



# MISSION COUNCIL

## *22 – 24 March 2002*

# MINUTES

### **FRIDAY, 22<sup>ND</sup> MARCH 2002**

Worship was led by the Chaplain, the Revd Flora Winfield. The Moderator, the Revd Elizabeth Welch, led Bible Study on Jeremiah 18: 1-6 and 2 Corinthians 4: 6-11.

#### **02/19 Welcome**

The Moderator welcomed everyone to the meeting, mentioning in particular the Revd Adrian Bulley (Moderator, Wessex Synod), Ms Amanda Wade (FURY Council), Mr Lawrence Moore (Director, Windermere Centre), Ms Ruth Norton (deputising for the Revd Nannette Lewis Head, convener, Equal Opportunities Committee), Mr Peter Etwell (deputising for Dr Peter Clarke, Northern Synod), Mrs Joan Trippier (deputising for the Revd Roz Harrison, South Western Synod), Mr Douglas Hogge (deputising for the Revd Dr Robin Pagan, Thames North Synod), the Revd Michael Davies (deputising for Mrs Marion Bayley, Southern Synod) and the Revd Ian Smith (deputising for the Revd Liz Byrne, Yardley Hastings Centre Minister).

#### **02/20 Attendance**

There were 72 members present with 19 staff and others in attendance and Mrs Barbara Hedgecock (Minutes Secretary).

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Philip Mawer (Theological Reflector), the Revd Nannette Lewis Head (convener, Equal Opportunities Committee), Dr Peter Clarke (Northern Synod), the Revd Roz Harrison (South Western Synod), the Revd Dr Robin Pagan (Thames North Synod), Mrs Marion Bayley (Southern Synod), the Revd Kristin Ofstad (Wales Synod), the Revd John Arthur (Scotland Synod), Dr Andrew Bradstock (Secretary for Church and Society), Ms Avis Reaney (Financial Secretary), Mrs Jenny Carpenter (Rural Consultant), the Revd Liz Byrne (Yardley Hastings Centre Minister) and the Revd Christine Craven (Secretary for Ministries).

#### **02/21 Minutes of Mission Council 26th January 2002**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th January 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: addition of commas in first paragraph; Paragraphs 02/01 and 02/06 "T/the Revd Brian Evans" should read "Mr Brian Evans".

#### **02/22 Matters Arising**

##### **02/05 Ministers' consultation**

The Revd Bill Mahood presented the final report on behalf of the group including the group's recommendation **that the suggestion of holding a ministers' consultation not be pursued at the present time.** After some discussion Mrs Helen Mee proposed and the Revd Simon Thomas seconded that Mission Council consider the matter further in one year's time. This was not agreed. After further debate Mission Council

agreed to accept the recommendation of the group that such a consultation should not take place.

### **02/23 Additional Business**

Proposed changes to the agenda were agreed.

### **02/24 Nominations Committee (Paper H)**

The Revd Glyn Jenkins, convener, introduced the report. Paragraphs 1.1 – 1.3 were matters of information as follows: Mrs Ruth Clarke would convene a review group for the Moderator of the West Midlands Synod; the Revd Dr John Sutcliffe would convene a nominating group for the Moderator of the East Midlands Synod and the Revd Elizabeth Nash would convene a review group for the post of Secretary for Life and Witness (subject to approval by the Resource Planning Advisory Group (RPAG) following advice from the Staffing Advisory Group (SAG)).

Paragraph 1.4 Mr Jenkins announced that the Revd Elizabeth Welch would convene a nominating group for the post of Secretary for Ecumenical Relations (subject to approval by RPAG following advice from SAG).

Paragraph 3 Mr. Jenkins moved that: **Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, appoints the Revd Adrian Bulley as a Trustee of the Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme (STETS).** This was agreed.

Paragraph 4 The matter of the term of those serving on the Retired Ministers' Housing Sub-Committee would be dealt with by the Assembly. Discussion took place over the term of service on committees in general, including the suggestion that it should be reduced to 3 years with the option to extend for a further 3 years. Consideration might also be given when appointing the secretary and convener that their termination of service should not coincide. The Revd Elizabeth Caswell proposed and the Revd Kathryn Price seconded: **that the Nominations Committee be asked to present a paper on the matter to a future meeting of Mission Council.** This was agreed.

Mission Council was informed that the Revd Derek Lindfield had resigned as convener of the Youth and Children's Work Committee and the Moderator thanked the Revd Kathryn Price for her willingness to take the convenership early. Thanks were recorded to the Revd Derek Lindfield.

The General Secretary presented the report and unanimous proposal of the Nominating Group for Moderator of the South Western Synod. He proposed that: **Acting on behalf of the General Assembly, Mission Council appoints the Revd David Miller as Moderator of the South Western Synod for a period of seven years from September 1st 2002.** This was agreed.

### **02/25 Grants and Loans Group (Paper A)**

The Revd Angus Duncan, convener, introduced the report, and the Moderator thanked him.

### **02/26 Newtown Methodist Church (Paper E)**

The Revd Peter Poulter, Moderator of the Northern Synod, presented this paper and moved the following resolution:

**Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, resolves to authorise the transfer by the present trustees of the land now forming the site of the Newtown Road Methodist Church Carlisle to trustees for the Methodist Church at a nominal consideration only in accordance with the provisions of Section 36(9)(b) of the Charities Act 1993 to be held on appropriate Methodist trusts.** This was agreed, it having been noted that it was expected that the Methodist Church would pay the legal expenses of the transfer.

#### **02/27 Yorkshire Synod restructuring**

The Revd Arnold Harrison, Moderator of the Yorkshire Synod, spoke briefly about the review of its structure being undertaken by the Synod. The Clerk drew attention to the fact that some of the proposals, particularly those relating to the creation of a single district council, may not be possible under the existing Structure of the United Reformed Church. The Northern Synod reported that it too was thinking about structure. These matters would be further considered at the October 2002 meeting of Mission Council.

#### **02/28 Mission Strategy (Paper I paragraph 3)**

The General Secretary proposed that strategic mission thinking be adopted as a major Mission Council theme for 2002-3. This had been prompted by discussions with the Moderators of Synods. The proposal was agreed, and the General Secretary was asked to prepare a paper for the October 2002 Mission Council meeting.

#### **02/29 Elections**

The Clerk explained the procedure for voting for members of the Mission Council Advisory Group (MCAG), RPAG and SAG. *See Minutes 02/36, 02/41 and 02/43*

#### **02/30 Resource Planning Advisory Group (RPAG) and Budget (Paper E from January 2002 meeting, Paper G and letter dated February 13th 2002 from Deputy General Secretary to members of Mission Council.)**

The convener of RPAG, the Revd Julian Macro, introduced this item, noting that it followed discussions at the October 2001 and January 2002 meetings. Mr Macro reported that there had been a deficit of £400,000 in 2001 which was masked in the published accounts by accounting conventions concerning the sale of property and the purchase of replacements. The main reasons for this deficit were that Ministry and Mission (M&M) fund receipts and income from interest were lower than budgeted and that ministry costs were higher than budgeted. The proposed budget for 2003 assumed a deficit of £250,000. Mr Macro spoke in detail about Paper G and he and the Treasurer, Mr Graham Stacy, responded to questions requesting clarification of the issues. Mission Council divided into groups to discuss the proposals contained in Paper G. There followed a plenary session during which the groups reported on their discussions.

**Mission Council accepted the following suggestions of the Resource Planning Advisory Group:**

- **That the aim should be to increase Ministry and Mission contributions by at least 4.5% over the pledges for 2002.**

- **That a basic ministerial stipend increase of 2.5% should be included in the budget.** (It was noted that though this would probably match inflation, it would be unlikely to track average earnings.)
- **That a resolution be presented to the General Assembly which would withdraw the provision which allows ministers to continue working on full stipend after reaching the age of 65.** *See Minute 02/47*
- **That Ministries Committee should be asked to seek a reduction of 5 in the predicted number of stipendiary ministers to be paid in 2003.** (It was noted that this would be consistent with General Assembly policy.)
- **That the Training Committee budget should be reduced by £25,000.**

The view was expressed that it would be right to consider increasing the income of the church, and the Revd Nigel Uden, Moderator of the Southern Synod, gave notice that that synod intended to present to the General Assembly a resolution concerning advocacy.

The Chaplain led worship and Mission Council adjourned.

## **SATURDAY, 23<sup>RD</sup> MARCH 2002**

Mission Council joined in worship led by the Chaplain which included Bible Study led by the Moderator and the induction of Mr Lawrence Moore as Director of the Windermere Centre.

### **02/31 Mission Council Advisory Group (MCAG) (Paper I)**

The Deputy General Secretary presented the report of MCAG.

Paragraphs 1 – 4 were matters for information.

Paragraph 5 The Deputy General Secretary presented the proposed terms of reference for the review of the Windermere Centre, as requested by the January Mission Council:

**Mission Council agrees to the holding of a review of the Windermere Centre with the following remit:**

- 1) **to review in general terms the operation of the Centre since its opening in 1984/5;**
  - 2) **to evaluate its findings against the original (and any later) statements of the Centre's purpose;**
  - 3) **to assess the needs for a URC training centre;**
  - 4) **to consider the proposals for a closer relationship between the Centre and Carver church, Windermere;**
- and 5) **to make proposals for the future of the Centre.**

**The review will be carried out by a group of four people, including a convener, with a report to be made to the meeting of Mission Council in March 2003. The cost of the review will be carried on the Mission Council budget. The group should consult previous Directors with regard to the first part of its remit, and representatives of the Life and Witness Committee and Carver church with regard to the fourth. Otherwise it should be free to operate as it wishes within budget constraints agreed with the Deputy General Secretary.**

This was agreed. It was also agreed that nominees should be approached, and that their names should be reported to the October Mission Council.

Paragraph 6 The General Secretary presented the following resolution on behalf of MCAG, after advice from the Legal Adviser: **General Assembly having recognised the members of MCAG as trustees of the URC at its meeting in July 2001, Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, now instructs the Church's legal advisers to draw up a Deed of Indemnity to indemnify the members of MCAG present and future, jointly and severally from and against all liability arising from the exercise of their powers and functions as trustees. The General Secretary and the Moderator of the General Assembly are duly authorised to execute the Deed on behalf of the church.** This was agreed.

#### **02/32 Section O working group (Paper J)**

The General Secretary introduced the paper and suggested that the proposed resolution should be examined by the following group of people: Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith, the Revd James Breslin, Mrs Ann Sheldon, the Revd Richard Mortimer and Mrs Elsie Gilliland. The group would report back during the plenary session on Sunday morning. This was agreed. *See Minute 02/48*

The General Secretary sought guidance regarding a process to handle the cases of ministers who may need to be suspended or their names deleted from the Roll of Ministers not for disciplinary reasons but because they were incapable or medically unable to minister. Various comments were made by members. It was noted that if a new group was formed it should retain the expertise of the core members of the Section O Group.

#### **02/33 Proposal for an Occupational Health Service (Paper F)**

The Deputy General Secretary gave a brief introduction to this paper, noting that Mission Council was required to give a response to the resolution of Assembly 2000. This would be further discussed in the plenary session on Sunday. *See Minute 02/45*

#### **02/34 Youth and Children's Work Review (Papers B, B<sup>1</sup> and B<sup>2</sup>)**

The Revd Elizabeth Caswell, convener of the Review Group, presented the report, highlighting the strong view of the Review Group that resources should be concentrated on local work.

The Revd Malcolm Hanson, speaking on behalf of the Northamptonshire District Council and the East Midlands Synod, made a statement about the recommendation concerning the National Youth Resource Centre at Yardley Hastings. He reported that the district council and the synod asked that time be allowed for more thorough work to be done on this issue. The Deputy General Secretary, as their line manager, read a statement from the Youth and Children's Work staff. They declined to offer a view, but urged Mission Council to consider the report as a whole.

The Revd Kathryn Price, convener of the Youth and Children's Work Committee, reported that the Committee had accepted the recommendations made by the Review Group (with one dissenting voice concerning Yardley Hastings) and said that the review should be seen as part of a continuing process. The Committee proposed to present to the Assembly the draft resolutions contained in Paper B1 and would welcome Mission Council's advice. Mission Council then divided into groups to discuss designated topics from the report and the draft resolutions. *See Minute 02/35*

**02/35 Youth and Children's Work Review (Papers B, B<sup>1</sup> and B<sup>2</sup>)** *Continued from Minute 02/34*

In the plenary session the comments made by the groups were reported, and after considerable discussion Mission Council agreed to advise the Committee that resolution 1 could be expanded to refer to the importance of local work, resolution 3 might include a requirement to report back and a resolution affirming Pilots might be included.

Concerning the proposal to cease using the buildings at Yardley Hastings as a Resource Centre for youth work, following considerable discussion Mission Council agreed that it would advise the Committee to proceed with its resolution 5. The Deputy General Secretary suggested that members be encouraged to communicate the nature of the discussions concerning this issue as widely as possible with a view to enabling a good debate to take place at General Assembly. He also proposed that MCAG be asked to invite a group of people to consider how such a decision might be implemented should the General Assembly pass the resolution. This was agreed.

Concerning the Youth and Children's Work Training (YCWT) programme, the Committee was advised to delete the words following "development" in resolution 7. The following resolution was then presented: **Mission Council instructs the Youth and Children's Work and Training Committees to undertake a review of the management and deployment arrangements for the YCWT programme, and to report to Mission Council in March 2003.** This was agreed.

It was agreed that the Youth and Children's Work Committee be advised to proceed with the remainder of the Review programme. The Moderator thanked the Revd Elizabeth Caswell and the Review Group for their major piece of work.

**02/36 Elections** *Continued from Minute 02/29*

The Clerk reported that she had received a nomination of an existing member of SAG to be the convener of that group; she therefore sought permission to seek two people to serve as members. This was agreed.

The following appointments were agreed:

MCAG member - Mr John Ellis

SAG convener - Mrs Val Morrison

RPAG members - Mr Steve Wood and the Revd Bill Wright.

The Clerk reported that further nominations were required. *See Minutes 02/41 and 02/43*

**02/37 Authority Task Group (Paper D)**

The Revd Adrian Bulley, convener of the task group, presented the modified report which had been requested by Mission Council at the October meeting. Mr Bulley noted that resolutions 1, 5 and 9 contained new material. Mission Council agreed that the report should be presented to the Assembly together with all the resolutions, though it was agreed that part iii) of resolution 5 should be amended to read: General Assembly agrees that the proposals for a radical review of the church's structure should be remitted to Mission Council, though consideration should not be given to this until after the Task Group on Personal and Conciliar Leadership has completed its work, so that such consideration may be given in the light of the theological work on episcopate which will be contained in its report.

The Moderator thanked Mr Bulley and the task group for their work.

**02/38 Development of the Church Related Community Work Programme (Paper K)**

The Revd Graham Long introduced the paper on The Development of the Church Related Community Work Programme to be discussed by groups on the following day. *See Minute 02/44*

**02/39 Assembly Resolutions (Paper ASS)**

The Deputy General Secretary introduced the paper, noting that the words “recommends that this be adopted as good practice.” had been omitted in error from the end of the accompanying text to the first resolution on page 7 of Paper ASS. This paper and other matters would be discussed by groups meeting on the following day. *See Minute 02/46*

**02/40 Matters of International Concern**

The Deputy General Secretary suggested that the Moderator might send letters expressing support and concern to our partner churches in Israel/Palestine, India, Zimbabwe and Pakistan. The Revd Philip Woods, Secretary for International Relations, addressed Mission Council with permission and it was agreed that he should draft letters for the Moderator to send. A letter would also be drafted for the Moderator to send to the Israeli Ambassador in London. *See Minute 02/49*

The Chaplain led worship and Mission Council adjourned.

**SUNDAY, 24<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2002**

Mission Council, led by the Moderator and the Chaplain, met for worship which included the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

**02/41 Elections** *Continued from Minutes 02/29 & 02/36*

Mission Council appointed Mrs Veronica Taylor to serve on SAG. The Clerk reported that there still remained one vacancy for SAG and two vacancies for MCAG. The Deputy General Secretary proposed that in view of the importance of having sufficient members on both these groups further time be given for nominations to be received. This was agreed. *See Minute 02/43*

**02/42 Canon Derek Palmer**

The Revd Sheila Maxey, speaking with permission, informed members of Mission Council that Canon Derek Palmer had died on March 20th 2002. Mr Palmer had been known to many as a leading ecumenical figure whose enthusiasm had been an inspiration. Thanks were given for his life and it was agreed that the Moderator would send a letter of sympathy to his widow on behalf of Mission Council.

Mission Council divided into groups to discuss Papers F, J, K and ASS, together with additional tabled matters.

**02/43 Elections** *Continued from Minutes 02/29, 02/36 & 02/41*

The Clerk announced the nominations for SAG and MCAG. Following the taking of votes by show of hand Mrs Helen Mee and the Revd Simon Thomas were appointed to serve on

MCAG. It was agreed that those nominated for SAG would be approached in the order of votes cast.

It was noted that the relationship between the terms of service of members of Mission Council and MCAG had caused some difficulty in the ability to nominate people who would be able to serve for more than a very short period. It was agreed that consideration should be given to how this situation might be remedied.

**02/44 Church Related Community Work (Paper K) Continued from Minute 02/38**

Groups reported on their discussions, and the Ministries Committee heard the advice given.

**02/45 Occupational Health Service (Paper F) Continued from Minute 02/33**

Groups reported on their discussions; general agreement with the paper was expressed, though amendments to the detail and presentation were proposed. It was agreed that the Deputy General Secretary should redraft the report and its conclusions in accordance with the views of Mission Council and present it to the General Assembly.

**02/46 Assembly Resolutions (Paper ASS) Continued from Minute 02/39**

Groups reported on their discussions concerning all the committees apart from the Racial Justice Committee. The committees undertook to take the comments into account when preparing their reports and resolutions for presentation to the Assembly.

Concerning the remit of the Racial Justice Committee, it was agreed that for the coming Assembly this should be considered to be a draft remit, and that the Committee would prepare a draft of a replacement to be presented to a future meeting of Mission Council.

**02/47 Retirement from full-time stipendiary service Continued from Minute 02/30**

It was proposed that the following resolution should be presented to the Assembly:

**Assembly agrees that full-time stipendiary service for ministers and CRCWs will cease at the end of the month in which a person reaches her/his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday unless**

**a) a commitment to extend had been agreed through current procedures before 4 July 2002;**

**or**

**b) a case has been accepted by the Accreditation Sub-Committee that there are exceptional reasons why the particular piece of stipendiary service should be extended for a limited time.**

This was agreed, noting that the supporting text would include reference to the planning of termed appointments in advance, and to previous resolutions which would be superseded.

**02/48 Section O (Paper J) Continued from Minute 02/32**

Having heard the report of the group appointed to consider the draft resolution, Mission Council approved the resolution, except that it asked that an additional sub-paragraph be inserted into Paragraph G.10 to make it clear that the church's Legal Adviser would be present at any Hearing of an Appeals Commission. Mission Council authorised those charged with oversight of Section O to draft the necessary changes to the resolution, which would then be presented to the Assembly.

**02/49 Letter to the Israeli Ambassador, London Continued from Minute 02/40**



Mission Council considered a draft letter which it was proposed should be sent by the Moderator of the General Assembly to the Israeli Ambassador. Some small changes were suggested, and it was agreed that the letter, suitably amended, should be sent as proposed.

### **02/50 An Assembly Commission**

The General Secretary made the following statement and proposal:

“The church faces a difficult pastoral problem with one of its ministers who is in dispute with a district council, a synod and the Assembly about the way the minister has been treated over many years.

At the end of January this year an Appeals Commission recommended that a case between the district council and this minister be resolved not by the normal methods of the Section O process but by ‘a different process’ which would allow all voices to be heard.

The series of interconnecting pastoral problems which are gathered together in the experience of this minister and the councils of the church which have been involved has occupied many people.

The MCAG meeting on March 7 authorised the officers of the Assembly to bring to Mission Council a recommendation about the way in which this matter should be managed. It was their clear view that it should not be dealt with by the General Secretariat because handling it there is distorting the handling of the rest of the church’s business. They were equally clear that a corporate response to the management of the matter was important for reasons of balance and equity.

So, the officers bring to Mission Council a request that an Assembly Commission be set up to manage this matter, and hopefully to move it towards resolution, in consultation with the councils of the church. It is their recommendation that the Commission consist of three people, and that the Commission have available to it advice from our Legal Adviser, a psychiatrist, and the Clerk of Assembly. Detailed terms of reference will be made available to the Commission by the officers, but for reasons of confidentiality which rightly surrounds the Section O process, these details must remain confidential.”

Mission Council agreed to the appointment of the proposed Commission in the terms suggested.

### **02/51 Close**

The Moderator thanked all those who were attending their last meeting of Mission Council, mentioning in particular the Revd Bill Mahood (immediate past Moderator), Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith (Clerk), the Revd Graham Long (convener, Ministries Committee), the Revd Alasdair Pratt (convener, Assembly Arrangements Committee), the Revd Nanette Lewis Head in her absence (convener, Equal Opportunities Committee), Dr Donald South (convener, SAG), the Revd Glyn Jenkins (convener, Nominations Committee), the Revd Flora Winfield (Chaplain), and Miss Naomi Davies. The Moderator paid special tribute to the Revd John Waller, for whom this would be his last meeting of Mission Council as the Deputy General Secretary, speaking of his wisdom and leadership and all the work done both in public and behind the scenes with the staff in Church House, committees and the wider church.

The General Secretary thanked the Moderator for her leadership during the past year, mentioning in particular the gracious way in which she had presided over the business, her acute sense of theological issues and her incisive and commanding Bible Studies.

Closing Worship was led by the Chaplain.

**GRANTS AND LOANS GROUP (GLG)**

**Annual Report to Mission Council - for March, 2002**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

The Grants and Loans Group of the Mission Council was brought into being in April 2000 in order to bring together the allocation of grants to churches from Central Church funds, formerly administered by AGOGAL (for developing local outreach and mission), and to allocate grants and loans from the Church Buildings Fund. It was also to be the clearing house for grant applications to the CWM Self-Support Fund. (GLG has learned that CWM hope to be in a position in 2005 to consider making funds available to the partner churches though not necessarily in the same way as before.)

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

Arising from a large allocation of grants in 1999 and 2000 from the Church Buildings Fund for assistance in the provision of disabled facilities, and subsequent significant reduction in available funds, Mission Council in October 2001 gave its approval for a revised policy in the allocation of these funds as follows:

- 1. That for the foreseeable future only the interest of the Capital available to the Church Buildings Fund (CBF) will be used for Grants.**
- 2. GLG will offer a revised maximum grant of £5,000 for Disabled Facilities and £1,000 for Feasibility Studies until new legislation comes into force in 2004.**
- 3. The moratorium on Loans will be extended until a review of the financial situation takes place in 2002.**
- 4. Synods will forward applications to GLG only for Churches where the financial need has been clearly identified and which cannot be met entirely from local church and Synod funds.**
- 5. Applications for funds from the Church Buildings Fund will be considered at the May and December meetings in order to ensure a proper sharing of the resources available each year.**
- 6. Churches should be encouraged to apply to Local Authorities and Charities for financial help with Disabled Facilities.**

*Churches need to be aware of the lead in time for grant applications to be received in good time for the meetings of GLG in May and November/December*

- 2. THE APPENDIX provides information about the allocation of Church Building funds and shows a much reduced level of activity both in the number of churches assisted and in the amount of money allocated. This is understandable with the “freeze” imposed until the end of May, 2001. For the present the annual Budget figure from the CBF income is set at £96,000. Although in 2001 there was a small carry-over amount of £12,000, GLG thought it wise to retain this amount to help meet the expected increase in applications during 2002.**

3. **RESOURCE SHARING**

The Policy of giving assistance to churches in synods with greatest financial need is beginning to work and some of the wealthier synods are assisting their churches from synod funds rather than applying to the GLG.

4. **PROVISION OF LOANS FROM THE CHURCH BUILDINGS FUND**

GLG gave an undertaking to review the position of Loans in 2002. At the meeting in February, GLG considered the matter of making Loans available again to churches for building projects and professional fees. Initial discussions indicated the hope of being able to re-introduce the offer of loans to churches towards the costs of building projects and of professional fees. At the May, 2002, meeting GLG will receive financial advice regarding the availability of loans and the level at which they might be set.

5. **APPLICATIONS FOR "MISSION" PROJECTS**

Each Applicant is required to demonstrate how the project links to the "Five Marks of Mission" programme adopted by the United Reformed Church.

**REVISED POLICY** - supported by Mission Council - October, 2001

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

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

6. **The Appendix** gives a record of grants made in 2001 for a variety of projects.

Again the allocation of grants has moved towards the less well-off synods, based on information from the Resource Sharing Task Group.

During the last year GLG has been pleased to receive reports from the Mission Projects. There are some "Good Stories" to be found among these reports and GLG is pursuing ways in which the stories can be circulated in the URC for the encouragement and benefit of a wider audience. Discussions have been held with the Editor of Reform as to ways and means, which will be effective and not be costly and time-consuming. Opportunities exist through "Reform" and the URC Website.

7. **THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS**

The feed-back from the mission projects indicates how the URC through GLG is able to be an important partner with others (often ecumenical) in the funding of new enterprises in mission in the community. Sometimes our contribution is relatively small yet vitally important for the achievement of a budget figure. On other occasions the URC is the major player in the funding of personnel both in the provision of local expenses and payment of stipend. Some projects seek a one-off amount for pump-priming with a view to becoming self-sufficient at a future date. GLG finds that others return to seek funding for a further term and rely on the grant from GLG for the continuation of the projects.

Every project is vital in the eyes of the people running the mission project and much good work is being achieved. So far GLG has managed to keep near its annual budget of £105,000 recognising that not all allocations are taken up immediately, usually due to a waiting-time for the availability and appointment of personnel. The dilemma for GLG, mentioned in last year's report, is how to meet the needs of renewed applications alongside first-time requests and at the same time stay within budget. The problem hasn't arrived yet but one day it will!

The variety of activity covers youth work, interfaith and community bridge-building, pilgrimage retreat centre, outreach worker, children and families, church planting, church centres for work among the young, disabled, asylum seekers, elderly, unemployed, food co-op, rural needs affected by foot and mouth, life-long learning - all seeking to link their activities to the on-going worship of the Christian community.

From one of the reports - "Reflections on Church Planting" some challenging issues are raised about "Church" and "Society" as it is. To quote from the report - *"Many of the traditional ways of being Church seem to create difficulties for people in our culture. The need for worship, growing together in community, teaching and opportunities to serve and proclaim are still there but the forms and shapes that have held them seem no longer to fit. . . . We have several members who take part in all aspects of the church's life and work, fellowship and service, but who cannot make Sunday at all. On the other hand, we have members who because of their need to travel, or other commitments, stay up to date with the life and work of the church through e-mail. . . . From my experience I believe Christians need to be the church in the community - finding ways to worship, serve, teach and proclaim which meet and reach people where they are, and in a real way."*

Some years ago Victor Premasager of the Church of South India helped to introduce a change in strategy for his church with a five-point plan for local congregations called VELCOM:

1. to identify the needs of the community, its hurts, pains, wounds and suffering.
2. to listen to the Word of God and the Holy Spirit; how do the dark realities of human need affect the church's functioning? How is faith related to such life situations?
3. to analyse and identify priorities.
4. to look for and identify local available resources and potentials.
5. to start actions of caring, sharing and serving.

Many of the reports to GLG indicate how such a strategy is now bearing fruit through the vision, faith and enthusiasm of those involved. GLG is encouraged that its work on behalf of the URC with its ecumenical partners is meeting such needs.

## APPENDIX

### CHURCH BUILDINGS FUND

#### SUMMARY OF GRANTS AGREED FOR FACILITIES FOR THE DISABLED AND FOR FEASIBILITY STUDIES June - December, 2001

	<u>No. of Churches</u>	<u>(2000)</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>(2000)</u>
Disabled Facilities	20	(63)	£79,958.83	(£371,488)
Feasibility Studies	5	(20)	3,863.62	( 30,606)
<b>TOTAL</b>	25	(83)	£83,822.45	(£402,094)

#### SUMMARY OF 'MISSION' GRANTS – JANUARY/DECEMBER 2001

##### NEW ENTERPRISE IN MISSION (NEM)

- £6,000 to the Birmingham District Inner City Mission Council for 2001 (West Midlands)
- £28,932 over five years to Brackley to support replanting of church within residential development (East Midlands)
- £3,500 pa for three years to Trinity, Abingdon to assist with youth work in town (Wessex)
- £1,793 to Shanklin, IOW to support 'Time for God' youth worker (Wessex)
- £500 to Derriford, Plymouth to support youth worker (South Western)
- £10,000 to the Birmingham District Inner City Mission Council for 2002 (West Midlands)
- £4,000 pa for two years to Friary, Nottingham to support part-time youth worker (East Midlands)

##### MISSION EXPENSES IN THE UK (MEUK)

- £3,500 for five years to West Wales District Council to support minister working half-time at Ystalyfera and Ystradgynlais and half-time in the community (Wales)
- £2,224.13 over five years (in addition to £19,340 over five years agreed previously) for tax and NI attracted by housing allowance costs for CRCW at Park, Llanelli (Wales)

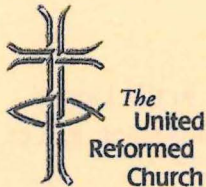
##### MISSION IN ECUMENICAL SITUATIONS (MES)

- A revised grant of £15,500 over five years to CONTRAST, Derby (East Midlands)
- £5,000 pa for five years (with a review after three) to support the ecumenical development at Abbey Meads, North Swindon (South Western)
- £10,000 over three years to support Counselling Manager at the Wynd Centre 'Beyond 2000' Project, Oakshaw Trinity, Paisley (Scotland)
- £5,000 pa for five years to Friary, Nottingham (on behalf of Gamston Methodist/URC) to fund community worker at Gamston (East Midlands)

##### SOCIAL ACTION (SA)

- £5,500 pa for five years for part-time administrator at the Friary Drop-In Centre at Friary URC, Nottingham (East Midlands)
- £500 to Asylum Seekers Support Group, Dover (Southern)
- £3,000 to Buihth Project, Powys Rural Stress Network (Wales)
- £4,000 pa for further four years to Penn Fields Community Support Project, Wolverhampton (West Midlands)

Angus W. Duncan  
Convener  
14<sup>th</sup>. February, 2002.



**MISSION COUNCIL**  
**22 – 24 March 2002**

**B**

## **Youth & Children's Work Committee**

### **Review of Youth & Children's Work in the United Reformed Church**

**2002**

#### **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

##### *Background*

During 2000 the Youth and Children's Work Committee of the United Reformed Church instigated a review of the youth and children's work within the denomination. In order that this review could cover the whole scene the Training Committee agreed that the YCWT programme should be included in it.

##### *Areas of Concern*

Whilst celebrating everything that is being achieved in work with children and young people the committee was concerned about falling numbers in our churches. At the same time it is important to make sure that our resources – in people, money and time – are used to their greatest effect. Everything associated with youth and children's work in the United Reformed Church is within the remit of this strategic review. However, it was decided that particular attention should be given to the key elements of the present programmes. The review should consider how this work is connected to synods, district councils and local churches. It should build on work already done (notably in the FURY review), and at present in process at Yardley Hastings and elsewhere.

##### *Terms of Reference*

###### *Generally:*

- To review the strategy of youth and children's work in the URC and the ways in which it is implemented, at Assembly, synod, district and local church level, with recommendations of any changes felt to be necessary in the light of changing needs and opportunities.

###### *In particular:*

- To review the role and operation of the Youth and Children's Work Committee, and its staff secretaries, and to make any recommendations for change.
- To review the role and operation of the National Youth Resource Centre at Yardley Hastings, its relationship to the whole work with children and young people, and to make any recommendations for change.
- To review the Pilots' organisation, its relationship to the whole work with children and young people, and to make any recommendations for change.
- To review the nature and operation of the Fellowship of United Reformed Youth (FURY), its relationship to the whole work with children and young people, and to make any recommendations for change.

- To review the relationship between youth and children's work in the United Reformed Church and the Department for Education and Employment, and to make any recommendations for change.
- To review the YCWT programme, its synodical management and relationship to the national church, its relationship to the whole work with children and young people, and to make any recommendations for change.

### COMPOSITION OF REVIEW GROUP

The committee invited the following people to serve on the Review Group:

Revd Elizabeth Caswell – Convener  
 Revd Derek Lindfield – Convener, Y&CWC  
 Revd Kathryn Price – Convener elect, Y&CWC  
 Mr John Marshall – FURY Council  
 Mr Graham Stacy – URC Treasurer  
 Mrs Anthea Coates – Training Committee  
 Mr Colin Ride – Methodist Church

Revd John Waller, Deputy General Secretary, has been in attendance at three meetings.  
 Mrs Sue Eason, Eastern Synod Moderator's PA, has acted as the Group's secretary.

### PROCESS

The Group has met seven times between April 2001 and January 2002, once residentially. Through *Reform* and *f2* it has invited submissions from individuals. It has also:

- Examined papers describing the history of this area of work in the United Reformed Church
- Conducted a telephone survey of 73 local churches
- Invited comments from all Synods
- Invited comments from all District and Synod Children's Work and Youth Work Secretaries, and Regional Pilots Officers
- Invited comments from URC Scout and Guide Fellowship; Boys Brigade and Girls Brigade
- Invited comments from under-26 representatives at 2001 General Assembly
- Representatives of the Group have conducted personal interviews with:
  - The Secretary for Youth Work
  - The Children's Advocate
  - The Pilots' Development Officer
  - The Centre Minister for the National Youth Resource Centre, Yardley Hastings; and received written submissions from them concerning their job descriptions, current work and vision for the future.
- Held face-to-face or telephone conversations with all Youth and Children's Work Training Officers or Youth Leadership Training Officers
- Met with the former Secretary for Training



- Attended two meetings concerning the DfES Social Inclusion Project, one being the Stakeholders Conference
- Attended a meeting of the Synod Managers for YCWT/YLTOs
- Attended a meeting of YCWT/YLTOs
- Attended FURY Council
- Attended FURY Assembly
- Met with FURY Chair 2001 and FURY Chair 2002
- Visited NYR Centre at Yardley Hastings twice, residentially
- Met with Yardley Hastings staff
- Met with Yardley Hastings Centre Manager
- Met with Yardley Hastings Community Team
- Met with members of Yardley Hastings United Reformed Church
- Held conversations with, or read correspondence from, others working in the field and other interested individuals

The Group wishes to record its sincere thanks to all those who have helped in its work, particularly Mrs Sue Eason for her secretarial work, Mrs Judith Johnson for supplying a list of churches for the random survey, and the Revd Colin Baxter for analysing the responses to the telephone survey, District and Synod responses and under-26 responses. We wish also to thank the Methodist Church for allowing Mr Colin Ride to serve on the Review Group and Colin himself for the contribution he made to the work.

We believe that although this process has been lengthy it has enabled us to gain an overview of youth and children's work in the United Reformed Church. It is simply not possible to examine every local situation or to acquire complete knowledge of a complex and diffuse area of work. But a blend of interviews, written submissions, random and targeted conversations and relevant documentation has enabled us to discern some issues which the Church needs to address.

Evidence comes in different forms: it can be anecdotal, statistical, historical. The church in general is not accustomed to evaluating its work, and struggles with finding suitable means of measuring the value of particular pieces of work. It is never as simple as numbers and categories, although they cannot be ignored.

At a meeting of Mission Council in 1996 the Revd Flora Winfield, the theological reflector, commented that every time youth and children's work was mentioned Mission Council came alive. She asked us to reflect on the possible reasons for this. Does a predominantly ageing and declining institution seek re-assurance by focussing on the young? In 2000 the General Assembly spent some £520,000 on its youth and children's work, which was matched by a further £200,000 of Synod funding. The 2002 agreed budget figures are £615,000 and £230,000 respectively. We need to reflect on what we are doing, why we are doing it, and how effective it is. Spending money is not in itself a sign of effectiveness; on the other hand reducing expenditure is not necessarily better stewardship. We cannot afford to evade those critical questions

- What are we doing?
- Why are we doing it?
- How effective is it?

## HISTORY

An outline story of youth and children's work in the URC

**In 1974 and 1975 the main foundations of a youth and children's strategy were agreed by Assembly:**

- District & Synod Youth Committees to be set up
- Local churches to set up Youth Councils (wherever practicable) and to make efforts to include the uniformed organisations
- All Provinces be asked to appoint a Provincial Youth Leadership Training Officer
- The invitation by the Baptist Youth Movement to participate in 'Time for God' be accepted
- Each District Council urged to include at least one young person in its Assembly representation
- District Councils encouraged to commend "Equipped to Teach" to the churches
- Publication of new "Partners in Learning" welcomed
- Support for the Christian Education Movement affirmed

**Among significant developments in the following years were:**

1979

- Following a study on "Decline and Growth" it was recognised that the church is a worshipping and learning community of all ages, and agreed that a programme in support should be prepared
- Appointment of 6 regional YLTOs agreed, subject to financial provision

1981

- Zambia/India project for young people agreed ('Together' project developed)

1982

- 1979 resolution on 6 YLTOs repeated, with implementation by 1984
- Agreed that the major service in every URC on 27 February 1983 should be conducted by young people, building on the Worship Project

1983

- Churches asked to review ministry to children in the light of the Children and Worship project
- Boys Brigade congratulated on its centenary
- Churches with uniformed organisations asked to examine the relationship between them and the organisations

1984

- Publication of "How can a child choose Faith?" noted and churches urged to consider how children and adults can be nurtured in the Christian faith

**Up to about this point the Children's Work Committee seems to have worked largely in tandem with the Christian Education Committee.**

**Changes of emphasis can be seen in some of the following years:**

1986

- The work of Pilots commended in the light of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations

- Creation of National Youth Training Officer post agreed, subject to funding

1987

- Districts and Provinces urged to appoint a Children's Work Secretary if they have not already done so
- Owing to success of two Ginger Groups, a 3 year extension of programme encouraged

**These bore fruit in a number of further changes and appointments:**

1988

- New short term staff post directed to work especially with 11-14s
- National Youth Training Officer appointed
- Goal of one YLTO per Province agreed

1989

- Discussion of "Children in Communion" encouraged
- Time for God silver jubilee celebrated
- 12% increase in Pilots companies noted and modernisation of the movement encouraged
- Change from YLTO to Youth and Children's Work Training Officers agreed in principle, where they are employed full-time by one Province
- New FURY Project adopted and a national appeal authorised
- *Charter for Children* launched

1991

- Appointment of ½ time Master Pilot for 5 years from 1 September 1992 agreed
- Report of 11-14 working party received, including recommendation for closer integration of children's and youth work
- Post of Children's Advocate promoted
- Jamaica Exchange project began

1992

- Training for those beginning to work with children or young people encouraged
- Post of Children's Advocate approved subject to finance
- The National Youth Resource Centre at Yardley Hastings opened
- Youth Committee reconstituted and FURY Council created

(In 1994 a restructuring of Assembly committees was agreed. Youth and Children's Work Committee created bringing two previously separate pieces of work together. YCWTs placed under the oversight of Training Committee)

1995

- Children's Advocate appointed
- Good Practice pack well received
- Local churches encouraged to receive FURY Information Service

**The next period was marked by more development and reflection:**

1996

- Mission Council agreed extra funds for Yardley Hastings for 1996 and 1997
- In the light of 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pilots, churches urged to see formation of companies as a means of growth in their work with children and young people
- Plans made to celebrate 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of FURY in May 1997

1997

- Mission Council decided to end post of National Youth and Children's Work Training Officer and to devolve management of YCWTs to synods over a period
- Agreement reached for the post of Pilots' Development Officer
- Jamaica exchange project completed

1999

- Recommendations of FURY review reported to Assembly

## WHAT WE HAVE SEEN AND HEARD

### A. Local Churches

Observation and surveys tell the same story: most of our local Sunday congregations contain a small number of children and young people. Numbers printed in the annual returns tend to be inflated. When numbers in each age band are low this can create difficulties in delivering appropriate Christian education. Children who attend church regularly tend (like adult congregants) to attend less frequently than people did a few years ago.

However, there are interesting developments: a minority of churches is experimenting with mid-week worship and education, for children and adults. These parallel congregations are usually targeted – pre-school children and carers, “shoppers”, teenagers etc.

Some churches are also changing what they offer on Sundays: more all-age worship, more ‘club’ format children’s activities on Sunday mornings, more acknowledgement that some rudimentary provision needs to be made for the unexpected child visitor (a ‘children’s corner’). However, there is a significant number of churches with no children present on a Sunday and some whose pattern of worship has changed little in the last fifty years.

Separated families and the changing use of Sunday for shopping and sport has made a major impact on churches. The quality of what we do ‘as church’ on Sunday morning matters; so does our willingness to be imaginative in responding to people’s spiritual needs at a time and in a form that is relevant. Service times that fit a bus timetable that is years out of date, or milking times in a congregation with no farmers, are ludicrous. We also need to learn how to acknowledge mid-week outreach, worship and education as legitimate expressions of ‘church’.

A minority of churches use *Partners in Learning* (to be discontinued and replaced by *Roots* after July 2002). Scripture Union ‘SALT’ material is used more widely; but there is a range of published material being used, as well as churches producing their own.

There is a growing use of rotas for Sunday children’s work, enabling adults to join in the main worship service on a regular basis. However, there is some reluctance to

engage in training. It is hard to recruit URC people onto *Kaleidoscope* and *Spectrum* courses, even when URC trainers are providing them. Other denominations tend to insist on proper training before people begin working with children. The word insist is not in the URC vocabulary.

*The Good Practice Guide* (now updated) has encouraged higher standards; but a minority of churches have seen its advice as threatening and have felt unable to initiate or even maintain work because of staffing levels and other requirements.

Youth and Children's Work Training Officers have done valuable work in the Synods in advocating good practice and in helping churches to implement change. The responsibility for good practice does, however, rest with each local church.

Local churches are in contact with much larger numbers of young people who participate in mid-week activities – Pilots, clubs, uniformed groups, playgroups. In theory all those in the right age category (11-25) are members of FURY. In practice this is not always communicated to the young people. Churches in contact with large numbers of young people may have little to do with FURY. However, there is much to celebrate in the work of church based youth groups. Young people from within and beyond the church meet on Sunday evenings or mid-week for a variety of activities. Sometimes these groups are described as FURY, more often they are given a locally chosen name. Many churches offer groups and clubs which encourage young people in their personal development and give them opportunities for spiritual growth. At a time when statutory authorities have been reducing their provision for young people churches should not underestimate the importance of what they do in this area. The Review Group was impressed by the commitment of churches to this work, involving as it does a willingness to give time and money to work with children and young people whether or not they have church connections. Although it was not specifically mentioned by the local churches contacted in the phone survey the Review Group is aware that one valuable aspect of such local youth work is time spent away together: at Yardley Hastings, at other youth centres or simply using facilities at local churches, as individual youth groups or as part of District or Synod events. Churches which have European partners may also involve their young people in group exchange opportunities.

There are currently 30% of our local churches which have Scout or Guide companies associated with them (including the appropriate groups for younger children). In 2001, after consultation between the URC and the Scout Association, a URC Scout Chaplain was appointed who is attempting to create a network of Synod Chaplains. A major internal review of Scouting has led to a greater emphasis on the spiritual dimension of their work; after the launch of their new programme in 2002 it is anticipated that local churches with sponsored groups will have greater opportunities to work with Scouts/Cubs etc on the spiritual aspects of their activities.

There is also a good number of churches which have Boys and Girls Brigade Companies. These are specifically church based, with the local minister usually acting as chaplain. They provide a Christian approach to faith issues, and can provide an effective evangelistic setting.

Most uniformed groups still have parade services on a regular basis. These are often held less frequently than they were, but continue to be the main focus of all-age

worship in many of our churches. They have the potential for sowing seeds of faith, and attracting families to the life of the church. They can also, of course, at their worst give credence to the idea that church services are boring and irrelevant. Many of the most committed children's and youth workers in the church are serving as Scout Leaders, Guiders or Brigade Officers. These organisations provide good quality programmes with national affiliation, and levels of local and regional organisation which aim to achieve consistency in training, accreditation and standards.

It is a matter of disappointment that some churches say they have no children when they do have uniformed groups meeting regularly on church premises. Promoting this work as a real partnership for the good of the children and young people should be a priority for the churches concerned.

Not all children wish to belong to single-gender, uniformed groups. Pilots is the United Reformed Church's non-uniformed youth and children's work organisation. It is church run and church owned, and is currently enjoying considerable growth (see separate section).

Some local and county authorities have made significant cut-backs in youth work provision; this has led to an increased importance for church-run detached or open youth and children's work. Many churches run Holiday Clubs, often in co-operation with schools, building on the valuable contacts made by ministers (and others) who regularly lead school Assemblies. This in itself is a valuable aspect of open work and forms a critical part of the ministry of local churches to their communities.

Across the country there is a growing number of Christian Schools workers, usually employed and funded ecumenically. There is also a burgeoning of locally employed church-based children's and youth workers developing the provision which churches can make, often because of a dearth of volunteers. Levels of training and competence are not consistent, and an emerging role of Synod YCWTs is in giving advice on such employment; the YCWTs frequently play an active role in supporting the on-going work of such employees.

The role of volunteers should not be minimised. Enthusiastic individuals who give generously of their time can motivate others to share in responding to local needs. Churches should not underestimate the worth of what they do.

Increasingly churches will be working ecumenically, both with committed young people and in open work. Such work may result from, or be creative of, real mutual commitment among local churches; it will certainly involve theological debate and an openness to a variety of spiritualities. Ecumenical developments can cause tensions when Districts seek to involve young people in FURY events across a much wider geographical area. In some places this is overcome by making all members of a youth group, whatever their church origin, into FURY members.

Young people make use of summer holidays and 'gap' years to participate in a variety of programmes: some join the Community Team at Yardley Hastings, others participate in overseas visits which broaden their experience and give them opportunities for learning and serving. The 'Belonging to the World Church' programme of the URC can help with advice and funds, as will the World Exchange programme. Churches often have their own overseas links so that individuals or whole

groups can make (and receive) visits. EU funding can be accessed regionally for such exchanges in some instances. It was good that the Pilgrim 2000 visit to the Holy Land deliberately included young people. A group of six young people also visited Bangladesh in 1998 under the auspices of Christian Aid/Commitment for Life.

Issues that emerge from considering local church work with children and young people are:

- The desire of most churches to pass on their faith in Jesus Christ to the next generation, in order that young people may live fulfilled lives, and be enabled to make informed spiritual and moral choices.
- The need for churches to develop imaginative new ways of doing things appropriate to today's children and young people, and to a particular church's available gifts.
- The key role of ministers in encouraging helpful change in the light of contemporary culture and in enabling churches to find the resources they need.
- The need for a change of mind-set, so that training is seen as a gift, not a threat or burden.
- The necessity for appropriate training designed to meet the needs of children's and youth workers.

#### **B. District/Area Councils**

Work among children and young people at District level is patchy. In one Synod every District has children's and youth secretaries who create a network of mutual encouragement among the churches, and organise District events and training. Elsewhere, few Districts will have such postholders and it falls to the District Secretary to pass on relevant information to the churches, or not.

The churches which have participated and benefited most from District and Synod events are those with small numbers of children and young people. It is important for them to join in activities with people from other churches, and realise that they are part of something bigger. Larger churches could play a key role in sharing leadership and resources for such special events. The greatest problem mentioned by local churches, Districts and Synods is the difficulty of finding volunteers. The fact that most voluntary groups and charities report the same thing is of small comfort.

At each level of church life the key factor is committed, enthusiastic leadership. Current patterns of working life militate against the involvement of working-age adults in evening children's and youth groups. The development of teams is essential if there is to be consistency of provision, yet many places struggle to find one person to help.

District initiatives may be unrealistic in scattered areas; we have to ask whether or not the attempt to maintain a uniform pattern across the Church is necessary. Tailor-made approaches, responding to the reality in each District have proved to be successful.

The ecumenical factor will often be the key to effective youth work locally, as churches pool their resources. The role of the District may then be to share stories of such developments and to maintain a network for mutual encouragement rather than to organise an extra layer of activity with all the demands which that places on people

(including the young people themselves). However, we should not lose sight of the fact that in some Districts there is effective work being done which should be encouraged.

Issues that emerge from considering District work with children and young people:

- What is the role of District Council in encouraging and supporting children's and youth work given the great variety of circumstances?
- How can that role best be carried out?
- How can the meetings of District Councils foster helpful story telling and sharing of good practice?
- What local support is offered to District children's and youth work secretaries?
- Is District the level where paid training/development posts would be most effective?
- Are there other models of support that should be explored?
- Should we be encouraging young people to participate in District Councils?

### C. Synods

Nine Synods made written comments; they included three which have been or are currently reviewing their development and training provision, including youth and children's work. Two other Synods of those which did not reply are similarly engaged in internal review of posts and structures. That five out of thirteen Synods are considering re-structuring is in itself highly significant: we are becoming less centralised. Many synods have the funding to determine their own priorities and programmes. This has been helped by the inter-synod resource sharing programme. The exception to this is the Youth and Children's Work Training programme which was set up (initially as Youth Leadership Training) in the very early years of the United Reformed Church, funded by money from the then Department for Education and Science.

National posts were deployed in Synods, with two Synods usually sharing one officer. Over time this sharing has ended, with each Synod having its own officer and paying half the costs. The Assembly now bears the other half of the cost directly, which in 2001 amounted to £259,000

It is increasingly difficult to find volunteers to fill District and Synod Youth and Children's Secretary posts. Where people are in post some report lack of support and lack of clarity about what they should be doing.

The picture across the Synods is bafflingly varied. In one Synod every District has both children's and youth secretaries as does the Synod itself; in other places there are none. One has abandoned the YCWT programme because of "a lack of young people and children in the churches." Two Synods are running successful, well-attended events; others have had to cancel events, even after lengthy and careful preparation.

Some Synods organise regular or occasional youth or children's gatherings alongside their Synod meetings: adults are asked to bring one or two young people with them so that transport costs are minimised, and Synod and FURY can appreciate each others' presence. Some find the pressures of Saturday jobs make this impractical, and have developed the practice of 24 hour gatherings which begin early evening Saturday,



combined with occasional weekends or even week-long camps. Some Synods also organise youth journeys e.g. to Taizé or Iona or to overseas partner churches.

The key to success appears to be enthusiastic and hard-working leadership, effective networking and communication, flexibility and teamwork. The Synods which are seeing success in organising events are those which match a vision for what they are doing with organisational flair and commitment of funds and leadership.

What are the issues which emerge?

- The tension between the variety of Synod practice and maintaining a common identity
- The need for development work at local level
- The importance of team-work
- A growing need for expertise in employment and management
- An expressed desire for more paid workers at local and District level
- The value of good large-scale youth events in encouraging young people and their leaders
- The importance of good communication
- The importance of lateral thinking
- The need for enthusiasm and inspired leadership

#### **D. Youth & Children's Work Committee**

##### *Committee Remit*

This committee supports, encourages and promotes work among children and young people, including the policy for the YLTO and YCWT Programme, giving oversight to Pilots, the National Youth Resource Centre at Yardley Hastings, and relates to FURY Council. It also ensures that its concerns are fully taken into account in the 'Doctrine, Prayer & Worship', 'Church & Society' and 'Life & Witness' committees, facilitating the involvement of young people in all the councils of the Church.

##### *Membership*

The committee comprises a convener, a secretary and 12 other members, two of whom represent FURY. The four staff members are in attendance.

The committee meets residentially three times a year at weekends, normally at Yardley Hastings. The residential format is intended to enable committee members and staff to get to know each other and therefore work together more effectively. Unfortunately it has not been uncommon for some members to be absent and others to arrive late or leave early.

At this stage in its life the committee is clearly wrestling with the issues which caused it to set up a comprehensive review. The committee finds it difficult to distinguish between the tasks of: a) carrying out the General Assembly's vision for Youth and Children's Work and b) furnishing General Assembly with such a vision. The committee meetings have been heavily dominated by a business agenda which reflects the work carried out on behalf of Assembly but which gives scant attention to supporting Youth and Children's Work locally. The special contribution of the committee members is that they are able to bring particular knowledge and experience

of such work from churches, Districts/Areas and Synods across the country, enabling the committee to identify pressing issues of concern. An agenda which is biased towards specific programmes can leave committee members frustrated and can also frustrate staff who perceive an ignorance in the committee about the broader range of their work. The committee is unusual in having four members of staff attached to it. The relationship between the staff and the committee members needs to be clarified, including issues of accountability, staff roles in servicing the committee and the convener and committee secretary's roles in management and agenda setting. It was unfortunate that the change of Convener, in 1998, overlapped with the appointment of three new staff members. The committee as a whole is unsure as to whether it is meant to serve as a sounding board for staff or to be directing their work. The staff would like to be able to look to the committee for strategy and identification of the big issues.

The Deputy General Secretary acts as line manager for the four members of staff but the role is supervisory and pastoral and there seems to be no provision for professional management.

Members of the committee represent its concerns for children and young people on other Assembly committees. This significantly increases the time commitment required of them. It is not clear that the Nominations Committee alerts potential committee members to this heavy workload. Committee members serve for a single term of four years; this gives little time for becoming familiar with the many areas of work and can lead to a feeling of impotence. This has led to some members feeling deskilled. This is beginning to be addressed.

The committee has specific responsibilities with regard to policy and programme. These are exercised in different ways. The YLTO/YCWT Programme is overseen by the Training Committee, managed by Synods, with the practicalities of employment being dealt with by the Personnel office, and the Youth and Children's Work Committee being responsible for policy. This division of responsibility is unnecessarily confusing. Both the National Youth Resource Centre and Pilots have their own management committees on which the Youth & Children's work Committee is represented. The Chair of FURY and one other FURY council member are members of the committee, but there is no reciprocal membership; support for FURY officers and FURY Council is given by the presence of the Secretary for Youth Work.

It should be noted that the Review was advocated by the Committee in order to address issues of concern and frustration. The fact of conducting it has facilitated some improvement but substantial issues remain to be tackled.

Issues that emerge from considering the role and the work of the Committee are:

- Do we require a new vision for Youth and Children's Work?
- Is the present committee structure an appropriate way to manage Youth and Children's work?
- How is the agenda formed and carried forward?
- How can the working relationships between committee and staff continue to be improved?
- What is the appropriate oversight and support required for different areas of work?
- Is there a need for clearer delineation of roles, particularly with regard to management?

## **E. Role and Operation of Staff Secretaries**

### *Centre Minister for the National Youth Resource Centre at Yardley Hastings*

The Centre Minister, the Revd Liz Byrne, was appointed in 1998. Over the last three and a half years this ministry has provided leadership to the centre.

Achievements of this post include:

- Renewed energy and confidence
- Better advocacy and promotion
- High standards of provision of worship
- Development of popular courses e.g. Jigsaw weekends despite overall drop in bookings
- Improvement in numbers of Community Team members and their support and length of stay, reversing a period of decline.
- Collaborative working with YCWTs.

This post is due for Review during 2002/3

### *Children's Advocate*

The post of Children's Advocate was created by General Assembly in 1995 and Mrs Rosemary Johnston was appointed. The post was reviewed after five years and Assembly renewed the post and Rosemary's appointment.

Achievements of this post include:

- Encouragement of inclusion of children in every part of the local church's life.
- Promotion of good materials for Christian education
- Production and promotion of inclusive worship materials
- Theological reflection on children and the church
- Creation and maintenance of an effective database and network of District and Synod Children's secretaries
- Production of an information network (URCHIN)
- Creation of website and resources
- Major revision of *Good Practice Guide* (with Secretary for Youth Work)
- Collaborative working with YCWTs

This post is due for review during 2004/5

### *Pilots Development Officer*

The full-time post of Pilots Development Officer commenced in October 1998 originally funded by the CWM 'Gift of Grace'. It is now fully funded by the URC with an annual contribution from the Congregational Federation towards expenses. Mrs Karen Bulley is in her fourth year in post.

Achievements of this post include:

- Development of the affiliation scheme

- Agreement of a new constitution
- Writing and production of new programme materials and regular editions of *Bridge*
- Improved publicity, image and advocacy
- Recruitment and support of Regional Pilots Officers
- Development of training programme
- Collaborative working with YCWTs
- Ecumenical networking

This post is due for Review during 2002/3.

### *Secretary for Youth Work*

Ms Lesley-Anne di Marco was appointed in 1998.

Achievements of this post include:

- Successful application for URC involvement in DfEE Social Inclusion project
- Support and monitoring of this project
- Collaborative working with YCWTs
- Support of FURY Assembly and Council
- Interaction with National Youth Resource Centre
- Major revision of *Good Practice Guide* (with Children's Advocate)
- Encouragement of high standards of health and safety and child protection compliance
- Participation in ecumenical and professional networks

This post is due for Review in 2002/3

### *General Staffing Issues*

The four staff members are often referred to as a team; however team work is not part of the job descriptions. The staff quite properly keep largely to their own areas of work except when specific tasks e.g. revision of *Good Practice Guide* or events e.g. FURY Assembly require team-work. If a greater sense of 'team' were thought to be beneficial to the work then there would need to be discussion of which model of team it would be appropriate to operate.

There has been some clarification of budget responsibility recently; some further clarification of which office handles particular matters would be welcome. It would be helpful if some level of administrative support could be agreed for the officers of FURY.

Line management and appropriate induction of new post-holders deserve attention. The current round of staff Reviews gives a useful opportunity to harmonise job descriptions and clarify reporting and accounting systems.

### **F. National Youth Resource Centre, Yardley Hastings**

The National Youth Resource Centre at Yardley Hastings was launched in 1991 as part of the New FURY Project as a development from the Ginger Groups which had

lived together in community and travelled to local churches to lead worship and youth-orientated events. The centre was intended to resource the life of FURY, offering a place of focused learning and equipping for a Community Team who would work with the chaplain and paid staff to welcome groups of young people and work with them for a weekend, or longer period. It was also to be a venue for FURY Council and other URC committees, and possibly be seen as the base for Assembly youth and children's work.

From its inception the Resource Centre has shared the time of a stipendiary minister with Yardley Hastings United Reformed Church, with whom they also share the building. The ratio of time spent on the two parts of the job has been adjusted as the membership of the church has increased. It now stands at 75% centre: 25% church. The post-holder is now known as the Centre Minister. It was a matter of concern that there had been no formal agreement for the sharing of the building.

The Centre is overseen by a management committee on which the Youth & Children's Work Committee, FURY Council, the local church and District Council are all represented.

On a day to day basis the centre is run by a loyal and dedicated staff, including a Centre Manager. The post of full-time Administrator has been vacant for over a year, with the duties being fulfilled by two part time staff. There has been some confusion of roles between staff members, including the minister; communication at the centre has been poor, and lines of decision-making and responsibility not always sufficiently clear. Both community team members and visitors making bookings have sometimes perceived administration to be unsatisfactory. The members of the church are highly committed to the centre, but can feel short-changed in terms of the minister's time. There have been issues around providing training for new community team members, and in providing them with appropriate support and pastoral care. This highlights the difficulty of fulfilling split roles: "boss"/chaplain, centre/church.

Over the last few years bookings at the centre have decreased markedly. Events have had to be cancelled, and the level of contribution from Assembly funds has increased. It is inevitably difficult to attract visitors during the week, but there is a welcome take-up by schools; however, the centre is not financially viable unless it sustains a healthy number of bookings at weekends.

Young people find travelling to the centre expensive and awkward. The cost of staying at the centre makes it an expensive choice for young adults. This is before the increase in charges proposed for 2003.

It has become increasingly difficult to recruit FURY members to the Community Team. The pattern of serving for one year, beginning in September, has given way to a more flexible approach, with Team members staying for variable lengths of time, and commencing at any time of the year. This has helped provide a wider scope of opportunity, but it has also made induction and training for Team members more difficult. None of the staff at Yardley Hastings is professionally trained in youth work. There have been issues around the management of the centre, including health and safety procedures and protocols. These have largely been dealt with, but still need to be properly documented.

The most popular sessions at the Centre are the Jigsaw weekends (successor to Pick 'n Mix). Local churches or District groups spend a weekend of varied activities and worship. Some of the specialist holiday weeks e.g. Theatre week have also remained popular. Visitors comment on the excellent quality of the food; the accommodation is adequate, although ten years from its opening the centre does need a planned programme of re-decoration and refurbishment.

This is a critical phase in the life of the centre. The management has worked hard to reduce the projected Assembly contribution for 2001 by 35% over the first nine months of that year. Nevertheless the anticipated contribution from Assembly required for 2003 (excluding stipend) is £125,000.

Over the last six months there has been a marked improvement in the atmosphere and spirit at Yardley Hastings. The sense of vision has been re-captured, and community team numbers have increased, with team members asking to stay longer. The centre minister, together with staff and team, are to be congratulated on continuing to seek out God's vision despite the difficulties and disappointments of recent years.

Issues which have emerged:

- What is the purpose of the centre within the URC's provision for Youth and Children's work?
- Level of use of Centre by URC young people
- How effective is the present management structure?
- How can internal communication be improved?
- Training and support for Community Team
- Refurbishments

## **G. Pilots**

Pilots is an area of particular growth within the children's work of the United Reformed Church. The original concept was a sharing between LMS/CWM and the Congregational Union/Church which initiated a themed children's programme around the missionary journeys in the South Pacific of the John Williams ships.

With the inception of the United Reformed Church in 1972 Pilots came under its ownership, though close partnership with the Congregational Federation has continued. A Master Pilot used to co-ordinate the work, and printed programme material and magazines have resourced local companies. The concept of mission journey gives a framework for the programme, as does nautical terminology: its core values are respect for children and young people and encouragement for them to value themselves as they participate in worship, learning and service. The non-uniformed groups are for boys and girls, and attract youngsters from a wide range of backgrounds into a church-based, world focussed programme through which they are helped to grow in the Christian faith and given the opportunity to respond to God. In many companies up to two thirds of the children have no other contact with church.

In 1998, following the retirement of the Master Pilot, the United Reformed Church undertook to employ a full-time Pilots Development Officer. Since that time there has been a major relaunch of the organisation: high production values for programme

material and advertising, coupled with good organisation, have revitalised Pilots. There is now an affiliation system for all companies which helps to fund the production of materials, and more importantly, gives greater consistency of values and standards, including Good Practice. A network of volunteer Regional Pilots Officers is being strengthened and developed to offer support and advice to new companies. The work continues to be in collaboration with the Congregational Federation, who contribute £2-3,000 annually towards the expenses of the development officer post. A new constitution has been agreed which offers places on the management committee to each sponsoring denomination which has companies, on a pro-rata basis according to the percentage of companies belonging to each denomination. The Methodist Church and the Church of Scotland are both exploring the benefits of Pilots.

By 2001 the number of Pilots companies had increased to 145, 60% of companies having been formed in the last three years. The summer of 2001 saw a suitably exuberant and well-attended celebration, when nearly 3,000 Pilots met at Cadbury World.

What issues emerge from this:

- The need to learn from success
- The importance of good organisation
- The value of affiliation
- Good support for volunteers and local groups
- Good record-keeping and communication
- Managing growth

## **H. FURY**

The Fellowship of United Reformed Youth notionally comprises all the young people aged 11-25 in The United Reformed Church. It has an annual Assembly at which each District/Area is entitled to have two voting members and one observer. There is a largely representative Council, which meets residentially three times a year. FURY is represented at General Assembly and on Mission Council and elects representatives to serve on other bodies e.g. the Churches Together in England Youth Forum. 'New' FURY was launched in 1991 as an attempt to make this layer of church life more inclusive and involving of young people. The National Youth Resource Centre at Yardley Hastings was to be the focus of its life. It adopted a mission statement and a structure.

As there is no formal membership it is hard to ascertain how many members there are. The local churches' annual returns give the only information we have as to how many people in the FURY age range belong to our denomination. But to use 'belong' begs the question: the young person who is a baptised and confirmed church member worshipping regularly and sharing fully in church life, is counted in exactly the same way as is the young person who comes to Guides once a week but is actually a worshipping member of another denomination, or the young person who attends a youth club sporadically. Even when we look at the total figure (80,000) we do not know what we are seeing: some church officers will have worked hard to avoid counting the same person more than once... others will have simply added up the totals from each organisation ignoring the fact that one young person may belong to several groups.

If there are 80,000 members of FURY why do Districts/Areas struggle to find people who wish to attend FURY Assembly? Those who come along usually enjoy it, but District/Area and Synod networks are virtually non-existent in many parts of the country. There were just 66 voting members at this year's FURY Assembly; plus a further 35 observers (one allowed per District/Area). Because the representatives are not actually representing anyone, or meeting each other regularly, there are few resolutions brought for debate except by FURY Council itself. Those resolutions which emerge during the event have had to be drafted at the last minute.

There is now no Assembly sponsored FURY programme apart from events run at Yardley Hastings and support events for FURY and General Assemblies. The international dimension has not been particularly evident over the last few years, but there are specific plans to remedy this. The development of the FURY website ([www.furyonline.org.uk](http://www.furyonline.org.uk)) should help to provide a forum for a more effective sharing of news and ideas between Synods and Districts/Areas. The introduction of *f2* as a supplement to *Reform* on an approximately quarterly basis in place of *FURY National* is difficult to assess. There is no separate subscription list, and its availability to young people is dependent on the action of those who subscribe to *Reform*.

The ability of young people in the URC to participate in General Assembly and to run their own FURY Assembly is much admired by other denominations, and is to be cherished and affirmed. The heart of FURY in the recent past has been FURY Council. In the absence of Synod FURY groups, however, the Council is operating in something of a vacuum.

FURY Council has a difficult-to-understand relationship with the Church. It is accountable to the Youth & Children's work Committee of the Church (not General Assembly) but the two groups meet together only in alternate years. The relationship that FURY Council has with the Youth Office appears to be misunderstood by many. Historically, DfEE funding for FURY Council led to it being set up as young-person run, servicing itself with such posts as Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. However, in recent years, since the United Reformed Church has funded the activities of FURY Council, the roles of Secretary and Treasurer are not so clear. FURY Treasurer appears to have little or no financial authority or control; the balance of secretarial workload between the FURY Council Secretary and the Youth Office is unclear.

Each Synod has a representative on FURY Council, to share information. However, it is not uncommon for several Synods' representatives to be absent from a FURY Council meeting. The role of Synod reps is summed up in the FURY Council guidelines thus "...the main activity is communicating... this communication should not be exclusively one way..." The difficulties encountered by some Synod reps in negotiating Synod and District communication pathways goes some way to explaining problems with sharing information. Synod reps gain personally from their experiences through FURY Council, but the benefit to Synods of these roles varies considerably.

Many young people are distanced from FURY and what it stands for. FURY Council is often seen as detached from young people of FURY age in the churches. There are many active young people in the United Reformed Church who have no explicit involvement with FURY, no sense of belonging to it, and who would not notice if it ceased to exist.



Issues that emerge from considering the role of FURY:

- Realistic membership
- Communication
- Identity
- District/Area and Synod networks
- Leadership
- New mission statement

**I. Department for Education and Skills (DfES)**  
*Formerly Department for Education and Employment (DfEE)*

*History*

The youth office has a history of being involved in government funded projects almost from the formation of the URC. The relationship with what was then the Department for Education and Science (DES) enabled the development of the YLTO/YCWT programme. Different programmes and projects have been funded over the years, as the nature of funding changed, including FURY Council.

In 1998, the URC made a successful application to develop a national project focusing on social exclusion and young people. The funding, requiring 50% match funding from the URC, was for a feasibility study in the first year followed by local church projects during the next two years, in England only.

The purpose was to enable local congregations to take part in projects which address the social exclusion of young people in their community, setting up 11 pilot programmes each year (notionally one per Synod) in each of 2 years, to undertake new initiatives with the disadvantaged, the disaffected, minority ethnic groups and those with disabilities. In addition one national project, The Black And Dynamic Conference, with black young people was included to address issues identified by the FURY Review and the Racial Justice Office and meets the DfES criteria.

The project was named 'Mission Possible'.

*Mission Possible*

As a result of difficulties in meeting the very tight time scales set by the DfEE, a successful request was made to the DfEE to allow the URC to use the proposed allocated funding for year 3 of the project to consolidate the work done in year 2.

The nine projects included: an alcohol-free bar, outreach youth work, a night drop-in for those at risk of offending, a video project.

Monitoring has been carried out by a Group accountable to the Youth and Children's Work Committee, which was set up after the feasibility study and meets regularly about every two months. It has six members including the Secretary for Youth Work and the external consultant.

Tim Barnes, the Consultant and Lesley Anne di Marco, the Secretary for Youth Work produced a critique in September 2001 (from which many of these facts have been taken). It concluded that there were clearly distinct advantages to continued involvement in the DfES Scheme of Grants for National Voluntary Youth Organisations (NYVO), with the proviso that any criteria set by the government resonate with the Church's mission.

All of the projects were invited to come together in November 2002 at a Stakeholders Conference, along with the Monitoring Group and a representative from the DfES as part of the evaluation process. It presented an excellent opportunity for workers on the projects to share their experiences (both personal and as part of their local church) of setting up a project, of process, of recognising achievement; of forming networks; of learning from one another; of the effect on local churches and communities; and very importantly how lessons learned can be shared with the wider church.

A Handbook to encompass stories and encourage further projects is in the process of being compiled by the consultant. It will include funding guides, a directory of Social Change, Good Practice Guidelines and countless other ideas. This Handbook is in the process of being compiled by the consultant.

#### *The next step*

The next step is to apply for the new programme of the DfES if the relationship is to continue. The Youth and Children's Work committee, meeting in November 2001, recognised the value of the projects to the communities and churches concerned, but felt that, in the light of the current financial situation, it could not support a request for match-funding (a possible £20,000) for such a small constituency a second time. Time was needed to evaluate fully the Mission Possible projects and to share the experience through the wider church. There was also concern that work in Wales and Scotland would be further neglected.

However, criteria have changed again and an application for funding a broader-based, though of necessity still England-only, programme, not requiring match-funding, has been submitted.

The objectives of this new programme are:

- To enable appropriate and relevant representation by young people involving the diverse youth work programme of the United Reformed Church
- To enable participation in management within the structures of the United Reformed Church of young people from the representative groups
- Develop the programme and young people's networks (FURY) on a regional basis
- Liaise with Synods in accordance with their local operation to facilitate the objectives
- Facilitate learning for young people and their workers with regard to participation, race and disability awareness and other associated issues, including those matters relating to poverty, rural isolation and crime in the context of both church and society
- To integrate the recommendations made by the United Reformed Church's review of youth and children's work (likely timescale for the review report July 2002)

The intended outcomes are for young people involved in local churches and projects to have equal access to the councils of the church at local, district, synod and national level; for a fairer representation of these people to participate more fully in these councils.

Issues which have emerged:

- Is it good to tie people in to the Government's agenda, with such tight time scales and with so few churches/people directly benefiting? Is it not a very expensive model of good practice?
- Is the church separate from secular life or integral?
- Should we, as a church, be forming society, not following it?
- Does being part of a Government Scheme like this take the Youth Work Secretary and colleagues away from their core tasks?
- Should the church consider ways of providing the money it has invested in this project without the need for it to be driven by external criteria e.g. will the *Black and Dynamic* (BAD) weekend continue without the funding?
- How do we ensure that the projects inform our youth work policy so that the nature of our programmes reflect the different backgrounds of the young people we are working with?
- Is it reasonable that a disproportionate amount of the URC's Youth & Children's Work budget should be spent on the English churches?

#### **J. Youth and Children's Work Training Programme**

Half the funding for this programme comes from the General Assembly which is the employer. One Synod has already forfeited Assembly funding in order to re-shape their training provision. Since 1994, the programme has come under the oversight of the Training Committee as the office holders are trainers and adult educators, coming from a variety of backgrounds.

When in 1997 the National Youth and Children's Training Officer post was ended, the management of the YCWTs and one remaining YLTO passed to their Synods. The managers are invited to regular meetings organised by the Training Committee, which has oversight of the programme. All YCWTs and the YLTO continue to be employees of the URC and are subject to its Staff Development Policy. They assume personal responsibility for professional development.

Synods, for the most part, continue to value what is done by these workers. However, the Synod of Scotland and Northern Synod do not have such posts, and two other Synods are considering change. YCWT work involves running training courses and events, working directly with local churches seeking to develop their work and supporting Synod and District Youth and Children's Secretaries (where they exist). Training offered is often organised ecumenically. Whilst the job title continues to emphasise the role of training church people to engage in youth and children's work, in reality an increasing amount of time is spent in developmental work, advising on new projects and on the setting up of paid posts, as well as contributing to the maintenance of effective networks and the organisation of events. They will almost certainly be part of a Synod Training and Development Team, and will continue to be expected, under current job descriptions, to offer some of their time to Assembly initiatives.

The YCWTs meet four times a year with the Secretary for Training who is currently the staff member responsible for the oversight and evolution of the programme. Management in the Synods is not always adequate – some YCWTs have had to train their own managers! Nor is there consistency in the provision of strategy or support structures. One area of concern is in the handling of personnel issues.

The size of Synods results in some YCWTs spending half their working hours driving to and from appointments. The housing of YCWTs can be a problem for a variety of reasons: like ministers they are expected (for the most part) to work from home. Housing costs vary widely across the country, which leaves some YCWTs having to live on the edge of their Synods in order to find suitable affordable housing; this in turn leads to more time spent travelling. This is a complex issue with no easy answers.

The majority of YCWTs come from non-URC backgrounds. This brings a welcome cross-fertilisation of ideas; but it is puzzling that a church which lays such an emphasis on youth and children's work has few people within its ranks who can give a professional lead.

The YCWT programme expects a contribution of time from each post-holder towards Assembly activities. The amount of time involved varies considerably. Much of what is offered is directed towards FURY. Some YCWTs are also involved in contributing to initial ministerial training, or to training courses run at Yardley Hastings, Windermere, or to particular events, e.g. the Pilots celebration at Cadbury World. The Secretary for Training normally attends the residential YCWT gatherings, together with some or all of the staff members of the Youth & Children's Work committee. It is not clear where responsibility and authority lie within the total group.

What issues emerge from a consideration of the YCWT programme?

- With limited financial resources where do we need paid workers most: locally, at District level or at Synod level?
- What should be the emphasis of the YCWT programme: training or development?
- Can this work satisfactorily be shared by two committees?
- How can consistency in management and personnel work be achieved?
- How does this programme serve any strategy for Youth and Children's work?
- How can this programme be best advocated to local Churches?

## THEOLOGY

The following paper on the theology of youth work was agreed by the Youth & Children's Work Committee in 2001.

### *Introduction*

The desire to think through a theology of youth work comes from three different directions: firstly, there is the constant agonising in local churches about 'how do we get young people into the church', born either of an indeterminate feeling that a church is not complete, or is even failing in some way, without young people in worship, or of a fear for the future demise of the church without a new generation to take up the baton. Then, there is the experience of

those young people who are there and their sense of being a kind of 'church in waiting' – they enjoy their fellowship together, but feel alienated from the life of the local church they go back to. Finally there is the work going on outside the local church in schools, colleges, community projects, anywhere young people are found, which is often indistinguishable from 'secular' youth work.

Any attempt to address these issues needs to go back to first principles – not 'what do we do?', but 'why do we do it?' We have used the grand title 'theology' of youth work, because that is what it is: an examination of the work of God that takes place in ministry and our part in it. Only when we know why we are doing something, is it possible to take the next step and work out the what and how and where and when.

This is one way of looking at the issue – there are bound to be others. It is our hope that it will start a conversation, many conversations, that will go on and on, because there is no end to God's involvement with us.

### *Working with God*

Loving relationships are at the heart of all Christian ministry – our relationships with God, with other people and with ourselves.

The prime model for relationships that we are using comes from our understanding of the Trinity as God in community – as Creator, self-giving brother/friend, bound together by the inspiring Spirit. But the community of the Trinity is not a closed community: it offers an invitation of welcome into an inclusive relationship to all God's children, where we can all share in the work of God.

Jesus calls all who will follow to share in the work of discovering, proclaiming and extending God's rule of justice, peace, healing and new life. The work of ministry is to nurture people, purely for their own sake, within a Christian community or reaching out from it, as a response to that call. This ministry is shared responsibility within the whole church of God.

Elements of this ministry include:

- Making oneself vulnerable and available (*At once they left their nets and went with him. Mark 1.18*)
- Working 'with' not 'for' people; receiving as well as giving; being loved and loving (*You, then, should wash one another's feet. John 13.14*)
- Always striving to 'become' good news (... *that the world may know that you sent me and that you love them as you love me. John 17.23*)
- Being ready to offer and receive forgiveness and acceptance (*Do for others what you want them to do for you. Matthew 7.12*)
- Sharing journeys and stories (*Come and see the man who told me everything I have ever done. John 4.29*)
- Being prepared to challenge and be challenged by individuals, community and culture (*Who is my neighbour? Luke 10.29*)
- Enriching life for all (*I have come in order that you might have life – life in all its fullness. John 10.10*)
- Responding to issues of justice (*He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away with empty hands. Luke 1.53*)
- Persisting in prayer and care in the face of resistance or hostility or indifference (*How many times I wanted to put my arms round all your people, just as a hen gathers her chicks under wings, but you would not let me! Matthew 23.37*)

This theology of ministry encompasses ministry with young people, ministry with children, ministry with people of all ages. However we know the Church is painfully discovering that there are special aspects of care involved when we work with children and young people, hence our policies on Good Practice and vetting of volunteers, etc. Adolescents and younger children can be particularly impressionable under the influence of strong older personalities. The safeguarding aspect of ministry should not be overlooked.

Nor should we be afraid of the ministries of leadership and teaching and confuse them with infallibility or a refusal to be vulnerable. Some young people who are searching for their own identity may need to encounter Christians who embody a degree of clarity and certainty at first, even if later on these individuals emerge as fully-rounded people with doubts and problems too.

Neither of these factors, though, should override the basic principles, but be aspects of the myriad ways ministry is carried out in so many different contexts.

### *An Invitation*

The original work done by a very small group has been revised by the Youth & Children's Work committee, FURY Council and the secretary of Doctrine, Prayer and Worship committee, but it is not suggested that this is the final version, but more of a conversation starter for local churches, districts, synods. It is proposed, not so that church meetings can congratulate themselves or feel discouraged, but to encourage a new way of looking at the way we operate as church. It can be rewritten in a more local context, set alongside Biblical stories (the initial group were particularly inspired by the parable of the prodigal son), rejected and replaced with a different approach, used to develop a more specific theology of ministry with a different group of people. Responses would be welcomed and should be sent to the Youth & Children's Work committee and/or the Editor of *Reform*.

God's work of ministry goes on and on and changes and adapts to meet the needs and circumstances and contexts of the people involved. It is in that spirit of flexibility that this paper is offered to the church.

*Charter for Children in the Church* has been widely used both in the United Reformed Church and in many partner denominations.

### *Towards a Charter for Children in the Church*

1. *Children are equal partners with adults in the life of the church.*
2. *The full diet of Christian worship is for children as well as adults.*
3. *Learning is for the whole church, adults and children.*
4. *Fellowship is for all – each belonging meaningfully to the rest.*
5. *Service is for children to give, as well as adults.*
6. *The call to evangelism comes to all God's people of whatever age.*

7. *The Holy Spirit speaks powerfully through children as well as adults.*
8. *The discovery and development of gifts in children and adults is a key function of the church.*
9. *As a church community we must learn to do only those things in separate age groups which we cannot in all conscience do together.*
10. *The concept of the 'Priesthood of all Believers' includes children.*

## CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS

### *Affirmation*

In the light of this theology of youth work accepted by the Youth and Children's Work Committee in 2001, and the Charter for Children, we affirm the following:

Children and young people are an integral part of the life and work of the whole United Reformed Church.

The URC values being an organisation in which different generations from all backgrounds meet with affection and respect and people's needs for acceptance and friendship are recognised, whatever their age.

The URC responds to its calling to share faith in Jesus Christ with people of all ages.

The URC affirms its responsibility to accept, nurture and care for children and young people, so that they may develop to their full spiritual potential, having the confidence to make their own life decisions and find their place in the local church and community.

The URC recognises that children and young people bring their own spiritual wisdom and experience to the life of the church.

The URC takes responsibility for enabling the whole church at its different levels to respond positively to the challenges in this statement, by seeking to take seriously the needs of local churches in the light of contemporary influences and events, and to promote excellence and best practice in all its work.

Most youth and children's work takes place in the local church, in Sunday worship, Junior Church, Pilots, uniformed organisations, after-school clubs, playgroups, open youth clubs, school assemblies, through ecumenical relationships . . .

The role of Districts and Synods is to support this work in practical ways: acting as a channel of communication, organising occasional large-scale activities, offering training and guidance on a range of topics.

The Youth and Children's Work Committee and its programmes and staff further and develop this work across the church, by providing theological reflection, training, up-to-date

information, advice, resource materials, information exchange, support structures and wider perspectives and contacts.

In conducting this review and in reaching conclusions for the future, we have used this understanding of youth and children's work in the URC as a way of measuring the need for and the effectiveness of current work and practice.

### *Recommendations*

The Review Group, having reflected on the evidence it has gathered, makes the following recommendations.

#### **A. Local Churches**

We recommend that:

1. All colleges and courses used by the URC for initial ministerial training and education should be urged to include in their core curriculum learning related to
  - Human development (intellectual, emotional and spiritual)
  - Appropriate models of Christian education and worship in relation to such development
  - An understanding of youth culture(s)
2. Synods ensure that serving ministers and other church members are offered opportunities to understand contemporary youth culture(s) and the development of appropriate models of worship and discipleship.
3. The URC explores with its partner denominations the production of a new generation of training materials for local youth work.
4. Local churches continue to explore partnerships in the local community in order to meet the needs of children and young people.

Ministers have a key role as theological educators and enablers of change. It is critically important that they bring understanding and enthusiasm to the area of local children's and youth work. If they are to help local congregations to understand and relate to the world of children and young people, and keep their own knowledge of continuing change up to date, then their initial and continuing education should include relevant courses. That such understanding should be available to all those who work with children and young people is self-evident. It is probably time for a new course to succeed *Spectrum*; there is also a need for continuing education: top up courses/programmes for those working locally.

At a time when the vast majority of children and young people have no regular church connection the role of the local churches in engaging with them in accessible ways is a major mission task. The experience of some churches is that by working ecumenically they are able to offer a wider range of activities and opportunities, and sometimes fund professional support. Working with others is in itself a sign of what the gospel means.



## **B. District/Area Councils**

We recommend that:

1. Councils continue to find ways to support the ongoing youth and children's work of the local churches in ways appropriate to their own particular context.
2. Councils be reminded of their responsibility to send young people as representatives to General Assembly.

In some parts of the country the traditional pattern of youth and children's work secretaries at District level continues to work well. In other places the system has collapsed. We urge Districts to develop ways of encouraging local youth and children's work which fit their own situation. In some places this will mean combining the two areas of work, in others it may mean having a small committee, in others it may mean having a correspondent who is part of a national network transmitting information.

Making personal contact with young people and with local youth and children's workers is important. Such personal contact avoids the bottle necks which can afflict official means of communication and also provides the network of friendships which fuel an appetite for joint activity.

We do not believe that the employment of paid youth and children's workers at District level would be a good use of the church's resources. Few Districts have the ability to fund such work anyway. The role of Districts is to encourage the work that is happening locally and to provide the occasional opportunities for combined activity or training which give encouragement, particularly to the smaller churches.

## **C. Synods**

We recommend that:

1. Synods prioritise the resourcing of youth and children's work.
2. Synods co-operate with the Youth & Children's Work Committee in developing and maintaining an effective network of young people, FURY members and those who work with young people and children across the Districts.
3. Synods be reminded of their responsibility to ensure that they have two young people as voting members.

Some Synods have already decided not to continue within the YCWT programme. The Review Group would like to encourage all Synods, whether or not they are participating in that programme, to continue to support, encourage and resource local youth and children's work through training, developmental work and the occasional provision of large scale events, where appropriate.

The development of a youth network comparable to the existing network of children's workers would, we believe, enhance the involvement of young people in the life of the wider church.

#### **D. Youth & Children's Work Committee**

We recommend that:

1. The Youth & Children's Work Committee and staff are asked to prioritise the creation and effective use of a youth-work network offering regular information and ideas.
2. Each committee member should have a portfolio of special interest. Some of the time at each committee meeting could be spent in relevant interest groups.
3. The committee continues to explore further developments in the ways it carries out its responsibilities.
4. The General Assembly should be asked to remove the requirement that the Youth & Children's Work Committee sends representatives to sit on other Assembly committees.
5. The Youth & Children's Work Committee should assume responsibility for the evolution and management of the YCWT programme.
6. The Secretary for Training be invited to participate in the regular meetings of the YCWT team.

The Review Group was impressed by the existence of a children's work network and felt that it was important to develop something comparable for youth work. It was mindful that the agenda of the Youth & Children's Work Committee covers an enormous range of work and in order to benefit from the experience and skill of individual committee members they should be encouraged to develop expertise in particular areas.

The Group became aware of the burden that has been placed on the Youth & Children's Work Committee by the General Assembly requirement that it should send representatives to serve on other Assembly committees. We do however see the need for cross fertilisation of ideas between all the committees and hope for the development of improved co-ordination and communication.

The main responsibilities of YCWTs fall within the remit of the Youth & Children's Work Committee. It therefore seems sensible to place the YCWT programme within the framework of this committee. If this proposal is accepted it would be important to retain contact with the Training Committee. The Secretary for Training should be expected to give support and advice and participate in team meetings.

#### **E. Staffing Arrangements**

We recommend that:

1. There should continue to be a Secretary for Youth Work. The priorities of this post should be:
  - To create, maintain and support a network of District/Area and Synod Youth Work contacts;

- To oversee the YCWT programme in place of the Secretary for Training, working co-operatively and supportively with managers in the Synods;
  - To work closely with the YCWTs and other professionals working at local, District and Synod levels, to produce and advocate high quality training and programme materials;
  - To co-ordinate the contribution of YCWTs to the national youth work of the URC, including FURY, initial ministerial training, production of training and programme materials, ecumenical collaboration and special events;
  - To support and facilitate the life of FURY including the creation and maintenance of a network of individual and group members;
  - To act as budget holder for the Youth & Children's Work Committee;
- To foster ecumenical youth work.
  - To work collaboratively with the other Youth and Children's Work staff members;
2. There should be a Secretary for Children's Work (currently known as the Children's Advocate). The priorities of this post should be:
- To enhance, maintain and support the network of District/Area and Synod Children's Work contacts;
  - To ensure the availability and advocacy of high quality resources for Children's Work;
  - To act as co-ordinator of the three Youth and Children's Work staff at Church House;
  - To act as secretary to the Youth & Children's Work Committee;
  - To work closely with the YCWTs and other Children's Work professionals at local, District/Area and Synod levels in resourcing and encouraging work with children, including appropriate training;
  - To work collaboratively and ecumenically on issues relating to inclusive worship and church life, faith development and child protection;
  - To work collaboratively with the other Youth and Children's Work staff members.
3. There should continue to be a Pilots Development Officer who will:
- Work within the existing job description and management structure;
  - Encourage the integration of Pilots into the total URC provision for Youth and Children's Work;
  - Work collaboratively with the other Youth and Children's Work staff members.

The Review Group believes that each distinct area of work benefits from having a staff member dedicated to that particular task. However some of the work does overlap and staff should work collaboratively with each other and with those serving at intermediate levels of church life. In fostering a collaborative working style it is suggested that one of them acts as Team Co-ordinator.

The major task for the Youth & Children's Work Committee and all its staff members is to resource local work and the structures at District/Area, Synod and Assembly level which support that work.

## **F. National Youth Resource Centre, Yardley Hastings**

We recommend that:

1. The URC should cease to use the buildings at Yardley Hastings as a Resource Centre for youth work.
2. The URC seriously considers potential future use of the resources at Yardley Hastings.
3. The Youth & Children's Work Committee should work with the Centre Management Committee and the officers of General Assembly to effect this change recognising the rights and needs of employees and customers.
4. The officers of the URC work with the East Midlands Synod and the Northamptonshire District to negotiate the changed use of the building in such a way that the rights and needs of Yardley Hastings United Reformed Church are respected.

The Centre was set up with the intention that it would be the heart of the URC's Youth Work. Whilst in the early years considerable numbers of URC young people went to, and were associated with, Yardley Hastings it has always been a centre for the minority. It was with hindsight unrealistic to expect it to have been anything else. However there can be no dispute that Yardley Hastings has been for some young people a spiritual power house, often changing the course of their lives. It remains so, but for a notably declining number. The Review Group believes that, however painful the change, limited resources of personnel and finance should be targeted at a level where they may affect a greater number of our young people.

It is not for the Review Group to comment on other uses for the building, or its disposal, or how to honour the needs of the local congregation. We do urge the URC to give good support and advice to those who will bear the brunt of this decision, if it is taken.

## **G. Pilots**

We recommend that:

1. The Youth & Children's Work Committee invites the Pilots Management Committee to reflect on the recent growth of Pilots' companies, and to think through how it would manage continuing growth.
2. The Youth & Children's Work Committee should monitor the relationship of the URC to other denominations having Pilots Companies, including policy, representation and funding.

It is good to see a piece of work with a long history that continues to thrive, and has enjoyed real growth over the last few years. It would be easy to be complacent. It would be better to reflect on the reasons for such vitality, with the hope that other programmes could learn from it. The exclusive use of one staff member's time is probably one factor, as is that person's level of commitment and enthusiasm. The willingness to implement changes that invite greater ownership (affiliation, new

constitution) is also significant. Are there other factors to do with policy, programme or development that should be analysed?

The Review Group would like to encourage an attempt to learn from success. Should the growth in companies continue then other management issues would emerge; levels of staffing might need to be considered, and shared funding with partner denominations. It is better to think about such possibilities before they become reality.

## **H. FURY**

We recommend that:

1. There should be a membership of the Fellowship of United Reformed Youth open to all young people aged 11 – 25, and all URC youth groups, who are willing to accept the (new) FURY mission statement:

*Our mission is to discover God, to help each other grow in the Christian Faith, and through our lives reflect God's love to all.*

2. District Councils and Synods should be asked to work with the Secretary for Youth Work to maintain an accurate database of such individual and group members and to encourage an effective network of young people and those who work with them.
3. Membership cards and regular mailings should be offered to FURY members.
4. The management and resourcing of the database and network of members should be included in the job description of the Secretary for Youth Work.
5. The budget of the Youth & Children's Work Committee should include the resourcing of FURY network and gatherings.

Participation in FURY Assembly is patchy. District/Areas may send two voting representatives and one observer; they may find them in any way they choose. In practice many are unsuccessful in their search for young people who wish to attend this annual gathering. We need to discover an effective way of connecting the young people with each other and with the wider church (if they so wish). Some form of membership and some form of managed network would seem to be the answer. It is important to encourage the active involvement of young people in decisions affecting youth work.

The Group feels that it is inappropriate for adults up to 26 years of age to be regarded as 'young people'. A post-FURY network for the 21-30 age group could be maintained if so desired, bringing the experience and energy of this group into mainstream church life. The Review Group invites FURY Council and the Youth & Children's Work Committee to discuss this and propose any appropriate action.

## **I. Department for Education and Skills (DfES)**

We recommend that:

1. YCWTs be encouraged to build on the work begun in *Mission Possible* using the handbook to challenge local churches to identify and respond to the needs of the communities in which they are set.
2. The Secretary for Youth Work investigates any similar funding opportunities in Scotland and in Wales.
3. Synods should explore other sources of funding available in their area.
4. The URC proceeds with the current application for funding.

The Review Group affirms the value of working in partnership with government and other voluntary agencies when that is seen as being in accord with the mission of the Church. However it would like to sound a note of caution; the Church must not be seen to be dancing to the tune of others in order to obtain funding. We are assured that the work proposed under the current application meets this criterion. The Review Group affirms the need for monitoring to be done in close co-operation with the relevant Assembly or Synod committee. The Group noted that central government funding is only available to English churches.

## **J. Youth and Children's Work Training Programme**

We recommend that:

1. The YCWT programme is continued with its present funding arrangements.
2. Synods encourage the developmental aspect of the role; the word Development could be added to the job title where this has not already happened.
3. Responsibility for the programme, its professional management and co-ordination and its contribution to Assembly programmes should be transferred from the Training Committee to the Youth & Children's Work Committee, and in particular to the job description of the Secretary for Youth Work.
4. The Secretary for Training be invited to participate in the regular meetings of the YCWT team.
5. Synods should continue to manage the local work of YCWTs within an overall strategy for training and for the development of youth and children's work in the Synod.
6. Volunteer managers working with YCWTs in Synods should receive initial training and continue to be advised and resourced by the Secretary for Youth Work.
7. Synods work with the YCWTs to improve advocacy of their role with Districts/Areas and local churches.
8. There should be a full review of the YCWT programme in four years' time.

The Review Group has heard the plea for paid Youth and Children's Workers at district level. There is already an increase in the number of local churches funding paid workers. We also reflected on the desire of some Synods to absorb this area of work into an overall training provision in which all trainers would be involved in the full range of church life. We understood the desire, on the other hand, to focus less on training and more on hands-on development of local work.

We do not believe that the redistribution of the funding of the YCWT programme would significantly affect the ability of the URC to provide development workers at district level; nor are we convinced that such resources are needed at that level. It is local work, increasingly conducted ecumenically, which should be our main mission focus.

Such local work does deserve support from the wider church. For YCWTs to engage with local churches in developing new pieces of work is a good use of their skills, and should be encouraged. It is in itself a valid method of training. It is also important that YCWTs are able to offer their knowledge and advice as local churches proceed to employ paid workers. If they were not available some other Synod officer would have to assume this responsibility, and it is a growing area of work.

We recognise that it is not always easy to find suitably qualified volunteers to act as managers. There should be a proper induction programme for them, guidelines and the back up of the Church House office. The Synods have assumed the work formerly undertaken by a full time staff member and deserve good quality support.

The YCWT programme is an expensive but valuable resource; in recommending that it continues we are keen that Synods place this programme within a clear overall strategy, enhance the developmental aspects of the work, which is a stated part of the existing YCWT job description, and find effective ways of advocating its use by the churches.

12 February 2002

**Draft resolutions to accompany the Youth and Children's Work Review Report**

1. Assembly encourages the Youth and Children's Work Committee to work with the recommendations in the review report and to develop them generally as the policy for youth and children's work in the United Reformed Church.
2. Assembly asks the Training Committee to consider and implement the recommendations in the review report which relate to initial ministerial training and the need to provide ongoing CME training opportunities in all aspects of work with children and young people, including contemporary youth culture.
3. Assembly asks synods and district/area councils to consider and as necessary to implement the recommendations in the review report regarding their work.
4. Assembly agrees to change part of the committee structure agreed in 1994 so that the Youth and Children's Work Committee is no longer required to send representatives to the Church and Society Committee, the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee and the Life and Witness Committee.
5. Assembly asks the Youth and Children's Work Committee to work with the Centre Management Committee, the local church and the Northamptonshire district council to implement the recommendations in the review report regarding Yardley Hastings, seeking help as necessary from Mission Council.
6. Assembly asks the Youth and Children's Work Committee to work with FURY Council to implement the recommendations in the review report regarding FURY, in particular the proposal that there should be a membership of FURY and an effective network through district councils and synods.
7. Assembly affirms the continuation of the Youth and Children's Work Training programme, with an increasing emphasis on development and with responsibility for the programme passing from the Training Committee to the Youth and Children's Work Committee.





**MISSION COUNCIL**  
22 – 24 March 2002

**B<sup>2</sup>**

The United Reformed Church

Northants District Council  
and East Midlands Synod

## **Yardley Hastings**

### *A response to the Youth and Children's Work Committee Review February 2002*

At its meeting on 4 March 2002, the Northants District Council received a report on the Review of Youth and Children's Work, particularly as it relates to Yardley Hastings. It asked that the following material might be passed on to Mission Council for its discussions on 22–24 March. At its meeting on 9 March 2002, the East Midlands Synod also considered this report and supported the actions and request of the District Council.

It was recognised in both discussions that the review deals with more than Yardley Hastings. But regarding that aspect, which is of particular concern to the District Council, and informed by those who had read the full report, District Council and Synod endorsed the following comments.

#### *On the report:*

- There seems to be no clearly stated overall national youth and children's work policy within which YH might or might not find a place.
- The key question - "What is the purpose of the centre within the URC's provision for Youth and Children's Work?" (p 16) - is never answered.
- The review does not seem to have looked in any depth at the Centre in its total life and context, nor at the strengths that could be developed or the weaknesses that should be addressed.
- No alternative options to closure are presented which might enable Mission Council or General Assembly to make an informed choice.
- The question of whether there is any realistic alternative use for the Centre buildings is raised but not addressed.
- A decision of this nature should not be made on financial or resource grounds alone.

#### *On the process:*

- A decision of this significance should not be made without a more focussed review.
- Any potential change or development in the life of YH needs to be carefully, strongly and urgently managed, particularly for the sake of staff and team.

#### *On the role of the Centre:*

- YH has fulfilled a key role in the life of the URC and is vitally needed for its future life.
- YH has had a key role in enabling, training and resourcing locally delivered youth work. As that work develops, the role of YH should become more significant, not less.
- YH has a role as -
  - A national focal point for the church's youth and children's work.
  - A place which young people can think of as their own.
  - A place of significance on many people's journey.
  - A place which models a constantly changing and dynamic pattern of community, in which the local congregation as well as staff, team and visitors, play an important part.
  - A place where international visitors make a major contribution.
  - A place where young people and others are formed and developed in discipleship and service - as the equivalent of a "tertiary" phase in education.

- YH is one visible sign that the church values and supports its young people and wants to provide the best for them.

District Council also wished to emphasise the following points.

1. The URC needs to affirm and rejoice in the church's support for the Centre as an expression of its commitment to mission with young people.
2. Before any decision to withdraw is taken, serious consideration needs to be given to –
  - Where and how might the work that has been done at YH be continued?
  - What message is being sent to our young people and to our churches, if there is no further vision for or commitment to a Youth Resource Centre?
  - What does it mean for this congregation which has poured so much into enabling the Centre to function and grow?
3. This recommendation, which is not yet a decision, is deeply unsettling to the local church and staff, and is an immediate threat to the life and viability of the Centre. It needs therefore to be emphasised that YH is still fully functioning and open for bookings.
4. Rather than simply withdrawing from YH, the current financial, management and other issues which the report alludes to should be addressed with urgency.
5. The implications of any changes for staff and team need to be addressed urgently.

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The following resolutions were agreed unanimously.

1. Northants District Council is extremely disturbed to hear of the recommendation that the buildings at Yardley Hastings should cease to be used as a Resource Centre for youth work. District Council expresses its concern and support -
  - for the minister, staff and team at the National Youth Resource Centre;
  - for the local church, particularly as its own life and work is so caught up in the life of the Centre;
 and commits itself to offering continuing support to all concerned as the future of the Centre and congregation are explored.
2. Northants District Council expresses its deep concern that the recommendation to withdraw the Resource Centre from YH seems to have been made in a precipitate manner and without any consultation with the local congregation, District Council and others most affected such as the staff and community team members.
3. Northants District Council asks Mission Council to take account of what has been achieved at YH over the last ten years, in particular the significant influence it has had on a great many lives, and to affirm the URC's commitment to youth and children's work by continuing to develop the role of the National Resource Centre at YH.

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At the Synod meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> March, the following resolutions were passed:

East Midlands Synod

- (a) shares the deep concern of the Northants District Council at the proposed recommendation that the National Youth Resource Centre should be withdrawn from Yardley Hastings;
- (b) supports the resolutions passed by the District Council meeting on 4 March 2002 and expresses its particular concern at the lack of consultation with the local church about the recommendation to close the Centre;
- (c) is also concerned at the lack of consultation with the District Council, Synod and ecumenically about the recommendation to close the Centre;
- (d) expresses its belief that the withdrawal of the Centre would be a tragic and unnecessary loss to the youth and children's work of the United Reformed Church.

### Election of Advisory Groups to Mission Council

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

#### 1. Mission Council Advisory Group

*The remit of Mission Council Advisory Group ("MCAG") is*

- (i) to plan the meetings of Mission Council;*
- (ii) to ensure that appropriate follow up actions are taken following meetings of Mission Council and General Assembly; and*
- (iii) to provide support and advice to the Assembly Moderator and the General Secretary.*

*In carrying out the above remit, MCAG should have regard to the Functions of General Assembly, as set out in the Structure, and should seek to ensure that Mission Council and General Assembly are provided with appropriate reports to enable them to see that those Functions are properly carried out.*

Moderator	Elizabeth Welch	
Immediate past Moderator	Bill Mahood	
Moderator-elect	John Waller	
2 Committee Conveners	Alasdair Pratt	2002
	John Rees	2005
Treasurer	Graham Stacy	(Dec) 2002
4 members of Mission Council	Delyth Rees	2002
	Roberta Rominger	2003
	Donald South	2002
	Ken Woods	2003
General Secretary	David Cornick	2008
Deputy General Secretary in attendance	John Waller/Ray Adams	2009

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

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

## 2. Resource Planning Advisory Group

*Within the context of the United Reformed Church's mission, the group will advise Mission Council on*

1. *long-term strategic planning;*
2. *priorities in the use of human and material resources;*
3. *the use of ministry, by*
  - 3.1 *liaising with the Ministries Committee and the synods in matters of the deployment of stipendiary ministry;*
  - 3.2 *liaising with the Ministries Committee to facilitate the development of new forms of ministry;*
4. *Assembly appointed posts, having received reports from the Staffing Advisory Group;*
5. *financial planning, by*
  - 5.1 *overseeing the budget process, and by its presentation to the church;*
  - 5.2 *seeking to educate the whole church and advocate the needs of mission, liaising with the Stewardship Sub-committee of the Life and Witness Committee;*
  - 5.3 *liaising with the Resources Sharing Task Group over the management of the financial resources of the whole church.*

The group will undertake such other tasks as Mission Council gives to it.

Convener	Julian Macro	2005
Secretary	Erica Young	2005
Synod Moderator	Peter Brain	2005
Member	David Thompson	2002
Member	Bill Mahood	2002
Member	Roger Pickering	2005
Convener Staffing Advisory Group	Donald South	2002
General Secretary	David Cornick	2008
Treasurer	Graham Stacy	2002 (Dec)

### **In Attendance:**

Secretary for Ministries	Christine Craven
Secretary for Finance	Avis Reaney
Secretary for Life and Witness	John Steele
Representative of Resource Sharing task group	David Butler

The convener and secretary, if not members of Mission Council, will be invited to attend. Members may or may not be members of Mission Council but they should have experience of synod or district council work. Elected officers and members will serve for four years, although the convener will normally serve a preliminary year as convener-elect.

### 3. Staffing Advisory Group

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

3 members	Christine Meekison	2002
	Val Morrison	2004
	Ken Forbes	2005
Convener	Donald South	2002

The Convener must be a member of Mission Council and serve for 4 years or until s/he ceases to be a member of the Council, whichever is the shorter. Members may or may not be members of Mission Council and should serve for 4 years.

### 4. Grants and Loans Group

*The group considers all grant and loan applications from local churches and local church projects. This includes the grants previously on the agenda of the Advisory Group on Grants and Loans, grants and loans from the Church Buildings Fund, and the consideration of grant applications to the CWM self-support fund. It also stimulates reflection on the theology and practice of mission in the light of its experience.*

Convener	Angus Duncan	2004
	Jean Thompson	2004

One representative from each synod

Plus, as consultants:

Secretary for Finance

Secretary for International Relations

Secretary for Life and Witness

Secretary for Church and Society

A CRCW Development Worker

Secretary for Youth Work or Children's Advocate

Deputy General Secretary

The convener must be a member of Mission Council, or be invited to attend, and will serve for 4 years. The secretary may or may not be a member of Mission Council and serves for 4 years.

### 5. Church House Reference Group

In process of creation!

**The March 2002 Mission Council therefore will need to elect:**

**Mission Council Advisory Group :     A Committee Convener  
  2 Mission Council  
  members**

**Resource Planning Advisory Group :   2 members**

**Staffing Advisory Group :                A convener  
  A member**

**Nominations taken from proposer/seconder or from groups at  
Mission Council.**



The  
United  
Reformed  
Church

**MISSION COUNCIL**  
**22 – 24 March 2002**

**D**

**AUTHORITY IN THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH**

The Task Group has responded to the comments and suggestions made by Mission Council in October 2001 by modifying its report as follows:

1. Minor alterations have been made throughout to reflect that it is now a report of Mission Council, rather than that of a Task Group.
2. Paragraph 1.6 has been altered to show that Pat Nimmo has now formally resigned from the Task Group.
3. Paragraph 1.9 has been added to bring the preamble up to date in the light of the October 2001 Mission Council.
4. Paragraphs 3.1.1 and 3.1.3 were formulated by one of the groups at Mission Council and have been incorporated as a helpful development and explanation of the Task Group's argument.
5. Paragraph 3.5.5 has been added to reflect the decision of Mission Council to leave any major review of structures until the Task Group on Personal and Conciliar Leadership has reported.
6. Paragraphs 3.7.2 - 3.7.4 have been written to reflect the major discussions at Mission Council and replace the original paragraphs with those numbers.
7. Paragraph 3.9.2b) has been rewritten to give more background to the thinking about the proposal to alter the standing orders by allowing alternative motions, and the suggestion that such alternative resolutions should be limited to three has been removed.
8. The draft resolutions (formally 3.9.5 and 3.9.6) have been removed and incorporated as draft resolutions for General Assembly (8 and 9))
9. Section 4 was originally headed 'Conclusions' and has now been renamed 'General Comments' to better reflect the nature of the paragraphs. The wording of paragraphs 4.1 - 4.4 has been slightly amended.
10. Section 5 was originally headed 'Recommendations' and has now been renamed 'Draft Resolutions'. Where necessary, the resolutions have been revised in the light of discussions at Mission Council and the redrafting of the report; all nine resolutions have been couched as draft resolutions for General Assembly. The numbering of the draft resolutions has been simplified since they will be numbered differently in the Book of Reports.
11. The original resolution 5.7 (relating to section 3.7) has been removed completely.

# AUTHORITY IN THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

## 1. PREAMBLE

- 1.1 In 1997 General Assembly, in response to the report of the Task Group on Human Sexuality, passed a resolution (1997:18) asking the Mission Council to arrange for further work to be done in four areas which included (b) 'the relationship between the authority of General Assembly and the other Councils of the Church'.
- 1.2 In October 1997 the Mission Council responded to this request by establishing Working Groups to be responsible for each of the areas mentioned in Resolution 1997:18.
- 1.3 The Working Group on the Authority of General Assembly and Other Councils (*hereafter referred to as the 1999 Group*) reported to General Assembly in 1999 as part of the Human Sexuality Report 1999 (*hereafter referred to as the 1999 Report*). The Working Group made nine recommendations arising from their deliberations (section 3.3 of their report):
  - i) The United Reformed Church needs to clarify whether its recognised colleges have the right (and if so, under what circumstances) to refuse particular recognised United Reformed Church candidates on any ground other than the academic suitability of their courses for the candidate. (3.3.1)
  - ii) The United Reformed Church needs through the appropriate committees (Training and Ministries) to continue its consideration of the rôles of the colleges, the synods, the district/area councils and the local churches in the selection, training, call and ordination of ministers). (3.3.2)
  - iii) The United Reformed Church needs to establish rules for the appointment of Task Groups to deal with matters of a serious and controversial nature. (3.3.3)
  - iv) The United Reformed Church needs to develop a general policy on how to conduct and evaluate surveys of opinion. (3.3.4)
  - v) The United Reformed Church needs to review its conciliar structure with the aim of improving the sense of relevance of one council to another and to enhance reception of decisions by other councils of the church. (3.3.5)
  - vi) The United Reformed Church needs to assess and explore ways of improving training for representatives in the councils of the church. Such training in the areas of the United Reformed Church's understanding of church and polity, consultation, decision-making and implementation, should enrich the life of all its councils. (3.3.6)
  - vii) The United Reformed Church needs further to develop reflection, based on the considerations set out in 3.1.6, concerning a theology and process of what it is right to do when radical disagreement harms the peace and unity of the church. (3.3.7)
  - viii) The United Reformed Church needs to agree a process, such as that suggested above, for dealing with contentious issues. (3.3.8)



- ix) The United Reformed Church may wish to consider amendments to Standing Orders and the Structure, such as those discussed in paragraphs B2.3.1, B2.3.2 and B3.2.1d. (3.3.9)
- 1.4 General Assembly 1999 (Resolution 39b) requested the Mission Council to consider the recommendations of the 1999 Group and to report to a future Assembly.
- 1.5 In October 1999 the Mission Council responded to this request by asking the Nominations Committee to appoint on its behalf a Task Group of seven people with a view to a report being made in 2001, first to Mission Council in March and then to Assembly in July.
- 1.6 In December 1999 the Nominations Committee made the following appointments: the Revd Ray Adams (Secretary), the Revd Adrian Bulley (Convener), Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith, Mr Eric Chilton, the Revd Jack Dyce, the Revd Pat Nimmo and Mrs Irene Wren. Because of pressure of work, the Revd Pat Nimmo was unable to participate beyond the first two meetings, and subsequently resigned from the Task Group, though the contribution she made to early discussions was much appreciated.
- 1.7 The Task Group met on 8 occasions during 2000 and 2001.
- 1.8 Difficulties with gathering the group together during the autumn of 2000, caused by a combination of ill health and rail problems, led the group to request an extension to the original timescale to enable first reporting to Mission Council in October 2001. This request was granted.
- 1.9 Mission Council considered the report of the Task Group in October 2001. Some changes were made by Mission Council, and the Task Group was asked to produce for the March 2002 meeting of Mission Council a further report which would take the form of a draft of the Mission Council's report to General Assembly. The Task Group met in January 2002 to carry out this work, and their report formed the basis for this report, which comes from Mission Council.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Mission Council affirms the theological principles set out in the 1999 Report (*Section 1: Groundwork – Authority in the Church*: pages 59ff), and quoted below (1.1 and 1.2) as background to the present discussion:
  - 1.1 *Doctrine*
    - 1.1.1 *For all Christians of whatever denomination and living in whatever church polity the source of authority in their individual and corporate lives is God who calls them. The response to this call is a longing to live in loving and willing obedience to God, a response expressed in baptism and in the life of faith in which disciples of Jesus Christ seek to proclaim and serve him, in the Church and in the world. Church life therefore must be rooted in obedience to God and a desire to acknowledge freely a commitment to God and God's authority over us.*
    - 1.1.2 *Such love of God and longing to be obedient to God lead the Church to proclaim its submission to God's authority; the acceptance of that authority is an integral part of Church life as Christians seek God's forgiveness, worship God in adoration and ask for renewal. How that authority is discerned and expressed, however, is understood in various ways within the universal Church; this leads to great difficulty in the search for unity.*

- 1.1.3 *It is fundamental to the life of the United Reformed Church that it "has been formed in obedience to the call to repent of what has been amiss in the past and to be reconciled. It sees its formation as a part of what God is doing to make his people one, and as a united church will take, wherever possible and with all speed, further steps towards the unity of all God's people" (Basis of Union 8). "Believing that it is through the freedom of the Spirit that Jesus Christ holds his people in the fellowship of the one Body", the United Reformed Church acknowledges two equal responsibilities, namely to "uphold the rights of personal conviction" and "safeguarding the substance of the faith and maintaining the unity of the fellowship" (Basis of Union 10). These responsibilities have always to be kept in balance with one another; in contentious issues (i.e. issues which arouse strife and controversy) they often pull against one another. The first ten paragraphs of the Basis of Union express a strong theology of unity, which has formed the groundwork of United Reformed Church policy, even when there is difficulty and pain in its shared life.*
- 1.1.4 *The United Reformed Church "acknowledges the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people" (Basis of Union 12). It acknowledges, too, "its duty to be open at all times to the leading of the Holy Spirit" "accepts with thanksgiving the witness borne to the catholic faith by the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds" and "recognises ... its own particular heritage". It has shown in its reception of both Scripture and tradition an awareness that through them the Church can be called to "make ... new declarations of its faith" and to have "its life ... renewed and reformed according to the Scriptures, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit"(Basis of Union 18 and 6). In contentious issues disagreement can arise over the meaning of the Scriptures and over what the Spirit is guiding the Church to do in changing circumstances and in face of new knowledge.*
- 1.1.5 *These doctrinal principles led to the creation of a Basis and Structure for the United Reformed Church in 1972 and again in 1981 which seek to be open to fresh developments, responding to disagreement and even to contention by affirming both freedom and responsibility. This has meant that no prior limits have been set to diversity (freedom) while the General Assembly has sought to prescribe rules when, and only when, it has become plain that a common practice is needed in order to safeguard the peace and unity of the United Reformed Church (responsibility). It is inevitable that there are occasions when some in the church plead for freedom while others are seeking a prescriptive ruling. The stress, which this sometimes produces, is to be preferred, in the opinion of this group, to the development of a detailed "canon law"; we believe that such sustaining of stress affirms the doctrinal principles which are foundational for the United Reformed Church.*

## 1.2 *Structure*

- 1.2.1 *The United Reformed Church is a conciliar church. Its Basis of Union establishes a balance of oversight between its councils: the Basis gives authority, all the councils of the church participate in the exercise of it, and the General Assembly has as one of its tasks the guardianship of the distributed responsibilities.*
- 1.2.2 *The Structure of the United Reformed Church is based on the affirmation that church meeting/elders' meeting, district councils, synods and General Assembly shall each be recognised "by members of the United Reformed Church as possessing such authority... as shall enable it to exercise its functions and thereby to minister in that sphere of the life of the United Reformed Church with*

*which it is concerned.” (Structure 1.3). This fundamental paragraph of the Structure (embodying what some call the principle of subsidiarity) affirms that wider councils should recognise that more local councils make decisions appropriate to their sphere, while the wider councils exercise an oversight which maintains unity and peace; it is the need for unity and peace that requires a structure that sets limits to local liberty and to conciliar decisions and actions. District council and synod each exercise oversight in their own particular sphere and the General Assembly “shall embody the unity of the United Reformed Church and act as the central organ of its life and the final authority, under the Word of God and the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, in all matters of doctrine and order and in all other concerns of its common life ...” (Structure 2.5). Local churches, district councils and synods are expected to receive and to apply reports and decisions from the wider councils; they also have access to the wider councils on any matter by reference or by appeal.*

1.2.3 *It must always be remembered that a free church is a voluntary society; authority can offer precept but can only enforce practice by an ultimate sanction of depriving a person of membership - and even that does not compel the person to follow the precept.*

1.2.4 *The members of the United Reformed Church are “publicly admitted to the full privileges and responsibilities of membership of the Church of Jesus Christ and in particular to the membership of the local church” (Basis of Union, Schedule A). They are encouraged both to develop their personal convictions and to learn from one another in the councils of the church. Ideally such learning from one another leads to consensus but where disagreement persists the United Reformed Church recognises that it can be right to move to a decision by majority vote, always in the setting of prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, careful consideration of the witness of the Scriptures and open discussion.*

1.2.5 *Such is the constitutional understanding of authority within the United Reformed Church, regularly reaffirmed in acts of worship and in particular at ordinations and inductions of ministers of the Word and Sacraments.*

### 3. THE TASK

Mission Council was asked to give further consideration to the recommendations contained in the 1999 Report:

<p><b>3.1</b> <i>The United Reformed Church needs to clarify whether its recognised colleges have the right (and if so under what circumstances) to refuse particular recognised United Reformed Church candidates on any ground other than the academic suitability of their courses for the candidate (3.3.1)</i></p>
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3.1.1 The United Reformed Church recognises for ministerial training Westminster College, Cambridge, which is under the direct authority of the General Assembly, and other colleges and courses which have a formally independent status.

3.1.2 The United Reformed Church has an agreed procedure for the selection of candidates. Mission Council wishes to affirm the importance of the partnership between the councils of the Church and the recognised colleges and courses throughout the entire process of candidating and ministerial formation, yet believes that decisions about candidates' suitability for ministry should remain within the sole jurisdiction of the councils of the Church.

- 3.1.3 The United Reformed Church recognises that all colleges and courses may occasionally decline to receive individuals for purely academic reasons when a person appears unlikely to benefit from the learning programme in a particular place.
- 3.1.4 In exceptional circumstances, a college or approved course may consider that a candidate's beliefs or conduct may cause serious disruption to the life of the learning community. Decisions on such matters of a formational nature (which are broader than solely academic suitability) also rightly fall within the remit of colleges and courses, recognising the importance of close liaison between them, the Training and Ministries Committees and synods at all stages of training.
- 3.1.5 While Westminster College is the only college under the direct authority of the General Assembly, Mission Council believes that on this issue the Church should not treat it differently from other recognised colleges and courses. It could be argued that because the Assembly has the authority, it could insist that the College takes whomever the church accepts for training, but Westminster College should have the same capability as other colleges to use discretion in exceptional cases as outlined above.

**3.2 *The United Reformed Church needs, through the appropriate committees (Training and Ministries) to continue its consideration of the roles of the colleges, the synods, the district councils and the local churches in the selection, training, call and ordination of ministers (3.3.2)***

- 3.2.1 Mission Council recognises the importance of the National Assessment process for providing a standard of assessment that is consistent across the whole church. The General Assembly has placed the final decision for the selection of candidates with synods. The Training and Ministries Committees have given an assurance that these matters remain on their agenda and Mission Council believes it to be important that they do so.

**3.3 *The United Reformed Church needs to establish rules for the appointment of Task Groups to deal with matters of a serious and controversial nature (3.3.3.)***

- 3.3.1 Task groups can be a valuable method of undertaking detailed or complicated work to ease the burden of the agenda of councils of the church or to progress difficult issues. If there are to be rules, they should apply to all cases and not only to those which are deemed to be of a serious and controversial nature at the beginning. The following are offered as guiding principles for the appointment of task groups:

- i) The remit of the group must be clear and unambiguous.
- ii) A group cannot enjoy greater authority than the council appointing it and it is answerable to that body alone.
- iii) If the work of the group involves, or the results are taken forward to, other councils of the church, it is done in the name of the appointing council, under its authority and in the terms it specifies.
- iv) Its work and reporting should be transparent.

- 3.3.2 If the General Assembly appoints a task group, that group is responsible to General Assembly and must report to it. This holds even though the Mission Council may well

need to clarify the remit and monitor the work of the task group. If the draft report is first considered by Mission Council, it may only be amended by agreement with the task group. It would then be presented as a report which is supported by Mission Council. If there is disagreement, the original report should be presented to General Assembly by the Convener of the group with the amendments proposed separately on behalf of Mission Council.

- 3.3.3 If a task group is appointed by Mission Council either at the suggestion of General Assembly or under its own initiative, it will be responsible for the work of the task group.
- 3.3.4 The General Assembly needs to be clear under which category the appointment is made, and to whom a task group will ultimately report.
- 3.3.5 It is a mistake to assume that task groups appointed by General Assembly are necessarily more representative than those appointed by Mission Council. The Council has more synod representatives present to consider names than the Assembly Nominations Committee, which is the normal mechanism for making General Assembly appointments.

**3.4 *The United Reformed Church needs to develop a general policy on how to conduct and evaluate surveys of opinion (3.3.4)***

- 3.4.1 Misunderstandings arose over the conduct of and interpretation of the responses to the canvassing of opinion which took place in the period immediately before the 1997 General Assembly. The task group which had been appointed *"to work out a process whereby the United Reformed Church can be enabled to hold an informed debate on the matter of human sexuality and come to a decision on the implications for ministry within the church"* had invited the councils of the church to discuss the issues, and had set out certain questions as starting points for those discussions. There was insufficient clarity in the councils where those discussions took place as to whether or not votes should be taken, the form of the response which should be made, and the use to which those responses would be put. Furthermore, when the report was presented to the Assembly, some accorded the analysis of the responses more authority than they deserved, given the differences of interpretation among the respondents and the self-nominating nature of those respondents. If, therefore, a "survey of opinion" were to be carried out in the future, it would be important that it be done in a more rigorous way, with due regard to proper sampling methods, including caution when respondents effectively self select.
- 3.4.2 However, the Task Group questioned whether it is appropriate for the United Reformed Church to be undertaking such surveys. If, a survey having been carried out, the Assembly is nevertheless free to make a decision which is perceived to be contrary to the majority view expressed by one or more of the sets of councils canvassed, people could say: "You asked us what we thought then ignored what we said."
- 3.4.3 The conciliar structure of the United Reformed Church is specifically designed to operate in a very different manner. The function of Assembly at 2(5)(A)(ix) of the Structure *"to remit questions concerning the witness and judgement of the church for general discussion in church meetings, elders' meetings, district councils and synods and to call for reports from these councils."* is not about conducting surveys of opinion. It says nothing about counting votes. It does not suggest a referendum. It isn't about asking for all the councils to vote, then adding them up and using the result as the answer. It is about the General Assembly gathering information before reaching a decision. The Assembly will probably have received reports from committees and/or task groups. It remits the questions to the other councils, receives their reports, and then, taking all that

into account, together with the debate at the meeting of the Assembly itself, will seek, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to reach a view as to the way forward.

- 3.4.4 The Task Group considered the possibility of including provision in the Structure for the Assembly to decide, in exceptional cases (perhaps those of great sensitivity, or which it judges could be divisive) to adopt another method whereby all councils are asked to vote, and then the Assembly would be bound by the result. But, if that were deemed to be the correct way to handle such important issues, why wouldn't it be right for all matters? The value of listening to one another and the Holy Spirit in Assembly would seem to have been discarded. Ultimately the church could have a paper ballot and there would be no need for Assembly to meet at all! If this were deemed to be the best way to deal with the important decisions, then why not extend it to the other councils? Some members of the Task Group thought that if we were to provide for a special, different way of handling these exceptional issues, they would be so rare that it would be better to determine in each case the appropriate procedure to use.
- 3.4.5 In summary, then, the Task Group considered three options:
- i) The General Assembly having, where it deems it right, remitted questions to other councils of the church and considered the responses, makes decisions following debate. (See paragraph 3.4.3 above.)
  - ii) The General Assembly carries out a proper, statistically valid survey to determine the views of other councils, and then, having considered the results, makes decisions following debate. (See paragraph 3.4.2 above.)
  - iii) The General Assembly may decide, in exceptional circumstances, to conduct a survey of opinion within the other councils or to hold a referendum of all members (again in a statistically valid way) and then to take the result as binding. (See paragraph 3.4.4 above.)
- 3.4.6 In the end both the Task Group and Mission Council were persuaded that the means provided for in Function (ix) was by far the best option (Option i): the Assembly listens to the views of the other councils, encourages wide discussion, and then reaches an informed and inspired decision. What is needed is education and communication so that all understand the process, including what will be done with the reports of the discussions in the various councils when they are returned to the Assembly. The views expressed in response to the remitting of questions under Function (ix) need to be seen as of great value, and as a vital element which enables the Assembly to make its decisions properly. To attempt to devise a "hybrid" which seeks to combine a survey of opinion with the ultimate responsibility of the General Assembly to act only causes confusion, and can lead to resentment.

<p><b>3.5</b> <i>The United Reformed Church needs to review its conciliar structure with the aim of improving the sense of relevance of one council to another and to enhance reception of decisions by other councils of the church (3.3.5)</i></p>
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- 3.5.1 Reflecting on a wide range of experience of councils and committees working within the United Reformed Church, the Task Group was divided between those who believe present structures can be made to work, and those who feel that it is time for radical restructuring.
- 3.5.2 In support of the first view, though people may be frustrated with slow and cumbersome church structures, and can feel that they are irrelevant and their decisions unacceptable,

nevertheless there is sufficient flexibility within the present structures to enable them to work. Structures work best when people take responsibility for them, take initiatives and act creatively to make them function better. There is no perfect structure, only the attitude and competence of those who operate within it. The history of the wider Church also shows that no structure copes with individuals who fundamentally disagree with the majority. However, it is important to affirm that the pain of the struggle for justice and truth must be borne. The United Reformed Church feels this most keenly, existing as it does to encourage the unity of the whole Church, in order to bear witness to the one God.

3.5.3 The alternative view is that the existing arrangements do not work well for many reasons. Of significance would appear to be the changing pattern of life in society with its different perceptions of authority and decision making; its impatience with bureaucracy or delay; its scepticism of government and remote management. This has heightened the critical awareness of church members who are influenced by these trends and generally do not understand the conciliar structure or its relevance to local mission. Additionally, membership of the wider councils tends to come from a generation when society was different and it is difficult to see how this will change quickly to be more truly representative because of the pressures on younger generations with family and work commitments. They would also need to be persuaded that it was an effective use of their time. It would be preferable to make the functions and workings of the conciliar structure more relevant to the present church.

3.5.4 The Task Group considered the implications of these two views as set out in 3.5A and 3.5B below:

#### **3.5A Areas for improvement within existing structures**

##### **3.5A.i) Greater clarity and effectiveness**

Work needs to be done by those responsible for the agenda of General Assembly, synods, district/area councils, church meetings and elders' meetings to ensure that people understand the relevance of their meeting for the ministry and mission of the whole church. Consideration needs to be given to how representatives of local churches may be helped to understand the importance and rôle of the council on which they serve.

Meetings should be organised in such a way that a balance is created between work delegated to committees and sub-groups, and issues in which representatives may share in real decision-making, rather than function as a rubber-stamp. Representatives should be helped to communicate to the council which they are representing, and be encouraged also to share local concerns with the wider councils of the church. Greater use could be made of the United Reformed Church website and *Reform* to get information directly from councils to individuals within local churches, and to equip representatives in their task of reporting back to those who appointed them. District/area councils could ensure, for example, that their representatives to General Assembly are allocated a certain number of churches to which to report on their return. This emphasizes that being a representative is a two-way task.

The Group notes how the contribution of FURY representatives to General Assembly is made effective by preparation together beforehand. Other representatives could learn from their good practice.

### 3.5A.ii) Shared good practice

From members' own experience, and from what has been written in recent Reports to Assembly (including several references in the reports from Moderators of Synod in 1997 and 1999) and other documents, the Group is aware that much is being done in the church to help to make the present Structure work more effectively. Training material is produced for those who are charged with being representatives to district/area council, synod and General Assembly. Imaginative ways of conducting meetings are being tried so that all present feel involved and able to contribute. Help is being given to those who are responsible for reporting back to the sending council on the business of a meeting.

In some places innovative ways are being explored of using the flexibility which is already there in the Structure to change significantly the way district/area councils and synods operate. Some of this thinking has been stimulated by the recent work of Tony Burnham, former General Secretary, and further exciting ideas are already emerging.

The Group suggests that each synod be asked to enquire of each of its district/area councils what good practice is being used and developed, and then to share this within that synod and with all other synods. It is envisaged that this exercise could be undertaken by means of the normal contact between officers (district/area secretaries' and synod clerks' meetings) and should therefore not place an untoward burden on already busy people. The rewards to be gained from sharing good practice and innovation could be great. Of course the Group acknowledges that what works in one place may be inappropriate for universal application. Nevertheless good ideas are always worth considering.

### 3.5A.iii) Transparency and precision

In order to ensure good practice and greater confidence in our conciliar structure, care should be taken to ensure that councils do not exceed the limits of the authority given to them. Mission Council has a pivotal rôle shaping the agenda of General Assembly through monitoring the resolutions of Assembly committees, and taking necessary decisions between meetings of the Assembly. However, it is central to the life of the United Reformed Church to recognise that the final authority rests with General Assembly 'under the word of God and the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, in all matters of doctrine and order and in all other concerns of its common life' (Structure 2.(5)). When exercising that authority, and in the light of past experience, particular care must be taken when policy is being created or clarified.

### 3.5A.iv) Mutual Accountability and Support

The church has a duty of care and support for those who are entrusted with authority within its councils.

Some synods have carried out pastoral consultations with district/area councils to ensure they fulfil their functions as set out in the Structure and to offer support and encouragement. Such practice could be extended within the life of the church.

District/areas might consider how they could report regularly to local churches on their work and vision, and invite feedback.



Appropriate accompanied self-appraisal for synod and district/area officers could help identify areas where help can be offered, and good practice encouraged.

### 3.5A.v) Understanding the nature of the United Reformed Church

The United Reformed Church lives with the creative tension between clarity of order and a commitment to be a church on a journey. As already established, any particular process of relating and working together must be under the authority of the Word of God, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. That discernment is for the building up of the church in its obedience and effectiveness in participating in the mission of God. We need to renew our understanding of the church as a theocratic rather than democratic organisation. Our conciliar system requires a mutuality of trust, support and empowerment, so that the church in all its gatherings may be life enhancing and life giving.

### 3.5B **Suggestions and reasons for a more radical approach**

#### 3.5B.i) The local situation

The present structure was set up in 1972 when our church was very different. Since then the membership of the church has declined by half and the number of stipendiary ministers has reduced by a third. However, the number of churches has only decreased by a sixth which has had a considerable effect on the pattern of ministry. There has been a marked decline in single church pastorates which historically had been the prominent feature. The foreseeable trend is towards a greater number of groups, clusters and local ecumenical partnerships (LEP). This is already placing added strain on our existing structures with additional meetings. As a result the authority of the local church is changing.

This alternative view suggests that a more appropriate designation of the local situation is the pastorate, emphasising the people rather than the buildings. This should encourage the unity of its ministry and mission, help create clearer leadership and focus the need for team working and co-operation by the elders and amongst the members of all the constituent churches. Whilst the authority of the individual church may still need to be recognised on specific issues, this should be seen within the mission of the whole pastorate. Thus the concept of group pastorate councils, complementing the single church pastorate model, should be evolved further so that combined elders' and church meetings or their equivalent in LEP's are normal, with individual church meetings being held exceptionally. Mission Council draws attention to the report on the Grouping of Churches which was sent to all district/area councils in May 2001.

#### 3.5B.ii) Synods and districts/areas

The Structure of the United Reformed Church clearly delineates the functions of synods and district/area councils. In our increasingly diverse practice, however, there may be need for more interchangeability of these functions.

The working practices in synods and district/areas vary considerably and there could be much to be learnt from this. Some synods and district/areas appear to function much better than others perhaps solely because of the resources available to them at the time. Where district/areas are deficient, especially where geography and the small number of churches make it difficult for them to fulfil their role adequately, some synods attempt to make good.

Some question the need for both the synod and district/area council and would

like to get rid of one or the other. It is not easy, without considerable research, to see how either option could be effected, particularly in the cases of the two national synods. Synods may be too remote from the local pastorate adequately to fulfil some functions, e.g. the oversight of all ministers and the care for all the churches. Equally district/areas might find it difficult with busy agendas to take on additional functions. Perhaps the rôles of synod and district/areas ought to be seen as essentially complementary and a single entity.

The alternative view suggests, therefore, that the rôles of the synod and district/area council should be examined rigorously to identify the scope for rationalising their functions, avoiding duplication and streamlining their operations to reduce the burden of meetings and to improve decision making. Such an examination is taking place in Mersey and Yorkshire synods.

### 3.5B.iii) Conclusion

All organisations, including the church, need to change because of moving trends in society. After almost 30 years of the United Reformed Church there are already a number of inconsistencies in practice and difficulties in operating the full structure in certain situations. This diversity is likely to increase. It is considered that the conciliar structure of the United Reformed Church should be thoroughly reviewed to improve its effectiveness and to help in the recognition of the authority of the various councils of the church.

3.5.5 Mission Council accepts the suggestions made in 3.5A, but considers that consideration of the radical review proposed in 3.5B should await the report of the Task Group on Personal and Conciliar Leadership. This Task Group was set up by Mission Council in January 2000 with the following remit:

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

The Task Group is expected to report to Mission Council prior to General Assembly 2003.

<p><b>3.6</b> <i>The United Reformed Church needs to assess and explore ways of improving training for representatives in the councils of the church. Such training in the areas of the United Reformed Church's understanding of church and polity, consultation, decision making and implementation, should enrich the life of all its councils (3.3.6)</i></p>
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3.6.1 Mission Council concurs with the view that more opportunities for training would create a better-informed church, but recognises that training itself will not prevent conflict and pain when matters of profound disagreement divide the church.

3.6.2 Mission Council is aware of several documents prepared by district/area councils and synods to help new representatives understand their rôle and the nature of the council on which they have been appointed to serve. General Assembly may wish to ask Training

Committee to consider the value of such materials as a training aid for representatives on every council of the United Reformed Church, and instigate a review of these with a view to producing training materials that could be used throughout the church.

**3.7 *The United Reformed Church needs further to develop reflection, based on the considerations set out in 3.1.6, concerning a theology and process of what is right to do when a radical disagreement harms the peace and unity of the church (3.3.7)***

- 3.7.1 The 1999 Report (section 3.1.6 c, page 68) took the view that *“the questions surrounding separation between majority and minority (or equal) groups of local churches are distinct from those of secession by a particular local church and we recommend that these questions be discussed by the Mission Council as a theological/constitutional matter apart from the particular issues of the human sexuality debate.”*
- 3.7.2 Mission Council reaffirms the theological principles quoted at section 2.1, in particular paragraph 8 of the Basis of Union: *“The United Reformed Church has been formed in obedience to the call to repent of what has been amiss in the past and to be reconciled. It sees its formation and growth as a part of what God is doing to make his people one, and as a united church will take, wherever possible and with all speed, further steps towards the unity of all God's people.”* The church which values unity with other churches so highly must seek as a fundamental principle to affirm and strengthen unity within the fellowship.
- 3.7.3 Mission Council recognises that unity is a gift of grace which needs to find expression in the continuing life of God's people. This will involve at times bearing the pain of division and conflict, but there is also a creative value in 'difference'. Experience has shown that where individuals who hold directly opposing views engage in dialogue in mutual love and respect they can reach a place of understanding where disagreement can be faced together with integrity.
- 3.7.4 Mission Council concludes that, while the church should continue at all levels to reflect on the meaning of our unity, it does not think it appropriate to develop a policy dealing with potential schism at the present time.

**3.8 *The United Reformed Church needs to agree a process, such as that suggested above (para 3.2.1), for dealing with contentious issues (3.3.8)***

- 3.8.1 The procedure suggested by the 1999 Group entailed a five stage process:
- i) Pre-conciliar discernment  
Committees of the United Reformed Church and the officers of the General Assembly and Mission Council need to identify those potentially contentious issues that are likely to arise in the near future.
  - ii) Pre-conciliar consultation  
An initial paper exploring the issue and underlying matters is prepared in consultation with councils of the church, ecumenical bodies and other relevant agencies/groups.
  - iii) First General Assembly meeting  
The issue is identified and the initial paper discussed, revised (if necessary) and accepted as a consultative view to be offered in the name of the church.

- iv) Second General Assembly meeting (not necessarily in the year following iii) above)  
When responses from the other councils are received they must be seen to be taken on board in framing resolutions to be brought to Assembly. Synods which have expressed strong views should have the opportunity to put those views to Assembly. Some issues may be finalised at this stage. Issues regarded by Mission Council as divisive or contentious should be dealt with under the constitutional amendment provision [Structure 3.(1)].
- v) Third General Assembly (normally in the year following iv) above):  
The resolutions return to Assembly for ratification or for further amendment [amendment would involve a further year of consultation under Structure 3.(1)].

3.8.2 The 1999 Group, working in the ferment of the aftermath of the passing by the Assembly of Resolution 19 of 1997, felt it appropriate to recommend that a special procedure be created to deal with "contentious issues". In the calmer atmosphere provided by the distance of time, Mission Council considers that the adoption of such a prescriptive mechanism would not be helpful for the following reasons:

- i) Initially, it could be difficult to be sure that it was right to identify an issue as contentious. Of course, certain matters might be readily discerned to be such, but there might be other areas where controversy arose after a process of debate on an apparently non-contentious issue was under way. Alternatively, a matter might be thought at first to be potentially difficult, only to reveal itself subsequently to be easily resolved.
- ii) If a special procedure existed for contentious issues, there would be the danger that attempts might be made to initiate that simply as a way to delay resolution of a debate. It would be frustrating for the Assembly if trivial calls were made to invoke the special procedure.
- iii) Such a prescriptive procedure could not be generally applicable. For example, it is possible that an issue might be contentious, but also urgent, which would mean that a three or four year process would be unhelpful.
- iv) With respect to the 1999 Group, who rightly wished to help the church to learn from mistakes made during the long period of the debate on human sexuality, Mission Council considers that because of the polarity of views strongly held within the church on this issue (as in most other main-stream churches) the use of a process such as that described in the 1999 Report would not have prevented the painful division caused by the specific issue of the debate on human sexuality.

3.8.3 However, there are lessons to be learnt:

One of the functions of the General Assembly (2(5)(A)(ix)) is: *to remit questions concerning the witness and judgement of the church for general discussion in church meetings, elders' meetings, district councils and synods, and to call for reports from these councils.* If the Assembly sees the need to remit a matter to other councils, there must be clear agreement about the process and the timescale, both of which might vary between issues. When reports are called for it is important that all concerned are clear about the form they should take, and how they will be interpreted and assessed. It should not be the intention of such a discussion and reporting stage to close down debate, but rather to open it up. The exercise of this function is to enable the Assembly to gather information to help it to come to a decision; the reports themselves are not binding on the Assembly. (See also the commentary in section 3.4 above.)

**3.9** *The United Reformed Church may wish to consider amendments to Standing Orders and the Structure, such as those discussed in paragraphs B2.3.1, B2.3.2 and B3.2.1d (3.3.9)*

3.9.1 This recommendation refers to three paragraphs in the 1999 Report: 2.3.1, 2.3.2 and 3.2.1.d.

3.9.2 Paragraph 2.3.1

This paragraph suggests three possible changes to the Standing Orders of the General Assembly to provide for (a) going into a committee of the whole Assembly, (b) alternative motions which could be voted on as an act of choice between the alternatives, and (c) a means of seeking a vote to discover whether the General Assembly concurs with the Moderator's judgement on a point of order.

- a) This would be a useful provision for those occasions when a document is attached to a resolution. At present only the resolution can be amended, which means that the presented document must be accepted in total, as it stands, or rejected. It has been useful, for example when considering a proposed revision to Schedule C to the Basis, for the Assembly to have the flexibility of working on the document in committee.

If the Assembly were to work in this way certain practical arrangements would need to be made (e.g. sufficient time must be allowed and consideration might be given to asking someone other than the Moderator to chair the debate in committee). Therefore, it would be advisable to require 21 days' notice to be given of the intention to move that the Assembly go into committee. Any document which might need to be considered in this way would be included in the Book of Reports which is sent to members of Assembly well in advance of the meeting, so the requirement for notice should not present difficulties.

At present if a document is to be debated in this flexible manner it requires that the Standing Orders be suspended. A motion to achieve this must be supported by three quarters of members in order to be passed. It would be excessive to require such a level of support for a motion that the Assembly should go into committee. It is, however, of sufficient significance to require a two thirds majority. Mission Council brings a resolution to effect this change.

- b) It could be helpful to the Assembly to be able to consider alternative motions together. The introduction of alternative motions would not change the rules about amendments. This would mean that if a member wished to move that one of the motions before the Assembly be amended, that amendment should be debated and decided before any further debate could be allowed on any other amendment or on any of the other alternative motions. It might be that when a motion is before the Assembly an amendment is moved which would be better taken in the form of an alternative motion. The Moderator should be able to rule that this be done.

Resolutions would be moved in the normal way, but with an indication that the new resolution represented an alternative to a resolution already before the Assembly. The proposer and seconder of each of the alternatives would speak, then debate would take place on all the resolutions together. If an amendment was proposed to one of the alternative motions, then the debate and decision on

that amendment would be completed before any further debate or amendment could be heard. Once the debate was over, the proposers would reply in reverse order to that in which they originally spoke. Votes in favour of each of the motions would be taken. Members of Assembly would vote only for their preferred option. The votes would need to be counted, and the result announced only after all the votes had been taken. If one motion achieved an absolute majority, then it would become the only motion before the Assembly. If not, the motion receiving the fewest votes would be eliminated. The same voting procedure would be repeated until one motion achieves an absolute majority. The Assembly would then be invited to vote for and against that motion in the normal way.

Mission Council brings a resolution which would effect this change.

This provision would be a new experience for the Assembly, and some might be apprehensive about how it would work. It would be quite reasonable to review the practice in the light of experience, and remove the provision from Standing Orders after a few years if it was found to be unhelpful.

- c) Mission Council, while understanding the concerns expressed by the 1999 Group, considers that it would be inadvisable to allow the Assembly to question the Moderator's judgement. Far from being a protection for the Moderator, as the 1999 Group suggested, Mission Council considers that a decision to overrule the Moderator could drastically undermine his/her position. In order for the Assembly to function it is necessary that the Moderator enjoys the confidence of its members. While unwise judgements might occasionally be made, the Moderator, advised by the Clerk and the General Secretary, must be trusted to guide the Assembly. Accordingly, no proposals for change are presented.

### 3.9.3 Paragraph 2.3.2

This paragraph asked for further consideration of the relation between interpretation of the United Reformed Church's constitution and alteration of it. Mission Council agrees that there needs to be a clear distinction, understood by all concerned, between change (under Function 2(5)(xi)) and interpretation (under Function 2(5)(x)). Given that clear distinction, the Assembly might wish to take the view that certain interpretation(s) should be taken under a process similar to paragraph 3.(1) of the Structure. However, there is no need for a change to the Standing Orders or the Structure to achieve this. It is at present open for a member of Assembly to move that the Assembly, under its function 2(5)(A)(ix), remit a question for wider discussion and report. Alternatively a motion might be brought under Standing Order 5c that decision be deferred to the next Assembly. Under the same Standing Order, at the discretion of the Moderator, the motion might be referred for consideration by other councils and/or committees. Further, it is also open for a member to move that a resolution be considered in a specified way which may be similar to the process set out in paragraph 3.(1). (Resolution 35 of 1999 was of this type.) Any of these routes could be used to test interpretations under Function 2(5)(A)(x).

If a member of Assembly believes that a motion before the Assembly represents a change under Function 2(5)(xi), then s/he could raise a point of order to the effect that it should be dealt with under the provisions of paragraph 3.(1).

No proposals for change are presented.

### 3.9.4 Paragraph 3.2.1.d

Most of the suggestions contained in this paragraph have been commented upon above,

but the final part of 3.2.1.d raises a different point. It reads: *“A process calling for positive acceptance of a resolution by a council, rather than the present system allowing a motion that the proposal be not proceeded with, might encourage and promote reception of the decision, though the present system, where a negative vote of more than one third of the relevant councils is needed to halt a proposal, protects the rights of significant minorities without being unduly weighted in a conservative direction.”*

Paragraph 3.(1) of the Structure which sets out the way in which constitutional amendments under the function of General Assembly 2(5)(xi) are to be made provides, in sub-paragraph (e), for the ‘blocking’ of a proposed change if more than one third of the councils consulted vote that it shall not be proceeded with. This provision is there, as the 1999 Group commented, to protect the rights of significant minorities without being unduly weighted in a conservative direction.

It is worth reflecting here on what happened when the Assembly invited the councils of the church to consider the proposed Statement on Human Sexuality by means of Resolution 35 of 1999. Prompted by the suggestions incorporated in the 1999 Report as to how sensitive issues might be handled in future the Assembly decided to use (in a modified form) the mechanism from Paragraph 3.(1) of the Structure. It was made clear at the time that this did not imply that a constitutional change was involved.

In the event, there was considerable misunderstanding throughout the church about the process, with many voices complaining that negative votes, not positive ones, were being counted. In places the General Assembly was ridiculed because people did not understand what was being done or why.

In the light of this, two differing views could be taken:

- i) the “negative” approach, while appropriate in the context of proposed constitutional changes, is inappropriate for use when sensitive statements are being assessed.
- ii) in cases where a sensitive matter is to be decided, even though there is no constitutional change proposed, the “negative” approach should be used in order to protect the minority, without making the barrier to a decision so high that it can rarely be jumped.

The latter approach would suggest that should a similar situation arise in the future the “negative” model might be used again, but with much better communication as to what it means. Mission Council, in line with its belief expressed above that a flexible approach needs to be taken whereby the appropriate process is determined individually for any major, sensitive matters, would not seek to prescribe whether negative or positive responses should be sought. No proposals for change are presented.

#### **4. GENERAL COMMENTS**

- 4.1 This report is confined to commenting on the specific recommendations of the 1999 Group.
- 4.2 Mission Council wishes to pay tribute to the work of the 1999 Group, whose report merits further careful reading. Where Mission Council has concluded that the 1999 Group’s proposals should not be implemented, it is not a criticism of their work, but reflects the fact that Mission Council considered the matter at a different time, and with more information to hand than was available to the 1999 Group (e.g. the reports of the other 1997 Resolution 18 groups).

- 4.3 Where strong beliefs and opposing views are held, as was the case in the debate in the United Reformed Church on human sexuality, no structure or process will be able to prevent pain.
- 4.4 It is most important that any decision-making process is understood and accepted by all before it begins. There may be those who remain troubled and dissatisfied by the ultimate decision, but if there is contention over technicalities it is worse.

## 5. DRAFT RESOLUTIONS

1. General Assembly reaffirms that:
  - i) Decisions about candidates' suitability for ministry remain within the councils of the church. (3.1.2)
  - ii) Decisions on academic and formational matters fall within the remit of colleges and courses. (3.1.3/4)
2. General Assembly encourages the Training and Ministries Committees to continue their consideration of the procedures for the selection, training, call and ordination of ministers. (3.2.1)
3. General Assembly affirms that task groups, regardless of their purpose, should be given very clear remits and there should be equal clarity about to which council or committee of the church the group will report. (3.3)
4. General Assembly affirms the present practice (function 2(5)(A)(ix)), namely that, where it deems right, the General Assembly remits questions, with clear guidelines as to the process, to other councils of the church and, having considered the responses, makes decisions following debate. (3.4.6)
5.
  - i) In order to promote clearer communication and share good practice between the councils of the church, and to ensure a greater sense of relevance between the councils of the church, the General Assembly urges local churches, district/area councils and synods to consider the suggestions in 3.5A of the report and take appropriate action. (3.5A)
  - ii) General Assembly asks Mission Council to issue guidelines:
    - a) to advise district/area councils on ways of appointing representatives to General Assembly which both offer continuity and respect the church's policy on equal opportunities; and
    - b) on the more effective sharing of reports and decisions with district/area councils and church meetings. (3.5A)
  - iii) General Assembly agrees that the proposals for a radical review of the church's structure should not be pursued at present, though consideration should be given to this after the Task Group on Personal and Conciliar Leadership has completed its work, and in the light of the theological work on episcopate which will be contained in its report. (3.5B)
6. General Assembly asks the Training Committee to evaluate training materials already available within the church, and to review them with a view to producing materials that



could be more widely used to assist representatives to understand their roles within the various councils of the church. (3.6)

7. General Assembly reaffirms the use of existing function 2(5)(A)(ix) to cover contentious issues rather than the procedure suggested by the Working Group on the Authority of General Assembly and Other Councils in the Human Sexuality Report 1999. (3.8)
8. General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to the Standing Orders of the Assembly:

Alter the title of Standing Orders section 5 to read:

“Motions on Status or Closure of Debate”

and add a new paragraph 5a:

“A member of Assembly may deliver to the General Secretary not less than 21 days before the date of the meeting of the Assembly a notice in writing of a motion that the General Assembly, for the better consideration of a specified resolution and its related documents, goes into a committee of the whole Assembly. For such a motion to be carried, two thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. Committee procedure enables members to speak more than once and exploratory votes to be taken on particular points or suggested changes. The number and length of speeches shall be at the discretion of the Moderator. After discussion in committee and decision on any proposed changes the Moderator shall declare the committee stage to be ended, and the Assembly shall proceed to hear a closing speech from the mover of the motion under discussion and proceed to a vote on the motion, subject to any further motion under Standing Order 5.”

Re-number the existing paragraphs 5a, 5b, 5c and 5d as 5b, 5c, 5d and 5e respectively, and in the new 5e, amend “5a, 5b 5c” to read: “5a, 5b, 5c and 5d”.

9. General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to the Standing Orders of the Assembly:

Add the following to Standing Order 3f:

“The Moderator may rule that a proposed amendment should be treated as an alternative motion under Standing Order 3k.”

Add new Standing Order 3k:

“Alternative (but not directly negative) motions may be moved and seconded in competition with a motion before the Assembly. After any amendments duly moved under Standing Orders 3f, 3g and 3h have been dealt with and debate on the alternative motions has ended, the movers shall reply to the debate in reverse order to that in which they spoke initially. The first vote shall be a vote in favour of each of the motions, put in the order in which they were proposed, the result not being announced for one until it is announced for all. If any of them obtains a majority of those voting, it becomes the sole motion before the Assembly. If none of them does so, the motion having the fewest votes is discarded. Should the lowest two be equal, the Moderator gives a casting vote. The voting process is repeated until one motion achieves a majority of those voting. Once a sole motion remains, votes for and against that motion shall be taken in the normal way and in accordance with Standing Order 6.



**MISSION COUNCIL  
22 – 24 March 2002**

**E**

**RE: NEWTOWN METHODIST CHURCH**

In 1911 a plot of land was acquired by private Trustees on which a Presbyterian Mission Hall was built which had links with the then Warwick Road Presbyterian Church. In 1952 Newtown Road was constituted as a Methodist Church and for the last 50 years there has been no Presbyterian or United Reformed Church involvement in that Church. Throughout all that time the Methodists have continued to worship there and have accepted full responsibility for the buildings. Technically however the premises are still held on old Presbyterian trusts.

By virtue of the Act of 1972, the powers conferred on the Presbyterian Church of England vested in the corresponding association of the United Reformed Church, which in my opinion is Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly. The Northern Synod has recognised that the former Presbyterian Church and its successor the United Reformed Church have no beneficial interest in the church premises and wish to facilitate the transfer of those premises to trustees for the Methodist Church.

Section 36 (9) (b) of the Charities Act 1993 permits trustees for one charity to transfer trustee land to trustees for another charity at less than market value. This procedure is only appropriate for the United Reformed Church where it is clear that the Church has nominal title only to the land, as is the case here.

At present, clarification is awaited as to the identity of the existing trustees. Meanwhile Mission Council is asked to pass the Resolution set out below to enable the transfer of the property to Methodist trustees to take place when this outstanding point has been clarified.

**RESOLUTION**

**Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, resolves to authorise the transfer by the present trustees of the land now forming the site of the Newtown Road Methodist Church Carlisle to trustees for the Methodist Church at a nominal consideration only in accordance with the provisions of Section 36(9)(b) of the Charities Act 1993 to be held on appropriate Methodist trusts.**

**An Occupational Health Service?**

1. In July 2000 General Assembly resolved to accept a resolution from the South Western Synod: "to explore the setting up of an Occupational Health Service for the benefit and support of all serving ministers, Church Related Community Workers and others paid from central funds".
2. The then General Secretary, the Revd Tony Burnham, carried out some work on the subject and before he retired prepared a paper for Mission Council. The paper reported that the only one of our sister churches having such a scheme was the Church of Scotland but that in Thames North Synod an Occupational Health Scheme was already in operation. It also recommended that a scheme should be set up, more modest than that described in the papers supporting the South Western Synod resolution but including those paid from synod funds. There was a suggestion that representatives of the synods should discuss the proposal.
3. Mission Council received the paper at its meeting in October 2001. It decided that the next stage should be a consultation with representatives of the synods. Invitations were sent to the synods in November, asking them to send one representative to a consultation on 13 February 2002 and in the intervening time to canvass opinion as appropriate. Eleven synods were represented at the consultation, another synod appointed a representative who sent detailed written comments on the paper but did not attend in person.
4. The consultation began from the assumption that the motivation behind the original proposal and its subsequent outworking was to ensure that proper care was given to those "employed" in the service of the church. In order to give focus to the discussion, time was given to considering the arrangements in place within Thames North Synod.
5. Thames North Synod has a voluntary occupational health scheme allied to a physical fitness programme which is offered to ministers and lay staff. They may take advantage of the facility every 2½-3 years and at present the take-up is about 70%. The cost to the synod is about £5,000-£6,000 p.a. In addition the synod employs four part-time pastoral consultants to assist the Moderator and District Councils in their duty of pastoral care. No other synod has a similar pattern but most of the synods represented at the consultation had some (largely) voluntary procedures in place. None felt they had the resource available to replicate the Thames North pattern. Discussion revealed doubt as to whether it was necessary to redirect funds in order to do so, even where it was possible.

6. Some voices at the consultation expressed the view that, even if an overall Occupational Health Scheme was felt to be necessary, this was an inopportune time to introduce it. The cost of such a scheme had been estimated at £42,000 p.a. To add such a sum to the budget at the very moment when ways were being sought to cut a much larger sum from existing expenditure did not make sense.
7. The consultation, having come to a negative response to the original proposal, wanted to draw attention to the resources of care that are available to ministers and lay workers in all places. These are outlined in the following paragraphs. In some cases they may need to be advocated, in some places there may need to be some sharpening up. The relevant councils of the church should consider these things as part of their duty of care.
8. It was noted that current changes in the Health Service are intended to make the General Practitioner the primary focus of health care. Recently it has become a requirement that GP practices must give all new patients a basic health check. There are other circumstances that will make it legitimate for people to have further checks, as for example when unexplained physical symptoms appear. Therefore it may be that synod financial resources could best be focused on occasions of change in work pattern when a health check might be a wise preliminary and where a fee may be required to be paid.
9. Of course this means that usually the initiative has to be taken by the minister or church worker her/himself. The consultation was of the opinion that the responsibility of each individual for self-care should be emphasised. The commandment to love our neighbour is followed by the words, "as ourselves". The majority of church members in employment have to take responsibility for their own health using the medium of the Health Service.
10. In 1987 the Assembly received a report on 'Stress in the Ministry'. This remains an important document and it reminds us that ministry imposes stresses on people which in a minority of cases leads to a breakdown in health. (As a rough indication of scale, it was discovered that of over 700 people on the URC payroll, 30 had had sickness absences of more than a month in the last tax year. By no means all those absences are stress-related.)
11. Since that report was received a number of support structures have been put in place. All ministers and members of their households have access to free and confidential counselling through the Churches' Ministerial Counselling Service. All ministers are encouraged to engage in accompanied self-appraisal on a regular basis. (The question is asked whether this programme needs more emphasis and whether a question about the possible need for a health check should be added to it.) There is further encouragement to refreshment and renewal through Continuing Ministerial

Education and the sabbatical programme. These structures, if taken seriously, should normally enable an individual minister to get balance in life and so prevent much avoidable damage to health.

12. The consultation wished to affirm the pastoral work done by synod moderators and by district pastoral committees as the bedrock of the church's healing ministry with ministers and church workers. It noted that Assembly and synod welfare funds are used to help at moments of stress and the breakdown of health. There are occasions when the pastoral care system does not deliver what is needed - sometimes it cannot - but there are many occasions when it does.
13. The consultation therefore makes four recommendations to Mission Council for possible transmission to the General Assembly:
  - 13.1 That an Occupational Health Service should not be set up at the present time.
  - 13.2 That those responsible for personnel matters in Church House and in the synods should consider creating support systems for lay staff similar to those available to ministers, where these are not in place.
  - 13.3 That Mission Council should instigate a more careful study of lengthy (more than one month in twelve) absences due to ill-health of those on the URC payroll, and consider the significance of the results.
  - 13.4 That Mission Council should keep this matter under review.

John Waller  
Deputy General Secretary  
February 2002

## **THE 2003 BUDGET**

### **Report from the Convener of Resource Planning Advisory Group**

The draft budget circulated with John Waller's letter of 13 February showed two alternatives:

A, which assumed an increase in Ministry & Mission contributions of 5.5%, allowing a stipend increase of 4%, and

B, which assumed an M&M increase of 3.9%, allowing a stipend increase of only 2%.

The accompanying notes indicated that there was a choice between these alternatives, or a point between the two, which required a judgement as to the likely level of M&M contributions.

Julian Macro and Graham Stacy attended the District and Synod Treasurers' and M&M Representatives' Workshop at Swanwick on 19/21 February 2002, and shared the thinking of RPAG with those present, seeking their response to suggestions for dealing with the challenges of the 2003 budget. In the light of discussions in RPAG, Mission Council and the Treasurers' Workshop we now make the following proposals:

- We aim for a minimum increase in M&M contributions of 4.5% over the pledges for 2002. The Treasurers felt that there was a psychological barrier at 5%, but the overall increase in M&M needs to be as near to 5% as possible. We recognise that this is a major challenge to our churches.
- With this level of increase in M&M it would be possible to budget for an increase in stipend for 2003 of the order of 2.5%, which remains the Government's target for inflation.
- All the other assumptions reflected in the URC 2003 draft budget to be retained, these are:
  1. That steps are taken to withdraw as soon as possible the provision which allows ministers to stay on full stipend for up to six months after reaching 65. We expect that this would allow a saving of about £100,000 per annum.
  2. That Ministries be asked to take steps to reduce by at least 5 (and preferably more) the number of stipendiary ministers in 2003 – there is a saving of some £22,000 per annum per minister.
  3. We have asked the Training Committee to reduce expenditure on CME (or some other area of work) by £25,000.
  4. We assume acceptance of the recommendation from the Youth and Children's Work Review to cease to use the buildings at Yardley Hastings as a Resource Centre for youth work. While there will be costs in 2003 we feel that it would be acceptable to allow for the budget deficit to be increased to allow for this on the basis that there would be no further costs.
  5. If the recommendation to cease to use Yardley Hastings is not accepted, other areas for saving £130k per annum will have to be identified.

**Nominations Committee's Report to Mission Council - March 2002**

1. **Assembly Appointments**
  - 1.1 Mrs Ruth Clarke will convene a review group for the West Midlands Synod Moderator.
  - 1.2 Revd Dr John Sutcliffe will convene a Nominating Group for the post of East Midlands Synod Moderator.
  - 1.3 In anticipation of RPAG (advised by SAG) approval of the post of the Life and Witness Secretary the Revd Elizabeth Nash has agreed to convene the review group.
  - 1.4 In anticipation of RPAG (advised by SAG) approval of the post of Secretary for Ecumenical Relations an invitation has been extended to someone who will convene the nominating group.
- 2 **Lay Preaching Commissioner elect:** Dr Philip Theaker has accepted nomination by the committee
- 3 **Trustee.** The officers endorse the Training committees nomination of the Revd Adrian Bulley as a Trustee of the Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme.
- 4 **Resolution.** Mission Council is invited to explore a proposal that membership of the Retired Ministers' Housing Sub-Committee should be for an initial four year period with the option to extend by a further two years.

The background

There are at present 24 people belonging to either the Assembly appointed Sub-Committee or the Board of the Retired Ministers' Housing Society appointed by the Sub-Committee, or both. Appointments to the Board have been made with a view to maintaining continuity and experience.

The proposal

In future the Board should comprise only of the seven Assembly appointed serving members of the Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee would take all decisions. The Board would give formal ratification to those matters that concern the Society immediately following each meeting.

The Sub-Committee and the Board are concerned that the four-year limit for service on a committee will make it difficult to obtain the experience and continuity required in what is a complex operation involving nearly 350 houses with a value of around £30 million. They suggest that membership of the Retired Ministers' Housing Sub-Committee should be for an initial four year period with the option to extend by a further two years without the need for special reference to Assembly each time. They think a six-year term is not appropriate.

**Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, is asked to confirm 4 above.**

**The rest is for information.**

### Mission Council Advisory Group

1. **Occupational Health Scheme.** The report of the synod consultation on 13 February was noted and it was agreed that this would be dealt with as a separate agenda item at Mission Council (Paper F).
2. **Church House Reference Group.** There were issues still to be resolved in the details of this group, in particular its relationship to the management of Health and Safety issues.
3. **Mission strategy and structures.** The General Secretary instigated a discussion on mission strategy and structures. His thoughts had been stimulated by a conversation with the synod moderators. MCAG noted that, in its initial concept, Growing Up was a mission programme for the three years 1998-2001. It was also realised that the October agenda already had matters planned – the Church Life Profile and the Mersey and Yorkshire synods' development plans – which have a clear mission intention. The General Secretary was therefore encouraged to propose to the March meeting that over the period of the next Assembly year Mission Council should engage in some considered strategic mission thinking in order to give a lead to the Church in its mission.
4. **March Mission Council agenda.** The agenda was agreed, along with plans as to how the major items should be introduced and discussed.
5. **Review of the Windermere Centre.** As requested by the January Mission Council, MCAG has prepared terms of reference for the above review, which are set out below. It has also considered names for the review group and hopes to be ready to propose them once the remit is agreed.

Mission Council agrees to the holding of a review of the Windermere Centre with the following remit:

- 1) to review in general terms the operation of the Centre since its opening in 1984/5;
  - 2) to evaluate its findings against the original (and any later) statements of the Centre's purpose;
  - 3) to assess the needs for a URC training centre;
  - 4) to consider the proposals for a closer relationship between the Centre and Carver church, Windermere;
- and 5) to make proposals for the future of the Centre.

The review will be carried out by a group of four people, including a convener, with a report to be made to the meeting of Mission Council in March 2003. The cost of the review will be carried on the Mission Council budget. The group should consult previous Directors with regard to the first part of its remit, and representatives of the Life and Witness Committee and Carver church with regard to the fourth. Otherwise it should be free to operate as it wishes within budget constraints agreed with the Deputy General Secretary.

6. **Risk assessment.** Acting in its role as charity trustees, MCAG considered a paper on the major risks facing the United Reformed Church and the policies in place for managing them. These include matters such as financial procedures, investments, health and safety, properties, data protection, employment, computer systems, the website, discipline, insurance, income tax, grant making policy and child protection. MCAG believed that a satisfactory report on these matters could be given to the auditors. It also agreed to give further consideration to some issues at its next meeting.





## SECTION O PROCESS

### NOTE TO MISSION COUNCIL FROM ADVISORY GROUP

Since General Assembly in July 2001 the Advisory Group has met five times. It now requests Mission Council to present to General Assembly in July 2002 resolutions to ratify the changes to Part I of Section O which Assembly approved last year and to approve a number of changes to Part II. Copies of the resolutions showing the proposed changes are attached to this Note.

Mission Council is also asked to present to Assembly the attached report to precede the resolutions. That report provides the background to the resolutions and gives details of other tasks in which the Group is presently engaged.

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Note: Mission Council should note that, in accordance with the decision of the January meeting, the following resolution and text will be included in its report to General Assembly.

**Assembly agrees that responsibility for the continued oversight of the Section O process shall be given to Mission Council, working through a Section O oversight group.**

From the time of its inception, oversight of Section O has been carried out by an ad hoc group appointed by Mission Council and consisting of the General Secretary, the Clerk of Assembly and the Convener of the Ministries Committee. This was seen as a temporary arrangement and by this resolution Mission Council hopes to establish something more permanent.

The remit would be to oversee the Section O process, monitoring how it works and being responsible for presenting to Mission Council any changes that the group believes should be taken to Assembly for decision. The group would have the status of an Advisory Group to Mission Council. It would not consider any specific cases in the Section O process.

Mission Council has agreed that the Section O oversight group if set up, would have a membership of a convener, a secretary, the General Secretary and the Clerk for the time being. The Secretary for Ministries, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission and the Legal Adviser would attend to give advice and support. Mission Council has in mind that the first Convener of the Section O oversight group would be the Revd Tony Burnham and the first Secretary Mr Hartley Oldham.

Making the oversight of Section O a Mission Council responsibility would mean that it rested with a body that is annually accountable to General Assembly and which is widely representative of the experience of the church.

## **SECTION O PROCESS**

### **REPORT TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY (to precede resolutions)**

During the past three years, the Section O Advisory Group has carried out a detailed review of the whole of the Section O Process. The first part of this review was completed last year when General Assembly approved a number of amendments to Part I of Section O. Resolution No. [to be inserted] now seeks Assembly's ratification of those changes.

To conclude the review, the Advisory Group is putting forward a series of amendments to the Rules of Procedure at Part II, and these are all set out in the Appendix referred to in Resolution No. [to be inserted]. Amendments to Part II do not need to be ratified by a subsequent Assembly, so if these two resolutions are passed the changes to both Parts I and II will take effect immediately. As part of its ongoing task the Advisory Group continues to monitor Section O and will advise Mission Council on any future changes to the Process.

In its original form Section O included an Introduction which gave some guidance on the operative parts of the Process. Last year's Assembly was advised that this Introduction was being withdrawn as it was out of date. The first part of the Introduction, however, had nothing to do with the fine print of the Process itself, but it provided a valuable statement on the significance of Christian discipline in the life of the Church. This initial part of the Introduction will therefore be restored when the Manual is reprinted.

The Advisory Group is also currently working on a series of Guidelines for the assistance of those involved in the Section O Process and these will shortly be ready for circulation.

## SECTION O PROCESS

### RESOLUTIONS TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2002

#### RESOLUTION NO. [to be inserted]

General Assembly agrees to ratify its decision of July 2001 to make the changes to Part I of the Section O Process for Ministerial Discipline which are contained in Part I of Appendix No. [to be inserted] to these Reports.

#### RESOLUTION NO. [to be inserted]

General Assembly agrees to make the changes to Part II of the Section O Process which are contained in Part II of Appendix No. [here insert same Appendix number as in previous resolution] to these Reports.

#### APPENDIX NO. [to be inserted]

##### PART I – Changes to Part I of the Section O Process ( see Resolution [insert number] )

[Here copy verbatim all the changes set out in Resolution 11 of 2001 at pages 38/41 of the 2001 Assembly Record.]

##### PART II – Changes to Part II of the Section O Process ( see Resolution [insert number] )

In the brackets immediately below the Heading delete ‘of the United Reformed Church’.

A.1 ‘Paragraph 3.2’ becomes ‘Paragraph 3’.

A.2 Delete this Paragraph

A.3 Delete this Paragraph

A.4 Delete this Paragraph

A.5 This becomes Paragraph A.2

A.6 This becomes Paragraph A.3

‘Section O Process’ becomes ‘Commission Stage’.

A.7 This becomes Paragraph A.4.

**'The Ministerial Disciplinary Process' and 'the Disciplinary Process' both become 'the Section O Process'.**

A.8 This becomes Paragraph A.5

A.6 Add a new Paragraph as follows:

**'In any case where the Secretary of the Assembly Commission is unable for any reason to carry out the duties of that office, his/her place shall be taken by a deputy duly authorised by or in the name of General Assembly.'**

B.1 This becomes Paragraph B.1.1.

After **'Structure'** delete **'of the United Reformed Church'**.

After **'District Council shall act'** insert **'solely'**.

**'on behalf of'** becomes **'in the name of'**.

B.1.2 Add a new Paragraph as follows:

**'The Mandated Group called in to deal with any particular case under Paragraph B.6.1, Paragraph B.9.2 or Paragraph B.9.3 has no pastoral role to fulfil and its precise functions are described in Paragraphs B.7 and B.8.'**

B.2 **'the Mandated Group'** becomes **'the Standing Mandated Group for each District Council under Paragraph B.3'**.

B.5.1 After **'Moderator of the Synod'** delete **'or his/her duly appointed deputy'**.

Replace the final sentence with the following two sentences:

**'If only one member of the Standing Mandated Group is disqualified or otherwise unable to act, then, until any such further appointment is made, the mandate shall continue to be held by the remaining two members of the Standing Mandated Group. If two members of the Standing Mandated Group are disqualified or otherwise unable to act, there is no mandate for the remaining member to act alone.'**

B.5.2 Replace this paragraph with:

**'No person shall serve as a member of or as the spokesperson for a Mandated Group in connection with any case where s/he would fall within any of the restrictions contained in Paragraphs 7.1.1 and 7.1.2 of Part I.'**

B.6. This becomes Paragraph B.6.1.

In the expression **'s/he may forthwith'** **'may'** becomes **'shall'**.

Before **'Mandated Group'** remove **'Standing'**.

At the end of the paragraph, remove the full-stop and continue:

, at the same time informing the Minister that this step has been taken.'

B.6.2 Add a new Paragraph as follows:

**'In cases of extreme emergency, the Moderator or other person entitled to call in the Mandated Group under the Rules of Procedure may, if s/he considers that there are strong and urgent reasons for so doing and only so long as s/he forthwith calls in the Mandated Group under Paragraph B.6.1, suspend the Minister with immediate effect either orally or in writing. Suspension imposed orally shall be immediately confirmed in writing to the Minister and written notice shall also be given to the Secretary of the District Council (see also Paragraph B.8.2).'**

B.6.3 Add a new Paragraph as follows:

**'Suspension imposed under Paragraph B.6.2 shall continue during the Mandated Group's initial enquiry period referred to in Paragraph B.7.1. If at the end of that period the Mandated Group serves a Referral Notice on the Minister, it must also serve on him/her a Notice confirming the continuance of the suspension during the Commission Stage.'**

B.6.4 Add a new Paragraph as follows:

**'In the event that the initial enquiry period terminates without the issue of a Referral Notice, the Minister's suspension under Paragraph B.6.2 shall automatically cease on the issue of a Notice of Non-Continuance under Paragraph B.7.2, whereupon the Moderator or other person imposing the suspension under Paragraph B.6.2 shall give written notice of the cessation of the suspension both to the Minister and to the Secretary of the District Council.'**

B.7 Replace the whole of Paragraphs B.7, B.7.1 and B.7.2 with:

**B.7 The functions of the Mandated Group called in by the person authorised for that purpose under Paragraph B.6 in any particular case are described in this Paragraph B.7 (as regards the initial enquiry) and in Paragraph B.8 (as regards its role during the Commission Stage):**

**B.7.1 The Mandated Group shall carry out its own initial enquiry with all due expedition in consultation (where practical and appropriate) with the Moderator of the Synod for the sole purpose of ascertaining whether the Commission Stage should be initiated. Having done so, it must bring its initial enquiry to a conclusion in accordance with Paragraphs B.7.2 and B.7.3.**

**B.7.2 If the Mandated Group decides as a result of its initial enquiry not to proceed any further with the matter, it shall serve on the Moderator or other person calling it in a notice to that effect (a Notice of Non-Continuance), which shall have the effect of discharging from further involvement in that case the Mandated Group itself and the Council in whose name it conducted the initial enquiry.**

**B.7.3 On receipt of a Notice of Non-Continuance the Moderator or other person calling in the Mandated Group shall forthwith notify the Minister and the Secretary of the District Council that the Mandated Group is not proceeding any further and if the Moderator or other person calling in the Mandated Group has already suspended the Minister under Paragraph B.6.2 s/he must notify the Minister and the Secretary of the District Council of the immediate cessation of the suspension.**

**B.7.4** If on the other hand the Mandated Group decides as a result of its initial enquiry to initiate the Commission Stage, it shall follow the procedure laid down in Paragraphs B.8.1 and B.8.3 whereupon the Commission Stage will be initiated.

**B.8.1** After the words 'suspend the Minister' insert the words '(unless s/he has already been suspended under Paragraph B.6.2, in which case the Mandated Group shall serve on the Minister a notice that his/her suspension shall continue during the Commission Stage)'.  
**'the Section O Process'** becomes **'the Commission Stage'**.

After the word 'Suspension' at the beginning of the penultimate sentence insert 'under this Paragraph' and after the word 'Suspension' at the beginning of the final sentence replace 'given' with 'imposed'.

**B.8.2** After 'Suspension' at the beginning of this Paragraph insert 'whether imposed under Paragraph B.6.2 or Paragraph B.8.1,'.

**B.8.4** Add a new Paragraph as follows:

**'During the Commission Stage it is the responsibility of the Mandated Group to conduct the Investigation in accordance with Section D of these Rules of Procedure, to comply with all procedural matters under the Rules of Procedure and to present the case against the Minister at the Hearing under Section E and at the Hearing of any Appeal under Section G.'**

**B.9.1** 'Paragraph 2.(4)(xv)' becomes 'Paragraph 2.(4)(xiv)'.

After 'Structure' delete 'of the United Reformed Church'.

After 'the General Assembly shall act' add 'solely'.

'on behalf of' becomes 'in the name of'.

**B.9.2** In the expression 's/he may forthwith' 'may' becomes 'shall'.

After 'Synod Panel for that Synod' delete 'and' and continue ', at the same time informing the Minister that this step has been taken.' Then the text continues with a new sentence 'The Mandated Group so appointed .....'.

At the end of the Paragraph, 'Paragraph B.6' becomes 'Paragraph B.6.1'.

**B.9.3** In the expression 's/he may forthwith' 'may' becomes 'shall'.

'from a Synod Panel' becomes 'drawn from the Panels of Synods'.

After 'out of which the case arises' delete 'and' and continue ', at the same time informing the Minister that this step has been taken'. Then the text continues with a new sentence 'The Mandated Group so appointed .....'.

At the end of the Paragraph 'Paragraph B.6' becomes 'Paragraph B.6.1'.

**B.9.4** 'Paragraphs B.2, B.4, B.5, B.7 and B.8' becomes 'Paragraphs B.2, B.4, B.5, B.6.2, B.6.3, B.6.4, B.7, B.8, B.10 and B.11'.

In the first sub-paragraph 'Paragraph B.5' becomes 'Paragraph B.5.1'.

In the second sub-paragraph, after 'in consultation' insert '(where practical and appropriate)'.

B.9.5 Add a new Paragraph as follows:

**'On any occasion throughout the Section O Process where notices and papers are required to be sent to the Moderator of the Synod and/or the Secretary of the District Council, then in a case proceeding under Paragraph B.9.3 they shall also be sent to the Deputy General Secretary.'**

B.10 Replace Paragraphs B.10, B.10.1 and B.10.2 with new Paragraphs B.10, B.10.1 and B.10.2 as follows:

B.10 To initiate the Commission Stage pursuant to Paragraph B.8.1, the Mandated Group in the name of the Council shall take the following steps:

**B.10.1 Serve on the Secretary of the Assembly Commission a duly completed Referral Notice which should clearly state the reasons why the Mandated Group believes that a breach of Ministerial Discipline has or may have occurred and which should also include where possible a summary of the supporting information on the basis of which the Mandated Group has issued the Referral Notice and**

**B.10.2 Serve on the Minister notice of the issue of the Referral Notice and of his/her suspension (or of the continuance of his/her suspension if Paragraph B.6.2 applies).**

C.1.3 'from the Minister and the Council to the Notice' becomes 'from the Parties regarding the Notice'.

'Paragraph G.9.2' becomes 'Paragraph G.12.1'.

C.1.5 Replace with a new Paragraph as follows:

**'Inform the General Secretary, the Moderator of the Synod and the Secretary of the District Council of the receipt of the Referral Notice but not of the contents thereof, apart from the name of the Minister.'**

C.3.1 'together with a copy of the Referral Notice and of any response from the Minister.' becomes 'stating the name of the Minister but containing no further details of the case'.

'Such' becomes 'The'.

C.4.1 'the Minister and the Council' becomes 'the Parties'.

C.4.3 'Section O Process' becomes 'Commission Stage'.

C.4.7 'those concerned' becomes 'the Parties'.

C.6.1 'Section O Process' becomes 'Commission Stage'.

C.6.2 'less' becomes 'fewer'.



D.1 'on behalf of' becomes 'in the name of'.

D.2 'it' becomes 'the Mandated Group'.

D.4 Replace the existing paragraph with a new paragraph as follows:

**'In cases where Paragraph E.7.1 applies, the Mandated Group may itself monitor the criminal proceedings, but shall otherwise for the period specified in that Paragraph suspend its own investigation of any matter under the Section O Process which might also be related to the criminal proceedings.'**

E.2 'Paragraph E.5.1' becomes 'Paragraph E.5'.

E.3.2 'the Minister and the Mandated Group' becomes 'each of the Parties'.

E.3.2.3 'invite' becomes 'call upon'.

E.3.2.4 'invite' (when the expression first appears) becomes 'call upon'.

E.3.2.5 'invite the Council' becomes 'call upon the Mandated Group'.

After 'member of the Mandated Group' delete 'or the Council' and after 'the general presentation of the case' delete 'for the Council'.

E.3.2.6 Replace the existing paragraph with a new paragraph as follows:

**'call upon the Minister to state whether s/he wishes to have a person present with him /her at the Hearing pursuant to Paragraph E.10.1 and, if so, call upon the Minister to indicate the name and status of such person and whether s/he will be present to give the Minister support and advice under Paragraph E.10.1.1 or to present the Minister's case under Paragraph E.10.1.2.'**

E.4.1 After 'Paragraph E.3' delete 'of these Rules'.

E.5.1.1. At the end of the Paragraph, delete the full stop and add 'and'.

E.5.2 Replace the existing paragraph with a new paragraph as follows:

**'Having notified the Parties prior to the Hearing, the Assembly Commission may invite any person with expert or specialist knowledge in any particular field to attend the Hearing with a view to that person giving evidence at the Hearing and may issue such requests and directions in that connection as it considers appropriate.'**

E.7.1 'Paragraph E.9' becomes 'Paragraph E.9.1'.

E.7.2.3 The existing E.7.2.3 becomes E.7.2.4 and a new E.7.2.3 shall be inserted as follows:

**'criminal offences relating to stalking and/or sexual harassment.'**

E.7.3 The existing Paragraph E.7.3 becomes new Paragraph E.7.5 (see below).

E.7.4 The existing Paragraph E.7.4 becomes Paragraph E.7.3 and there shall be a new Paragraph E.7.4 as follows:

**'It shall be the responsibility of the Mandated Group to procure a duly certified Court record or memorandum of the decision of the criminal or civil court in connection with any such case and to lodge it with the Secretary of the Assembly Commission, whereupon the Section O Process shall be re-activated and the case brought to a Hearing as soon as possible.'**

E.7.5 The existing Paragraph E.7.3 becomes Paragraph E.7.5 with the following change:

**'being so found guilty of any such offence(s)' becomes 'being convicted of any criminal offence whether or not within the categories listed in Paragraph E.7.2'.**

E.8.3 At the end of the Paragraph, delete the full stop and add 'and/or'.

E.8.4 Add a new E.8.4 as follows:

**'Any conduct on the part of the Minister during his/her suspension under the Section O Process which breaches or contravenes Paragraph 4 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union.'**

E.9 The existing Paragraph E.9 becomes Paragraph E.9.1.

E.9.2 Add a new Paragraph as follows:

**'If as a result of its investigation during the Commission Stage, the Mandated Group unanimously comes to the view that no breach of discipline on the part of the Minister has occurred or at least that no breach can be established to the standard of proof required, it may give written notice to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission before the Hearing date that as a consequence it does not intend to press the case against the Minister. Thereupon the members of the Assembly Commission shall consult together to decide whether they still require the Parties to attend a formal Hearing before them or whether in the circumstances their attendance can be dispensed with. If they elect for the former, the Hearing will take place as planned. If they elect for the latter, they may in consultation together dispense with the formal Hearing and come to the decision to allow the name of the Minister to remain on the Roll of Ministers under Paragraph 10.1 of Part I. If this procedure is adopted, the said consultation shall constitute the Hearing and its decision shall be effective for all purposes as though a formal Hearing had taken place.'**

E.9.3 Add a new Paragraph as follows:

**'Paragraph E.9.2 shall not apply where the Mandated Group, whilst not pressing the case for deletion, requests the Assembly Commission to issue a written warning under Part I Paragraph 10.2.1. In such a case a formal Hearing shall take place.'**

E.10.1.1 **'his/her own case' becomes 'his/her response' and 'the Minister's case' becomes 'the Minister's response'.**

E.10.1.2 **'case' becomes 'response' twice.**

E.10.2 Replace the existing Paragraph with the following:

**'Neither the spokesperson nominated by the Mandated Group in accordance with Paragraph E.3.2.5 nor the Minister's accompanying person invited to present his/her response under Paragraph E.10.1.2 shall be permitted to give evidence in the case or personal testimony as to the Minister's character, either by written statement or orally at the Hearing. Where the Minister has invited a person to be present at the Hearing to give support and advice only under Paragraph E.10.1.1, the Assembly Commission may, in its**

absolute discretion if it sees fit, consider a written statement received from such person prior to the Hearing strictly limited to personal testimony as to the character of the Minister, but shall not permit him/her to give evidence in the case or oral testimony as to character at the Hearing.'

E.11 'less' becomes 'fewer'.

E.12.1 '(see Paragraph E.12.3)' becomes '(see Paragraphs A.6 and E.12.3)'

'The spokesperson for the Council' becomes 'the spokesperson for the Mandated Group'.

'The representative of the Church's legal advisers (if invited by the Assembly Commission to be present)' becomes 'A representative of the Church's legal advisers'.

Add a further category of persons permitted to attend the Hearing:

'Any persons responsible for operating the recording equipment or otherwise preparing the verbatim record of the proceedings referred to in Paragraph E.12.4.'

E.12.2 'keeping a formal record of the Hearing' becomes 'ensuring compliance with Paragraph E.12.4'.

E.12.3 After 'Assembly Commission' (the second time these words appear) 'may' becomes 'shall'.

'the Secretary' (the second time these words appear) becomes 'him/her'.

Add the following sentence at the end of the paragraph:

'Such person shall carry out the duties set out in Paragraph E.12.2 but shall not be present when the Assembly Commission deliberates and decides upon the case.'

E.12.4 Add a new paragraph as follows:

'The Secretary of the Assembly Commission or his/her deputy shall prepare a summary minute of the proceeds at the Hearing (the Secretary's minute). Where possible, a verbatim record of the proceedings shall also be made by electronic recording or by such other means as shall be directed by the Convener of the Assembly Commission. The Record of the Hearing shall consist of the Secretary's minute together with any such verbatim record, which shall be transcribed in the event of an appeal.'

E.13.2 (twice), E.13.3, E.13.4 and E.13.6

'Council' becomes 'Mandated Group'.

E.14.3 'may, at the invitation of the Assembly Commission, be present at the Hearing to advise' becomes 'shall normally be present at the Hearing (unless his/her attendance has been expressly dispensed with by the Assembly Commission) in order to advise and address'.

E.15 The existing Paragraphs E.15.1 and E.15.2 are deleted, to be replaced by the following Paragraph E.15:

'At the Hearing the Parties shall be allowed to question any such person as attends the Hearing under Paragraph E.5.2 and to comment on any evidence, information, opinion or advice offered by him/her.'

E.16.1.1 **'Council'** becomes **'Mandated Group'**.

E.16.2 At the beginning of the paragraph, insert **'During the Commission Stage of any case brought against a Minister,'**.

**'considered in the course of any previous referral into the Section O Process in respect of the Minister unless (i) the decision taken as a result of such previous referral' becomes 'part of the body of evidence laid before any Assembly Commission or Appeals Commission during the Commission Stage of any previous case brought against that Minister unless (i) the decision reached in the previous case'.**

After **'in the opinion of the'** insert **'current'**.

Add the following sentence at the end:

**'The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall have authority to inspect the papers of that earlier case for the sole purpose of ensuring compliance with this Paragraph.'**

E.16.3 **'occurring after the inception of the Section O Process'** becomes **'arising during the Commission Stage'**.

**'the Minister and the Council'** becomes **'each of the Parties'**.

E.17 After **'Hearing'** (when it first appears) insert **'(as distinct from those serving the Assembly Commission in compliance with Paragraph E.12.4)'**.

E.18 **'Council'** becomes **'Mandated Group'**.

At the end of the paragraph **'the Assembly Commission shall conclude the Hearing'** becomes **'the Convener of the Assembly Commission shall announce to the Parties that the members of the Assembly Commission would at that point retire to consider their decision which would not be announced that day but would be notified to the Parties in accordance with Paragraph F.3. The Hearing is thus concluded.'**

F.2 Insert a new paragraph as follows:

**'The decision so taken shall conclude the involvement of the Assembly Commission in the Section O Process, except as to the discharge of its responsibilities under Paragraph J.2, and shall have the effect provided for in Paragraph 17 of Part I.'**

F.3 The existing Paragraphs F.2, F.2.1 and F.2.2 are now renumbered F.3, F.3.1 and F.3.2.

F.3.1 **'within 7 days'** becomes **'within 10 days of the date of the decision'**.

**'Council'** becomes **'Mandated Group'** twice.

Delete **'and the General Secretary and the Moderator of the Synod'**.

**'Paragraph G.1'** becomes **'Paragraph G.1.1'**.

F.3.2 Replace the existing paragraph with the following new paragraph:

**'If Paragraph 10.2 of Part I applies, s/he shall at the same time (i) serve on the Minister any written warning referred to in that Paragraph, (ii) send a copy thereof to the Mandated Group and (iii) send to the Minister and the Mandated Group copies of any**

**recommendations or guidance appended to the decision of the Assembly Commission under Paragraph 16.1.3 or Paragraph 16.1.4 of Part I as the case may be.'**

**F.3 and F.4** The original Paragraphs F.3 and F.4 are deleted, being replaced with some changes by Paragraphs F.2 and J.1.

**F.4** Add new Paragraphs F.4, F.4.1, F.4.2 and F.4.3 as follows:

**F.4.1** At the same time as s/he serves on the Minister and the Mandated Group the documents referred to in Paragraphs F.3.1 and F.3.2, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall send to the General Secretary, the Moderator of the Synod and the Secretary of the District Council a Notice to the effect that a decision has been reached by the Assembly Commission, simply stating whether the decision of the Assembly Commission has been to delete or to retain the name of the Minister on the Roll of Ministers, and, if the latter, whether or not a decision to issue a written warning was also made. Such notice shall not contain any further information other than that the decision is still subject to the possibility of an appeal being lodged and that a further Notice will be sent under Paragraph F.4.3 (if there is no Appeal) or under Paragraph G.1.2.1 or Paragraph G.1.2.2 (if there is an Appeal).

**F.4.2** If an appeal is lodged by either Party, the procedure contained in Section G of these Rules of Procedure shall apply.

**F.4.3** If within the time specified in Paragraph G.1.1 (or such further time as may be appropriate if the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall receive from either Party an application under Paragraph G.1.3 for permission to lodge an appeal out of time) no appeal is lodged by either Party, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall notify the General Secretary, the Moderator of the Synod and the Secretary of the District Council of that fact within 10 days of the expiration of such period (or within 10 days of the decision itself if the proviso to Paragraph 17.2 of Part I applies) and at the same time shall send to those persons copies of the documents sent to the Minister and the Mandated Group in accordance with Paragraphs F.3.1 and F.3.2.

**G.1.2** Replace this Paragraph with the following Paragraphs:

**G.1.2.1** The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall forthwith notify the General Secretary that an Appeal has been lodged, at the same time passing on to the General Secretary the Notice of Appeal together with the body of papers laid before the Assembly Commission in hearing the case and the Record of the Hearing as defined in Paragraph E.12.4. The General Secretary shall thereupon act in a secretarial and administrative capacity in all matters relating to the Appeal.

**G.1.2.2** At the same time the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall also notify the Moderator of the Synod and the Secretary of the District Council that an Appeal has been lodged against the decision of the Assembly Commission.

**G.1.4** 'content' becomes 'context'.

**G.2.1** After 'Notice of Appeal' remove the full stop and add ', send to the Appellant a copy of the Record of the Hearing (see Paragraph E.12.4) and follow the procedure set out in either Paragraph G.2.2 or Paragraph G.2.3.'

- G.2.2 'Council' becomes 'Mandated Group' three times.  
'Paragraph G.1' becomes 'Paragraph G.1.1'.  
After 'statement of reasons' insert 'and a copy of the Record of the Hearing (see Paragraph E.12.4)'.  
'invite' becomes 'call upon'.  
Remove the full stop at the end and add 'or'.
- G.2.3 'Council' becomes 'Mandated Group'.  
'Paragraph G.1' becomes 'Paragraph G.1.1'.  
After 'statement of reasons' insert 'and a copy of the Record of the Hearing (see Paragraph E.12.4)'.  
'invite' becomes 'call upon'.
- G.3 'Paragraph G.1' becomes 'Paragraph G.1.1'.
- G.4.1 Replace the existing Paragraph G.4.1 (including its sub-paragraphs) with the following Paragraph:  
  
'The General Secretary shall send to each of the proposed appointees for the Appeals Commission an invitation to serve on the Appeals Commission for the hearing of the Appeal in that case, naming the Minister concerned but supplying no further information about the case.'
- G.5.1 'the Minister and the Council' becomes 'the Parties'.  
G.5.7 'those concerned' becomes 'the Parties'.  
G.7.2 'less' becomes 'fewer'.  
G.7.5 Before 'the Moderator of the General Assembly' delete 'either' and after those words delete 'or the Clerk to the General Assembly'.  
G.8 Insert new Paragraphs G.8 and G.8.1/G.8.8 as follows:

**G.8 Each member of the Appeals Commission when appointed shall receive from the General Secretary copies of the following:**

- G.8.1 Notice of the Assembly Commission's decision.  
G.8.2 Any statement of reasons given by the Assembly Commission.  
G.8.3 Any written warning issued  
G.8.4 Any recommendations or guidance appended to the decision in accordance with Paragraph 16.1.3 or Paragraph 16.1.4 of Part I as the case may be.

- G.8.5** The Notice of Appeal, containing the grounds for the appeal.
- G.8.6** Any counter-statement received under Paragraph G.2.2 or Paragraph G.2.3.
- G.8.7** The body of papers laid before the Assembly Commission in hearing the case.
- G.8.8** The Record of the Hearing (see Paragraph E.12.4).
- G.8.1** The original Paragraph G.8.1 becomes Paragraph G.9 and the original Paragraphs G.8.1.1, G.8.1.2 and G.8.1.3 become Paragraphs G.9.1, G.9.2 and G.9.3.
- G.9.3** In this Paragraph as re-numbered 'of the information before it by the Assembly Commission' becomes 'by the Assembly Commission of the information before it or of any aspect of the Section O Process itself'.
- G.8.2** The original Paragraph G.8.2 becomes Paragraph G.10 and the original Paragraphs G.8.2.1, G.8.2.2, G.8.2.3, G.8.2.4, G.8.2.5 and G.8.2.6 become Paragraphs G.10.1, G.10.2, G.10.3, G.10.7, G.10.8 and G.10.9 (additional Paragraphs G.10.4, G.10.5 and G.10.6 being inserted as stated below).
- G.10.4.** Insert a new Paragraph as follows:
- 'The General Secretary shall (unless excluded for the reasons specified in Paragraph 7.1.1 or Paragraph 7.1.2 of Part I) attend the Hearing for the purpose of giving such procedural advice to the Appeals Commission as may be appropriate and of keeping a formal record of the Hearing: S/he shall not be present when the Appeals Commission deliberates and decides on the case.'**
- G.10.5** Insert a new Paragraph as follows:
- 'If the General Secretary cannot for any reason be present at the Hearing, the Appeals Commission shall itself appoint such person as it considers appropriate to deputise for him/her for that purpose, ascertaining beforehand that such person is not excluded for reasons specified in Paragraph 7.1.1 or Paragraph 7.1.2 of Part I. Such person will carry out the duties set out in Paragraph G.10.4 but shall not be present when the Appeals Commission deliberates and decides on the case.'**
- G.10.6** Insert a new Paragraph as follows:
- 'The General Secretary or his/her deputy appointed under Paragraph G.10.5 shall prepare a summary minute of the proceedings at the Hearing (the Secretary's minute). Where possible, a verbatim record of the proceedings shall also be made by electronic recording or by such other means as shall be directed by the Convener of the Appeals Commission. The Record of the Hearing shall consist of the Secretary's minute together with any such verbatim record.'**
- G.11** The original Paragraph G.11 is deleted, re-appearing as part of new Paragraph J.1.
- G.9.1** The original Paragraph G.9.1 becomes Paragraph G.11.
- After 'the Parties' insert 'and of the General Secretary and of the legal adviser'.
- G.12 and G.13** The original Paragraphs G.9.2, G.10.1, G.10.2 and G.10.3 are deleted, to be replaced with some amendments by new Paragraphs G.12 and G.13 as follows:

**G.12** 'As regards the notification of the decision, the General Secretary shall comply with the following:

**G.12.1** S/he shall within 10 days of the date of the decision serve on the Minister and the Mandated Group notice of the decision and of the written Statement of Reasons given under Paragraph 16.1 of Part I.

**G.12.2** If the decision is taken in accordance with either Paragraphs 14.3 or 14.6 of Part I, the General Secretary shall at the same time serve on the Minister the written warning referred to in those Paragraphs and shall send a copy thereof to the Mandated Group.

**G.12.3** If the decision is taken in accordance with Paragraph 14.4 of Part I, the General Secretary shall at the same time serve on the Minister and on the Mandated Group notice that the written warning issued following the decision of the Assembly Commission is withdrawn.

**G.12.4** If Paragraph 10.2.2 of Part I applies, s/he shall at the same time send to the Minister and the Mandated Group notice of any recommendations or guidance appended to the decision of the Appeals Commission under Paragraph 16.1.3 or Paragraph 16.1.4 of Part I as the case may be.

**G.12.5** S/he shall at the same time send to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission, the Moderator of the Synod and the Secretary of the District Council copies of the documents served on the Minister and the Mandated Group under Paragraphs G.12.1 to G.12.4.

**G.13** If the decision is taken in accordance with Paragraph 14.7 of Part I, the Notice served by the General Secretary under Paragraph G.12.1 shall constitute a Notice of Reference Back. The Assembly Commission appointed for the re-hearing of the case shall not be given any information relating to the conduct of the previous Hearing but may have sight of the documents, statements and information delivered to the Assembly Commission under the provisions contained in Section E.'

**G.14** Add a new Paragraph as follows:

'The decision so taken shall conclude the involvement of the Appeals Commission in the Section O Process except as to the discharge of its responsibilities under Paragraph J.2 and shall have the effect provided for in Paragraph 17 of Part I.'

**H.1** Delete the sentence: 'Copies of these forms can be obtained from the Secretary of the Assembly Commission.'

**H.2.2** 'Council' becomes 'Mandated Group'.

**H.2.2.1** Replace this with the following Paragraph:

'By delivering the document personally to that member of the Mandated Group who has been nominated in the Referral Notice to accept service or in the absence of such nomination to the person who signed the Referral Notice, provided that in either case such person is still a member of the Mandated Group when such service is required to be effected.'

**H.2.2.2** 'such nominated person' becomes 'the person referred to in Paragraph H.2.2.1'.



'to the spokesperson for the Mandated Group' becomes 'at the address given in the Referral Notice'.

H.2.5 'pre-paid first class' becomes 'first class pre-paid' (for consistency with the earlier references in Paragraph H.2).

H.4 and H.5 These are deleted to reappear, slightly reworded, as Paragraphs J.2 and J.3.

After Section H add the following words in italics:

*For the avoidance of confusion, there is no Section I, the Rules of Procedure moving directly from Section H to Section J.*

J. Add a new Section J as follows:

**J** **REPORT TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY, COSTS AND RETENTION OF RECORDS AND PAPERS**

**J.1** The General Secretary shall report to the General Assembly all decisions reached by the Assembly Commission and the Appeals Commission in the following manner:

**J.1.1** If a decision of the Assembly Commission is subject to appeal, the Report shall simply state that a decision has been reached in a case which is subject to appeal and shall not name the Minister.

**J.1.2** If a decision of the Assembly Commission is not subject to appeal and is to delete under Paragraph 10.1 of Part I or to issue a written warning under Paragraph 10.2.1 of Part I, the Report shall so state and name the Minister.

**J.1.3** If a decision of the Assembly Commission is not subject to appeal and is to allow the name of the Minister to remain on the Roll of Ministers under Paragraph 10.1 of Part I without the issue of a written warning under Paragraph 10.2.1 of Part I the Report shall so state without naming the Minister.

**J.1.4** In any case which goes before the Appeals Commission, if the decision is to delete or to issue a written warning, the report shall accord with Paragraph J.1.2 above but if the decision is to allow the Minister's name to remain on the Roll of Ministers without the issue of a written warning, the report shall accord with Paragraph J.1.3 above.

**J.2** The cost of operating the Section O Process and the reasonable and proper expenses of persons attending a Hearing and the costs of any reports obtained by or on the authority of the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission or any other costs and expenses which the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission deem to have been reasonably and properly incurred in the course of such process (but excluding any costs of representation) shall be charged to the general funds of the Church, and the Report of each case to the General Assembly shall state the total cost incurred in that case.

**J.3** The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall be responsible for the keeping of the record of decisions taken by the Assembly Commission and by the Appeals Commission, and for the custody of all papers relating to concluded cases, which shall be kept in a locked cabinet at Church House.



**MISSION COUNCIL**  
**22 – 24 March 2002**

**K**

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE  
CHURCH RELATED COMMUNITY WORK  
PROGRAMME**

*Church Related Community Work*



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## 1 THE INTRODUCTION & PROCESS

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- 1.1 This report starts by making clear the number of issues that challenge the developing Church Related Community Work programme. The report will identify the issues, known and anticipated in section 2: *THE ISSUES & CONCERNS*. Inevitably, in pursuing the vision of a mainstream ministry the programme will encounter obstacles whether real or imagined, technical, spiritual or personal.
- 1.2 The report will then go on to clarify all the strengths and opportunities of the programme in section 3: *THE STRENGTHS & OPPORTUNITIES* as the most effective response to the issues identified. To put them in perspective and introduce a sense of balance in decision-making. It is important not to lose focus through discouragement or frustration.
- 1.3 The sections 4: *THE 1987 ASSEMBLY DECISION*, 5: *THE 1998 REVIEW* and 6: *GROWING UP - A mission strategy for the United Reformed Church*, highlight some of the roots of the concerns.
- 1.4 The following section 7: *CONCLUSIONS* does not simply deal with the symptoms but seeks to avoid recurring concerns by responding wisely and looking at the consequence of any action.
- 1.5 Finally, in section 8: *RECOMMENDATIONS* the report looks for approval from Mission Council and General Assembly to implement the determined plan, test the solutions and establish whether they have the desired effect.
- 1.6 The following Appendices support the report:

9: *APPENDIX A: A perspective of Community Work*

10: *APPENDIX B: A perspective of Church Related Community Work and ministry*

These appendices have been included to help to show the Church Related Community Work programme perspective. Some things may have been overlooked or underestimated and it is recognised that these are not the only understandings or approaches used in the United Reformed Church which means that there may be churches doing something quite different but equally valuable.

## 2 THE ISSUES & CONCERNS

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**A number of significant issues about the programme and its relationship to wider concerns about ministry in the United Reformed Church remain.** They are highlighted in bold print for ease of reference.

- 2.1 A 1987 General Assembly resolution recognised **Church Related Community Work as an office of ministry**. Church Related Community Work was understood by its fashioners to be a ministry, distinguished from but intimately related to the ministry of Word and Sacraments.

The structures and conditions in which Church Related Community Work can flourish and mature are deeply tied into the United Reformed Church definition of ministry and understanding of calling. This has ensured that the Church Related Community Work ministry is recognised, supported and financed, and that those called to it are appropriately trained.

The passage of time has obscured the fact that this resolution was not implemented fully, particularly in relation to the **Plan for Partnership**. Importantly, no amendment was made to the **Basis of Union**.

- 2.2 Two implications of Church Related Community Work being defined as a ministry need further work. These are the questions of **ordination** and **diaconate**.
- 2.3 Developing this ministry calls for the co-operation of all those involved. To produce an integrated programme it is essential that appropriate **organisational arrangements** are developed. Efficient **channels of communication** also need to be established and maintained.
- 2.4 The 1999 decision to **devolve the management of the programme to Synods and Districts** has produced serious concerns about the extent of the decentralisation i.e. the establishment of projects, consistency in accreditation and equality of opportunities.
- 2.5 **Deployment policy** was also determined by the General Assembly in 1999. "It is aimed to increase the present ten CRCWs to thirty, with at least two serving each synod" (*Growing Up* p.18). This means the Ministry & Mission Fund will support up to 30 workers at any one time.
- 2.6 Other issues have risen up from this root; the most common being the **availability of workers**. The problematical positions of **vacant accredited CRCW posts** has naturally led to concerns and questions over the routes into this ministry and to concerns over the **promotion** of Church Related Community Work ministry - where and how its profile is raised.
- 2.7 The issuing of **Certificates of Eligibility** is connected into the general concern of accessibility. It is the mechanism to enable suitably recognised and qualified workers in other churches to serve in Church Related Community Work ministry in the URC. As such, it is not an available route to allow vacant projects to employ unaccredited workers and have them paid from the Ministry & Mission Fund.

- 2.8 In the midst of all of these concerns lies the matter of **life-long service** and questions continue to be asked about vocation and work satisfaction and variety. This involves the issue of mobility as accredited posts are few and far between and workers have their own personal reasons for not moving.
- 2.9 The Manchester Accreditation Unit awarded the nationally recognised professional Diploma in Community and Youth Work to the workers-in-training. They lost the licence to award this diploma in 2001. Northern College, at very short notice, are making arrangements to gain a licence to award the diploma via the English Standards Board.

This brief mention of the difficulties relating to **initial training** in this section of the report is not meant to dismiss the serious impact that this had on the programme, particularly on the workers-in-training. Progressive and positive steps are being taken at this time to resolve this matter. The undertakings of the Training Committee and Northern College are much appreciated.

**Significant issues have also emerged about the relationship of the programme to the mission of the United Reformed Church.**

- 2.10 **Community Development is a rapidly developing field.** The relationship between British churches and their communities has changed since the Church Related Community Work ministry was created nearly 21 years ago. Many churches have a far sharper awareness of the possibilities of community involvement and of the funding available from different sources. There has therefore been a growth in local employment of a range of lay workers enabling churches to engage in that part of their mission.
- 2.11 Obviously, this programme is not the only way in which United Reformed Churches are engaging in their communities. There is a need to **explore the range of community work and development in the United Reformed Church**, as this will help in understanding the appropriateness of each approach and how to get the best from each one. This will also deepen understanding of how the Church Related Community Work programme contributes to the life of the wider United Reformed Church and provide a guide to the challenges and opportunities that Church Related Community Work ministry offers.
- 2.12 Church Related Community Work is a transformative practice set in frameworks both theological and ideological that have human and spiritual values associated with them. Because of this, it has **taken time to establish where the programme is.**

Over the years, communication and commitments have had different meanings and expectations. To understand CRCW ministry as a life-long, itinerant vocation involving service in a number of projects, **an understanding of its nature and scope needs to be worked through all the councils of the church.**

### 3 THE STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

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**Despite all the issues there are significant strengths and opportunities in this programme.** They are highlighted in bold print for ease of reference.

- 3.1 The opportunities extensively lie in the work itself. As Church Related Community Work is about the relationship of community work to the whole ministry of God's people, its dynamic should be the **transformation of congregations into churches-in-community**.

This not only includes caring for the poor and needy, in God's name, but also involvement in public activities, attempting to influence local and national government policies, and through speaking against systematic injustice as the church has opportunity.

- 3.2 Church Related Community Work ministry is a specialised, radical, cutting-edge ministry and from this perspective the worker's **call and commitment** is specific. The individual workers bring their own particular strengths to the work and their contribution is essential to its success.

The workers are a large factor in the development of this ministry because they understand how the Christian faith affects practice in community work and are able to articulate what they believe in terms that significantly overlap with the concerns of society through their **visible qualified leadership**.

- 3.3 The **parameters of ministry** frame a canvas that workers and church community projects can paint on - whatever picture they want. This freedom is a major opportunity. Faith groups are being recognised in the field of community development and initiatives are being directed specifically at faith groups.
- 3.4 Through the **process of accreditation** of projects the programme seeks to make sure that workers have the space to operate, are actively supported and that there is a balance of commitment, energy, organisation, resources and management skills to enable project to operate.

**Recognising risk-taking** is an important part of the accreditation process. Churches and communities develop together involves the material and spiritual, Christians and non-Christians alike in their environment.

- 3.5 The work considers public questions in relation to faith. With a God-centred rather than people-centred approach to public concerns, this gives the Christian faith the freedom to stand on its own feet and compete in the market place of ideas in our society. The programme has an **opportunity to share with the wider church** how scripture is being used as a guide both for life and for community - the good news of how a planned mission strategy can relate to how God is working in a particular situation.
- 3.6 The church's mission locally and nationally is helped further as the projects develop **ecumenical and inter-faith relationships**.

#### 4 THE 1987 DECISION

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- 4.1 Church Community Workers, now Church Related Community Workers have been working in the United Reformed Church since 1981. Initially, it was thought that the work would be "self-financing". By 1983, however, it became apparent that special funds would have to be available, bearing in mind the type of situation in which the Church Related Community Worker serves.
- 4.2 The following year the General Assembly passed a resolution stating that this work should be viewed as a "special ministry" and funds allocated accordingly. By 1987, Assembly decided that funding should more appropriately come from the Maintenance of Ministry Fund. This had a fundamental bearing on the way in which workers were viewed and led to the following critical decision being taken.
- "The Assembly acknowledges that in Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs) properly trained and appropriately employed, the Lord Jesus Christ is giving particular gifts for a particular ministry and is calling such individuals to exercise them in an office which is duly recognised within His Church (76.1)." (1987 Assembly Record p.22)
- 4.3 The 1987 Assembly decision has never been rescinded. The United Reformed Church has acknowledged the vocation of the Church Related Community Worker and accepts their commitment. They are appointed to a particular ministry and set apart with prayer, having been prepared, trained and called to specially approved posts. Like ministers of Word and Sacraments, they also have a responsibility to perform certain functions for the benefit of the whole church.



## 5 THE 1998 REVIEW

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- 5.1 The 1998 Mission Council report examined the development of the Church Related Community Work Programme and the wider aspect of mission.
- 5.2 The report was generally supported and four of its fifteen recommendations were incorporated in the strategy for mission paper "Growing Up" which was also presented to that Mission Council in March 1998.

The eleven remaining recommendations were passed to the Ministries Committee and were given to the CRCW Central Management Committee for consideration and appropriate action

- 5.3 The four recommendations incorporated into Growing Up from the 1998 review were as follows:

- "The United Reformed Church takes into the mainstream of its life the theology and practice of diaconal ministry largely developed by CRCWs and the churches-in-community in which they have served."
- "We begin to implement a policy which would devolve the management of the CRCW programme from the centre to the provinces and districts."
- "It become our policy to aim for an establishment of 30 CRCWs, with at least two being in each province."
- "The United Reformed Church gives consideration to the appointment of not one, but two, persons: the CRCW Development Worker for a period of up to five years, and a second post the designation of which would need to be agreed by Mission Council within its consideration of a total strategy for mission."

(Mission Council minutes 98/88, p.11)

- 5.4 The report has been the subject of much discussion since then, particularly the issue of devolution. However, following commencement of the CRCW Development Worker's post in June 1999 further issues emerged. Some of them became priorities and it was quickly discovered that many affected the process of devolution to Synods and Districts.

## 6 GROWING UP - A missions strategy for the United Reformed Church

- 6.1 The fact that four of the recommendations from 1998 report had been incorporated into Growing Up resulted in the emphasis on the relationship of churches with their communities for the whole United Reformed Church. The report re-affirmed that "to fulfil the church's calling requires a deliberate engagement with the local community" (9.1, p.18).
- 6.2 Church Related Community Workers were identified in the report as "a primary resource for any developing strategy of church and community engagement" (Appendix 2.3, p.28). This inclusion raised false expectations about the availability of workers. There was no preparation to ensure the success of this mission strategy or for the resulting surge of interest from churches seeking involvement in Church Related Community Work ministry.
- 6.3 It has become apparent that without the opportunity for an informed debate about the nature of this particular ministry or the resources required to support it, this report unwittingly gave the impression that Church Related Community Work ministry was the answer to each church's mission needs. Not surprisingly, demand for accreditation of posts has outstripped the available workers.  
  
Many enquiries came from churches already engaged or seeking engagement in community activities. Many are developing worthy community initiatives and services and others are developing the opportunities to provide community facilities. The Church Related Community Work ministry is not always the most appropriate response to all of the church's community engagement and the programme is not in a position to respond to all the needs.
- 6.4 The clear rationale for the accreditation of posts needs to be widely communicated. It spells out the characteristics of this ministry and includes the likely benefits and outcomes of the process.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

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### 7.1 **Church Related Community Work ministry in the URC**

Returning to the 1987 decision to move forward, workers need to be fully incorporated into ministry. The Plan for Partnership is being altered and terms of settlements will apply to workers rather than contracts of employment for the termed post. The workers will need to be classified as Ministers of Religion for tax purposes, and will then become eligible to join the URC Minister's Pension Fund. Eligibility for retired ministers housing provision is being explored.

The Church will need to be flexible so that workers can continue within their present contracts, if they so wish, rather than transfer to the new conditions of ministry. However, this is an opportunity for workers to be fully incorporated in to the structures of the church and brings new possibilities for lifelong service.

The Basis of Union and the URC Manual were never changed to accommodate this decision. This should now be done as a matter of necessity.

### 7.2 **Devolving the management of the programme to Synods and Districts**

The 1998 report did not specify how decentralisation was to be achieved. It was largely understood that full devolution would happen speedily. In light of the issues and concerns, it has become clear that only partial management of the programme should be devolved. This should be phased over a longer period than allowed.

Districts and Synods are already involved in the management of the Church Related Community Work programme through the calling, training, placing and commissioning process. They are also only involved in the development of new posts and have the weighty responsibility of reviewing existing projects.

It should be noted that this programme does not stand alone. Many related areas of church life are covered by Assembly committees e.g. Ministries, Training and Life & Witness. Representation in these areas will need to be co-ordinated and the channels of communication to and from the projects, workers and workers-in-training need to remain open.

From the perspective of people management, the structures at Synod and District increasingly support Church Related Community Workers e.g. through pastoral committees and Training Officers. Further work needs to be done but encouraging efforts are being made by Moderators and Synods to be inclusive.

However, this type of ministry is likely to remain small and most workers will be serving in isolation from one another. The difficulties this creates can be avoided by ensuring that workers are connected one to another and by giving the accredited projects the opportunity to share with each other so that the programme does not lose its cohesion or its drive.

Another consequence of the small size of the programme is the matter of standards. Its size inevitably makes Church Related Community Work ministry a distinctive service and the standards, therefore, must be maintained. Advice, best practice, new developments

and opportunities need to be disseminated round the projects - as well as good news. It would be more effective if information for new enquirers is consistently developed, updated and distributed.

The promotion of the programme is very much a prerequisite to any decentralisation. It should be centrally co-ordinated as it requires some wider insights and representation. And our pursuit of the ecumenical vision would be better served by central co-ordination.

However, there is a need for clearer guidelines. To develop the programme and to effect devolution existing materials need to be compatible with the governing documents of the URC. All documents relating to this programme, particularly the Handbook, formerly called 'the Manual', which acts as the guidebook for Church Related Community Work ministry, are being examined.

The small size of the programme has meant that for some Synods with no Church Related Community Work projects devolution is merely a theoretical issue with little relevance. The practicalities of local management are not easily understood and the programme could still be considered "misunderstood, unaccepted and marginalised" (1998 Report to Mission Council 5.4, p.11) if the process of accrediting, monitoring and extension of church-in-community projects becomes decentralised. Similar to Special Category Ministry posts, there is a need for a central body to manage this process, not least because of the disproportionate work involved for Synods and the availability of expertise. Considering all the factors, it is clear that it may be necessary to change the way in which the Central Management Committee works, as well as how it is composed.

Districts and Synods should seek every opportunity for CRCWs and projects to work strategically with Mission Enablers, YCWTs/YTLOs, Synod Training Officers and, where possible, alongside others who may work nearby e.g. Racial Justice Advocates, Commitment for Life Representatives, Pilots Officers and Children Work Secretaries.

### 7.3 **Growth**

The increase to 30 workers was envisaged as a gradual increase over ten years. The increase is almost on target. In 1998, there were 10 workers in active ministry, there are currently 15 (17 expected by end of 2002).

### 7.4 **The Diaconate**

The matter of the Church Related Community Work ministry being the United Reformed Church's equivalent of diaconal ministry was recently put on hold by Mission Council, but should be revisited at a future date.

### 7.5 **The wider mission strategy**

Owing to budgetary concerns the second post identified by the 1998 review has never been established. Its focus on mission and development was incorporated into the job description of the CRCW Development Worker's post. This was an unrealistic expectation.

The only contribution that has been made in the area of the wider mission strategy is to request further information on local church workers involved in community activity in United Reformed Church. Initial work on this has been done via the Annual Church Returns and responses are currently filtering in.

In relation to community involvement, the Training Committee may need to look again at the possibility of providing or recognising appropriate training in Christian community involvement, perhaps as a module of TLS and through the initial training of Ordinands.

#### **7.6 Training**

The viability of regional training for such a small programme raised many more issues than it resolved. CME opportunities have been difficult to prioritise but are now being addressed. The developments around the distinctive nature of Scottish community education are still being explored.

#### **7.7 Terms of service**

Lessons can be learnt from continuous assessment of Church Related Community Work ministry which should inform future decisions and enable the creation of a body of knowledge, theory and good practice in the United Reformed Church.

To this end, and in the light of other developments mentioned before, there is a need to explore the possibility of changing the two 5-year terms available to projects that have been successfully reviewed. It may be more productive in Church Related Community Work to allow the first of the two terms to be a 7-year term with the second then becoming a final 3-year term. The advantages and disadvantages of this proposal need to be carefully considered by the Central Management Committee.

#### **7.8 Different Service Opportunities**

The opportunity to explore other forms of Church Related Community Work service should not be ignored. Further exploration needs to be done on the possibilities of receiving and sending workers internationally. Such proposals need to be established, clearly outlined and their overall impact and value measured.

The matter of non-stipendiary workers still needs to be considered. Discussions have taken place on this matter before in the progression towards parity. The Central Management Committee will further explore this.

#### **7.9 General**

All those in ministry suffer stress points. Our workers need time for reflection, to spend time with the Lord and to call on others. They have counted the cost and overall remain optimistic, creative and hopeful.

The CRCW ministry needs to be theologically profound, contextually viable and purposefully effective and needs to communicate how it can make a significant and sustainable difference. The overall programme requires oversight, management and vision.

Out of this necessity, two discussion documents were circulated in 2000. The first, 'Towards local management & responsibility: Devolution of the Church Related Community Work programme to Synods and Districts' came out in July. The second, 'New opportunities for the recruitment and training of URC Church Related Community Workers' came out in November. The responses have been carefully considered and what has been learnt from them has been incorporated into this report.

## 8 RECOMMENDATIONS

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Mission Council needs to consider the details of this report. The resolution (8.1) will be put to General Assembly in 2002 and the recommendations (8.2), (8.3) and (8.4) will be put to the October 2002 Mission Council for decision. These recommendations correct the technical problems lying at the root of many of the issues and concerns. This report may also be used as a tool to develop an understanding of this work in the wider councils of the church.

**The effective development of the Church Related Community Work ministry means that it will need to be accommodated fully in the structures of United Reformed Church ministry.** The following resolution will be brought to General Assembly 2002 for consideration and decision.

- 8.1 General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to the Basis of Union. So that Church Related Community Work is included as a particular ministry. The alterations are highlighted in bold print for ease of reference.

Changes to the section 'MINISTRY IN THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH' (A7: Manual 2000)

- a) Add to the sentence at the end of paragraph 20:

**and in the case of church related community workers be termed commissioning.**

- b) Insert the following paragraph after paragraph 21 and renumber the existing paragraphs 22-25 as 23-26:

**22. Some are called to the ministry of church related community work. After approved preparation and training, they may be called to be church related community workers in a post approved by the United Reformed Church, and are then commissioned and inducted to their office to serve for a designated period. They are commissioned to care for, to challenge and to pray for the community, and to discern with others God's will for the well-being of the community, and to enable the church to live out its calling to proclaim the love and mercy of God through working with others in both church and community for peace and justice in the world.**

- c) Change the existing paragraph 25 to read:

**25. The ordination and induction of ministers and the commissioning of church related community workers** shall be in accord with Schedules C and D. Appropriate affirmations of faith shall also be made by those entering upon other ministries within the life of the church. In the United Reformed Church all ministries shall be open to both men and women.

The totality of ministers who fall within any of the categories defined in Schedule E, Paragraph I and are in good standing may be referred to as the Roll of Ministers. Ministers shall conduct their ministry according to criteria set out in Schedule E.

d) Changes to title, header and note of Schedule C:

SCHEDULE C (see clause 21 and 22 in the Basis of Union)

**Affirmations to be made by ministers at ordination and induction and church related community workers at commissioning.**

NOTE: The service will also include the reading of the Statement contained in Schedule D, and provision will be made for a statement to be made concerning the circumstances of the call. **Ministers and church related community workers** may also make a personal statement about their faith and sense of calling.

e) Add the following to the end of question 7, Version I of Schedule C:

**or, if the candidate is a church related community worker**

**Do you promise to care for, to challenge and to pray for the community, to give guidance to and receive guidance from others as you yourself receive guidance from God, and to mediate the love and mercy of God to all those whom God gives to us as neighbours?**

**Do you promise to share in building up the Church so that it can play its part in co-operation with others in fulfilling God's purpose in the world?**

f) Change question 8, Version I of Schedule C to read:

8 Do you promise as a minister/**church related community worker** of the United Reformed Church to seek its well-being, purity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church?

g) Add the following to the end of question 3, Version II of Schedule C

**or, if the candidate is a Church Related Community Worker**

**By the grace of God I promise to care for, to challenge and to pray for the community to give guidance to and receive guidance from others as I receive guidance from God, and to mediate the love and mercy of God to all those whom God gives to us as neighbours.**

**I promise to share in building up the Church so that it can play its part in co-operation with others in fulfilling God's purpose in the world.**

**As a church related community worker of the United Reformed Church**

**I promise to seek its well-being, purity, and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches,**

**and to endeavour always to build up the one holy, catholic and apostolic Church.**

**I undertake to exercise my ministry in accordance with the statement concerning the nature, faith and order of the United Reformed Church.**

**All these things I profess and promise in the power of the Holy Spirit.**

**The effective devolution of management to Synods needs to be partial and extended beyond 2004.** The following recommendations will be brought to the October 2002 Mission Council for consideration and decision.

- 8.2 Mission Council accepts that full devolution of the Church Related Community Work programme is not possible, and that a central body should remain responsible for the overall management of the programme.
- 8.3 Mission Council agrees that the timetable for partial devolution be extended beyond 2004.
- 8.4 Mission Council agrees to review the 1998 decision to extend the post of CRCW Development Worker for a 'final five-year term'. (1998 Assembly Report p.108)



## 9 APPENDIX A: A perspective of Community Work

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9.1 Community Work focuses on the relationship between individuals and groups and the institutions that shape their lives. It entails bringing people together, developing their awareness and understanding, developing skills and confidence and facilitating access to information and resources. Community Work builds on the strengths that exist within communities and creates new relationships. It involves many types of work that enable individuals and groups to recognise and value their contributions within the communities in which they live and work.

9.2 Community work can be expressed in different ways:

**Community Development** is the primary expression of community work. This model finds a way of drawing everyone into taking responsibility for their common life. It is a consensual exercise, to build common identity.

**Community Organisation** is the bringing together of existing different interest groups.

**Community Action** is responding to a special issue that demands resolution.

**Community Centre** is the most common church expression of community work - this is a community facility, enabling many leisure and educational activities to take place.

**Community Service** is the provision of services usually to specific groups in the community.

9.3 Community work can be seen as an active educational process in which the personality, belief structure and values of the worker are an integral part. The URC shares the following community work perspective described by the Federation of Community Work Training Group.

**Community Work** is about the involvement of people in the issues which affect their lives.

**Firstly** - Its about people acting together to influence, change or assert control over social, economic and political issues. Community Work aims to change the balance of power and create participatory and democratic structures which bring about control at local and other levels. Community Work centres on the relation between people and institutions and decision-makers which affect people's everyday experience.

**Secondly** - Community Work is about involving and recognising the skills, knowledge and experience of people in responding to social, economic and political problems.

**Thirdly** - Community Work must challenge inequalities and discrimination on grounds of race, class, sex, age, sexual orientation, disability and encourage awareness of these issues in groups and organisations in which they work. Community Work must raise awareness about and confront such discriminating attitudes and practices in individuals and institutions.

**Community Work** is a process which links and contains these three elements. This process can focus on a wide range of issues: employment - housing - play - youth work - work with elderly people - work with women and men - race - disability - environment - gay and lesbian issues etc. Community Work is rooted in neighbourhoods and communities of interest.

## 10 APPENDIX B: A perspective of Church Related Community Work and ministry

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- 10.1 Much of the history and origins of community work can be found in the outworkings of the Christian faith. There are hundreds of church-based or church-sponsored groups working in a variety of tasks in church buildings, rented halls, community centres and shops fronts, all with an underlying concern of community and its development.

The practice of Church Related Community Work (CRCW) has developed from this origin. CRCW is about the process of carrying out community work aims.

A commitment to and a holistic understanding of the needs of communities define its goals - the approaches and methods used in community work characterise its nature. Like community work, CRCW objectives are to respond to the needs of the local community, to help foster community and to combat the effect that unjust structures have on people.

- 10.2 The CRCW foundation is rooted in 'kingdom theology'. It is about allowing community work to be a vehicle for affirming the kingdom of God in human affairs. It implies, amongst other things, a respect for the spiritual dimension to life, an active commitment to justice, a belief in the possibility of change and a belief in the value of working together.

CRCW identifies a more specific role within mission. The ministry challenges the relationship of two perspectives of mission - between those who see it primarily in terms of personal conversion and those who see it primarily in terms of action for God's justice. Lesslie Newbigin best describes this separation in his book 'The Open Secret'.

*'Christian programs for justice and compassion are severed from their proper roots in the liturgical and sacramental life of the congregation, and so lose their character as signs of the presence of Christ and risk becoming mere crusades fueled by a moralism that can become self-righteous. And the life of the worshipping congregation, severed from its proper expression in compassionate service to the secular community around it, risks becoming a self-centred existence serving only the needs and desires of its members.'* (Open Secret p.11)

CRCW supports the need of people wanting to translate a commitment to Christ into action. The issues facing Christians today include not only their involvement but also how that involvement relays their views and influences. All of what the church has to offer will encompass the various forms of 'community work' in its broadest sense.

- 10.3 From the perspective of URC ministry, the main purpose of CRCW is to assist the churches to widen and/or sustain their mission in the community. To become part of a church's life this involvement needs to be worked out and clearly defined. This involves hearing what is really happening locally and what God wants the responses to be.

This will change how the church is perceived and the number of people the church associates with. It will also change the church's focus and how it does things i.e. order, outreach, worship, spirituality, mission and ministry. Participatory relationships will be built that take commitment beyond the time a worker serves.

The workers are committed specialists involved in the promotion of human and spiritual well-being and development. They engage in reflective action for the common good and help others to do the same, so that communities have a greater feeling that the church is theirs and is working with them, and the church has a greater understanding of the part it can play in finding the solutions to the needs and concerns of the community.



**Creating Change in Communities**



**MISSION COUNCIL**  
*22 - 24 March 2002*

**ASS**

- CHURCH & SOCIETY
- RACIAL JUSTICE
- COMMUNICATIONS AND EDITORIAL COMMITTEE
- ECUMENICAL COMMITTEE
- LAY PREACHING STRATEGY PROPOSAL
- MINISTRIES COMMITTEE
- FUTURE MINISTRIES WORKING PARTY
- CERTIFICATE OF LIMITED ELIGIBILITY
- MAINTENANCE OF MINISTRIES

## Church & Society

**General Assembly approves the work of the group set up to look at issues relating to the end of life in response to the resolution of Assembly 2000, and welcomes the material it has produced for use in the Churches.**

Resolution 19 passed by Assembly 2000 invited Church and Society to gather a working group to examine a range of issues associated with the end of life and to report in 2002. The resolution was intended to alert the Church to a rising tide of concern, identify key issues, and enable further work to be done. In responding to this the Church and Society Committee duly convened a working group which, following a process of consultation with Churches, has produced a pack containing information, resource material and practical ideas. The Committee commends this to the Churches and hopes it will be widely used.

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## RACIAL JUSTICE

Mission Council is asked to approve the following as the remit of the Racial Justice Committee:

*It is the responsibility of the Committee for Racial Justice:*

- To enable and encourage the United Reformed Church to make manifest in its congregations and councils the multi-racial/multi-cultural nature of the church and society;
- To explore the task of mission in our culturally diverse society;
- To assist the Assembly and Mission Council to understand and reflect on racial justice issues and to address such issues in the policies of the United Reformed Church;
- To identify strategies for overcoming racism in all its forms, and work closely with other Assembly Committees to eradicate racial prejudice and discrimination from our church and society;

To assist the Assembly to ensure that minority ethnic members are appropriately empowered to participate meaningfully at all levels of church life.

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## COMMUNICATIONS AND EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

### RESOLUTION

The General Assembly of the United Reformed Church commends to all local churches *ROOTS*, the new lectionary-based resource programme to support the worship and learning of the whole church community.

1. The Church Publishers Network, a group under the auspices of CTBI have met regularly for several years and have been keen to find a project that could be undertaken ecumenically.
2. With the news that Partners in Learning would not be continued beyond 2002, but realising there was a need for such a publication for the whole church the Network began to explore the possibility of this being their first project. As a result *ROOTS*, an ecumenical venture supported by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland along with representatives of the Church Publishers has been launched.
3. As a result of lengthy discussions Church House Publishing, The Methodist Publishing House, the United Reformed Church, the Sunday School Council for Wales and Christian Education have financed the setting up of the Roots project. The sum invested by each body will eventually be repaid. A limited company, Roots Ltd, has been formed and the United Reformed Church is represented on the Board.
4. A project manager, editors for each of the magazines and the web site have been appointed, and writing groups formed. The United Reformed Church is represented on the management group by the Secretary for Communications, on the editorial group by Revd Tim Lowe and has many among the groups of writers commissioned for the project.

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### Resolutions from the Ecumenical Committee to General Assembly 2002

#### Preamble

In July 1996 the Church of England and the Methodist Church published *Commitment to Mission and Unity*, the report of two years of informal conversations. It proposed that, given that the two churches believed they shared a common understanding of the goal of visible unity, they should enter into Formal Conversations while taking account of the wider ecumenical relationships of the two churches. Every member church of Churches Together in England was asked for comment.

The United Reformed Church, at its General Assembly in July 1997, responded: "...we hereby express our interest in becoming a full participant in the process of *Commitment to Mission and Unity*.....Our particular contribution would be insights from the Reformed tradition, notably the conciliar expression of the apostolicity of the Church and the shared ministry of the Elders."

The proposal to enter Formal Conversations, which was accepted at both the November 1997 General Synod of the Church of England and the 1998 Methodist Conference, was, however, a bi-lateral one, with ecumenical participants invited to play a full part in the process: two from the United Reformed Church and one each from the Baptist Union, the Roman Catholic Church and the Moravian Church. The proposal also included the hope that trilateral informal conversations which included the United Reformed Church might be set up to work alongside the Formal Conversations.

The reports of both sets of conversations are now published. The report of the trilateral informal conversations, *Conversations on the Way to Unity*, (see Appendix ?) is a United Reformed Church report and therefore requires us to receive it and respond to it. *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant* is not our report, but its third recommendation states: "We recommend that in the light of the Trilateral Informal Conversations that took place in conjunction with the Formal Conversations, the United Reformed Church be specifically invited to study and respond to the report and that its response be received by both our churches as part of a continuing three-way conversation." Such an invitation to respond is, therefore, expected from the Methodist Conference and the General Synod of the Church of England if the report is accepted for study and response by these two churches.

### **Resolutions**

1 General Assembly receives with gratitude *Conversations on the Way to Unity*, the report of the informal conversations between the Church of England, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church and commends it for study throughout the Church in conjunction with the study of *an Anglican-Methodist Covenant*. Comments from synods, district councils and local congregations should be with the Secretary for Ecumenical Relations by 31 March 2003.

2. (A resolution to be put only if the expected invitation is received following the debates in the Methodist Conference and the General Synod in the days immediately before the debate in General Assembly.)

General Assembly accepts the joint invitation from the Church of England and the Methodist Church to study and respond to *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant* and commends it for study, in conjunction with *Conversations on the Way to Unity*, throughout the United Reformed Church. Comments from synods, district councils and local congregations should be with the Secretary for Ecumenical Relations by 31 March 2003.

### **Resolution ?**

#### **Lay Preaching Strategy Proposal**

Given the urgency of the situation, Assembly commends the Strategy Proposal of the Lay Preaching Support Committee to District and Area Councils and local churches and encourages them to implement the strategy proposal.

## STRATEGY PROPOSAL

### 2.1 Introduction

There can be no doubt that many people are finding great benefit from the *Training for Learning and Serving* courses, and that these are standing the Church in good stead for the future. However, the report on TLS given to Mission Council in the autumn of 2000 raised some important questions. Not least, is TLS delivering the number of new lay preachers the Church requires?

As no one seemed to know the answer to that question and a number of those present had a feeling that the United Reformed Church is about to fall into a black hole, Ministries asked the Lay Preaching Support Committee to commission an urgent survey into lay preacher numbers and future needs. An analysis of the results shows that there is a shortfall but that it varies from synod to synod and district to district. The figures indicate the need to recruit, train and have in active ministry about 850 new lay preachers by the end of the decade. This is a formidable challenge to our churches, and Ministries asked the Lay Preaching Support Committee to prepare a strategy to be brought to General Assembly in 2002.

The success of any strategy will depend on the ability of every district and synod to identify, train and support new lay preachers from within their local churches. The Church needs to develop a culture in which churches, ministers and lay preachers work closely together. Lay preachers are a valuable resource and it is important that ministers and churches recognise their value. Equally lay preachers should demonstrate that their ministry is important by not over-committing themselves in the life of their own church, and the churches should support them in this. In this way full encouragement will be given to the Ministry of Word and Worship exercised by lay people, and the hope that the considerable number of lay preachers needed will be raised up from within our local churches may be realised.

### 2.2 Strategy

Alongside the Ministry of Word and Sacrament, the Church recognises the importance of the Lay Ministry of Word and Worship, where some are called to be lay preachers, some to be worship leaders and some to be members of worship teams. It is important to recognise the current resources in the district for leading worship and for equipping others. The Lay Preaching Support Committee therefore recommends that each district appoint a group to identify the needs of their district in order to support and maintain this ministry.

These resources will include Nationally Accredited and District Recognised lay preachers, as well as others with gifts and training in leading worship, and Ministers of Word and Sacrament. It is essential to explore new ways of developing people's gifts by encouraging existing worship groups to include young people and to use the groups as 'seed beds' for growing worship leaders.

In response to the needs identified the Lay Preaching Support Committee strongly recommends that districts:-

- i) Encourage local churches to challenge people of all ages to recognise and respond to the call to be involved in the Ministry of Word and Worship.
- ii) Encourage the setting up of worship teams in individual churches, groups of churches or the district as a whole, including young people wherever possible.
- iii) Identify training programmes appropriate to different people at different stages of experience and development, which could be delivered by district or in co-operation with synod training officers or ecumenical partners.
- iv) Support and encourage all those involved in this ministry by putting a support system in place and, where possible, encouraging churches to release those in training from other church tasks.



v) Identify and encourage the ongoing development of gifts as worship leaders or lay preachers through regular training opportunities.

vi) Accept responsibility for testing and affirming the calling of those coming forward for the Lay Ministry of Word and Worship.

### 7.3 Method

i) The strategy could be implemented through such things as:-

A district enquirers day covering all aspects of the Lay Ministry of Word and Worship

A 'roadshow' visiting churches and encouraging questions and discussion

A 'taster' day led by enthusiastic advocates.

ii) The pattern of worship teams in a district would vary depending on a number of different factors such as number and size of churches, geography, availability of people able to train and lead teams but sharing between congregations would be seen as an important element to avoid a sense of isolation. In some situations sharing across district and synod boundaries should also be considered as many lay preachers already cross these boundaries in the course of their ministry.

iii) A number of training programmes already exist at various levels and the Training Committee and Studies Panel are considering these with a view to validating them with an indication of the level both at the start and on completion. These programmes include such things as 'Starting to lead worship', 'Step-up', the Wimbledon district programme and others. The Lay Preaching Support Committee is not suggesting that districts or synods should all devise their own programmes. In certain areas ecumenical schemes may be appropriate. The Lay Preaching Support Committee will continue to work with the Training Committee in developing training opportunities for lay preachers. (Information about courses may be obtained from Training or Ministries at Church House)

iv) Various forms of support might be used, e.g. mentoring - pairing an 'apprentice' with an experienced leader of worship, feedback sessions after leading worship, group support. Districts and synods will need to recognise that support will also involve ongoing in-service training and the consequent financial implications. The Lay Preaching Support Committee recognises with pleasure that some districts already provide their lay preachers with financial support and would encourage other districts and synods to adopt this practice.

v) Appropriate training is the route to obtaining District Recognition and/or National Accreditation as a lay preacher. In some synods the training officer could assist with this. People will be ready at different times for different types of training and recognition depending on circumstances. Ways of affirming and developing gifts also need to be found.

vi) The Lay Preaching Support Committee will develop guidelines to help districts test and affirm the calling to lay preaching.

In order to achieve these aims the Lay Preaching Support Committee envisage the district will need a co-ordinator to liaise between churches, worship teams, lay preachers, the lay preaching commissioner, synod training/development officer, and the TLS regional organiser. This could be the existing commissioner.

The Lay Preaching Support Committee will continue to work in every way it can to encourage and support lay preachers, districts and synods and will produce as quickly as possible information about running Enquirers/Taster Days or Roadshows.

### 7.4 Conclusion

These proposals are all offered in the belief that God continues to call people to worship and praise. It will be an ongoing challenge and needs to be undergirded by prayer.

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**Resolution ?  
Ministries Committee**

Assembly resolution re ministers who transfer

**Assembly agrees that from general assembly 2003 it will receive and welcome alongside all newly ordained ministers of word and sacraments and newly commissioned church related community all those ministers from other churches who have been received onto the roll of ministers of the United Reformed Church,**

For many years the United Reformed Church has been enriched by the varied experiences and different perspectives of ministers of other churches who serve our churches.

Some remain within their own denominational oversight and discipline whilst serving, for a period, in local ecumenical partnerships.

Others transfer on to the roll of ministers of the word and sacrament or the list of church related community workers after being given certificates of eligibility and subsequently receiving a call to a local church or post. Once on the roll or list they are within the oversight and discipline of the United Reformed Church. Some of them will serve this church for an agreed limited period. Others seek to serve for an unspecified length of time or are making a permanent transfer to the United Reformed Church for doctrinal and ecclesiological reasons.

The number of ministers who are admitted onto the roll of the United Reformed Church varies from year to year.

Mainly in the context of discussions about non stipendiary ministry General Assembly has stated on a number of occasions that we have only one order of ministers of word and sacraments. That should be true also of the way in which ministers are received amongst us, irrespective of route of entry.

The Ministries Committee believes that the commitment to the United Reformed Church by ministers from other churches should be fully acknowledged in the same way we recognise the men and women who are newly ordained and commissioned. Recognition is of course given within the Districts and Synods where ministers are serving but there should also be the opportunity for them to receive the welcome accorded by General Assembly to other new ministers and church related community workers. The committee strongly

## **FUTURE MINISTRIES WORKING PARTY RESOLUTION**

Assembly

1. welcomes the interim report of the Future Ministries Working Party of Ministries Committee
2. remits it to local churches, districts and synods for consideration and response by the end of April 2003
3. requests Ministries Committee to present a further report to General Assembly in 2004 in the light of the responses received and the additional work to be done on outstanding issues.

**RESOLUTION ?****Certificates of Limited Eligibility**

General Assembly authorises the Ministries Committee, through the Accreditation sub-Committee, to grant Certificates of Limited Eligibility to ministers of other churches in order that they might serve local pastorates and posts in the United Reformed Church and receive a stipend from the Maintenance of the Ministry fund.

Before granting a Certificate of Limited Eligibility the Accreditation sub-Committee must be satisfied that the minister:

- is from a member church of the Council of Churches in Britain and Ireland, or a church overseas which is a member church of the Council for World Mission or the World Alliance of Reformed Churches
- will subscribe to the Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church
- is in good standing with their own denomination.
- has the appropriate training and experience or gifts to enable them to serve the United Reformed Church.

Such Certificates shall relate to a particular appointment and be valid for a limited period not exceeding twelve months.

A Certificate of Limited Eligibility will be endorsed with the name of the local church to which an appointment has been made as soon as it is known. It is valid for no other local church. It also bears the date when the Certificate ceases to be valid.

- 1 There are ministers of other churches who serve the United Reformed Church in addition to those who transfer onto the roll of ministers by way of certificates of eligibility.
- 2 Some serve in local ecumenical partnerships and remain with and are funded by their own church that takes full responsibility for their oversight. No action is required by the United Reformed Church in relation to such ministers' status or support.
- 3 Others are willing to serve the United Reformed Church but for various reasons do not wish to transfer to our Roll of Ministers. These are some of the circumstances when this might arise;
  - a) Where a minister of another denomination is near retirement age and is willing to serve in a short term appointment of not more than 12 months.  
If the minister is granted a Certificate of Limited Eligibility s/he may receive a call, and after induction receive a stipend from the Maintenance of Ministry Fund. S/he will come under the oversight of the District Council and his/her name will be added to the List of Ministers of other Churches serving the United Reformed Church.  
Upon completion of the period of service, or earlier resignation from it, his/her name will be removed from the list.
  - b) Where there is a need for interim ministry in a local United Reformed Church and the local church and District wish to call a minister from another denomination for a period of not more than twelve months.  
In such circumstances a request for a Certificate of Limited Eligibility will be made by the minister and supported by the District Council at the request of the local church. This follows the procedure already in place.

- c) Where a minister of another denomination is in pastoral charge within their own denomination, or is in an ecumenical appointment, or is seconded by their denomination to a United Reformed Church sponsored appointment, and is willing to extend their ministry to give pastoral oversight to a local United Reformed Church.

*The Accreditation sub-Committee will need to establish that the applicant's denomination is willing to allow them to extend their ministry beyond that work in which they are already engaged, and is prepared to hold them under its own disciplinary procedures for that part of their work which is carried out in the United Reformed Church. If such an arrangement cannot be achieved, the minister must agree to exercise his or her ministry under the discipline of the United Reformed Church.*

Thereafter, provided that the minister receives a valid call, he/she may be inducted, and his/her name added to the List of Ministers of other Churches serving the United Reformed Church. Upon completion of the period of service or earlier retirement from it, his/her name will be removed from the List.

If the original appointment with the parent denomination, or other body, comes to an end, the minister's service in the local United Reformed Church also terminates. If it is desired that this service should continue, an application for a Certificate of Eligibility should be made, as appropriate to the new situation.

- d) Where a minister of another denomination is employed outside the structures of their own denomination, and is willing to give oversight to a local United Reformed Church on a non-stipendiary basis.

In this case, a minister should apply for a Certificate of Eligibility in the usual way. If it were necessary (and not merely desired on the applicant's part) for the original denominational link to be maintained, then the minister should apply as for 3c above

In relation to the circumstances detailed above, it is necessary for the Accreditation sub-Committee to have granted a Certificate of Limited Eligibility before any formal agreement concerning ministry is entered into by the local church.

The affirmations set out in Schedule C of the Basis of Union will be made by those to be inducted .

In no case shall the inclusion of a person's name in the List of Ministers of other Churches serving in the United Reformed Church confer a right to receive a call from any local United Reformed Church save that for which the Certificate of Limited Eligibility as granted.

If the minister wishes to extend his/her service in the United Reformed Church s/he will need to apply for a Certificate of Eligibility and transfer onto the roll of Ministers of the United Reformed Church.

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## MINISTRIES COMMITTEE

Through the Ministries Committee the Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee will be taking three resolutions to General Assembly.

The first resolution relates to the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration (Plan). Some amendments are merely to re-arrange paragraphs for ease of understanding or to amend wording for clarity, others are more fundamental as shown below:-

- Previously the Plan did not give full recognition of the ministry undertaken by CRCWs and the Plan has been amended to recognise CRCWs as a ministry not just lay workers.
- A significant change is made to equate the treatment of part-time ministers whether in manse accommodation or their own property with regard to the payment of the standing charges. Previously the local church paid in full the standing charges for those part-time ministers in manse accommodation but pro-rata to those living in their own property. This should now be paid pro-rata to all part-time ministers/CRCWs.
- It is recommended that the fixed car allowance **should** be paid at the prescribed rate. Previously this was a recommendation which churches interpreted as a choice and not a requirement to pay.

Two further resolutions relate to the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund.

The first resolution makes changes to the Pension Fund Rules, which incorporate:

- Church Related Community Workers – to provide for the inclusion of CRCWs as members of the URC Ministers' Pension Fund.
- Additional Voluntary Contributions – last year's Assembly Report drew attention to this legal requirement for the new provision for members. The changes to the Pension Fund Rules have been made in the Inland Revenue prescribed form, in order to obtain Revenue approval.
- Pension Sharing on Divorce – last year's Assembly Report drew attention to this requirement. The additional Pension Fund Rule and supporting appendix, which contain lengthy and technical language, have been made in the Inland Revenue prescribed form in order to obtain Revenue approval. The changes set out the procedure to be followed upon the divorce of a member.

The second resolution proposed will allow the Pension Trustees to give consent for the additional pensions of members to be augmented, on condition that there are no adverse funding implications. It is not usual to do this but on occasion the local church or participating body may wish to pay an additional contribution towards the provision of extra pension for the member. This extra pension is secured on a money purchase basis through the additional voluntary contribution scheme.