessing on the ministry here for the Church.

95/24 CLOSING WORSHIP

Worship was conducted by the Chaplain with the assistance of members of staff of Yardley Hastings.





# The United Reformed Church

86 Tavistock Place London WC1H 9RT

Telephone 071-916 2020

Fax number 071-916 2021

General Secretary The Revd Anthony G Burnham BA

---

To all members of Mission Council

10 January 1995

Dear Colleague,

Mission Council - 21st January 1995

I enclose the second mailing for our meeting. Please note the following:

1. If you have any special dietary requirements, please phone Sheila Andrews not later than 16th January.
2. Enclosed is a revision of Paper A labelled A1. Please destroy Paper A.
3. Groups The first name on the list is the leader of the group and the second is the reporter. If this presents difficulties for anyone, please phone ASAP.
4. Yardley Hastings Fax The correct number is 01604 696030.

I look forward to seeing you at 9.30am for a 10.00am start.

Yours sincerely,

*Tony*

p.p. Anthony G Burnham

Encl. Groups (on the reverse of this letter)  
Agenda  
Papers A1, B, C, D, E

## GROUPS

The first name is the leader, the second is the reporter.

A

Cook  
Rees  
Butler  
Caswell  
Forecast  
Franklin  
Head  
Jenkins  
McVey  
Oakley  
Wright (Bill)  
Wyatt

B

Garrow  
Bending  
Coetzee  
Gordon  
Hilton  
Macro  
Nimmo  
Oldham  
Poulter  
Sowerbutts  
Sutcliffe  
Tull

C

Lloydlangston  
Brain  
Black  
Crack  
Earp  
Fairbairn  
Frank  
Hanson  
Hine  
McKelvey  
Thompson  
Written

D

Waller  
Turner  
Burnham  
Brown  
Dryburgh  
Evans  
Goodier  
Hart  
Hunter  
Mahood  
McKay  
Prentice

E

Wilson  
Gathercole  
Adams  
Clare  
Cressey  
Curry  
Gunn  
Hughes  
Johnson  
Maxey  
O'Neill

F

Wright (Chris)  
Humphries  
Buxton  
Coates  
Duncan  
Frew  
Helyar  
Meekison  
McIntosh  
Reardon  
Trippier

G

Andrews  
Hardwick  
Bainbridge  
Diffey  
Hilton  
Rand  
Rogers  
Shaffery  
Singh  
Thornton  
Woodside

H

Forecast  
Webb  
Black  
Collins  
Forster  
Healey  
Husselbee  
Mackenzie  
Sanderson  
Taylor  
Thomas



MISSION COUNCIL

21st JANUARY 1995

A

To Team Members  
(In-house)

23 December 1994

Here is the first mailing.

Procedure for final mailing

1. Please inform me by 10am Wednesday 4 January of the subject matter for our agenda. I have had notice so far from:

Tony	Re Cong. Christian Church of American Samoa
Clem	Procedure for setting stipend level
Clem	Finance Committee - remit (Or is this for March?)
Michael	Numbers of Ministers
Paul	Guest: George Coetzee
Peter	Guest: Justine Wyatt
Hilary	Nat. Youth Secretary - re-appointment

2. Note the format i.e. heading top left, space top right for reference letter and colour of paper. That's the easy bit. More difficult is the need not to waste paper - therefore it would help to see a sample so that a decision could be taken to put different items from different sources on the same sheet. Sheila Andrews will co-ordinate all that and issue letters and colours.
3. 100 copies to be produced by the end of the day on Friday 6 January. Book your space on the photocopier now!

**Thank you for your help - Merry Christmas!**

**Tony**



## URC MISSION COUNCIL - 1995

Chair:	The Moderator (Revd Dr Jack McKelvey)
General Secretary:	Revd Tony Burnham
Clerk:	Revd Martin Cressey
Moderator Elect:	Revd John Reardon
Past Moderator:	Revd Donald Hilton
Treasurer:	Mr Alistair Black
Deputy Gen Sec:	Revd Terry Oakley
Legal Adviser:	Mr Hartley Oldham

### Assembly Standing Committees

Doctrine, Prayer & Worship	Dr. David Thompson
Discipleship & Witness	Revd. Elizabeth Caswell
Church & Society	Professor Malcolm Johnson
	Mr Aubrey Curry (alternate)
Youth & Children's Work	Revd. Stephen Thornton
Ecumenical	Revd. Murdoch Mackenzie
Ministries	Revd. Keith Forecast
Training	Revd. John Sutcliffe
Finance	Mr Alistair Black
Communications and Editorial	Mr Chris Wright
Nominations	Revd. Jessie Clare
Assembly Arrangements	Mrs Wilma Frew
Equal Opportunities	Mrs Susan Rand
Fury Council	Mr John Dryburgh
	Mr Michael Healey

### Task Groups

Advocacy & Stewardship	- Revd. Julian Macro
Mission & Other Faiths	- Revd. Bill Mahood
Health & Healing	- Rev. Robin Hine

### 12 Provincial Moderators, plus 3 representatives from each Province:

1	Revd David Jenkins	Revd Peter Poulter, Miss Janet Turner, Miss Sheila Fairbairn
2	Revd Keith Forecast	Mrs Delyth Rees, Mr Andrew Goodier, Revd Brian O'Neill
3	Revd Graham Cook	Revd Angus Duncan, Revd Jean Forster, Mr Wesley Woodside
4	Revd Donald Hilton	Mr Brian Evans, Revd Duncan Wilson, Mrs Angela Hughes
5	Revd Malcolm Hanson	Mr Geoff Prentice, Mrs Maureen Buxton, Revd Margaret Taylor
6	Revd John Waller	Mr Ron Webb, Mrs Jennifer Shaffery, Revd Patricia Nimmo
7	Revd Bill Gathercole	Mr William McVey, Mrs Elizabeth Whitten, Revd Margaret McKay
8	Revd Ray Adams	Revd Sandra Lloydlangston, Mrs Joan Trippier, Mr Ivan Andrews
9	Revd Nelson Bainbridge	Revd Bernie Collins, Mr David Butler, Mrs Christine Hardwick
10	Revd Janet Sowerbutts	Revd Geoffrey Bending, Miss Marian Crack, Mrs Marlene Hunter
11	Revd David Helyar	Mrs Christine Meekison, Revd Raymond Singh, Revd Simon Thomas
12	Revd John Humphreys	Revd Henry Gordon, Revd Nanette Head, Mr Denis Earp

### In attendance:-

Minute Secretary	Mrs Sheila Tull
Moderator's Chaplain	Revd Stephen Brown
Church & Society	Revd Peter Brain
International Church Relations	Revd Tony Coates
Ministries	Revd Michael Diffey
Chief Accountant	Mr Clem Frank
Youth Work	Mr Paul Franklin
Discipleship & Witness	Mrs Muriel Garrow
Office & Personnel Manager	Mr Hilary Gunn
Editor, Reform	Mr Norman Hart
Training	Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee
Ecumenical Relations	Revd. Sheila Maxey
Director, Windermere Centre	Revd Peter McIntosh
Communications	Mrs Carol Rogers
NYCTO	Mrs Eileen Sanderson
Advocacy	Revd. Bill Wright





MISSION COUNCIL

21st JANUARY 1995

A1

Draft 10

**GUIDELINES CONCERNING SUSPENSION AND RESIGNATION FROM  
MINISTRY, AND DELETION FROM, AND REINSTATEMENT TO, THE UNITED  
REFORMED CHURCH ROLL OF MINISTERS**  
(Pastoral Measure)

(Being a full revision of the Pastoral Measure received as guidelines by the General Assembly 1988 with one amendment accidentally not printed in the Manual 1991, pp 153-5; the first two paragraphs under the heading 'Resignation' p 154 were amended by the Assembly to read: 'If any thought of resignation from a pastorate arises, without a prior call to another pastorate having been received, ministers are well advised to consult with the Provincial Moderator prior to taking any formal action. Thereafter they inform the Church Secretary and the Secretary of the District Council in writing. Should there be difficulty about a minister's further welfare, the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee may be consulted and will then exercise discretion about how the church should care for the minister during a break in service').

**INTRODUCTION**

1. United Reformed Church experience since 1972 has shown the need, alongside voluntary resignation by a minister, for (a) suspension, ie. a temporary bar on ministerial service in a time of pastoral crisis for the minister or pastorate, for (b) some arrangement whereby those not in ministerial service may remain under the oversight of a District Council, and for (c) deletion from the Roll of Ministers not only as an administrative consequence of voluntary resignation from the ministerial service of the United Reformed Church but also as a disciplinary action where the minister is unwilling to resign. From 1983 the General Assembly has been assisted in these cases by the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee (from January '95 known as Assembly Pastoral Committee).
2. The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that, when emergencies or serious lapses occur, or when a minister resigns from pastoral charge, the responsible bodies have guidance on how to act, and the minister has the proper opportunity to state his or her position and case. Guidelines on any matter of procedure in the United Reformed Church are to be clearly distinguished from the rules set out in the Basis of Union and Structure; a council can set aside such guidelines for good reason, though on any appeal the fact that the guidelines had not been followed would certainly be noted. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Guidelines must be consistent with the United Reformed Church Basis of Union and Structure which is binding. The District Council has the function 2.3.viii, 'to consider resignations of ministers and, in consultation with the Moderator of Synod, to decide upon appropriate action (see para 2.4.viii and 2.5.xviii)'. This refers both to resignation from a particular pastoral charge (or part of it) and to resignation from the ministerial service of the United Reformed Church; a District Council (though not a local church) can decline to accept a resignation, just as it can decline concurrence in a call from a church. The paragraphs mentioned under District Council take the matter first to Synod; 2.4.viii gives the Synod the function 'to consider questions regarding inclusion on the Roll



### DEFINITIONS

3. The Roll of Ministers comprises:

- (i) ministers in pastoral charge;
- (ii) church-related community workers;
- (iii) retired ministers;
- (iv) ministers out of pastoral charge who have been appointed by Synod to membership of a District Council;
- (v) those designated Ministers Without Charge (see paras 20-23).

Ministers are added to the Roll on ordination within the United Reformed Church or by transfer from other churches through the Accreditation Sub-Committee of the Ministries Committee. Church Related Community Workers are added to the Roll on being commissioned to an approved URC post.

A Pastoral Charge means a church or a group of churches entrusted to the pastoral care of a minister or ministers, full or part-time; or a sphere of service approved by the District Council and/or to which a minister has been appointed by a District Council, Provincial Synod or the General Assembly.

Suspension is a temporary bar on ministerial service. A minister under suspension, whether in pastoral charge or not, shall not present him/herself as a minister and, therefore, shall not preside at communion. The minister shall refrain from all activity which might lead others to believe he/she was acting as a minister of religion. Suspension also means that the minister may not exercise the ministerial rights of membership of any council of the church save those accorded by the process determining the disciplinary matter which has led to the suspension. Suspension carries no implication for future ministry nor for any subsequent discussion of conduct. Suspension may end with a return to ministerial service or with voluntary resignation or with deletion from the Roll.

#### Resignation

Resignation means:-

- (i) Resignation from pastoral charge upon retirement;
- (ii) Resignation from one pastoral charge ( or part of it ) on accepting a call to another pastoral charge in the United Reformed Church;
- (iii) Resignation from pastoral charge with no call to another pastoral charge having been received.

---

of Ministers of the United Reformed Church and make recommendation thereon to the General Assembly'; 2.5.xviii gives to the General Assembly the function ' to decide upon questions regarding inclusion on the Roll of Ministers of the United Reformed Church which have been previously considered and transmitted with recommendations by Provincial Synods'. From these functions it is clear that no resignation can take effect without the involvement of the District Council. A resignation from the ministerial service of the United Reformed Church, as distinct from resignation from a particular pastoral charge, requires also the involvement of Synod and General Assembly. The Synod stands in the midst of the process; it may, therefore, initiate an enquiry to a District Council on such a matter as well as passing on a recommendation to the General Assembly.



Deletion from the Roll of Ministers means action by the General Assembly on the initiative of a District Council, supported by the relevant Synod. On deletion the individual concerned becomes no longer available for a call to pastoral charge in the United Reformed Church, is not considered to be a United Reformed Church minister, and needs to re-apply if seeking later to serve as a United Reformed Church minister.

#### A GENERAL NOTE ABOUT PROCEDURES

4. The District Council is the primary place of reference in all matters affecting ministerial discipline since it is the body which exercises oversight of the ministry. A District Council must take action when it is aware of anything concerning a minister under its oversight that might require disciplinary action. Anything in character, conduct or belief that appears to be either incompatible with continued exercise of pastoral responsibility, or injurious to the unity, peace and mission of the United Reformed Church, or any such thing being seriously alleged against a minister, must be investigated by the District Council in consultation with the Provincial Moderator. The minister concerned must be given the opportunity to be heard. There may then be a suspension. This may be followed by a satisfactory healing of relationships or voluntary resignation. It should be noted that a District Council which accepts a voluntary resignation could be asked by the relevant Synod to reconsider such an acceptance, if the Synod judged that a disciplinary deletion was necessary in the interest of fairness to other parties and the good name of the Church.
5. A minister who moves to reside in the area of a District Council should normally inform the district secretary and seek to be added to the membership. If this has not happened and a disciplinary matter arises or a minister wishes to resign, the District Council in whose area the minister resides must be informed of the problems or request, but may resolve simply to pass the matter to the Synod for consideration; the Synod in such a case may in turn resolve simply to pass the matter to the Accreditation Sub-Committee so that the Ministries Committee may bring a resolution to the General Assembly. This process of reference is not a satisfactory one for disciplinary matters and this fact underlines the importance for ministers of seeking membership of the District Council in whose area they reside even when they are designated as a Minister Without Charge.
6. A council may delegate its own function to a committee, but it would have to do so by council resolution, defining either generally or in particular what emergency powers have been given to whom. The delegation of functions of councils to these committees, except in terms of emergency powers, is not a step to be taken lightly in matters which affect the standing of members and ministers.
7. In cases of suspension, because there is often a need for swift action, District Councils are advised to pass a resolution mandating a specific group to act on their behalf. Such a group might comprise the officers of the District Council such as president, secretary, convener of pastoral committee, with alternative suggestions in case one of those officers is involved. (A model resolution is appended at the end of these guidelines.)
8. The same group could also be authorised to prepare any disciplinary action considered appropriate but this action would require confirmation by the District Council.



9. In ecumenical situations, committees/groups will need, for United Reformed Church disciplinary purposes, to consist of members of the United Reformed Church. Even when doing ecumenical work United Reformed Church ministers are answerable in discipline to the District Council where each is a member.

#### SUSPENSION

10. Suspension is appropriate to situations of emergency when, in exceptional circumstances, the ability to minister effectively is seriously impaired (see para 4) and action needs to be taken when the full procedures for resignation or deletion from the Roll of Ministers either cannot or should not yet be used. The circumstances making this necessary will be determined by what is in the best interests of the Church and what best provides appropriate pastoral care for the minister concerned.
11. For suspension the District Council has to act. If it has appointed, by resolution, a group to act on its behalf in these matters (see paras 7-8), then this group, after full consultation with the Provincial Moderator and opportunity given for the hearing of representations from the minister and the Local Church(es), may suspend the minister from pastoral charge. It should inform the relevant Synod committee and the Assembly Pastoral Committee. The Accreditation Committee is not involved because suspension is essentially a pastoral 'holding operation'. Any emergency action taken by a committee/group requires confirmation by the District Council. The District Council is entitled to ask for any information which is relevant to its decision, though it may, in matters of delicacy or confidentiality and with the consent of the minister concerned, agree to accept the recommendation of the designated committee/group on trust.
12. No suspension may continue on the authority of the District Council alone for a period of more than three months. Any continuation of suspension beyond that period must be considered by the Assembly Pastoral Committee who, in consultation with the Provincial Moderator, will recommend appropriate action to the District Council.
13. In the case of stipendiary ministers, the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee officers will accept the decision of the District Council regarding payment of stipend for a maximum of three months. Any further payment of stipend beyond that period will require the authorisation of the Assembly Pastoral Committee.

#### RESIGNATION FROM PASTORAL CHARGE

14. In the majority of cases resignation from a particular pastoral charge occurs either on retirement or on the occasion of a call to another pastoral charge. The District Council considers the resignation in the process of concurrence (note that the District Council of the pastoral charge being left must concur as well as the District Council of any pastoral charge to which a move is being contemplated).
15. If a resignation occurs with no call to another pastoral charge in the United Reformed Church having been received, the following action is necessary:-
- (a) The District Council may make recommendation to the Synod for the minister to be appointed to serve on the District Council in accordance with paragraph 2(3)(xix) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church;
- or



- (b) The minister may request the District Council to recognise him/her as a Minister Without Charge;  
or, if neither of the above apply
- (c) The minister shall resign from the United Reformed Church and/or the District Council shall take steps for his/her name to be deleted from the Roll of Ministers.
16. Ministers considering resigning without a call to another pastoral charge having been received will do well to consult the Provincial Moderator before taking any formal action, since there are implications of resignation that may need further reflection (eg. stipend, pension, housing, etc).
17. When, after appropriate consultation and reflection, a minister has reached a decision, the church secretary/ies and the secretary of the District Council shall be informed in writing. The District Council, with advice from its appropriate committee and in consultation with the Provincial Moderator, will decide whether to accept the resignation.
18. The tendering of a resignation from part of a pastoral charge requires careful consideration by the District Council; it might, for instance, decide that resignation from part of a pastoral charge was unacceptable as creating an unviable financial situation for all concerned.
19. In the case of a voluntary resignation accepted by the District Council, the District Council could be asked to reconsider such an acceptance if the Synod judges that a disciplinary deletion was necessary in the interests of fairness to other parties and the good name of the Church.

#### RESIGNATION FROM THE ROLL OF MINISTERS

20. Ministers who wish to resign from the Roll of Ministers will place their intention before the District Council. As with resignation from a particular pastoral charge, the District Council, with advice from its appropriate committee and in consultation with the Provincial Moderator, will decide upon appropriate action, ie. to decline to accept the resignation and/or to initiate further consultation or to transmit the resignation to Synod with an expression of approval. In the event of expression of approval, it will then inform the clerk of Synod in order that a decision may be taken by the Synod regarding a recommendation to the General Assembly through the Accreditation Subcommittee.

#### MINISTERS WITHOUT CHARGE

21. Ministers who resign from ministerial service and are not appointed by Synod to membership of the District Council (see The Structure of the United Reformed Church 2 (3) (xix)) may apply to the District Council of the area in which they reside to be recognised as a Minister Without Charge.



22. Those so designated shall:-
- (a) be members of a Local Church;
  - (b) remain on the Roll of Ministers;
  - (c) be under the care of the District Council;
  - (e) be eligible for a call providing they have the approval of the District Council responsible for their oversight;
  - (f) receive District Council papers;
  - (g) inform the secretary of the District Council of any changes in their occupation, address or other relevant circumstances.
23. Ministers Without Charge are, with the approval of the District Council under whose care they are, eligible to be introduced to a pastorate. The District Council, in consultation with Synod, shall assess any need for re-training and consult with Ministries about any implications in returning to the pay roll.
24. The Ministries Committee, through its Accreditation Sub-Committee, shall be responsible for reviewing annually the lists of Ministers Without Charge and advising District Councils on appropriate action.

#### DELETION FROM THE ROLL OF MINISTERS

25. If the District Council decides that a disciplinary deletion of the minister from the Roll of Ministers is the right action to be taken, it will send such a recommendation to the clerk of the Synod, who will place the matter before the appropriate committee of the Synod. The District Council will also inform the Assembly Pastoral Committee. Opportunity will be given to the minister to speak in person to the Synod committee, accompanied by a friend if the minister so wishes. If the Synod committee reaches a clear conclusion, it will bring to the Synod a resolution either rejecting the District Council's recommendation or sustaining it and recommending to the General Assembly that the deletion take place.
26. A District Council or a Synod or their committees may seek advice from the Assembly Pastoral Committee, but the matter must return to the relevant councils for decision.
27. When a Synod reaches a decision to recommend deletion, it will inform the minister and the Accreditation Sub-Committee of the Synod's recommendation. The Accreditation Sub-Committee will ensure that the correct procedures have been followed and advise the General Assembly by means of a resolution either supporting or rejecting the Synod's recommendation.<sup>2</sup> If the General Assembly decides against deletion it may nevertheless dissolve the pastoral relationship between the minister and his/her present pastoral charge and refer the case to Assembly Pastoral Committee.

#### RE-INSTATEMENT

28. Ministers who have resigned from the Roll who wish their names to be re-instated shall be required, as with other candidates for the ministry, to go through the normal assessment procedures (i.e. Local Church, District Council, National Assessment and Synod).

---

<sup>2</sup> Note Rules of Procedure for access to Assembly by named parties (Rules of Procedure for the Conduct of the United Reformed Church)

29. Ministers who have resigned or whose names have been deleted from the Roll for disciplinary reasons, who wish their names to be re-instated may apply to the Accreditation Sub-Committee but normally only after a period of five years has elapsed from the date of the resignation or deletion. The minister may re-apply only if the Accreditation Sub-Committee is satisfied that it is appropriate and then through the normal procedures.

**MINISTERS APPOINTED BY ASSEMBLY**

30. United Reformed Church ministers who are in appointments made by the General Assembly are none the less under the oversight of the District Council of which they are members; these guidelines apply also to them with the addition that it is appropriate to consult the General Secretary as well as the relevant Provincial Moderator and the Mission Council Advisory Group as an additional advisory committee. In the case of a Provincial Moderator, who is ex-officio a member of several District Councils and chairs the Synod, the Mission Council will take the place of District Council and Synod.

December '94

**MODEL RESOLUTION** (to be added)





MISSION COUNCIL

21st JANUARY 1995

B

**From the Missionary & Ecumenical Work Abroad Committee Meeting on 13 October 1994**

**Request for Membership of Council for World Mission from  
The Congregational Christian Church of American Samoa (CCCAS)**

The CCCAS has applied to CWM for admission to membership, and the URC, with all other existing CWM member churches, is asked to give its consent.

After the division of the Samoan Church in 1983 the Congregational Christian Church of Western Samoa (CCCWS) remained a member of CWM, but the CCCAS did not seek membership. The CCCAS is now seeking membership. Their application has received the support of the Pacific Region of CWM, including the CCCWS. This is not an application from a church totally outside the LMS/CWM tradition but rather a request for the resumption of membership, which has been allowed to lapse.

The General Secretary was in American Samoa in September 1994 for the meeting of the CWM Pacific Region and can supply further information.

As part of the process of entry into CWM membership, a delegation of three from CCCAS visited the UK in October and was the guest of the URC for three days. They visited 86, Tavistock Place, the Church of Christ the Cornerstone, Milton Keynes and Bromley-by-Bow, among other places. Much warmth was experienced on both sides.

The MEW Abroad Committee (Minute A94/31b) recommends to Mission Council that the URC give approval to the admission of the CCCAS into CWM membership





MISSION COUNCIL

21st JANUARY 1995

C

## THE 1994 REVIEW OF CHURCHES TOGETHER IN ENGLAND

When, in 1990, the national ecumenical instruments (CTE, ACTS and CYTUN) were set up in addition to the Council of Churches in Britain and Ireland (CCBI) it was on the understanding that, being a new development, they would be reviewed earlier than the five yearly review of CCBI. In the event many feel it to have been a bad decision to separate the reviews in that way.

There were seven in the CTE Review Group: a Methodist chairman, an Anglican Review Officer, and members from the New Testament of God, the Congregational Federation, the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of England and one ecumenically appointed Ecumenical Officer.

The Enabling Group of CTE (on which our General Secretary sits) studied the recommendations and made careful (and sometimes critical) comments.

The following proposed URC response has been prepared by a small group set up by the Missionary and Ecumenical Work at Home Committee. It consisted of the Revd Christine Craven, general secretary of the Birmingham Council of Christian Churches, the Revd Richard Mortimer, URC ecumenical officer for Suffolk, Dr Mary Ede, formerly one of the two URC representatives on the Church Representatives Meeting of CCBI and the Revd Sheila Maxey, secretary for URC ecumenical relations.

### The Response of the United Reformed Church to the 1994 Review of CTE

Note: the following response is not a comprehensive critique but aims only to comment on some issues of the Report and its recommendations. The Enabling Group's own comments have also been considered. Numbers in brackets refer to paragraphs in the Report and numbers preceded by 'Rec' refer to the Report's recommendations.

Some issues that may need to be addressed within the URC itself are noted separately at the end.

#### General Comments

The URC is grateful for the careful work of the Review Group and endorse their view that we are on the right ecumenical track, even if we have not advanced as far along it as some would have wished. It is now clear that national bodies have proved appropriate instruments. In particular we would underline the need for member churches "to acknowledge and make more widely known" what the new ecumenical framework is [10].

**CTE is described as an instrument of the ecumenical process but firmly within the hands of all the member churches and even if this process of working together is a slow one, it is still the right way and we endorse our commitment to it.**

Since CTE comprises the churches' interaction at every level - local, intermediate and national - the Review Group's analysis of the appropriate objects, aims and functions of CTE at each level is a useful one.



### **Local Ecumenical Projects**

The URC is heavily involved in LEPs but will also confirm the Group's finding that many "local congregations are happy enough for a local Churches Together body to exist as long as it doesn't upset the normal flow of separate congregational lives" [20].

Clarification of names used to describe ecumenical ventures is not just tidying up: Local Ecumenical Partnership is now to be preferred to Local Ecumenical Project and **we support the Enabling Group's proposal** (coming originally from the 1994 Swanick consultation on LEPs) **that there be four categories of LEP** ie Church Partnership, Covenant Partnership, Community Partnership and Chaplaincy Partnership [22].

### **Intermediate Level**

At all levels, member churches need to understand each other's process of decision making and we agree that ecumenically appointed and funded Ecumenical Officers at intermediate level can help in this [Rec 7a].

The URC hopes that a better understanding of the concept of conciliar authority held by some of the member churches will result in the acceptance of shared as well as individual leadership when church leaders meet together.

We support the Enabling Group's opinion that because some church leaders have much larger areas than others and carry correspondingly heavier burdens in meeting ecumenical demands "delegation with clear lines of authority and accountability needs to be agreed within each denomination and understood between church leaders across denominations" [Rec8].

Since overlapping boundaries are part of the problem, **the URC will consider looking again at its boundaries.**

Though the funding of intermediate bodies was not part of the review Group's brief there is reference to resources [41] and we note here that the URC is presently considering a discussion paper on how best they might be supported and funded.

### **National Level : The Enabling Group**

At national level we do not agree with the radical proposal for a new Member Churches Gathering of about 60 persons and a much smaller Administrative Body of 19 in place of the Enabling Group [Rec 15]. **It is too soon in the life of the new instruments for major restructuring and it is better at this stage to look at where the working of the existing structure can be improved.** We agree largely with the Enabling Group's own comments here: that too sharp a separation between administrative and reflective roles could lead to an over-powerful Administrative Body with the Gathering becoming little more than a 'talking shop'; that matters of policy should be dealt with by a body widely representative of member churches; that its present Agenda Group can deal with detailed practical matters.

We endorse especially the Enabling Group's support for a fuller representation of member churches on the Enabling Group [72a]. We do not make any special pleading for increasing the URC (and Baptist) representation but believe that if the Enabling Group is not to become too large and some adjustments are necessary, it is better to reduce representation from the Intermediate Bodies and the Forum. Reporting back by the former is difficult, and, in the case of the Forum, impossible, and increases the danger of the Enabling Group developing an independent life of its own. The importance of communication at all levels cannot be underestimated.



### **The Forum**

We endorse the need for careful selection and briefing by all the member churches of those who will represent them on the Forum [57]. This of course applies equally to representatives on the Enabling Group. The Review describes the purpose of the Forum as: "To share its reflections on the current activities and future programmes of the member churches, and to recommend which matters should be jointly addressed through the Churches' Coordinating Groups and Agencies". This suggested rephrasing of the functions of the Forum is helpful in clarifying that the Forum is not a policy maker in any institutional way

### **Social Responsibility**

We recognise that social responsibility issues need to be appropriately handled at different levels and also need to be addressed ecumenically. **We do not believe that CTE should establish a Coordinating Group for Social Responsibility but that the existing CCB Social Responsibility Consultation should have better communication links with and through CTE [87].**

### **CCBI and CTE**

**We fully endorse the Report's conclusion that the inter-relation of CTE and CCBI is a crucial issue and must be resolved [47], and that the coming Review of CCBI should give full attention to the following matters identified in Rec 1b.**

- i. frequency of meetings for those belonging to councils of both CTE and CCBI;
- ii relative functions of the two sets of Presidents;
- iii whether CCBI's function is to give the lead in certain areas or simply to 'co-ordinate' the work initiated by member churches through the national instruments.

Because of the crucial question of the proper relationship between CCBI and CTE, much in this Review and in our response to it must remain somewhat provisional until the review of CCBI.

#### **Note: Issues for the URC to consider within its own life:**

1. How has participation in the ecumenical pilgrimage in the last few years changed the URC?
2. The Review identifies "a real danger that those who serve in LEPs will, when they move on, seek to move to another LEP so that a cadre of professional LEP ministers is built up, whose vision is non-denominational, rather than inter-denominational" [25]. Is this happening with URC ministers and do we share the concern?
3. The Review identifies a need for a general strengthening of links between the Intermediate Bodies and the 'intermediate level' structures of individual member churches [36]. How is communication and consultation on current activities, concerns and plans between Provinces and Districts and the appropriate Intermediate Bodies being effected?
4. "Since overlapping boundaries are part of the problem, the URC will consider looking again at its boundaries." How does and how might the URC tackle this problem?

Dr Mary Ede  
Revd Christine Craven  
Revd Richard Mortimer  
Revd Sheila Maxey

January 1995

*The highlighted passages are intended to make it easier for Mission Council to see the main points. They will not be highlighted in the final version.*





MISSION COUNCIL

21st JANUARY 1995

D

### Training Review

#### Mission Council Decisions

October 1993 93/85 After a long discussion the following proposals were agreed:

- A. An interim group, of which the members should have been present at Mission Council discussion, should be set up to establish clear Terms of Reference for a Reviewing Group and a timetable for its work, in the light of Mission Council's discussion of this paper. These Terms of Reference and timetable to be agreed at Mission Council in March 1994.
- B. A provisional timetable should be agreed for the Reviewing Group's work, and there should also be agreement as to the body/bodies to which the Reviewing Group should report. If the Reviewing Group is set up following Mission Council in March 1994 it should aim for an interim report by the time of Mission Council in March 1995 and, subject to the reception given to such an interim report, should submit to Mission Council in January 1996 a report for presentation to General Assembly in 1996.

It was decided not to proceed with the following suggestion.

- C. "We suggest that the Reviewing Group should consist of five people nominated by the Nominations Committee and including at least one person with experience of training other than in a URC setting. This definitive Reviewing Group should be asked to make specific proposals for action".

The General Secretary then proposed that a group of three people be set up. It was later agreed that these should be Ruth Clarke, Julian Macro and Philip Morgan.

March 1994 94/29 The group presented a discussion document (re-produced on pages 2-4). "Mission Council accepted this timetable for the Review Group's work and the membership of the Group as set out in item 3 of the report.

General Secretary's Comments When you look at item 3, it can be seen as a description of the appointment of the group to produce this paper. Mission Council therefore needs to consider the way forward. However it should be noted that in the interval, work has proceeded on: the Westminster College Review; Patterns of Ministry; the setting up of a new Training Committee to deal with ordained and lay training, (this has not yet met); a consultation in September '94 with provinces on the YLTO/YCWT programme; some provinces have continued to increase their own provisions for training during this period.

Review of the National Youth Secretary and the coming review of the National Youth and Children's Work Training Officer point to the urgency for some decisions in this area.

**In the light of the above, would members please read sections 4, 5 and 6 on the following pages. Is Mission Council ready to proceed on such a broad and all-inclusive front?**





# MISSION COUNCIL

18-20 MARCH 1994

## UNITED REFORMED CHURCH - REVIEW OF TRAINING TERMS OF REFERENCE [DISCUSSION DOCUMENT FOR MISSION COUNCIL - MARCH 1994]

- 1 MISSION COUNCIL in January 1993 decided that 'a review of the URC's policy, staffing and funding in the field of training be undertaken; that this review, taking account of Synod and District as well as Assembly provision, should take place during the next 18 months'

Mission Council in October 1993 further decided:

'A. An interim group, of which the members should have been present at the Mission Council discussion, should be set up to establish clear Terms of Reference for a Reviewing Group and a timetable for its work, in the light of the Mission Council's discussion of this paper. These Terms of Reference and timetable to be agreed at Mission Council in March 1994.

B. A provisional timetable should be agreed for the Reviewing Group's work, and there should also be agreement as to the body/bodies to which the Reviewing Group should report. If the Reviewing Group is set up following Mission Council in March 1994 it should aim for an interim report by the time of Mission Council in 1995 and, subject to the reception given to such an interim report, should submit to Mission Council in January 1996 a report for presentation to General Assembly in 1996.'

## 2 DEFINITIONS

- By 'training is meant: acquiring knowledge, developing skills and forming attitudes in preparation for a particular task or role, or in continuing such a task or role.
- By 'within the URC' is meant: within any part of the URC, in particular at denominational, provincial, district and congregational levels.
- By 'resources for training' is meant: all resources of personnel, finance, buildings, administrative structures and training materials.

## 3 MEMBERSHIP OF THE REVIEW GROUP

In October 1993 a suggestion was made to Mission Council 'that the Reviewing Group should consist of five people nominated by the Nominations Committee and including at least one person with experience of training other than in a URC setting. This 'definitive' Reviewing Group should be asked to make specific proposals for action.'

>>>



Mission Council 'decided not to proceed with this suggestion' but set up a group of three people, elected by the Mission Council, to draw up terms of reference. Mission Council in March 1994 will have to decide on the composition of the Reviewing Group and how it should be elected/appointed.

#### 4 AREAS OF CONCERN

- 4.1 What training is currently undertaken within the URC?  
What resources are used to this end?  
What does it cost the URC at national, provincial and local levels?

[This is a deliberately inclusive enquiry, involving resources available

- at national level, e.g. Windermere and Yardley Hastings centres, the theological colleges, use of diocesan training courses, YLTO/YCWT team etc.;
- at provincial and district levels, e.g. training officers, courses for ministers, elders, leaders etc
- at local and congregational levels, e.g. elders', members' training etc.]

- 4.2 How is this training monitored and assessed?  
If it is monitored and assessed, what standards are used?  
How does it measure up to these standards?

- 4.3 Are the methods of training appropriate to the tasks?  
Is it desirable to have a variety of training programmes for the same task, or should a single programme be used for that task?

- 4.4 To what extent are ecumenical and secular resources available to the URC, how far are they considered before new training material is prepared, and to what extent are they used? What does the URC contribute to help other churches in provision of training?

- 4.5 How effective is this training in preparing the members of the URC and its corporate manifestations to be the people of God as defined in para 11 of the Basis of Union?

- 4.6 Are there a) areas of neglect  
b) areas of overlap and duplication  
c) an imbalance in the provisions of resources, including making any unrequired provision?

#### 5 METHODS CHOSEN FOR THE REVIEW

Employ whatever methods are consistent with the proposed time-scale (see 7)

Use work already done e.g. by:

- Julian Macro, Peter Poulter and Eric McDonald in their report to Mission Council on how a review of training, staffing and finance might be undertaken.
- Integrated Training Working Party
- Committees concerned with training
- YLTO/YCWT Team
- Provincial In-service Trainers' Consultation
- Training Network
- Fellowship of United Reformed Youth
- Patterns of Ministry
- College visitation reports



Recognise decisions made by General Assembly re Committee Structure and the implementation of them during the time of the Review Group's work.

Recognise that a review of the use of Westminster College in relation to other colleges will be taking place during the time of the review Group's work.

Recognise other planning for change during this period of the Review Group's work eg Patterns of Ministry Working Party and the development of provincial plans eg a Development Team in the Northern Province and other provincial restructuring.

Gather information (by visiting, sampling, questionnaires etc) from:

Provinces

Windermere

Yardley Hastings

FURY

YLTO/YCWT Team

Districts re local church training

Finance, national and provincial.

Individuals responsible for and engaged in training in the URC and elsewhere

Groups and individuals who want to submit information (by open request e.g. in Reform)

Compare, as far as possible, these results with those of a comparable body, e.g. The Methodist Church?

Possibly make limited use of independent consultant/s, reader/s from outside the group e.g. from another church or independent agency.

## 6 RECOMMENDATIONS

What recommendations would the Review Group make to improve the quality and consistency of training provided by the URC at all levels and for all tasks, in the provision and use of personnel, in money made available, in the methods used, in the materials provided etc.?

## 7 TIME SCALE OF REVIEW

Because of all the uncertainty and the difficulties this causes for existing staff, it is desirable that the Review be completed within as short a time as possible. To that end it is suggested that an interim report be brought to Mission Council in March 1995 for the Council to decide whether it should be brought to General Assembly 1995.

RUTH CLARKE  
JULIAN MACRO  
PHILIP MORGAN





MISSION COUNCIL

21st JANUARY 1995

E

### **Provincial Moderators' Review and Nominating Groups**

MC Advisory Group had been asked by Mission Council (94/6) to examine the 1986 "Guidance for Provincial Moderator Review Groups". A number of submissions had been received and a summary of them had been proposed by the General Secretary. However before the group were ready to bring specific proposals Mission Council is asked to consider and answer the following questions.

1. Ought the Moderator to be called by the Synod with the General Assembly giving concurrence or, as at present, ought to call to come from the General Assembly on the advice of a joint Synod-Assembly commission?
2. Is the practice of having a different group of Assembly representatives for each review the appropriate way or would a standing committee of the Assembly with the sole task of dealing with all Moderators' appointments be better?
3. Is the review of a serving Moderator so different from the search and nomination of a new Moderator that they merit different styles of groups with different approaches?
4. Should a nominating group be limited to meeting one person at a time?
5. Should a nominating group seek names by advertising the search on the vacancy list (which only goes to ministers) and also in REFORM?
6. Ought there to be a maximum period of service of two terms (presently seven years plus five)?





Re: Functions of the Synod and the General Assembly

1. A matter has arisen which requires the interpretation of two clauses in the Basis of Union related to the functions of the Synod and the General Assembly.
2. The Basis of Union - functions of the District Council
  - 2 (3) (viii) to consider resignations of ministers and, in consultation with the Moderator of Synod, to decide upon appropriate action (see also paragraphs 2.4.viii and 2.5.xviii).

- functions of the Provincial Synod
  - 2 (4) (viii) to consider questions regarding inclusion on the Roll of Ministers of the United Reformed Church and make recommendations thereon to the General Assembly.

- functions of the General Assembly
  - 2 (5) (xviii) to decide upon questions regarding inclusion on the Roll of Ministers of the United Reformed Church which have been previously considered and transmitted with recommendations by Provincial Synods.
3. A Case has arisen in which a district council, acting under its functions of exercising oversight of the ministry and the above clause 2 (3) (viii), resolved to recommend to the synod that the name of a minister be removed from the Roll. The synod appointed a committee to act on its behalf. This committee did not accept the resolution of the district council.
4. The Question raised by the above clauses is, does the matter end there, with the decision of synod being the final word? Or is this, in effect, a recommendation to the General Assembly? The Assembly would receive advice from the Ministries' Accreditation Sub-Committee.



5. One interpretation is that the district council, having started on such a serious matter expects the final decision to be taken by the General Assembly. The clause governing the district's function points to the Assembly as well as to the synod. The synod under its clause is obliged to make a recommendation to the Assembly. The function of both district council and synod is to **consider** such matters. The General Assembly's function is to **decide**. The General Assembly also has a general function:

2 (5) (ii) to make decisions on reports and recommendations from its own departments and committees, issue such directions and take such actions as it deems conducive to the propagation of the Gospel, the welfare of the United Reformed Church, the interests of the Church of Christ as a whole and the well-being of the community in which the Church is placed.

6. The matter is further complicated by the existing Pastoral Measure which does not specify a procedure if the synod committee fails to recommend deletion from the Roll. (See Manual p. 154-5.)
7. Mission Council The above interpretation is the General Secretary's. In discussing it with the Clerk to the Assembly, we agree that there is some ambiguity in the clauses in that i) they do not specifically deal with deletion from the Roll and ii) it is not clear whether a synod decision not to accept a recommendation to delete from a district council constitutes a final decision or is a recommendation to the Assembly. We ask the Mission Council to act on behalf of the General Assembly and interpret these clauses.



MISSION COUNCIL

21st JANUARY 1995

G

Mission Council Task Group on Human Sexuality

Report to Mission Council, 21 January 1995

1 The Task Group has held two meetings, and has considered various items of correspondence and other material placed before it. The Group noted that its terms of reference as set out by Mission Council were "to work out a process whereby the URC can be enabled to hold an informed debate on the matter of human sexuality and come to a decision on the implications for ministry within the Church". The Group has spent some time trying to decide how the time needed for an informed debate on the matter of human sexuality can be reconciled with the felt need for a relatively speedy decision on the specific question of admitting homosexuals as candidates for training with a view to ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. Guidance was sought from the Mission Council Advisory Group in this regard and MCAG advised that "while the issues ought to be thoroughly aired at the 1995 Assembly, it was more important to allow discussion in Synods, District Councils and churches than to rush a decision"; it further advised that "the prime task was to deal with ministers of Word and Sacrament".

2 The Group sees its present task as that of framing a process by which the Church may discuss the ordination of homosexuals in the context of human sexuality as a whole. It envisages the preparation of a report which will be presented to Assembly 1995 outlining such a process and hopes that the Assembly would refer such a report to Provincial Synods for discussion. In the present structure Provincial Synods have the responsibility of accepting candidates for training, and of determining their eligibility for a call when training is complete. It would be for Provincial Synods to determine whether the process should include discussion in District Councils and local churches, and whether that should take place before the Synod discussion or after. The Group's hope is for a wide discussion.

3 The Group intends to submit a report to the March Mission Council, which would be substantially what goes to Assembly. It also envisages the preparation of an accompanying paper which would be an initial resource for the subsequent discussion. As at present advised, the Group would envisage any resolutions on policy coming to General Assembly at the end of the process of debate initiated at this year's Assembly.

D.M.T.  
16 January 1995



# PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND COMMISSION

[using the sung response:-

*Through our lives*

Iona Community

Through our lives and by our prayers,

your king - dom come.

## THE GRACE

### SONG

Stuart Dauermann  
arr. Paul Bateman (1954-)

You shall go out with joy and be led forth in peace,  
and the mountains and the hills shall break forth in singing.  
There'll be shouts of joy, and the trees of the field  
shall clap, shall clap their hands.

And the trees of the field shall clap their hands,  
and the trees of the field shall clap their hands,  
and the trees of the field shall clap their hands,  
and you'll go out with joy.

# THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

## MISSION COUNCIL

21st January 1995

# WORSHIP MATERIALS



The grace of God comes close  
to those whose grace is spent,  
when hearts are tired or sore  
and hope is bruised and bent.  
The grace of God is here to stay;  
embracing those who walk his way,  
the grace of God is here to stay.

The Son of God comes close  
where people praise his name,  
where bread and wine are blest  
and shared as when he came.  
The Son of God is here to stay;  
embracing those who walk his way,  
the Son of God is here to stay.

## CLOSING RESPONSES

Loving God,  
we would come close to you in the worship of our work,  
**BE NEAR TO US AND GIVE US WISDOM.**

We would speak peace in the turbulent to and fro of church life,  
**BE NEAR TO US AND GIVE US TRUTH.**

We would find joy in shared faith and fellowship,  
**BE NEAR TO US AND GIVE US LOVE.**

We would bear grace to fractured and frail hearts,  
**BE NEAR TO US AND GIVE US COMPASSION.**

We would listen for your voice at the heart and on the margins,  
**BE NEAR TO US AND GIVE US DISCERNMENT.**

We would do your will - heart, soul, mind and strength -  
**BE NEAR TO US AND EMBRACE US ON OUR WAY.**  
AMEN

## CLOSING DEVOTIONS

### TAIZE CHANTS

Laudate, omnes gentes (twice)

Ubi Caritas (twice)

Split (twice)

