



MISSION COUNCIL

25 January 2003

MINUTES

Worship was led by the Chaplain, the Revd Lesley Charlton. The Moderator's Reflection was from Psalm 34 and Philemon 1-7.

03/01 Welcome

The Moderator, the Revd John Waller, welcomed everyone to the meeting, mentioning in particular:- Mr Eric Chilton (attending for the first time as Hon Treasurer), Mr George Morton (North Western Synod Representative replacing Mr Eric Chilton).

03/02 Attendance

There were 61 members present with 16 staff and others in attendance and Mrs Barbara Hedgecock (Minutes Secretary).

Apologies for absence were received from the Revd John Arthur (Moderator of Synod of Scotland), Mrs Suzanne Adofo (CRCW Development Worker), Mrs Karen Bulley (Pilots Development Officer), the Revd Elizabeth Caswell (Eastern Synod Moderator), the Revd Angus Duncan (Convener of Grants and Loans Group), the Revd John Jenkinson (Yorkshire Synod), the Revd Julian Macro (Convener of Resource Planning Advisory Group), the Revd David M Miller (East Midlands Synod), Miss Catriona Smith (Synod of Scotland), the Revd Paul Snell (South Western Synod), Mrs Roberta Wood (Northern Synod), the Revd John Young (Convener of Doctrine, Prayer & Worship Committee), the Revd Brian Jolly (Convener of Life & Witness Committee) and the Revd Pamela Ward (Northern Synod).

03/03 Additional Business (Paper H)

Notice was given of three resolutions concerning the international situation and four resolutions concerning Assembly staff appointments and re-appointments, which would be taken later in the agenda.

03/04 Minutes of Mission Council 1st-3rd October 2002

The minutes of the meeting held on 1st-3rd October 2002, which had been circulated, were presented by the Clerk. They were approved and signed as a true record by the Moderator after the following amendments: minute 02/68 **Recommendation 2: Mission Council affirms the United Reformed Church's understanding of the nature of the Church and its readiness to make new statements of faith and to reform structures in ever new obedience to the Living Christ.** It was agreed to accept this recommendation. Although it was challenged that this recommendation was not agreed, as being superfluous (already in the Basis of Union) Mission Council agreed that it had accepted the general tenor of the recommendation; minute 02/69 should read "Mr Graham Stacy" - delete "Stacey"; minute 02/70 paragraph 2, 2nd sentence: delete "per cent" after "about a quarter" and delete "every year for 10 years" after "rise by 4%"; paragraph 4: delete "Revd John Ellis remarked that £1 million would equate to 50 ministers." and replace with "In response to a question, Mr John Ellis said that even if the current number of stipendiary ministers had been precisely in line with the Assembly target, the essence of the issues raised by Mr Macro would still have remained."; minute 02/75 delete 38 and insert 48 to read: "The vote was House of Clergy 48

in favour”; minute 02/79 delete comma after Resolution 4 and “Instructs” to read “instructs”; minute 02/80 penultimate line: “involve out” to read “involve our”; minute 02/81 at the end of line 6: delete “the”; minute 02/82 should read “Mr Graham Stacy” – delete “Stacey”.

03/05 Matters Arising

02/78 West Midlands Synod Moderator Review

“from 1st September 2003” should have been added to the resolution:

Acting on behalf of the General Assembly, Mission Council appoints the Revd Elizabeth Welch as Moderator of the West Midlands for a further 5 years from 1st September 2003. This was agreed.

02/72 Development of the CRCW Programme

The Clerk reported on a point of order raised at October Mission Council regarding Ministries Committee. He stated that the situation was unclear and therefore asked the Moderator to rule on the question. The Moderator ruled that as the initial discussions in 1999 took place at Mission Council it was in order for Mission Council to determine the matter.

02/57 & 02/79 The Vocation of the United Reformed Church (October 02 Paper G) and General Secretary’s Review (Paper F)

The General Secretary gave a report on the developments since October Mission Council. There were a few amendments to Paper F: in the first paragraph under “Information gathering”, the last word to read “treasurers”; in “Identifying a small steering group” the word “Shell” be replaced by “BP” and “I am awaiting replies from” be replaced by “yet to write to”. After plenary discussion the General Secretary advised Mission Council that the whole process should be concluded by 2007 with resolutions taken to General Assembly each year leading up to that date. Information on the process would be conveyed to churches through mailings, at least twice yearly and possibly through Reform magazine. The Moderator thanked the General Secretary for the report and for the quick response to the issues raised at the October Mission Council.

02/66 & 02/68 Report of Task Group on Personal and Conciliar Leadership and Authority (October 02 Paper F and Paper B)

Mission Council welcomed the Revd Rachel Poolman, convener of this task group who was invited to introduce these reports. Mission Council then divided into buzz groups to discuss paragraphs 21-34 of Paper F and reflect on questions a) b) and c) of Paper B. This was followed by a plenary session and further buzz groups to discuss paragraphs 35-45 and questions a) and b) of Paper B. During the plenary session the following resolutions were moved:

Recommendation 6: Mission Council requests that all councils of the United Reformed Church examine their nominations procedures and the make up of their membership to ensure that the breadth of membership of the URC is appropriately reflected when we meet together in council.

This was withdrawn and Ms. Poolman undertook to revisit this recommendation and revise the wording in the light of the discussion

Recommendation 7: Mission Council requests that the Equal Opportunities Committee, in addition to its current monitoring work, arranges for an audit to be

taken of those exercising personal leadership throughout the URC with a view to discovering if any imbalance exists in the type of people appointed to particular roles. **It was agreed that this recommendation should be referred to the Equal Opportunities Committee.**

Recommendation 8: Mission Council asks the Equal Opportunities Committee to take account of imbalances that are found to existing in the membership of our councils or in the range of people appointed to leadership roles and consider how procedures, patterns of meetings, job descriptions and advertisements can be altered to help us achieve our declared ideals of inclusivity. **It was agreed that this recommendation should be referred to the Equal Opportunities Committee.**

On the invitation of the Moderator, the Convener of the Equal Opportunities Committee, the Revd W. Bahadur undertook to ensure that this was done.

Mission Council did not have time to examine Recommendations 9 and 10 and these were deferred to the March Mission Council.

03/06 Introduction to CTBI "Time for Action" Report (Paper A)

The Revd Sheila Maxey, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations, speaking in her capacity as Moderator of the Church Life liaison Group of C.T.B.I. introduced the issues in this report, which was available for purchase at the meeting. MCAG brought and Mission Council agreed the following recommendations:

1. **Mission Council appoints the Revd W.W. Mahood as convener of a small inter-disciplinary, inter-committee working party to consider the "Time for Action" Report.**
2. **Mission Council invites committees, working parties and groups who believe themselves to have an interest in this matter to suggest names by the end of February, to the Deputy General Secretary, of those who may be invited to serve in this working party. The appointment of this group to be in the hands of MCAG, in consultation with Mr. Mahood.**

Thanks were given to Mrs Maxey for her report.

03/07 Mission Council Advisory Group (MCAG) (Paper C)

The Deputy General Secretary presented the report of MCAG.

Paragraphs 1, 2 and 4 were matters for information.

Paragraph 3 and 5– Church House Management Group. The Deputy General Secretary presented the proposed terms of reference, on behalf of MCAG of the re-named Group:

The meeting, authorised by January 2002 Mission Council as the Church House Reference Committee, shall be called the Church House Management Group.

1. Membership will include a Convener, and three members appointed by the Mission Council Advisory Group who have experience in finance, management and personnel. These shall be appointed for four years, the timing of replacement of members being staggered to ensure continuity. The Secretaries for Finance, Communications and Editorial, the Office and Personnel Manager and the Deputy General Secretary shall be in attendance, the latter acting as secretary to the Group.

2. The Group (CHMG) shall report to the Mission Council Advisory Group (MCAG), which is the Charity Trustee of the United Reformed Church, and through MCAG (where necessary) to Mission Council. The secretary shall be responsible for communicating to Church House staff those decisions which are directly relevant to them, and will receive any matters, within its terms of reference, which staff wish to be considered by the CHMG.
3. The Group shall set and monitor policies relating to the management of Church House, the responsibility for implementation of such policies remaining with those appointed by the Church to do so, and ultimately the General Secretary.
4. The Group shall set and oversee the budget for capital expenditure on 86 Tavistock Place, London, for maintenance to the fabric (including the caretaker's flat); and for such equipment and staffing costs as come under the "Church House Costs" budget head in the accounts of General Assembly.
5. The Group shall authorise a policy and hold budgetary responsibility for I.T. in Church House.
6. The Group shall oversee and monitor the implementation of a Health and Safety Policy.
7. The Group shall oversee and monitor the implementation of a Data Protection Policy.
8. The Group shall develop and implement guidelines about the terms and conditions of Assembly-appointed staff, in consultation with the Staffing Advisory Group and the Salaries Committee. These shall include taxation and benefits, housing policy, the provision of cars and training. Terms and conditions of Assembly-appointed staff who are ordained ministers shall come within the framework of the Plan for Partnership.
9. The Group shall develop and implement guidelines about the terms and conditions of support staff, in consultation with the Salaries Committee. The Group shall also monitor and advise on the level of support staffing in Church House
10. The Group shall be responsible to MCAG as Charity Trustee of the United Reformed Church for that part of the Church's Risk Assessment Policy which relates to the running of Church House, including all matters covered within its Health and Safety policy.
11. The Group shall be responsible for any other related matters which affect the welfare of staff, employment or operational matters which may arise from time to time, for which a formal policy or procedure is required; and any other associated matters referred to it by MCAG or Mission Council.

It was moved and agreed:

Mission Council approves the terms of Reference of the Church House Management Group.

The Deputy General Secretary reported contents of a letter received from the Yardley Hastings Review Group and Mission Council was asked to give this letter consideration.

03/08 Assembly Arrangements (Paper D)

Mr William McVey presented this paper. After lengthy discussion on a number of ideas for reducing the cost of General Assembly, it was moved

That for one year only Mission Council adopt recommendations 2, 4 & 6 of the Report i.e.

2. That Mission Council ask all Synod Treasurers not to exercise their right to attend General Assembly, unless they are attending in another capacity.
4. That only a certified summary of the financial Report and Accounts be included in the book of reports, thus fulfilling the legal obligation for disclosure, and that the full set be provided only to those who request a copy.
6. That Mission Council ask Synods not to exercise their right to send 3 representatives each to General Assembly, but to restrict that number to one each.

After some discussion the Clerk indicated that such an action was out of order. The Moderator therefore declared that Mission Council was unable to proceed with the resolution but members could adopt any of these suggestions voluntarily, if they so wished.

Ms Emma Pugh, seconded by the Revd David Bedford moved:

That the General Assembly Book of Reports be circulated freely to members of Assembly and to each local church but that otherwise copies be available for purchase

This was agreed. Mrs Carol Rogers assured Mission Council that all Committee reports are and will continue to be available on the Church Website. Mr McVey was thanked for an interesting discussion and for raising important issues.

The Revd Malcolm Hanson proposed, seconded by the Revd Geoffrey Townsend

That a suitable phrase inviting members of Assembly who wished to do so to contribute to the cost of the Assembly be inserted into the paperwork for Assembly so that anyone wishing to make a contribution of any sort might do so. This was agreed.

03/09 Statement on international situation and Zimbabwe (Paper H)

The Revd Martin Camroux, Convener of Church and Society brought the following resolution on the situation in Zimbabwe:

1. The Mission Council of the United Reformed Church, having received news of the continuing deterioration of the situation in Zimbabwe
 - Expresses its support for our partners and people in Zimbabwe in these difficult times
 - Encourages Christian Aid to be more responsive to the situation in Zimbabwe and requests that a delegation meet with the Director of Christian Aid to explore this furtherRequests that the Moderator of General Assembly communicate the church's concern about the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe to Her Majesty's Government and the Zimbabwe High Commission.

After debate and an amendment moved by members, Mission Council agreed Resolution 1. in the amended form and that action should be taken as requested:

The Mission Council of the United Reformed Church, having received news of the continuing deterioration of the situation in Zimbabwe

- **Expresses its support for our partners and people in Zimbabwe in these difficult times**
- **Encourages Christian Aid to be more responsive to the situation in Zimbabwe and requests that a delegation appointed by the Church & Society Committee meet with the Director of Christian Aid to explore this further**

03/10 Statement on international situation on Iraq (Paper H)

The Moderator invited the Revd Philip Woods, Secretary for International Church Relations, to present the following resolutions on Iraq and the international situation:

The Mission Council of the United Reformed Church, noting the increasing military preparations for an invasion of Iraq and the universal rejection by churches and church leaders in the United States, the United Kingdom and around the world of war as the solution to the threat posed by Saddam Hussein's regime

- Expresses its concern that the scale of this military build-up creates a momentum that increases the inevitability of war
 - Supports the view that the UN Weapons Inspectors should be allowed to complete their work
 - Believes that, in the 'post 9.11' world, United States and United Kingdom-led military action against Iraq will further destabilise the international situation
 - Urges, therefore, that more be done to effect a peaceful outcome that affirms western respect for the Arab world and a desire to foster just and peaceful relations between all God's peoples
 - Recognises the considerable stress and worry for the families and friends of military personnel already sent to the region and for those with relatives and friends living in the region
 - Urges its congregations to seek ways of ministering to those facing such anxiety
 - Calls upon members of the United Reformed Church to reach out to people of the other Abrahamic (Christian, Jewish, Muslim) faiths and covenant with them to work and pray for peace in Iraq and throughout the Middle East, recognising that the journey to such commitment will be costly and painful as difficult and divisive issues are faced and wrestled with before our God who calls us all to live with justice and mercy
 - Encourages all those who are praying and witnessing for peace, giving thanks for their ministry.
3. Mission Council resolves that its resolutions on the international situation shall be
- communicated to all churches and councils of the United Reformed Church
 - placed on the United Reformed Church's website
 - communicated by letter to the Prime Minister by the Moderator of General Assembly.

After debate and two amendments moved by members, Mission Council agreed Resolution 2. in the amended form:

The Mission Council of the United Reformed Church, noting the increasing military preparations for an invasion of Iraq and the universal rejection by churches and church leaders in the United States, the United Kingdom and around the world of war as the solution to the threat posed by Saddam Hussein's regime

- **Expresses its concern that the scale of this military build-up creates a momentum that increases the probability of war**
- **Supports the view that the UN Weapons Inspectors should be allowed to complete their work**
- **Believes that, in the 'post 9.11' world, United States and United Kingdom-led military action against Iraq will further destabilise the international situation**

- Urges, therefore, that more be done to effect a peaceful outcome that affirms western respect for the Arab world and a desire to foster just and peaceful relations between all God's peoples
- Recognises the considerable stress and worry for the families and friends of military personnel already sent to the region and for those with relatives and friends living in the region
- Urges its congregations to seek ways of ministering to those facing such anxiety
- Calls upon members of the United Reformed Church to reach out to people of the other Abrahamic (Christian, Jewish, Muslim) faiths and covenant with them to work and pray for peace in Iraq and throughout the Middle East, and for good community relations in the UK, recognising that the journey to such commitment will be costly and painful as difficult and divisive issues are faced and wrestled with before our God who calls us all to live with justice and mercy
- Encourages all those who are praying and witnessing for peace, giving thanks for their ministry.

After an amendment moved by Mrs Marion Bayley and seconded by Mrs Helen Clapp, Mission Council agreed Resolution 3. in the amended form:

Mission Council resolves that its resolutions on the international situation shall be

- **communicated to all churches and councils of the United Reformed Church**
- **placed on the United Reformed Church's website**
- **communicated by letter to the Prime Minister by the Moderator of General Assembly**
- **communicated by letter to the London Ambassador of the United States of America.**

The Moderator indicated that he would be signing the letters on Monday.

03/11 Additional Business

Mr John Ellis, seconded by the Moderator moved.

That Mission Council send greetings to the Revd Murdoch McKenzie on his retirement as Ecumenical Moderator for Milton Keynes. This was agreed.

The General Secretary asked Mission Council to remember in its prayers all URC and Baptist Ministers serving as Chaplains under the United Board.

03/12 Resource Planning Advisory Group (Paper E)

In the absence of the convener, Mr Eric Chilton presented the report of RPAG and presented the recommendation that:

Mission Council appoints with immediate effect the Revd William Wright to be secretary of RPAG until 2006, Mrs Erica Young remaining a member of RPAG until 2005. This was agreed.

03/13 Nominations Committee (Paper G and Paper H)

Principal Stephen Orchard, Convener of the Nominations Committee brought the following resolutions:

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly appoints the Revd John Steele as Secretary for Life & Witness for a further period of three years, from 1 October 2003.

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly appoints Mrs Karen Bulley as Pilots Development Officer for a further period of three years, from 1 October 2003.

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, appoints the Revd Richard John Mortimer as Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith and Order for a period of five years, from 1 August 2003.

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, appoints the Revd Terry Oakley as Moderator of the East Midlands Synod for a period of seven years from 1st October 2003.

These were agreed.

Paper G was matters for information. The Revd Raymond Singh had resigned as Convener of the Racial Justice Committee and there was an addition to the paper: Revd Ray McHugh had been nominated as convener-elect of the Stewardship sub-committee of Life and Witness.

03/14 Theological Reflections (Gold Paper)

The General Secretary drew out the salient points from the paper and the Moderator thanked the General Secretary for sharing these points.

03/15 Response of Methodist Council to Mission Council Letter

The General Secretary reported the positive response he had received from the Methodist Council. It had led to further discussions with the Secretary of the Methodist Conference and others. A progress report, presented to Mission Council, outlined areas for further discussion and consultation throughout both churches. The paper, issued for information only at this stage, would be amended before being presented to the March Mission Council, when the matters raised within it would be considered more fully.

03/16 Closing Remarks

The Moderator asked Mrs Jenny Carpenter to thank those responsible for providing hospitality in the splendid new suite at the Arthur Rank Centre.

The Moderator mentioned Amanda Wade's forthcoming eighteenth birthday; the news that Revd Lesley Husselbee was in hospital with a broken leg, and of the death of the Revd Sam Ansa-Addo, a former member of Mission Council.

Closing Worship was led by the Chaplain.



The United Reformed Church

86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT, United Kingdom
General Secretary: The Revd Dr David Cornick

To: Members of Mission Council
and staff in attendance

17th December 2002

Mission Council: Saturday 25th January 2003
Arthur Rank Centre, National Agricultural Centre
Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire
Telephone 024 7685 3060

Though Christmas and New Year are still ahead of us, it is necessary, in view of the pressure on the postal service at this time of year, to give early notice of the January meeting of Mission Council.

There will be one or two changes this time:

- a) the Arthur Rank Centre has moved, (though still within the National Agricultural Centre at Stoneleigh Park) so please pay extra attention to the enclosed map.
- b) The layout of the new centre is such that we are unable to provide a sit-down meal, but a buffet lunch will be provided instead.

Please find enclosed with this letter:

- A map giving directions to the new Centre
- A list of members (to enable you to arrange to travel together)
- An expenses slip (to be completed and left in the box provided on the day)
- A form to be returned to Sheila Andrews' office by 6th January 2003

Please would you remember to **bring with you the following papers from the October 2002 Mission Council:**

- **Paper F** (The Report of the Task Group on Personal and Conciliar Leadership and Authority)
- **Paper G** (The Vocation of the United Reformed Church)
- **Paper A** (The Development of the Church Related Community Work Programme)

and from the March 2002 Mission Council (discussed also in October)

- **Paper K** (Development of the CRCW Programme)
- **The report of the theological reflector** which was sent out with the minutes.

There will be a further mailing early in January with the remaining papers.

The main items of business for Mission Council are

- the process by which the review of the Church (authorised at the last meeting) is to be done. Enclosed is a copy of the pastoral letter which has been sent by the General Secretary to all ministers, church secretaries, district secretaries, synod clerks and synod offices.
- the Report on Personal and Conciliar Leadership and Authority.

Cont/d....

There will also be reports of the Methodist response to the proposal for a shared pastoral strategy, and an introduction to CTBI's major report "Time for Action" (see the enclosed flier) about sexual abuse by Christian professionals. You may wish to order your own copy. The March Mission Council will be the earliest opportunity to discuss this, as the report has only recently been published.

Though the agenda will not be fixed until early in January, the timetable for our day at Stoneleigh will be:

09.30 Arrivals and coffee
10.00 Worship and Session 1
12.30 Lunch
13.45 Session 2
15.15 Tea
15.45 Session 3
16.45 Closing worship
17.00 Departure

Between now and then comes the festival of Christmas, with its message of hope and peace for the world. Amid the threats of war to whole populations, and the often hidden suffering of individuals, may our celebration of the coming of Jesus Christ be a faithful witness to the hope that is in us, and a spur to more loving service in the year ahead.

Yours sincerely



The Revd Raymond Adams
Deputy General Secretary



The United Reformed Church

86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT, United Kingdom
General Secretary: The Revd Dr David Cornick

From the General Secretary of the United Reformed Church
The Revd Dr David Cornick

A pastoral letter to all ministers and church secretaries
(copied to all District Secretaries, Synod Clerks and Synod Offices)

4th December 2002

Dear Friends

I am writing to you as part of the process initiated by October's Mission Council. The Council focused on two inter-related yet distinct issues, the mission of the United Reformed Church, and the way in which we use our resources and finance them.

1) The mission of the church

It was an exciting, realistic Council, blessed with a true sense of being a consultation of representatives of the whole church. It was clear to the Council that we are living through a difficult time of transition in the history of the Western European church. We have lived with a century and more of the steady erosion of the faith and its institutions by the waves of secularisation. That decline, imperceptible to all but historians at first, gathered a savage intensity from the mid 1950s. Some now detect a shift in the intellectual climate that might result in more favourable weather for all kinds of spirituality (including Christianity). For the moment though, its effect can be measured more in the 'Body, soul and spirit' sections of bookshops than in any change in church attendance and membership figures.

The statistics (notoriously difficult though they are to interpret) suggest that Lesslie Newbigin's analysis of modern Britain as the most difficult mission field he had ever worked in was correct. Only 7.4% of the population of England and Wales and 13.4% of the Scottish population attend church regularly. 44% of the British population claim no religious affiliation at all. For the first time in more than a millennium the British churches have to learn how to be missionary churches and re-discover how to tell the Christian story and live the Christian life in ways which engage and move our culture.

That re-alignment of churches to the task of mission is happening in some places. New ways of being church are emerging, new styles of engagement with the community, new ways of disciplined, disciplined living. These new shoots need nurturing. The landscape is far from being a barren wilderness of declining chapels and ageing congregations. Our faithful God has not finished with us yet. However, if we are able to grasp the opportunities of God's future we need to be realistic about the resources we have been given.

2) The use of resources and finance

In common with most mainline churches our membership has shrunk by half over the past thirty years. In the same period the number of churches has reduced by about one sixth and the number of ministers by about one third. We are a community of some 90,000+ members and adherents in 1745 churches spread across three nations, served by 884 ministers (725 stipendiary and 159 non-stipendiary) and 15 active Church Related Community Workers. The Churches Information for Mission denominational profile shows that our membership is significantly older than the population as a whole, and it is therefore possible that we will halve in size again over the next thirty years. The implications are clear. A smaller membership is more thinly spread and an increasing financial burden has fallen on fewer and older shoulders. Ministers have been asked to cope with multiple pastorates that sometimes have no relationship to each other but economic necessity.

The reasons for decline are complex but there is no evidence that the trends are about to change. If we are to be prudent and realistic we need to plan for the future accordingly. That is not to preclude the possibility of faith and revival (for which we all earnestly pray). If it is God's gift to us, it will finance itself. If it is not (and God is less likely to confuse size with success than we are), it is our vocation to continue in faithful witness and discipleship. That means that we will need to hear what God is asking of us, organise ourselves accordingly and provide the funding. We are a small church that is getting smaller, but that doesn't mean that we can't still do great things with God.

We presently fund our mission through the Ministry and Mission Fund. Out of every pound that we spend, 76p goes on stipends and salaries of local ministers, Moderators and Church Related Community Workers, 9p on training ministers and lay people and 6p on other mission programmes. Only 8p is spent on administration and support activities.

The Ministry and Mission Fund is financed through local church contributions. Because our membership has declined faster than the number of ministers, the amount of Ministry and Mission Fund contributions, expressed as an amount per member, has had to increase over the years at a rate very significantly higher than inflation. It is a matter for rejoicing that over the years these increases have been achieved but there are clear signs that the capacity of local church congregations to go on increasing their contributions at these rates is under strain. Furthermore, the current stock market decline may require us to increase annual contributions to the Minister' Pension Fund by up to half a million pounds, putting yet more pressure on our financial situation.

It is not realistic to assume that increased costs of this scale can simply be passed to local churches. Appeals for increases in Ministry and Mission Fund contributions have to be accompanied by proposals to manage costs in a way that recognises our current and prospective circumstances. It should be obvious from the breakdown of expenditure above that our financial situation cannot be controlled simply by paring down 'non-essentials' and we certainly do not have reserves from which to draw for more than short-term fluctuations. Mission Council, realising that the future mission of the church, and the way

we finance that mission, are profoundly interrelated, therefore committed itself 'urgently and radically to re-think the church's priorities, programmes and processes'. It is important that we realise that this affects all of us.

We will therefore be gathering information about what we actually do, so that it can be used to inform our praying and decision making about our priorities. Mission Council has asked me to devise a process by which this can happen and a small steering group will soon be beginning its work. It is clear that the group will need to consider all the questions, which have been bubbling up all over the church in the past couple of years. So, attention will be given to our structures, to the way we use ministers, our levels of decision making, the balance between work undertaken by the Assembly (at Church House, for Church House is nothing more and nothing less than the offices of the General Assembly) and the Synods, which have evolved significantly in the last decade. We shall need to consider such matters as whether we can continue to provide stipendiary ministry for each local United Reformed Church, how we should deploy ministers, how many institutions (like training centres and colleges) we need and can afford, and whether we need to meet in General Assembly annually.

It is Advent, and our thoughts are therefore about the God who comes. We look forward with expectant hope to God whose love brooks no defeat, but we only do so by the light of the star the magi followed. That star came to rest not over a palace, but over the scruffy outhouse of a down at heel hotel. Our God is a God who comes, but a God who comes in unpredictable ways - as a tiny baby, as a storyteller, as one who walked unknown with his friends towards Emmaus. Our faithful God has not finished with us yet and it should not surprise us that when Jesus spoke of the kingdom, he used pictures of salt and yeast and mustard seeds - small things that have a disproportionate effect. They are good, heartening pictures for us, for they recall us to the core reality of our Christian life - the grace of God working in us, through us, and despite us.

Our Advent God is calling us to follow. We cannot expect the journey to be easy or smooth, but we can be assured that only by following will we discover God's blessing.

I hope that the process Mission Council has initiated will be as open as possible, and I would be pleased to hear from any who wish to contribute to the on-going debate, whether through the councils of the church or as individuals. Please write to me at Church House or e-mail me at david.cornick@urc.org.uk.

May the peace of Christ be yours this Advent and Christmas.



(please feel free to copy this letter or parts of it if that is helpful to you and your church)



MISSION COUNCIL 25 January 2003

The Moderator:
General Secretary:
Deputy General Secretary:
Clerk:

Revd John Waller
Revd Dr David Cornick
Revd Ray Adams
Revd. James Breslin

Past Moderator:
Moderator Elect:
Treasurer:
Legal Adviser:

Revd. Elizabeth Welch
Revd. Alasdair Pratt
Mr Eric Chilton
Mrs Janet Knott

Assembly Standing Committees

Doctrine Prayer & Worship: Revd John Young
Life & Witness: Revd Brian Jolly
Church & Society: Revd Martin Camroux
Youth & Children's Work: Revd Kathryn Price
Ecumenical: Revd John Rees
Ministries: Mr John Ellis
Training: Revd John Proctor
Finance: Mr Graham Stacy
Communications & Editorial: Revd Graham Cook
Nominations: Revd Dr Stephen Orchard
Assembly Arrangements: Mr William McVey
Equal Opportunities: Revd. Wilf Bahadur
Inter-Faith Relations: Mrs Daphne Beale
Racial Justice

Fury Council

Ms Emma Pugh
Ms Amanda Wade

13 synod Moderators, plus 3 representatives from each synod

1 Revd Peter Poulter	Revd Pamela Ward, Dr Peter Clarke, Mrs Roberta Wood
2 Revd Peter Brain	Revd Geoffrey Townsend, Mr Eric Chilton, Mrs Janet Eccles
3 Revd Graham Cook	Mr Donald Swift, Revd. Martin Hardy, Revd. John Kingsley
4 Revd Arnold Harrison	Revd John Jenkinson, Mr John Seager, Mrs Val Morrison
5 Revd Malcolm Hanson	Mrs Ann Ball, Mrs Barbara Turner, Revd David Miller
6 Revd Elizabeth Welch	Mr Simon Rowntree, Mrs Ann Sheldon, Revd. Simon Helme
7 Revd Elizabeth Caswell	Revd Victor Ridgewell, Mr Ken Woods, Revd Richard Mortimer
8 Revd David Miller	Revd Roz Harrison, Revd Paul Snell, Miss Angela Bebbington
9 Revd Adrian Bulley	Revd Simon Thomas, Mrs Veronica Taylor, Revd David Bedford
10 Revd Roberta Rominger	Revd Dr Robin Pagan, Mrs Helen Clapp, Revd. Jane Wade
11 Revd Nigel Uden	Mrs Marion Bayley, Revd Lesley Charlton, Mr Ian Chalmers
12 Revd Peter Noble	Revd David Marshall-Jones, Mrs Janet Gray, Mr W Stuart Jones
13 Revd John Arthur	Revd Ken Forbes, Mrs Helen Mee, Miss Catriona Smith

In attendance

Minute Secretary	Mrs Barbara Hedgecock	Rural Consultant	Mrs Jenny Carpenter
Moderator's Chaplain	Revd Lesley Charlton	Editor, Reform	Revd David Lawrence
Church & Society	Dr Andrew Bradstock	Training	Revd Roy Lowes
International Church Relations	Revd Philip Woods	Ecumenical Relations	Revd Sheila Maxey
Ministries	Revd Christine Craven	Director, Windermere Centre	Mr Lawrence Moore
Finance	Ms Avis Reaney	Communications	Mrs Carol Rogers
Youth Work		Childrens Advocate	Mrs Rosemary Johnston
Office & Personnel Manager	Mr Hilary Gunn	Convener RPAG	Revd Julian Macro
Life & Witness	Revd John Steele	Secretary RPAG	Mrs Erica Young
Pilots Development Officer	Mrs Karen Bulley	Grants & Loans Group Convener	Revd Angus Duncan
Church Related Community	Ms Suzanne Adofo /	Racial Justice Secretary	Mrs Katalina Tahaafe-Williams
Work development workers	Mr Stephen Summers	Yardley Hastings Centre Minister	Revd Liz Byrne



The United Reformed Church

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

To: Members of Mission Council
and staff in attendance

14th January 2003

Dear Colleague,

Mission Council: Saturday 25th January 2003
Arthur Rank Centre, National Agricultural Centre
Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire
Telephone 024 7685 3060

Enclosed is the second mailing for the one-day meeting of Mission Council at The National Agricultural Centre, Stoneleigh Park.

Directions: Please remember that the Centre has moved to a new location (within sight of the old one). As you arrive at the main entrance and go straight along Avenue M, take the fourth turning on the right into 6th Street, just past the *Farmers' Weekly* building. A few yards further on, the Arthur Rank Centre is on the right. Just before you reach the centre, a right turn leads into a car park. Those who are unable to walk far may alight at the main door of the Centre, and there is room for a few cars to park around the building, but it would be best if the majority use the designated car park.

May I remind you to bring all the enclosed papers with you, and the following papers from the October 2002 Mission Council:

- The Minutes of the October Meeting
- Paper F (cream) Report of the Task Group on *Personal and Conciliar Leadership and Authority*
- Paper G (gold) *The Vocation of the United Reformed Church*
- Theological Reflection (issued with the Minutes)

Please bring a Bible and a copy of Rejoice and Sing.

The enclosed **Paper B** provides a précis of the discussion so far on *Personal and Conciliar Leadership and Authority*. We shall look at the next section of the report (October Paper F, pages D3-D8) and recommendations 6-10.

Paper F is a progress report on the General Secretary's review of the Church, authorised by October Mission Council. (October paper G provides a background to this).

Paper A provides an introduction (to be supplemented by the Revd Sheila Maxey) to the report "*Time for Action: sexual abuse, the churches and a new dawn for survivors*", published by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. This will be discussed more fully at the March Mission Council. Some copies should be available for purchase at Stoneleigh, or you may order a copy through the Church House Book Room.

Papers C,D,E and G deal with matters from the Mission Council Advisory Group; the Assembly Arrangements committee; the Resource Planning Advisory Group (with three recommendations); and the Nominations Committee; all of which ask for Mission Council's guidance and decision.

In view of the limited time available, and the possibility of a further resolution being tabled about the international situation, it has been decided to defer the unfinished business about Church Related Community Work until the March Mission Council.

I am conscious of the long journeys and early starts many of us will have to make in order to hold a one-day meeting of Mission Council. I hope, nonetheless, that the aim of our coming together to seek God's will for the health and mission of the United Reformed Church will be realised in the decisions that are made, and that we shall feel it has been a day well-spent.

With all good wishes in this still-new year

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ray Adams". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the text "Yours sincerely".

The Revd Raymond Adams
Deputy General Secretary



MISSION COUNCIL
25 January 2003

**AGENDA AND
TIMETABLE**

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

9.30am Arrivals and coffee

10.00am WORSHIP

SESSION 1

Welcome and apologies

Minutes of the meeting held on 1-3 October 2002

Matters arising

Vocation of the United Reformed Church (*October 02 Paper G*)
and General Secretary's Review **(Paper F)** ✓

Report of Task Group on Personal and Conciliar Leadership and Authority ✓
(*October 02 Paper F and Paper B*)

12.20pm Break

12.30 - 1.45pm Lunch

1.45pm **SESSION 2**

Introduction to CTBI "Time for Action" Report (Sheila Maxey) **(Paper A)** ✓

Report of the Mission Council Advisory Group **(Paper C)** ✓

Report of the Assembly Arrangements Committee **(Paper D)** ✓

Break

3.15 - 3.45pm Tea

3.45pm **SESSION 3**

Resource Planning Advisory Group **(Paper E)**

Report of the Nominations Committee **(Paper G)**

Theological Reflections (gold paper) circulated with October Mission Council minutes)

Report on response of Methodist Council to Mission Council letter

4.45pm CLOSING WORSHIP



MISSION COUNCIL
25 January 2003

AGENDA AND
TIMETABLE

**NOTES FOR THE MODERATOR AND HIS SUPPORTERS
WITH SUGGESTED TIMINGS**

10.00am WORSHIP

SESSION 1

10.30

Welcome and apologies

a) Attending for the first time:

Mr Eric Chilton as Hon Treasurer. Mr George Morton (as NW synod representative, replacing Eric Chilton)

b) Apologies: Mrs Suzanne Adofo (CRCW Development Officer); the Revd John Arthur (Synod of Scotland Moderator); Mrs Karen Bulley (Pilots Development Officer); The Revd Elizabeth Caswell (Eastern Synod Moderator); The Revd Angus Duncan (Convener of Grants and Loans Group); The Revd John Jenkinson (Yorkshire Synod); The Revd Julian Macro (Convener of the Resource Planning Advisory Group); The Revd David M. Miller (East Midlands Synod); Miss Catriona Smith (Synod of Scotland); The Revd Paul Snell (South Western Synod); Mrs Roberta Wood (Northern Synod); The Revd John Young (Convener of Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee).

Items of Additional Business will be found in tabled **Paper H** (resolutions 1-3)

- Suggest that two resolutions concerning the international situation and one consequent resolution should be taken this afternoon after the report of the Assembly Arrangements Committee and before tea (concluding after tea if necessary) .
- Other items about appointments and re-appointments should be taken after the Nominations Committee Report (resolutions 4-7).

Minutes of the meeting held on 1-3 October 2002

A Number of corrections (Paper tabled outlining these)

Matters arising:

- (Minutes page 8, 02/78) Note that the resolution about the re-appointment of Elizabeth Welch should – for clarity – read “ for a further five years from 1st September 2003”
- The clerk will comment on a point of order raised at October Mission Council (see clerk’s paper “a point of order re Ministries Committee”).
- There may be others.

10.45 **General Secretary’s Review (Paper F)** (background: Vocation of the United Reformed Church -*October 02 Paper G*)

- General Secretary to lead: report, questions and discussion: no resolution

11.15 **Report of Task Group on Personal and Conciliar Leadership and Authority**
(*October 02 Paper F and Paper B*)

- Rachel Poolman (convener) to be welcomed to Mission Council – and leads
- RP to guide discussion through pp’s D3-D8. Paper B (side 2) looks at two sections

- i) paras 21-34, and asks three questions (a,b,c). RA has suggested to Rachel that after an introduction, Council may form buzz groups to discuss these. Moderator may want to ask if Council accepts Recommendations 6-8.
- ii) paras 35-45 also provided with 2 questions (a,b) (Paper B side 2 last para). The same method of buzz groups, plenary and Recommendations 9-10.

When (if) we get to **Recommendation 10**, an amendment has been notified

Proposed by: Ken Woods

Seconded by: John Seager (additions underlined; *deletion in italics*) :

Mission Council recommends that good practice guidelines be produced to promote good relationships between ministers/ CRCWs and local churches, together with the production of a middle range disciplinary procedure that addresses breakdowns in such relationships (DELETE: *matches the present grievance procedure*)'

(DGS's intention is that pages D8-12 (and remaining resolutions 11-13) be discussed at March Mission Council, though as these resolutions conflict with proposals arising from the Deployment Working Party, there might be a view that the rest of this report be deferred. The Council may yet want to discuss the last section before taking a view)

12.15 Announcements before lunch (DepGenSec)

12.20pm Break 12.30 - 1.45pm Lunch

1.45pm **SESSION 2**

1.45 Introduction to CTBI " Time for Action" Report **(Paper A)**

- Sheila Maxey to lead: This paper introduces the issue.
- Further discussion at the March Mission Council, where we hope a small group will bring recommendations on a possible United Reformed Church response.
- Need to appoint a group. Bill Mahood has been approached and is willing to convene it.
- Need Mission Council resolution and suggested names (to DGS, to be approached)
- Some copies of the full CTBI report are available for sale today. (£7.95)

2.10 **Report of the Mission Council Advisory Group (Paper C)**

- Ray Adams (secretary) to lead
- MC should agree the terms of reference of CHMG
- Sec to report contents of letter received from the Yardley Hastings Review Group

2.30 **Report of the Assembly Arrangements Committee (Paper D)**

- William McVey (convener) to lead
- This is a paper to " test the water". Decisions may be made today, but there will be time to return to this at the March Mission Council if serious proposals are to be shaped by them to bring to General Assembly.-

3.00 (at the latest)

Additional items: statement on international situation (tabled Paper H: resolution 1 (Zimbabwe):

- **Martin Camroux** (Convener, Church and Society) to lead

If time, the Moderator may wish to move on to Resolution 2 on Iraq, though it may be interrupted by the tea break.

Break

3.15 - 3.45pm Tea

3.45pm

SESSION 3

complete **Additional item: statement on Iraq and international situation** (resolutions 2 and 3)

- Moderator to move: invite Philip Woods to lead

4.00

Resource Planning Advisory Group

(Paper E)

- In the convener's absence (Julian Macro is recuperating after an operation on his eye) the Hon Treasurer (Eric Chilton) will report.
- Recommendation 1: to be put to Mission Council for approval
- Recommendations 2 and 3 : In the light of concerns expressed since these papers were sent out, I have advised the convener that they be referred back without MC discussion for further consultation with the Ministries Committee.

4.15

Report of the Nominations Committee

(Paper G)

- Dr Stephen Orchard (convener) to lead
- Additional business (**paper H**) includes 4 nominations which require appointment by Mission Council.:
- Revd John Steele - (lead: General Secretary)
- Mrs Karen Bulley - (lead: Deputy G-S)
- Revd Richard Mortimer – (lead : Elizabeth Welch, convener of appointment group) LATE NOTE: this is also included in the Nominations Committee report, so may be proposed by the convener during his presentation)
- Revd Terry Oakley - (lead: General Secretary)

4.25

Theological Reflections (gold paper) circulated with October Mission Council minutes

- lead: General Secretary

4.30+

Report on response of Methodist Council to Mission Council letter

- lead: General Secretary
- Attention to be drawn to the tabled blue paper " Progress report" : ***Towards an appropriate pastoral strategy for the three nations in which we serve.***
- The preamble states what is to be done with the paper.
- Paper for information rather than discussion at this stage.
- A more detailed presentation at the March Mission Council, coinciding with an agreed timetable with the Methodists.

Thanks to Arthur Rank Centre for hospitality (via Jenny Carpenter)

**Sheet of notified corrections/amendments to the Minutes of Mission Council
(1-3 October 2002)**

Page 5:

**02/68 Report of Task Group on Personal and Conciliar Leadership and Authority
(Paper F)**

Recommendation 2: Mission Council affirms the United Reformed Church's understanding of the nature of the Church and its readiness to make new statements of faith and to reform structures in ever new obedience to the Living Christ. It was agreed to accept this recommendation. John Ellis challenges that this recommendation was not agreed, as being superfluous (already in the Basis of Union)

Page 6:

**02/69 Maintenance of Ministry Sub-Committee: Basic Stipend 2003 (Paper H)
Mr Graham Stacy (delete-Stacey)**

02/70 Resource Planning Advisory Group

para 2: "Mr Macro had received a report from the actuary stating that the Ministers Pension Fund was also at a critical stage. Unless there were to be a rise of about a quarter (~~per cent~~) in the stock market the Church's contributions would have to rise by 4% (~~every year for 10 years~~)

para 4: Revd Julian Macro replied that if a minister took early retirement and was eligible for housing then the funds would have to be sought to purchase the house. As regards a national gift day, unless that day raised £1 million every year it would not solve the situation. (**ADD: In response to a question, Mr John Ellis said that even if the current number of stipendiary ministers had been precisely in line with the Assembly target, the essence of the issues raised by Mr Macro would still have remained. (DELETE: Revd John Ellis remarked that £1 million would equate to 50 ministers).**

page 8:

02/75 The Revd Peter Noble reported a matter for information regarding an Ecumenical Bishop for Wales. This matter had received a negative answer from the Governing Body of the Church in Wales, even though the Bishops, including the Archbishop of Canterbury Elect, had voted in favour. The vote was House of Clergy **48 (delete-38) in favour,**

page 9:

02/79 The Vocation of The United Reformed Church (Paper G)

Resolution 4

(delete comma (,)) "**Mission Council instructs (~~Instructs~~) the General Secretary to deliver an interim report at its next meeting.**"

page 10:

02/80 Letter to the Methodist Council

(penultimate line)

"that if you were favourably disposed to this initiative, we might together seek to involve ~~our~~ (~~out~~) other ecumenical partners.

02/81 Theological Reflections

line 6: "The Moderator thanked (delete - the) Dr Collinson for being with us

02/82 Close

As it was his last attendance at Mission Council, the Moderator thanked the Treasurer, Mr Graham Stacy (~~delete-Stacey~~)

Matter Arising:

02/78 West Midlands Synod Moderator Review

Acting on behalf of the General Assembly, Mission Council appoints the Revd Elizabeth Welch as Moderator of the West Midlands for a further 5 years (ADD: from 1st September 2003). This was agreed.

Point of Order relating to the Report of Ministries Committee. Mission Council October 2002.

At Mission Council in October 2002 the Ministries Committee brought proposals to alter the way in which the Church related Community Work programme might be managed. On a point of order it was questioned whether this proposal lay within the competence of Mission Council as it attempted to overturn a decision of General Assembly.

The necessary documents not being to hand, it was not possible, in the context of that meeting, to answer definitively whether these proposals were or were not out of order.

Even now, having consulted the minutes of Assembly '99 and 2000 and the Growing Up Report, I remain unsure as to the answer.

The Growing Up Report Page 18. Section 10.3 reads.

Church related Community Work. Mission Council commissioned a review of this ministry the report of which was received in October 1998. The report affirmed the work, which in different forms exercises a ministry of service...

After listing the different models of community work and its theology the report makes a number of recommendations, the chief of which are that

10.3.1

10.3.2. a policy is implemented which devolves the management of the CRCW programme from an Assembly committee to the synods and district councils.

10.3.3.

10.3.4.

There are eleven other recommendations which refer to issues of accreditation, training and support. The above four recommendations have already been agreed by Mission Council and the rest referred to the Ministries Committee for Action.

That would suggest that the recommendation for the devolution of management was a matter for Mission Council.

However, Assembly then resolved

Resolution 14. General Assembly accepts the mission programme outlined in the report "Growing Up" and strongly commends it to local churches, district councils and synods;

Resolution 15. General Assembly instructs the Mission Council to oversee the planning of the programme.

The Report of the Ministries Committee to General Assembly 2000 stated *inter alia*

Work has begun on the priorities reported last year....The devolved management of the Church Related Community Worker Programme to the Synods over an agreed time-scale. A plan of action is being prepared which will be ready for the Assembly.

Also in that year General assembly resolved.

Resolution 35. General Assembly instructs the Ministries Committee, in consultation with others to continue the discussion of present and future patterns of ministries, building on ecumenical insights and designed to enable the church to respond more effectively to the challenge of the mission strategy outlined in Growing Up.

Therefore although it is clear that the initial decision in this matter was made by Mission Council it is possible to argue that the actions of General Assembly in endorsing and accepting the Growing Up Report are such as to transform that decision into a decision of General Assembly. Both positions being possible it requires the Moderator to make a ruling.

J. Breslin, (Clerk)



MISSION COUNCIL

25 January 2003

A

Time for Action: sexual abuse, the churches and a new dawn for survivors.

A report to Churches Together in Britain and Ireland of the Group established to examine issues of sexual abuse.

Mission Council members have been sent a flier concerning the above report. Below is CTBI's brief summary of the content of the report.

Time for Action

The issue of sexual abuse has come to the fore in the last few decades. As a result much attention has been given by both the State and the Churches to the protection of children. One group, however, feel that their concerns have not been heard, namely those who have experienced the sexual abuse, the victims and survivors who have been left for many years to live with their dreadful pain. In October 1999 the church leaders' meeting of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland set up a Group to consider the pastoral care of those who had been abused, factors which lead people to become abusers and ways of rehabilitating those who have been abused.

Time for Action is the 182pp report of this Group. It is offered to the Churches as a tool to help them to care more appropriately for those who have been sexually abused and also to enable them to become more fully the just, open and caring communities which we believe God wants them to be. Those who have been abused are coming out of the shadows of isolation and despair and are speaking with a righteous anger. Their voices challenge the Church, as the body of Christ in the world to respond with compassion and courage.

The report sets the scene in the context of history and change. It indicates how hard it is for those who have been abused to tell their stories and describes graphically the psychological and emotional effects of abuse. Through a series of vignettes or stories it indicates how best to respond to the stories of those who have been abused. It points out that the effects of abuse and its disclosure are far reaching and go on spreading like ripples in a pond.

In a hard hitting chapter it speaks of the abuse of adults in the Church and the importance of maintaining appropriate boundaries. There is evidence that there are higher levels of sexually abusive behaviour in the Church and by religious professionals than in other comparable caring professions. The report attempts

to analyse the reasons for this and connects it in part with the boundary-blurring role ambiguity associated with Christian ministry.

The whole report is based on theological reflection, which is at the same time tough and poetic in its style. As Christians we are persons in community and need to share one another's suffering and joy. The challenge to living and to worshipping is sharp and yet hopeful. All Christians need to heed this.

Worship materials are included and it is suggested that local churches hold special services for those who have experienced abuse

A series of recommendations highlight the changes the Churches need to make as institutions and the contribution, which individual Christians can make in their local community.

As is said by the Most Revd Dr Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury-designate: 'This report is sometimes devastating reading, but it is timely, necessary and - if we are prepared to hear and act on some unwelcome truths ultimately hopeful.'

The recommendations to the member churches of CTBI, and therefore to the United Reformed Church, appear at the end of the report and are extensive and wide-ranging. They refer to the quality of local church life: how can local churches become places where the voices of victims are heard, where abuse is challenged - places of honesty and compassion? They refer to the training, pastoral care, methods of screening and discipline of those who hold office in the church, particularly but not only ministers. And much more.

The first of the 37 recommendations reads:

" That this report be widely read and discussed within CTBI and member Churches and that its implications be considered and acted upon by churches, individually and ecumenically at local, regional and national level."

Mission Council is invited to set up a small group to consider the report and its recommendations. The group's remit would be to consider where and how in the United Reformed Church the various recommendations and their challenges might best be addressed. This would then enable the United Reformed Church to make its proper contribution to the ongoing ecumenical engagement with this timely and significant report.

Sheila Maxey, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Moderator of the Church Life Liaison Group of CTBI.



MISSION COUNCIL

25 January 2003

B

Task Group on Personal and Conciliar Leadership and Authority

Update

At the October 2002 Mission Council recommendations 1 - 5 of the report were discussed. Recommendations 1 - 4 relate to parts B and C, and recommendation 5 to the first part of part D (Conciliar leadership and authority).

Mission Council requested that the substance of recommendation 1 should be included in the final paragraph of part B. The amended paragraph reads as follows:

para 25 (pB4) line 11

Christians will continue to differ as to how far they believe *they* should adhere to models found in scripture. (DELETE lines 12- 15 even when such models...contemporary situation) INSERT: *Nevertheless, when patterns of church practice are considered they should take account of scriptural models and principles. A survey of scripture reminds us that, whatever our context, the Holy Spirit will continue to lead God's people into forms of leadership and authority that equip us for ministry and mission in our contemporary situation.*

Mission Council also requested that some corrections be made to part C. The revised part C is available separately.

Mission Council January '03

The following commentary and questions are offered in the hope that they will simplify the preparation process for the discussion in January.

Mission Council accepted the substance of parts B and C of the report in October '02, although there were questions over the wording of the recommendations. Parts B and C lay the scriptural and ecclesiological foundations (summarised in paras B25 and C4.12) for part D of the report, which addresses the question of how our Reformed principles are translated into practice in our current context.

At this Mission Council we will be considering the section on personal leadership and authority (pD3 - D8) and the accompanying recommendations 6-10. The challenge for Mission Council is to address theological principles as well as practical outcomes of those principles. As we saw in October's discussion of the report it is not always easy, in a conciliar context, to find ways of grappling with abstract (but crucial) ideas.

In paragraphs D21 - 34 the Task Group raises issues for the United Reformed Church in its understanding of personal leadership. It documents some of the reasons why we can be uncomfortable with the concept of authority being invested in individuals, but nevertheless asserts that personal episcopé and leadership does exist in our tradition. Para 34 concludes that we should be open to change in this area. In considering this section of the report Mission Council is invited to reflect on the following questions:

- a) Does it recognise the Task Group's analysis of the issues in this area ?
- b) Do we need to be more open to giving authority to individuals ?
- c) What cultural changes would this demand in the United Reformed Church and how can we effect them ?

Paragraphs 35 - 45 focus on two areas in which the Task Group is concerned that we do not reflect our principles in our practice. Firstly, the question of whether we are making use of all the potential leaders in our midst is raised. Recommendations 6-8 seek to build on the work of the Equal Opportunities Committee by initiating a widespread review of the diversity of membership of our councils and of those appointed to positions of responsibility. The Task Group also recommends a review of our processes of nomination and appointment to ensure we are not weakening our life together by unwittingly excluding gifted people.

The second matter addressed in this section of the report is the accountability of ministers of word and sacrament. The Task Group was concerned that whilst we give ministers great responsibility we do not have a process within the United Reformed Church whereby an individual's progress can be checked and necessary encouragement and support can be offered if weaknesses are identified. If a minister is failing in her/his responsibilities their pastor, district or moderator have no sanction against them unless it is necessary to initiate the section O process. Recommendations 9 and 10 seek to address these concerns.

Mission Council is invited to consider the following questions regarding this section:

- a) Does it share the concerns raised by the Task Group?
- b) Is the recommended action appropriate?

Rachel Poolman (Task Group Convenor)
January 2003



MISSION COUNCIL

25 January 2003

C

Mission Council Advisory Group

1. **Assembly Commission:** MCAG held an extra meeting on 7th January to consider the report of the Assembly Commission set up by Mission Council in March 2002, which has reviewed the circumstances of a minister whose case has exercised the decision-making processes of the church for many years. A report will be made to the March Mission Council.
2. MCAG approved the appointment of the Deputy General Secretary as convener of the re-formed **Ethical Investments Advisory Group**, which held its first meeting in December. A progress report will be made to Mission Council in March.
3. **Church House Management Group:** The January 2002 Mission Council agreed to the setting up of a Church House Reference Committee which would define and monitor policy on a range of issues concerning the running and management of Church House. It is envisaged that the Group will report routinely to MCAG (on behalf of Mission Council). Matters requiring Mission Council decision shall be raised within MCAG's own report to the Council. MCAG presents the terms of reference of the re-named Church House Management Group for approval by Mission Council (see 5 below).

The Group, convened by the Revd John Waller, comprises of people with experience in management, finance and personnel matters: the Revd David Marshall-Jones, Mr John Woodman and Mrs Val Morrison. Others serve in *ex officio* capacities.

4. **Information:**
 - i) A meeting took place in Church House in the autumn 2002 between some senior staff and John Battle MP, (appointed by the Prime Minister to liaise with the Faith communities). He has asked for any statements or correspondence from the Church, which are addressed to Downing Street, to be copied to him, so that he can bring them more directly to the attention of the Prime Minister.
 - ii) Avis Reaney, the Financial Secretary, has represented the Church at talks which the Department of Trade and Industry has instigated with the Faith Communities about the employment status of ministers and other religious professionals.
 - iii) The projected agenda for March 2003 Mission Council will include
 - Report of Task Group on Personal Oversight and Leadership
 - RPAG and budget for 2004
 - Report of Grants and Loans Group
 - Assembly resolutions
 - Report of Mission Council Task Group reviewing the Windermere Centre
 - Report of General Assembly Task Group on the future of the National Resource Centre at Yardley Hastings.

- Report of the ethical investments advisory group
- Task Group on Authority's revised resolution 17
- Consideration of recommendations of Assembly Commission

5. **Terms of Reference for the Church House Management Group**

The meeting, authorised by January 2002 Mission Council as the Church House Reference Committee, shall be called the Church House Management Group.

1. Membership will include a Convener, and three members appointed by the Mission Council Advisory Group who have experience in finance, management and personnel. These shall be appointed for four years, the timing of replacement of members being staggered to ensure continuity. The Secretaries for Finance, Communications and Editorial, the Office and Personnel Manager and the Deputy General Secretary shall be in attendance, the latter acting as secretary to the Group.
2. The Group (CHMG) shall report to the Mission Council Advisory Group (MCAG), which is the Charity Trustee of the United Reformed Church, and through MCAG (where necessary) to Mission Council. The secretary shall be responsible for communicating to Church House staff those decisions which are directly relevant to them, and will receive any matters, within its terms of reference, which staff wish to be considered by the CHMG.
3. The Group shall set and monitor policies relating to the management of Church House, the responsibility for implementation of such policies remaining with those appointed by the Church to do so, and ultimately the General Secretary.
4. The Group shall set and oversee the budget for capital expenditure on 86 Tavistock Place, London, for maintenance to the fabric (including the caretaker's flat); and for such equipment and staffing costs as come under the "Church House Costs" budget head in the accounts of General Assembly.
5. The Group shall authorise a policy and hold budgetary responsibility for I.T. in Church House.
6. The Group shall oversee and monitor the implementation of a Health and Safety Policy.
7. The Group shall oversee and monitor the implementation of a Data Protection Policy.
8. The Group shall develop and implement guidelines about the terms and conditions of Assembly-appointed staff, in consultation with the Staffing Advisory Group and the Salaries Committee. These shall include taxation and benefits, housing policy, the provision of cars and training. Terms and conditions of Assembly-appointed staff who are ordained ministers shall come within the framework of the Plan for Partnership.
9. The Group shall develop and implement guidelines about the terms and conditions of support staff, in consultation with the Salaries Committee. The Group shall also monitor and advise on the level of support staffing in Church House
10. The Group shall be responsible to MCAG as Charity Trustee of the United Reformed Church for that part of the Church's Risk Assessment Policy which relates to the running of Church House, including all matters covered within its Health and Safety policy.
11. The Group shall be responsible for any other related matters which affect the welfare of staff, employment or operational matters which may arise from time to time, for which a formal policy or procedure is required; and any other associated matters referred to it by MCAG or Mission Council.

Ray Adams
13th January 2003



MISSION COUNCIL

25 January 2003

D

Assembly Arrangements Committee The cost of General Assembly

General Assembly costs the church approximately £200,000 every year.
A summary of the costs of General Assembly in both 2001 and 2002 is attached.

As part of its response to the current circumstances, the Assembly Arrangements Committee has been rigorously examining the financial aspects of General Assembly - while remaining mindful of the need to maintain an appropriate conciliar structure for the church. Some key questions follow:

How does Mission Council respond to the following ideas for reducing the cost of General Assembly?

- 1) Ask all former Moderators of Assembly – except the immediate-past Moderator and the previous-past Moderator – not to exercise their right to attend General Assembly, unless they are attending in another capacity. (A practical illustration of this scheme is set out overleaf.)
- 2) Ask all Synod Treasurers not to exercise their right to attend General Assembly, unless they are attending in another capacity.
- 3) Restrict Committee Reports that are included in the Book of Reports and circulated to members, to a maximum of four sides each.
- 4) Include only the certified summary of the financial Report and Accounts in the Book of Reports, thus fulfilling the legal obligation for disclosure. Provide the full financial Report and Accounts only to those who request a copy.
- 5) Remove the Standing Orders from the Book of Reports and print this as a separate document available to all on request.
- 6) Ask Synods not to exercise their right to send 3 representatives each to General Assembly, but to restrict that number to 1 each - excepting Scotland from this pro temp. (This is still in addition to the Moderator and Clerk from each Synod.)

This could reduce the number attending General Assembly by about 54 people, saving approximately £16,000. The reduction in the size of the Book of Reports has yet to be properly costed, but there would be a double saving - through reduced printing costs and reduced distribution costs. (From the attached summary of costs, it may be seen that Printing & Stationery costs rose from £22,000 in 2001 to £40,000 in 2002.)

These ideas are suggested as short-term remedies in the current financial circumstances. We recognise that they do not contribute large savings in the overall budget of the church. Many other options were examined by the Convener and Secretary in advance of a lively meeting with members of the Resource Planning Advisory Group in December 2002. Almost all of the other financially significant options require a constitutional amendment and have not – at this stage - been enumerated here. Indeed, it is not the responsibility of the Assembly Arrangements Committee to determine the nature of General Assembly. That is the responsibility of the church in all of its councils, summarised perhaps by Mission Council.

The Assembly Arrangements Committee is conscious of the present financial difficulties and stands ready to make radical suggestions about General Assembly – and inevitably about the councils that support it. But those ideas will be in response to the need of the church to order its affairs in a certain way – and will not be exclusively determined by financial expediency.

William M McVey
Convener – Assembly Arrangements Committee

6 January 2003

Attachment to the paper on: The cost of General Assembly

Draft scheme for the voluntary withdrawal of former Moderators of General Assembly from attendance at General Assembly.

The suggestion is that the immediate-past Moderator and the previous-past Moderator should retain the right to attend General Assembly. This would result in the Moderator being present in the year in which they hold office and in the two succeeding years; after that they would not attend (in their capacity as a former Moderator of General Assembly).

To illustrate this more clearly:

	Current Moderator	Immediate-past Moderator	Previous-past Moderator
2000	Mahood	McIntosh	Frew
2001	Welch	Mahood	McIntosh
2002	Waller	Welch	Mahood
2003	Pratt	Waller	Welch
2004	X	Pratt	Waller
2005	Y	X	Pratt
2006	Z	Y	X

This arrangement could have the following (maximum) effect:

Former Moderators (Chairman etc) qualifying as members of General Assembly under section B paragraph 2.(5) (g) and as listed for General Assembly 2002 St.Andrews (Assembly Record 2002 page 5):

Gwen Hall; Norman Birnie; Arthur Macarthur; Robert Latham; John Johansen-Berg; Martin Cressey; Rosalind Goodfellow; Wilfred Georgeson; John Francis; Karl Burdett; Richard Murray; Bernard Waterton; Bentley Webster; Peter Arthur; George Sharpe; David Thompson; Victor Smith; Alasdair Walker; Philip Morgan; David Dale; Ray Heritage; Cyril Franks; Edmund Banyard; Keith Forecast; Graham Cook^(b); Malcolm Hanson^(b); Ruth Clarke; Donald Hilton; Jack McKelvey; John Reardon; David Thompson; David Jenkins^(b); Wilma Frew; Peter McIntosh; William Mahood^(c); Elizabeth Welch^(b); John Waller. 36

Less: Immediate-past & Previous-past Moderators	2
Less: Synod Moderators <i>paragraph (b)</i>	4
Less: Committee Conveners <i>paragraph (c)</i>	1
Less: Other categories <i>paragraph (d)</i>	?
Resulting Moderators who might not attend	29

The United Reformed Church
Assembly Arrangements Committee

Summary of Assembly costs

	General Assembly 2003 - expected costs Portsmouth			% change over the previous yr	General Assembly 2002 - actual costs St.Andrews			% change over the previous yr	General Assembly 2001 - actual costs York		
	estimated £'000	% of total costs	budget £'000		actual £'000	% of total costs	budget £'000		actual £'000	% of total costs	budget £'000
Assembly Hall & ancillary rooms etc	foc	0.0%		-100.0%	£ 84.0	31.7%		82.6%	£ 46.0	24.9%	
Accommodation & meals	£ 124.4				£ 100.6				£ 95.1		
Less: reimbursed to the URC by visitors**	£ -				-£ 15.7			115.1%	-£ 7.3		
Net cost of accommodation & meals	£ 124.4	62.2%	£ -	46.5%	£ 84.9	32.0%	£ -	-3.3%	£ 87.8	47.5%	£ -
	<u>£ 124.4</u>	<u>62.2%</u>	<u>£ -</u>	-26.3%	<u>£ 168.9</u>	<u>63.7%</u>	<u>£ -</u>	26.2%	<u>£ 133.8</u>	<u>72.4%</u>	<u>£ -</u>
Members travel costs	£ 39.3	19.7%		-22.2%	£ 50.5	19.1%		115.8%	£ 23.4	12.7%	
Printing & Stationery	£ 31.3	15.7%		-22.9%	£ 40.6	15.3%		82.1%	£ 22.3	12.1%	
Church House resources & transport costs	£ 2.8	1.4%		0.0%	£ 2.8	1.1%		100.0%	£ 1.4	0.8%	
Miscellaneous expenses	£ 2.2	1.1%		0.0%	£ 2.2	0.8%		-42.1%	£ 3.8	2.1%	
Total cost	<u>£ 200.0</u>		<u>£ 200.0</u>	-24.5%	<u>£ 265.0</u>		<u>£ 200.0</u>	43.5%	<u>£ 184.7</u>		<u>£ 175.0</u>
Attendance:											
Members of Assembly	632	88.0%		0.0%	632	88.0%		1.1%	? 625	87.9%	
Guests at URC expense	29	4.0%		0.0%	29	4.0%		0.0%	? 29	4.1%	
Assembly-appointed staff	19	2.6%		0.0%	19	2.6%		0.0%	? 19	2.7%	
Other "Church House" staff	21	2.9%		0.0%	21	2.9%		0.0%	? 21	3.0%	
Others in attendance	17	2.4%		0.0%	17	2.4%		0.0%	? 17	2.4%	
Total attending at URC expense	718		718		718		718		? 711		711
Total cost per person attending	£ 278.55		£ 278.55	-24.5%	£ 369.08		£ 278.55	42.1%	£ 259.77		£ 246.13
Accommodation nights paid by the URC	3		3		4		4		3		3
Total Assembly cost per person per day	£ 92.85		£ 92.85	0.6%	£ 92.27		£ 69.64	6.6%	£ 86.59		£ 82.04
Visitors who reimbursed their costs**					74				? 50		



MISSION COUNCIL

25 January 2003

E

Report of the Resource Planning Advisory Group

RPAG feels that there are certain principles that need to underscore what we do;

- ❖ We should continue to encourage suitable people to train for stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministry, and train them properly.
- ❖ Those who work for the United Reformed Church, ministerial and lay, should be paid appropriately.
- ❖ Pensions for those in retirement should be safeguarded, and housing for retired ministers should continue to be made available to those who need it.

However unless there is a substantial increase in M & M contributions from Synods it will not be possible to maintain such principles and engage in all the other programmes agreed by General Assembly. In general terms a substantial increase is again needed in 2004 because of the increase in National Insurance contributions, the probable need to increase contributions to the URC Ministers' Pension Fund and the fact that M & M offers for 2003 may be as much as £200,000 below Budget. Some committees/budget holders have been asked to make substantial reductions in their expenditure in 2004. If that is achieved and if stipendiary minister numbers now track membership, then, **provided that M & M contributions in 2004 are some 5% over offers for 2003**, M & M increases in later years are likely to be close to RPI. However members of Mission Council should note that this is only a preliminary "broad brush" view: the situation will be a little clearer by March Mission Council, but is unlikely to be much better.

Expenditure in recent years, together with the decline in the value of investments, has depleted the Church's reserves to such an extent that we cannot budget for continuing excesses of expenditure over income.

The Church, therefore, has a stark choice: either to guarantee (insofar as we can make such commitments for the future) a substantial increase in M & M contributions, to discontinue activities previously agreed, or freeze stipends at a time when contributions from Ministers to the Pension Fund are likely to increase on top of the increase in NI contributions.

Such decisions have to be made in 2003.

Julian Macro
9 January 2003

Recommendations:

1. **Mission Council appoints the Revd Bill Wright to be secretary of RPAG until 2006, Mrs Erica Young remaining a member of RPAG until 2005.**

Mrs Erica Young is unable to continue fulfilling the role of Secretary to RPAG, though is happy to complete her appointed term as a member of the Group. The Revd Bill

Wright (who is already a member of the Group) has accepted nomination as Secretary to RPAG for the remainder of his appointed term until 2006 . This requires Mission Council's agreement.

- 2. Stipendiary Ministerial Numbers: RPAG recommends that the formula be revised from stipendiary minister numbers changing at half the rate of change of membership numbers to tracking the change in membership directly.**

The current predictions of the numbers of retirements and other losses over against the projected number of ordinations to stipendiary ministry, show that this direct tracking should be achieved without the need for further action, except the continued restriction on introducing ministers who have received certificates of eligibility.

- 3. Church-Related Community Workers: RPAG recommends that CRCWs be included within the total deployment figures of ministers, with synods having discretion to vary numbers within the agreed total. RPAG recommends that further consideration be given to setting a target allocation of two CRCWs per synod.**

If this recommendation is agreed, it would mean the target number of CRCWs would be 26 rather than 30, as previously agreed.



MISSION COUNCIL

25 January 2003

F

General Secretary's report

At the October meeting, in the light of Mission Council's decision to commit itself "*urgently and radically to rethink the Church's priorities, programmes and processes (consulting widely throughout the United Reformed Church, ecumenically and with secular organisations)*", you instructed me to

"call together a small group to undertake this work as a matter of urgency, and, consulting with MCAG and others as .." (I deemed)... "appropriate, to draw up the terms of reference for the group".

There have been three important developments since October.

(i) Information gathering

After consultation with the incoming Treasurer, I decided that the first phase of the process should be the gathering of information. A simple survey form was devised, and sent to various groups within the life of the church to discern their view of our strengths and weaknesses, and their analysis of the problems we face, together with suggested solutions. District Secretaries, Mission Enablers, Moderators, colleagues at Church House and national Committee Conveners have been circulated thus far. In the near future that will be extended to two more groups, members of FURY Assembly and district M&M secretaries.

Alongside this process, we are seeking to gather information about the cost of component parts of our corporate mission. The cost of Assembly programmes can be assessed from existing figures. Mr David Butler, the Secretary of the Resource Sharing Group, has kindly agreed to supplement this by gathering information about the work that is done by Synods and the costs involved.

(ii) Pastoral letter

A pastoral letter was sent to all ministers and church secretaries in Advent, setting out the process agreed by Mission Council and inviting responses. There has been a significant response by both e- and snail mail. It has been overwhelmingly supportive and encouraging. More importantly, it has released a well of creativity and many offers of help. I know that many elders' and Church

Meetings will be dealing with the letter in the weeks ahead, so I expect the responses to keep rolling in.

(iii) Identifying a small steering group

I have not moved swiftly, quite deliberately. The focus thus far has been on obtaining information. When it has been analysed it will provide rich fare for the group. Thus far the following have been gracious enough to accept invitations to take on this task - Eric Chilton (our new Treasurer), Linda Austin (an elder at Kingston-upon-Thames who is a widely experienced senior manager with Shell) and Graham Cook (Moderator of the Mersey Synod). I am awaiting replies from a young person and I have yet to approach an ecumenical consultant.

I am reluctant to enlarge the group much beyond that.

The Process

(a) Terms of reference

The steering group shall

- receive the information that has been gathered in response to Mission Council's proposed radical review.
- have such powers of consultation as it deems necessary
- devise strategic options for the church which are informed by mission imperatives and sensitive to economic realities, and which will be implemented over a five year period.
- the group shall report regularly to Mission Council and General Assembly.
- it will seek to conclude its work by General Assembly 2007

(b) Working method

The steering group will be responsible for devising strategies, but it will need to 'test' those strategies against the wisdom and vision of a wider, more representative group. Synods are therefore invited to appoint 2 'listeners' each - one minister and one lay person. Their responsibility will be to meet with the steering group twice a year (perhaps coinciding with the October and March Mission Councils), and in between those meetings to devise methods of consultation within their Synods and districts. In other words, they will be crucial channels of communication, keeping the Steering Group informed of the views of the church at local level and enabling them to see the implications of their strategic options.

Reports will be made to every meeting of Mission Council which must retain ultimate responsibility for the process, and therefore have the right to comment freely at any stage.

Communication is critically important. It is important that local churches are kept informed and helped to own the process. Despite the cost and labour involved it therefore seems appropriate to write to ministers and church secretaries at least twice a year. They will also be invited to respond at every stage of the process if they so wish.

Three concluding comments

1. Do not underestimate the amount of work that will be involved in this process. It will be considerable. We have made some provision within Church House for administrative assistance for the process. However generous your intent, it is unrealistic to expect that the General Secretary can drop everything else to concentrate on this. What is realistic is a pruning back of commitments, most particularly attendance at committee meetings, and a judicious re-allocation of some tasks. Please be patient when things that should be done are either left undone or delayed.
2. Do not underestimate the amount of time that this process will take. It is essential that we hold together spirituality, theological reflection, missiological analysis and financial discipline as we go about this task. What we are attempting is not simply (!) the re-engineering of an organisational structure. The church is an organisation, but it is more than an organisation. What we are attempting is changing a culture, and that is more akin to turning an oil tanker through 180 degrees than putting a power boat into reverse. Five years might seem a generous allocation of time to complete this work. We might find that this simply brings us to the end of phase one.
3. We can feel quietly encouraged. Whilst it is far too early to offer a serious analysis of the material that I have received, I can confirm that there is huge energy in certain parts of the church, a passionate belief in the gospel and a sacrificial commitment to discipleship. I would be the last person to suggest that is universal amongst us, but I do believe that the Lord is equipping us for the facing of these days, and for that I give grateful thanks.



MISSION COUNCIL
25 January 2003

G

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

- ◆ The Review Group for the Moderator of West Midlands Synod convened by Mrs Ruth Clarke recommends the reappointment of Revd Elizabeth Welch to serve for a further term of 5 years from September 2003 to 31st August 2008.
- ◆ The Nominating Group for Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith & Order convened by Revd Elizabeth Welch recommends the appointment of Revd Richard John Mortimer for a period of five years, from 1 August 2003 until 31 July 2008.
- ◆ Racial Justice – Convener: to note resignation of Revd Raymond Singh
- ◆ The following have accepted nomination:

Mersey Synod Moderator Nominating Group – Convener: Mr Simon Rowntree
Eastern Synod Moderator Review Group – Convener: Dr Anthony Jeans

Conference of European Churches, Trondheim 2003 - Revd Malcolm Hanson

Racial Justice – Convener: Revd Andrew Prasad
Communications and Editorial – Convener elect: Revd Martin Hazell
Doctrine, Prayer and Worship – Revd Professor Alan Sell commencing January 2003
Inter -Faith Relations – Secretary-elect [2004-2008]: Mrs Jean Potter

Life & Witness Programme - Revd Peter - 2004 - Revd Helling

Congregational Fund Board – Revd David Helyar
Milton Mount Foundation – Revd David Cuckson

- ◆ The Nominations Committee supports Ministries request to merge the National Assessment Board panel and the panel for Assessment Conferences - CRCW - Sub-Section.
- ◆ The Nominations Committee has discussed whether it is appropriate for there to be a panel of 20 when reviewing or seeking to nominate moderators. Mission Council is asked to express a view on whether to ask Assembly to address this matter.
 1. How large a group is needed?
 2. Should there be equal numbers from the appointing synod and the wider church?
 3. How would a range of opinion be taken into account if the appointing group were smaller?

These questions arise from our conviction that summoning twenty people, including ten from a wide spread constituency, is not an efficient way of doing the necessary job, especially when a review is proposed rather than a new appointment.

remind them they asked me to do this!



MISSION COUNCIL

25 January 2003

H

Additional business

1. Resolution on the situation in Zimbabwe proposed by the Church and Society Committee

Background:

Like the rest of the world, we maintain a prayerful watch on developments in the Middle East. However, we are also deeply troubled about events in other parts of the world, not least those with which we have an especial bond through our Commitment for Life programme. Zimbabwe is one, and a letter received two weeks ago from the Director of Silveira House, Fr Dieter Scholz, brings home vividly how the rapidly deteriorating situation in that country is affecting our partners there.

After mentioning that food bought from South Africa can only be used for famine relief and not to maintain Zimbabwe's institutions, Fr Scholz states bleakly that, with all its staff and students in attendance, Silveira House has food only for ten days and fuel for less than a week. 'For the first time in the 35-year history of Silveira House I had to ask the staff who have no urgent teaching commitments to stay at home because we can neither feed nor transport them', Fr Scholz writes. The mood at Silveira House can only be imagined, for after his colleagues were given this news Fr Scholz records that 'there was total silence. No questions. No comments. That, too, has never happened before.'

But, Fr Scholz continues, 'we will not give up, and I will do everything I can to keep the Centre going. These days my heart resonates with the prayer of Habakkuk: 'Though the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit is on the vines; though the produce of the olive fails and the fields yield no food; though the flock is cut off from the fold and there is no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the God of my salvation'.

Mission Council is encouraged to pass this resolution and express publicly its concern about the situation in Zimbabwe and its practical support for our sisters and brothers in Silveira House.

Resolution:

The Mission Council of the United Reformed Church, having received news of the continuing deterioration of the situation in Zimbabwe

- Expresses its support for our partners and people in Zimbabwe in these difficult times
- Encourages Christian Aid to be more responsive to the situation in Zimbabwe and requests that a delegation meet with the Director of Christian Aid to explore this further

Requests that the Moderator of General Assembly communicate the church's concern about the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe to Her Majesty's Government and the Zimbabwe High Commission.

2. Resolutions on Iraq and the International Situation

The Mission Council of the United Reformed Church, noting the increasing military preparations for an invasion of Iraq and the universal rejection by churches and church leaders in the United States, the United Kingdom and around the world of war as the solution to the threat posed by Saddam Hussein's regime

- Expresses its concern that the scale of this military build-up creates a momentum that increases the inevitability of war
- Supports the view that the UN Weapons Inspectors should be allowed to complete their work
- Believes that, in the 'post 9.11' world, United States and United Kingdom-led military action against Iraq will further destabilise the international situation
- Urges, therefore, that more be done to effect a peaceful outcome that affirms western respect for the Arab world and a desire to foster just and peaceful relations between all God's peoples
- Recognises the considerable stress and worry for the families and friends of military personnel already sent to the region and for those with relatives and friends living in the region
- Urges its congregations to seek ways of ministering to those facing such anxiety
- Calls upon members of the United Reformed Church to reach out to people of the other Abrahamic (Christian, Jewish, Muslim) faiths and covenant with them to work and pray for peace in Iraq and throughout the Middle East, recognising that the journey to such commitment will be costly and painful as difficult and divisive issues are faced and wrestled with before our God who calls us all to live with justice and mercy
- Encourages all those who are praying and witnessing for peace, giving thanks for their ministry.

*and for good
community
relations in
the UK*

3. Mission Council resolves that its resolutions on the international situation shall be

- communicated to all churches and councils of the United Reformed Church
- placed on the United Reformed Church's website

- **communicated by letter to the Prime Minister by the Moderator of General Assembly.**

4. Resolution from the Group reviewing the Revd John Steele in the post of Secretary for Life and Witness

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly appoints the Revd John Steele as Secretary for Life & Witness for a further period of three years, from 1 October 2003.

5. Resolution from the Group reviewing Mrs Karen Bulley in the post of Pilots Development Officer *(to be reviewed)*

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly appoints Mrs Karen Bulley as Pilots Development Officer for a further period of three years, from 1 October 2003.

6. Resolution from the Group appointed to bring a nomination for Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith and Order *(to be reviewed)*

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, appoints the Revd Richard John Mortimer as Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith and Order for a period of five years, from 1 August 2003.

7. Resolution from the Group appointed to bring a nomination for Moderator of the East Midlands Synod *(to be reviewed)*

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council appoints the Revd Terry Oakley as Moderator of the East Midlands Synod for a period of seven years from 1st October 2003.

Progress Report

The Methodist Church

The United Reformed Church

Towards an appropriate pastoral strategy for the three nations in which we serve

This paper is intended to begin a conversation wherever, in either church, it rings bells, finds an echo, stirs up a response. Contributions to this conversation should be sent either to Revd Ray Adams, Deputy General Secretary of the United Reformed Church or to Revd Keith Reed of the Methodist Church - or to both - before 24 October 2003.

The background

The October 2002 Mission Council of the United Reformed Church invited the Methodist Church to consider whether "there might be ways in which we can work together more closely in discovering an appropriate pastoral strategy for the three nations which we serve."

The October 2002 meeting of the Methodist Council received the invitation warmly and asked for work to be done to "unpack" the implications of the invitation.

A meeting was held on 25 November between:

For the Methodist Church:

The Rev Dr Nigel Collinson, Secretary of the Conference

The Rev Keith Reed, Assistant Secretary of the Conference

The Rev Peter Sulston, Ecumenical Officer.

For the United Reformed Church:

The Revd Dr David Cornick, General Secretary

The Revd Ray Adams, Deputy General Secretary

The Revd Sheila Maxey, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

This group prepared a first draft, which was presented to Methodist Council in December. The group met again on 20 January 2003 to produce a revised version to present to the United Reformed Church Mission Council and the Methodist Council with a view to wide distribution as a discussion paper.

Why now?

- 1. The formal conversations** between the Methodist Church and the Church of England which resulted in the proposal for *An Anglican Methodist Covenant*, and the informal trilateral conversations which included the United Reformed Church, have raised the ecumenical temperature.
- 2. The question that continually bubbles up**, with varying degrees of pressure, from **the widespread shared life of our two churches** is: "What kind of permissions from our councils would enable and extend that shared life?"
- 3. Both churches are seeking radical answers to the challenges of mission today** in the context of their own numerical decline, ageing membership and attendant financial difficulties. Both churches are facing the fact that in parts of the country many of our local church structures are under considerable stress, and our ministry resources are being

dangerously stretched. Both churches are presently engaged in various ways in responding to these challenges.

There are **three existing models**, often very successful, for local shared work between our two churches; united churches, united areas (i.e. the merging of circuit and URC district) and a more informal sharing of ministry where a minister from one tradition agrees to offer oversight to a small, often rural church of the other tradition.

However, this new proposal for a pastoral strategy is not just about existing co-operation, but also about **exploring new possibilities** of talking to one another, at every level, about deployment plans and concerns, about sharing resources, about how to be the Church together, or on behalf of each other.

The present situation calls for an **urgent ecumenical response**, not in terms of unions or mergers, but in terms of a co-ordinated strategy. Such a strategy would be, at its heart, about the Christian presence in worship and witness in local communities across the three nations – and not just about survival.

A pastoral strategy – what might it look like?

1. It will **encourage our churches**, locally, at circuit/ URC district level, at Methodist district/URC synod level, and at the three-nation level, where there is genuine potential, to explore creative ways of being an effective Christian presence in the various natural communities in which we are present. Both churches are spreading ministry too thinly for effective church life and witness.
For example:
 - A market town receiving part of both a URC and a Methodist minister's time, neither of whom is resident - why not agree to have one resident minister?
 - Where circuits are linking churches in very disparate communities and where the URC is reorganising its churches into clusters, sometimes also stretched across communities – we need to talk to each other.
2. Such a strategy would take a **variety of forms** depending on the local situation. In parts of England the natural partner would be the Church of England or the Baptists – in Wales and Scotland yet other partners. **This is not an exclusive, bi-lateral proposal, but the reality is that the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church are involved in more ecumenical partnerships together, in many cases including other partners, than any other of the churches – about 400 in total.** It would be a matter of building on relationships which already exist and painting a picture of what else might be possible – opening some doors and urging the churches to step through.
3. The vital question, given our different ways of ordering our churches, will be **“Who talks to whom?”** Talks about local possibilities need to take place both between the Methodist circuit superintendent and the local United Reformed Church minister, and between the synod moderator and the district chair - and they will point to the other appropriate conversation partners.

Wales and Scotland

In Scotland, both our churches have a limited geographical spread. Where they coincide, there are already several united churches and some new proposals.

As the United Reformed Church national synod of Wales is entirely English-speaking, there are language limits to joint work. However, in south Wales there is already an informal united area and a significant number of joint churches.

There is potential for development in both nations.

Some elements in a Methodist/United Reformed Church pastoral strategy

1. Deepening our shared local life.

At the April 2002 consultation on Methodist/United Reformed Church United Areas, the Church of England observer commented:

The Church of England is mystified at the way the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church can unite locally in so many vibrant ways when they have different approaches to ministry and to church governance.

Another observer, from the USA, commented on the tension between a shared and developing local vision and remaining faithful to, and drawing on the riches of the two traditions. We need to know and understand each other better, accepting difference and seeming incompatibility.

In the trilateral informal conversations between our two churches and the Church of England (which produced the report *Conversations on the Way to Unity*), we began to ask deeper questions of one another – an example of how these conversations, inspired by the formal conversations, have raised the ecumenical temperature.

The United Areas consultation identified the following areas which local experience suggested needed further work in order improve the quality of our shared life:

- **The role of the minister** - especially the relationship between ministers and local congregations, the collegiality of Methodist ministers, and the place of obedience to church authority in the two churches' understanding of ministry.
- **The relationship between personal leadership and authority** exercised by ministers, superintendents, moderators, district chairs **and the leadership and authority exercised by councils**, such as the Church Council/ Church Meeting, or the Circuit Meeting/District Council - with special reference to the role of the superintendent and the URC resistance to personal leadership beyond the local.
- **The meaning of ordination** with particular reference to the eldership and to the question of lay presidency at the sacraments.

2. Some practical issues and how they are being approached.

- **The sharing of resources at Methodist Church House and United Reformed Church House.**
Current proposals for change in the Methodist Church arising from the Leadership Task group report and the present openness to radical proposals in the United Reformed Church may offer a unique opportunity to share our plans for the future. An audit of the extent to which central programme staff work with their opposite numbers in the other church has revealed a close working relationship in many areas, often working together on the same agenda across several denominations.
- **A joint way of collecting local statistics from local united churches.** The Methodist move to collecting statistics from local congregations rather than circuits

opens a window of opportunity. It is worth pursuing an agreed approach across both churches rather than seeking a special arrangement for LEPs. Both churches are involved in a wider discussion on this matter including the Baptist Union and the Church of England as well as others, but the possibility of bi-lateral agreement (or tri-lateral including the Baptist Union) should not wait for agreement across the board.

- **Induction courses** for the ministers of one tradition about the other, when beginning to serve in a united situation.
The Liaison Committee is exploring regional induction days/courses.
- **Denominational literature and joint churches.** There is no agreement on the way forward here, as some want to leave denominational identity behind, while others want to contribute it, as a living tradition, to the LEP.
- **The discipline of ministers** serving more than one tradition. The two churches are working together on a good practice guide to one another's disciplinary procedures for local churches, and an agreed protocol covering the legal questions. The aim is to develop confidence in and clarity about one another's systems.
- **The Liaison Committee** is our only formal meeting place. As the pastoral strategy becomes clearer and more wide-ranging the remit of the Liaison Committee and the nature of its authority will need to be revisited.

What next?

We commend this strategy to both our churches. It is intended to be part of an on-going conversation about co-operation in mission in the three nations. It in no way excludes other conversations with other partners: rather it should be seen as helping to enable a flexible and diverse missionary response in a changing ecumenical landscape.

22 January 2003.